

"I loved THE KILLING JOKE...
It's my favorite. It's the
first comic I've ever loved."

— Tim Burton

SMILE!

ALAN MOORE
BRIAN BOLLAND
BATMAN
THE KILLING JOKE
THE DELUXE EDITION

INTRODUCTION
BY TIM SALE





BATMAN THE KILLING JOKE
THE DELUXE EDITION

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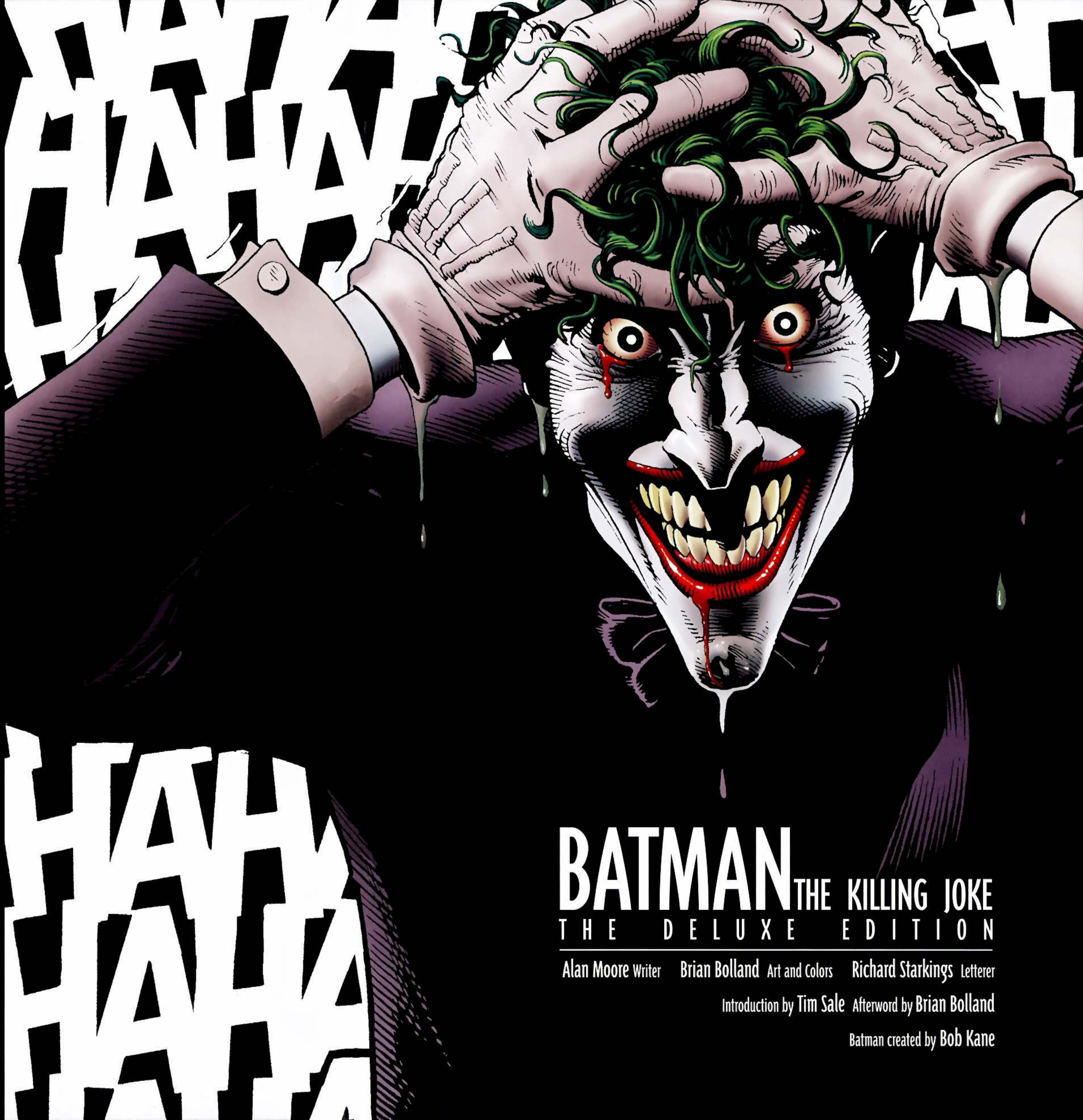
Cover by Brian Bolland

Batman: The Killing Joke: The Deluxe Edition

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BATMAN THE KILLING JOKE

THE DELUXE EDITION

Alan Moore Writer Brian Bolland Art and Colors Richard Starkings Letterer

Introduction by Tim Sale Afterword by Brian Bolland

Batman created by Bob Kane



INTRODUCTION

Man, how cool is this?

