



AFTERSHOCK

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
Authority

BATMAN

558 | SEP 98

MOENCH
APARO
BUSCEMA



DYING CITY

THE CAVE:

HELP ME,
ALFRED.

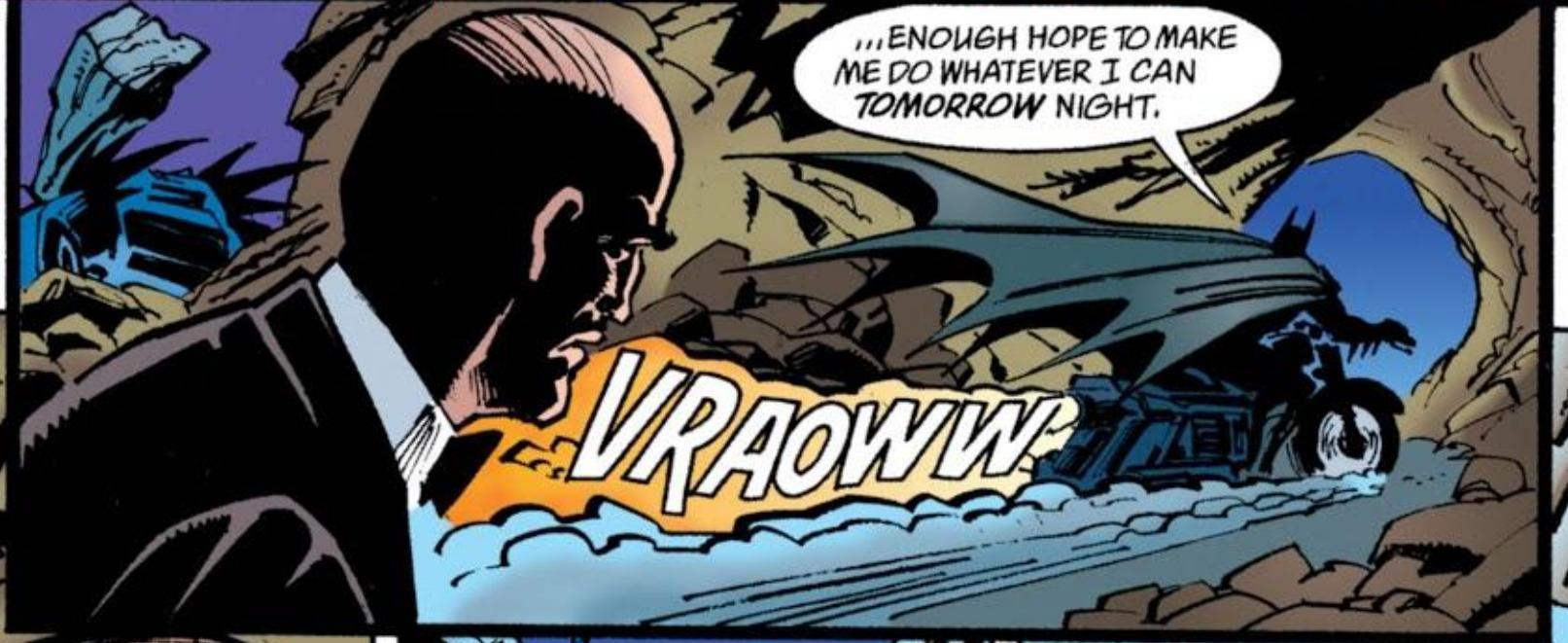
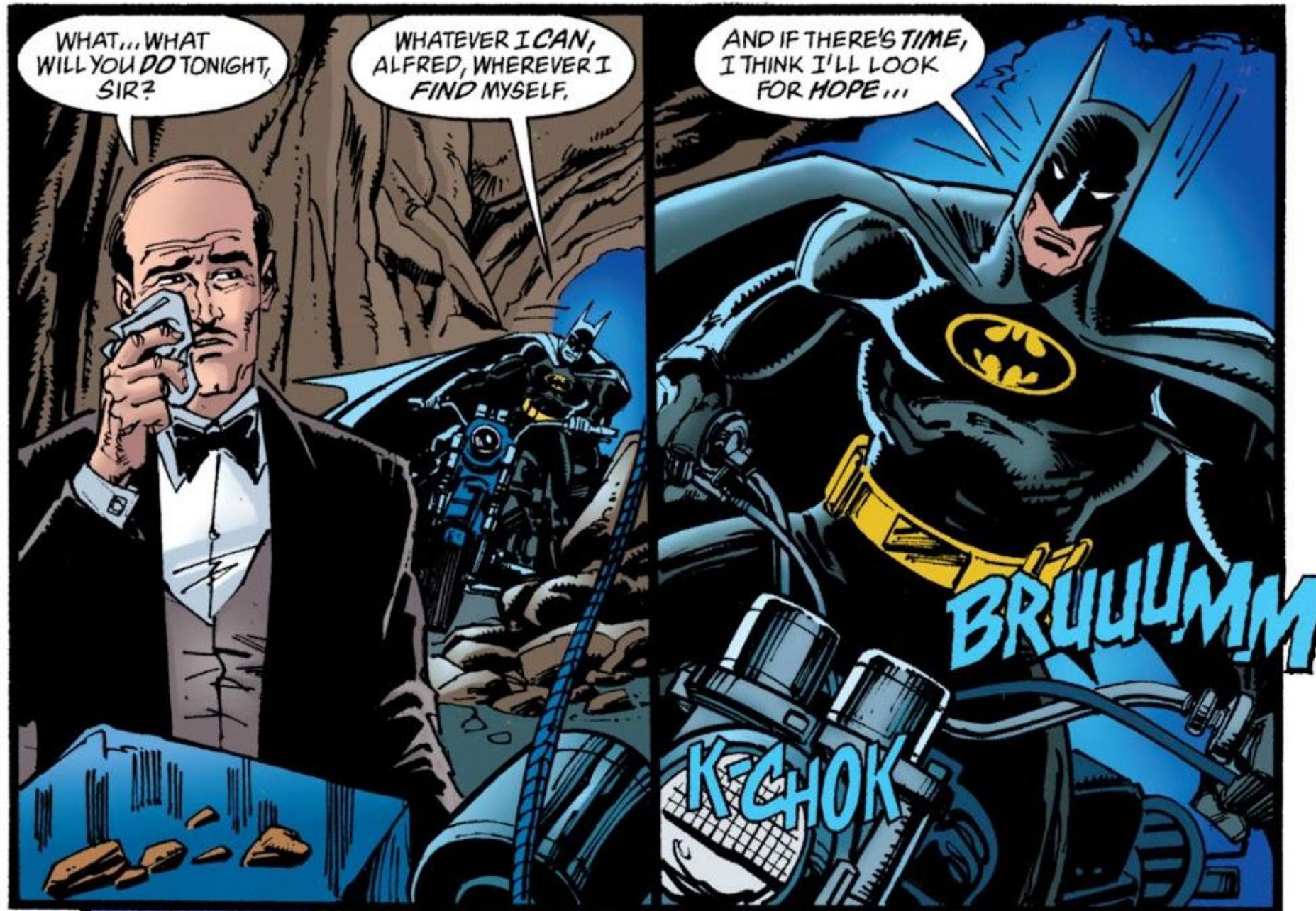
I NEED
STRENGTH.

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BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE







OUR CITY'S BEEN POUNDED HARD, SARAH, AND THE WOUND MAY BE MORTAL.

AND HERE I COULD'VE SWORN YOU SAID YOU WERE "FINE."

I DID, BUT I LIED.

GOTHAM, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, IS DYING--MAYBE ALREADY DEAD... AND WE JUST CAN'T SEE IT YET, THE SAME WAY WE COULDN'T SEE THE QUAKE.

AND BY THE WAY, HOW'S THE MAYOR HOLDING UP?

OH, SHE'S FINE, TOO--JUST LIKE YOU.

ROOF REPAIRED AND READY TO JUMP FROM IT.

--VESPER FAIRCHILD, YOUR "SIREN OF THE NIGHT," WITH A FEW GRIM THOUGHTS ON THE SUBJECT OF CATASTROPHE, A REALITY-CHECK ON THE STATUS OF THIS LEAKY BOAT WE'RE ALL IN...

...AND WHETHER OR NOT WE SHOULD RATOUT AS IT SINKS.

AS YOU KNOW, FEMA AND OTHER FEDERAL RELIEF AGENCIES HAVE COMMITTED MASSIVE FUNDING TO GOTHAM, BUT OUR SHORT-TERM PROBLEMS HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH CASH...

AGC TALK RADIO

RIGHT NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT TIME, AND THE CLOCK IS TICKING, PEOPLE, MOVING EVER CLOSER TO THE BIG MIDNIGHT.