Like everyone who was in the mainstream comics field in the late 1980s, or — as was my case — had their noses pressed against the glass, the back-to-back-to-back-to-back of *DARK KNIGHT RETURNS*, *WATCHMEN*, *BATMAN: YEAR ONE*, and *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE*, completely reenergized the field. The characters (other than those in *WATCHMEN*) had been around for decades and, while many talented writers and artists had done much notable work in that time, there was an incredible sense of the new coming from Frank Miller and this handful of crazy Brits — Alan Moore, Brian Bolland, John Higgins, Richard Starkings and Dave Gibbons — who were seeing possibilities in them, in the kinds of stories that could be told, and not incidentally, in the way that a story could be presented.

BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE is the only one of the stories listed above that did not first exist in another format, as a series of comics that were eventually collected into that catch-all term, a “graphic novel.” *THE KILLING JOKE* was a 46-page story, but it was crafted at such an astonishing level, and printed so much more cleanly and carefully, that it seemed to be a different beast altogether, not just a really great Batman comic, but something different. I didn’t get it then, but I do now.

That is what authors of extraordinary craft can do: make the old seem new.

And thrilling. Don’t forget thrilling.

I am told that the origins of *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE* go back to a Batman/Judge Dredd proposal that Moore and Bolland had cooked up. When it fell through, Moore asked Bolland what else he wanted to do, and Bolland said, “The Joker, please.”

So polite. And thus a classic was born.

Moore is famous for many things, not the least of which are his maniacally controlled and precisely orchestrated scripts, requiring an equal and similar effort from his artist partner, and in the amazing Brian Bolland he found an artist his equal in talent, fanaticism, care, and expressiveness. Both excel in impressing with their rendering of the mundane, so that it never *feels* mundane. And then they blast into a reveal, a money shot so explosive that is it only then that you realize how well you, as a reader, have been lulled to rest *on purpose*, just to set you up.

The Joker’s reveal on page 11, the tragic event on page 18, the second reveal on page 37, all orchestrated and carried out in ways that astonish, and then astonish again when you go back and see just how much these artists have known and set things up from the beginning. How fun it is to be in the hands of creators who know so much about what they are doing.

Oh, and the joke (how cool is it that the book ends with a joke) at the finish?

Priceless, funny, and perfect for the characters of Batman and The Joker.

What you hold in your hands, though, is not the book that I own, that so inflamed(!) me and thousands of others back in 1988, because of one crucial element: the coloring.

This time around, you lucky buggers, you have the fantastic treat to see the book colored by the artist himself, and see his more complete vision of how the story should look. Side by side, the comparison is amazing.

Bolland’s colors are characteristically thoughtful and restrained. They fit the work more completely than Higgins’s state-of-the-art job in 1988 and are a joy to look at. Slow down and one can see how cool the palette is now, versus the warmer one of 1988, and how much better that reflects the somber tone of the story, and how, when Bolland retains a color from 1988 that has become iconic, like Barbara’s yellow shirt, he integrates that so well into the cooler colors in the scene, allowing the shirt to really pop and ratchet up the horror of the event.

But the biggest and most amazing change in this newly colored edition is in the flashback sequences.

Bolland washes out all color in each one, but chooses to spotlight an object in each — a bowl of tentacles, shrimp, and so on — in increasingly

intense shades of red, all leading up to (here’s that sense that everything has been planned from the start by masterful hands) the Red Hood that was posited to be The Joker’s mostly forgotten origin, *way back in 1951*, and the transformation of the milquetoast failed comedian to insane criminal mastermind.