WILL GOTHAM HAVE TO DIE BEFORE IT CAN LIVE AGAIN?

"AND BEFORE YOU ANSWER, FIRST UPON OUR REALITY-CHECK IS THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT, WHICH STILL CAN'T GET ITS TRUCKS THROUGH THE RUBBLE.

SOMEDAY THIS CITY WILL BE REBUILT, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, BUT WILL WE CALL IT RECOVERY... OR RESURRECTION?

OR WILL WE HANG ON, WEATHER THE STORM... AND SAVE OURSELVES, SAVE OUR SOULS, SAVE OUR CITY?

"ON SOME STREETS, TRASH HASN'T BEEN COLLECTED SINCE THE QUAKE-- AND EVERYWHERE ELSE, THERE'S HARDLY A DENT IN THE MOUNTAINS OF GARBAGE.

"THE RATS LOVE IT, AND I'M TOLD THEIR POPULATION IS EXPLODING.

"I'M ALSO TOLD THEY CARRY DISEASE, AND EVEN PLAGUE..."

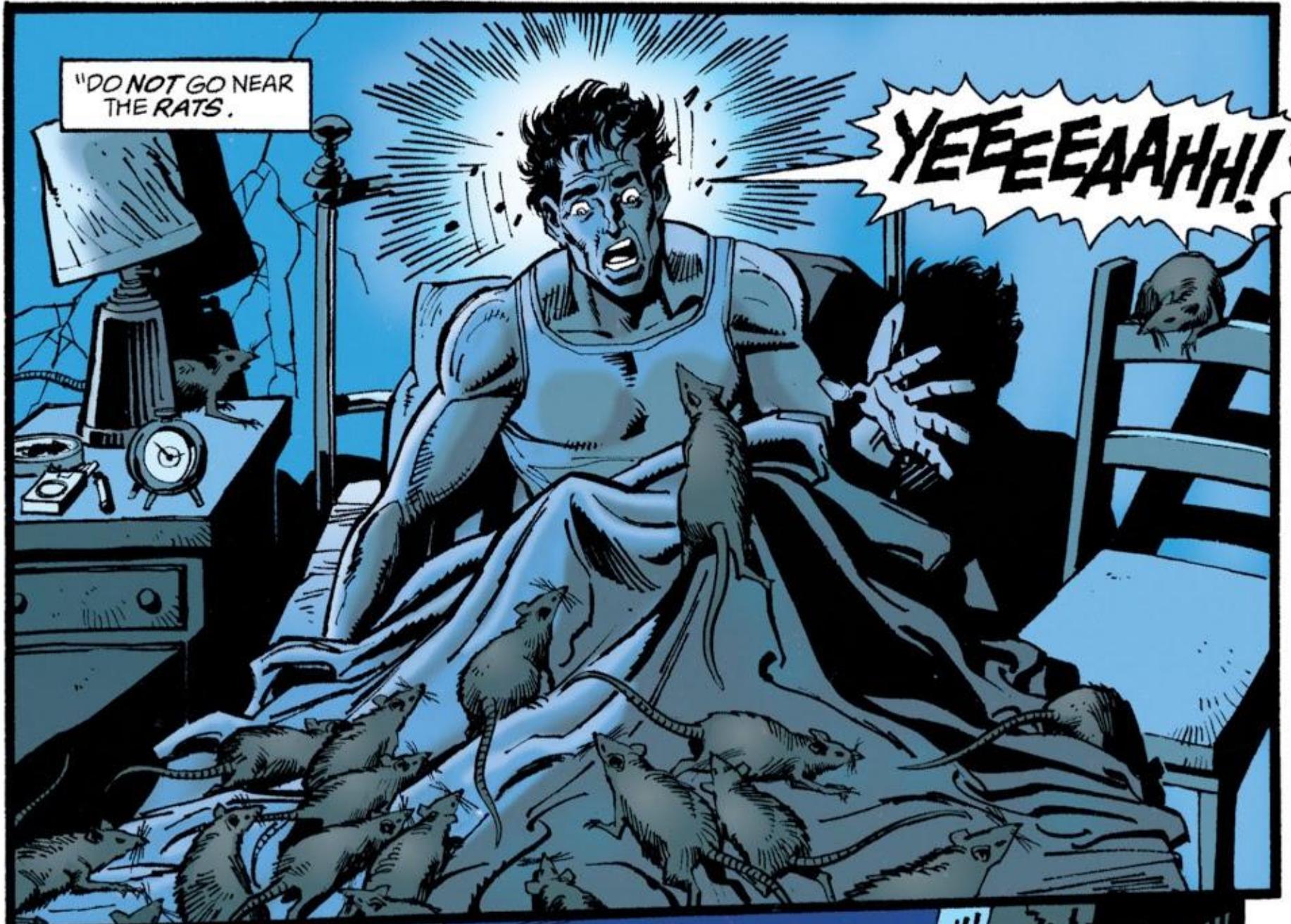
"AND SO, EVEN PUTTING THE STENCH ASIDE, WE SHOULDN'T LOVE ALL THE GARBAGE..."