Brrrrrr. I just got chills.

Anyone else get chills?

Man, how cool is this?

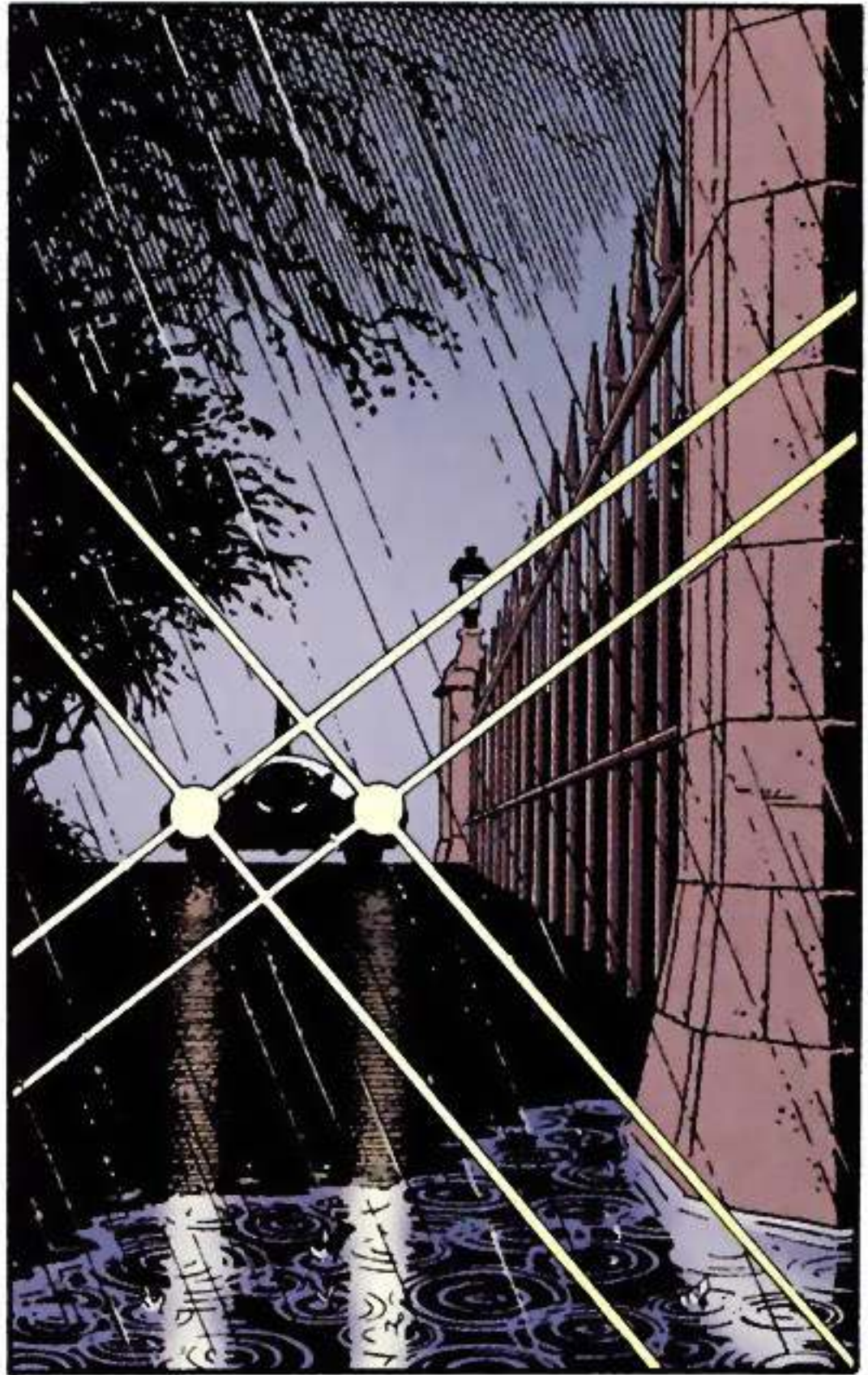
Tim Sale

Pasadena, CA 2008

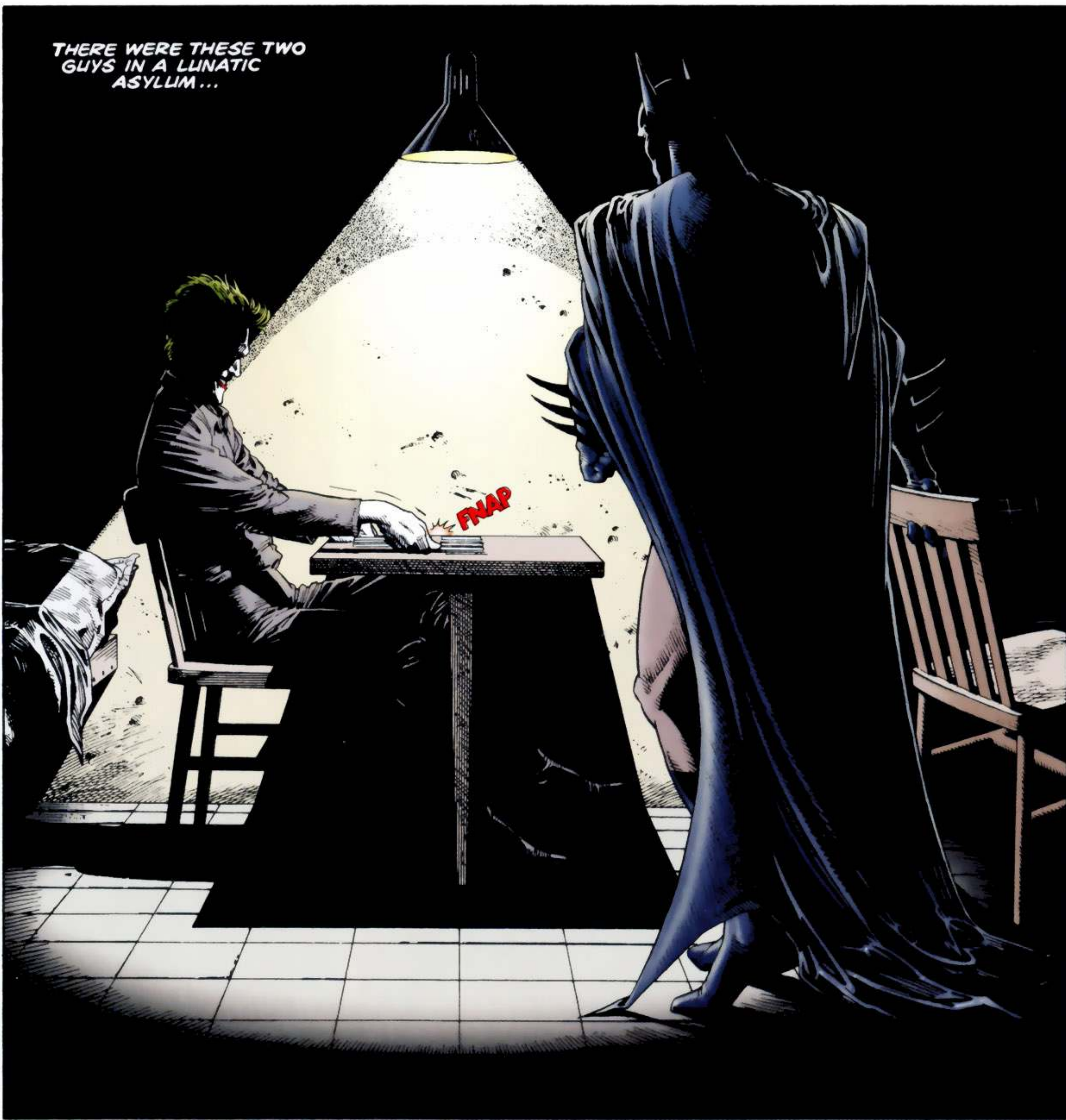
Tim Sale lives in southern California with his aged dogs Hotspur and Shelby. Raised in Seattle, he still finds California an odd place, though he hopes that will change someday.

Tim is the artist on BATMAN: DARK VICTORY, CATWOMAN: WHEN IN ROME, BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN and many other titles.