"PLEASE, PEOPLE, AND HEAR ME CAREFULLY..."

MHHMM?

"DO NOT GO NEAR
THE RATS."

YEEEEEAAHHH!



"I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT THE
ROVING PACKS OF DISPLACED
DOGS, FORMER PETS NOW
TURNED WILD, MIGHT KEEP
THE RAT POPULATION IN CHECK--"

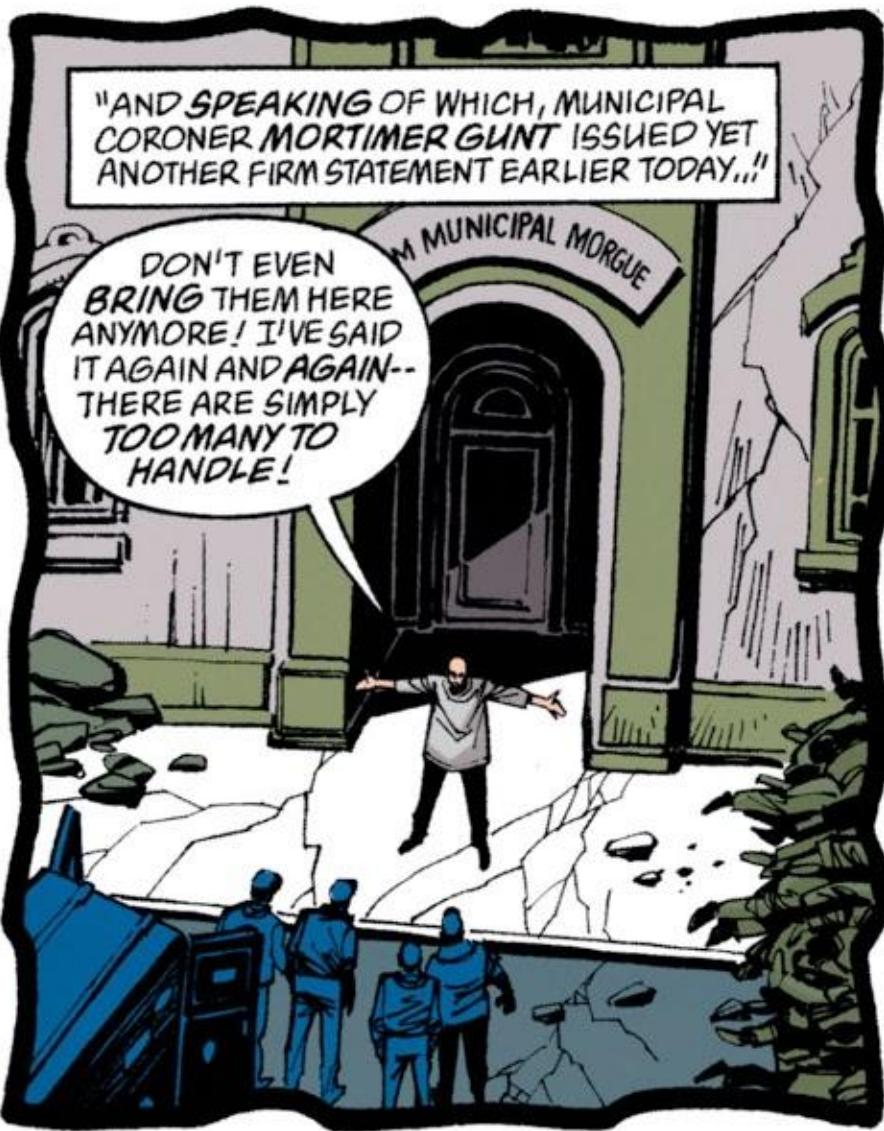
RAOWRR YAIK



--BUT AS WE ALL KNOW,
THEY SEEM TO FAVOR
BIGGER GAME ...

REHRRR







"INDEED, EVERY TIME THE WATER DEPARTMENT ATTEMPTS TO RESTORE SERVICE, ANOTHER QUAKE-DAMAGED MAIN SEEMS TO RUPTURE..."

"...FLOODING SEVERAL LOW-LYING AREAS OF THE CITY UNDER AS MUCH AS FIVE FEET OF WATER, AND HARDLY IMPROVING THE ONGOING CHOLERA EPIDEMIC."

"AS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION... WELL, LET'S JUST SAY 'NO MORE TEACHERS, NO MORE BOOKS!'

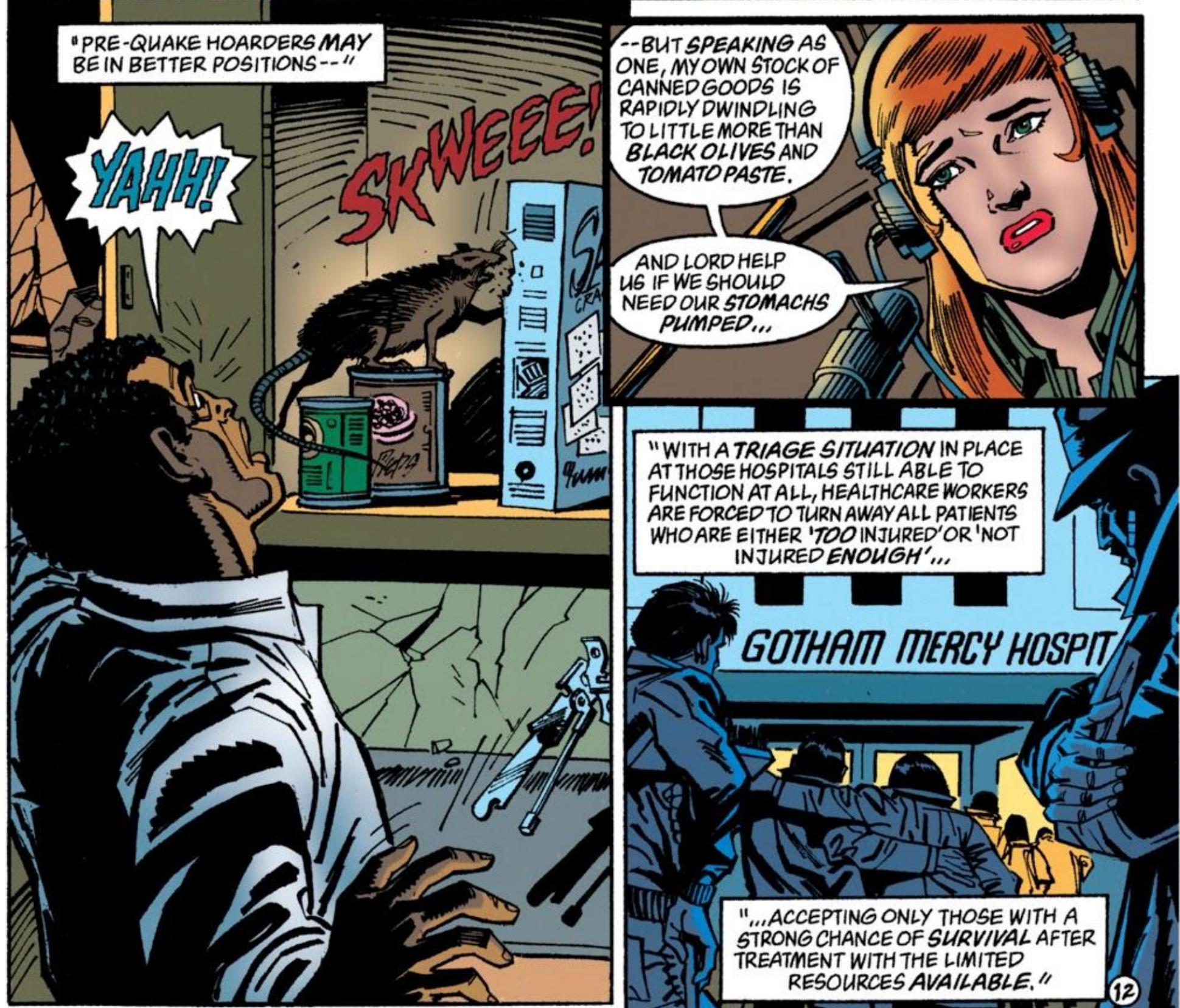
Free Will
vs.
Destiny

"SCHOOL IS OUT."

"THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS 'A BAD JOKE,' ITS ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING ITSELF IN UTTER SHAMBLES."

AND WELFARE OPERATIONS, LIKE SO MANY OTHER CITY SERVICES, HAVE SIMPLY BEEN SUSPENDED FOR THE DURATION.

AGAIN, OUR SITUATION IS NOT ONE OF MONEY, BUT OF TIME AND LOGISTICS...



"ONE HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR EVEN BROACHED THE CONTROVERSIAL POSSIBILITY OF EUTHANASIA, TO 'PUT THE HOPELESS OUT OF THEIR MISERY'..."

"...BUT LATER WITHDREW THE SUGGESTION, CITING A 'SHORTAGE OF DRUGS SUITABLE FOR LETHAL INJECTIONS.'

"PERHAPS DUE TO ITS STRONG LEADERSHIP, THE POLICE DEPARTMENT HAS PROBABLY FADED BETTER THAN ANY OTHER CITY SERVICE..."

POLICE!
FREEZE!

TOO MANY OF
THEM, HARV--WARNING SHOT.

"ABSENTEEISM IS SAID TO BE RELATIVELY LOW, WITH MORALE AS HIGH AS CAN BE EXPECTED!"

I SAID
FREEZE!

BAMM!

FALL BACK, HARV! THEY'RE STAMPEDING!

"IN FACT, MOST COPS ARE STILL REPORTING FOR REGULAR DUTY, AND MANY ARE PUTTING IN VOLUNTARY OVERTIME."

MONToya,
LOOKOUT!

"TO MY WAY OF THINKING, THAT MAKES THEM EITHER SUPER-HUMAN OR GLUTTONS FOR PUNISHMENT..."



"THEY ARE THE HEROES--GRAND AND SMALL, BUT ALL MARKED BY THE SAME RIGHT STUFF CALLED HOPE OR COURAGE OR GRIT."

GORE DR

THE MOTHER WHO LIFTED A WALL OFF HER CHILD...THE CHILD WHO BROUGHT RESCUE WORKERS TO HER TRAPPED MOTHER ...THE SHOP OWNER WHO GAVE AWAY HIS ENTIRE INVENTORY...

WE ALL KNOW AT LEAST ONE OF THEM, AND SOME OF YOU ARE AMONG THEIR RANKS...

WELL, JUST TELL HER SHE CAN'T TAKE HER TOYS! WE'RE LEAVING WITH WHAT-EVER WE CAN CARRY ON OUR BACKS--AND NOTHING MORE.

IT'S NOT ALL GRIM, PEOPLE, BECAUSE THERE IS HOPE, AND THERE ARE HEROES.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU...BUT THEY GIVE ME GOOSE-BUMPS...AND THEY MAKE LIVING IN THIS HELL OF A CITY BOTH A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOR.

"HEROES, PEOPLE... AND HOPE."

WHY DID I COME HERE? WHAT DID I THINK I COULD FIND?

I EVEN TOLD ALFRED... I'M NOT GOOD WITH THIS... NEVER HAVE BEEN... NOT SINCE TWO DEATHS CHANGED ME FOREVER, TURNING A BOY OF BRIGHT HOPE INTO A MAN OF DARK VENGEANCE.

THE MURDERS OF MY PARENTS ALTERED MY FUTURE, HAUNTING MY DREAMS TO THIS VERY DAY.

HOW WILL THE QUAKES MASS KILLING ALTER ME? WHAT WILL THOUSANDS OF DEATHS MAKE OF A MAN ALREADY DARK?

THERE'S NO VENGEANCE TO REAP FROM THE CRACKED AND SUNDERED EARTH, NO VILLAIN TO HOLD RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS HORROR...

THE DEAD ARE SIMPLY GONE, WITH NO ONE TO BLAME, BUT WHAT DOES THEIR ABSENCE DO TO THE LIVING?

HOW DO WE GO ON?

HOW DO WE MARCH PAST ALL THOSE WHOSE STEPS ARE STILLED, AND WHO MUST RISE TO THE HEAVENS AS HELLISH SMOKE?

AND WHY, LOOKING FOR HOPE, DID I COME TO THIS PLACE WHERE EVEN OLD DEATH IS DAMAGED AND DEFILED?