In 2006, Tim became the artist for the hit NBC television series Heroes.



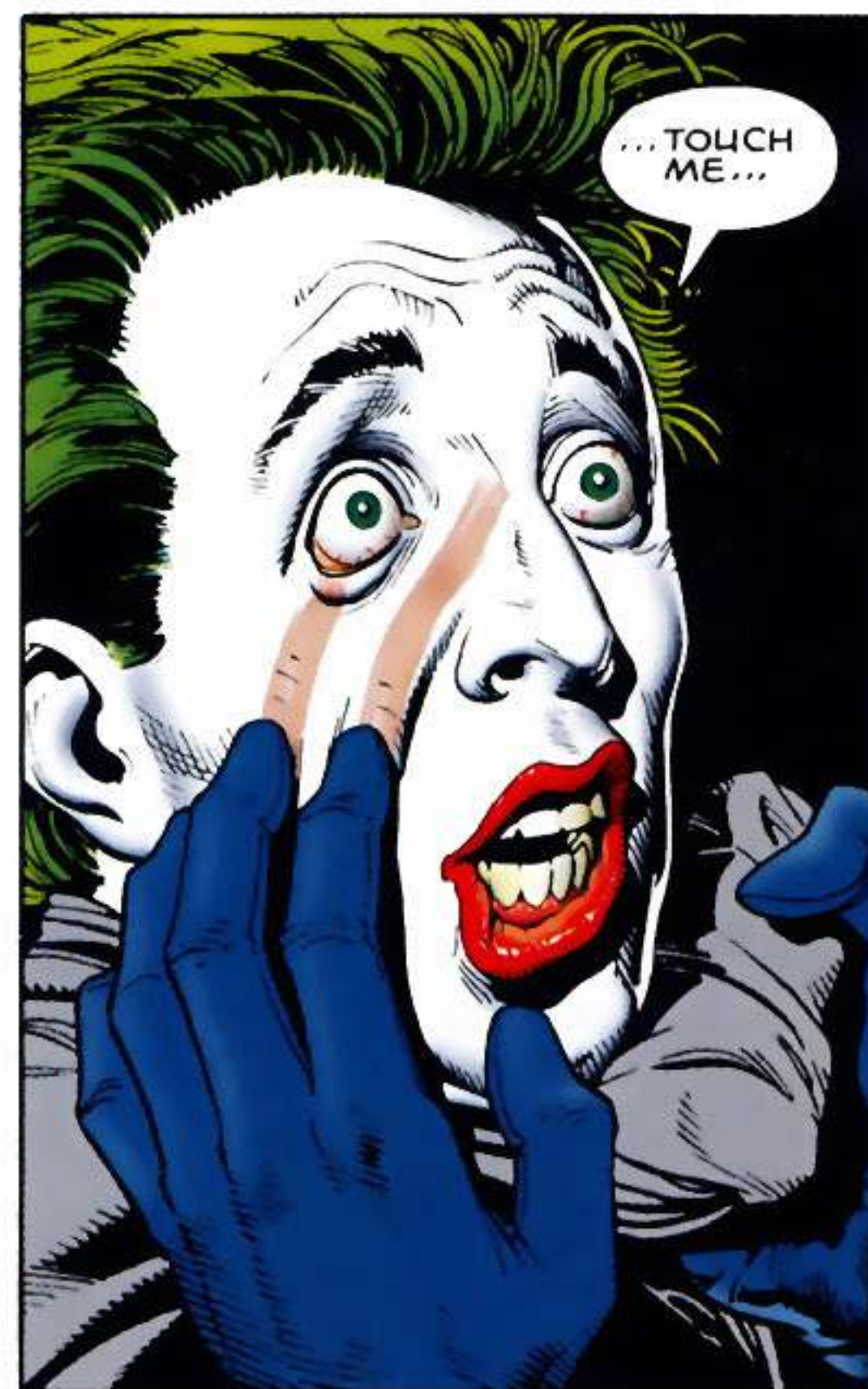






WE'RE GOING TO KILL EACH OTHER, AREN'T WE?







"WHERE IS HE?"

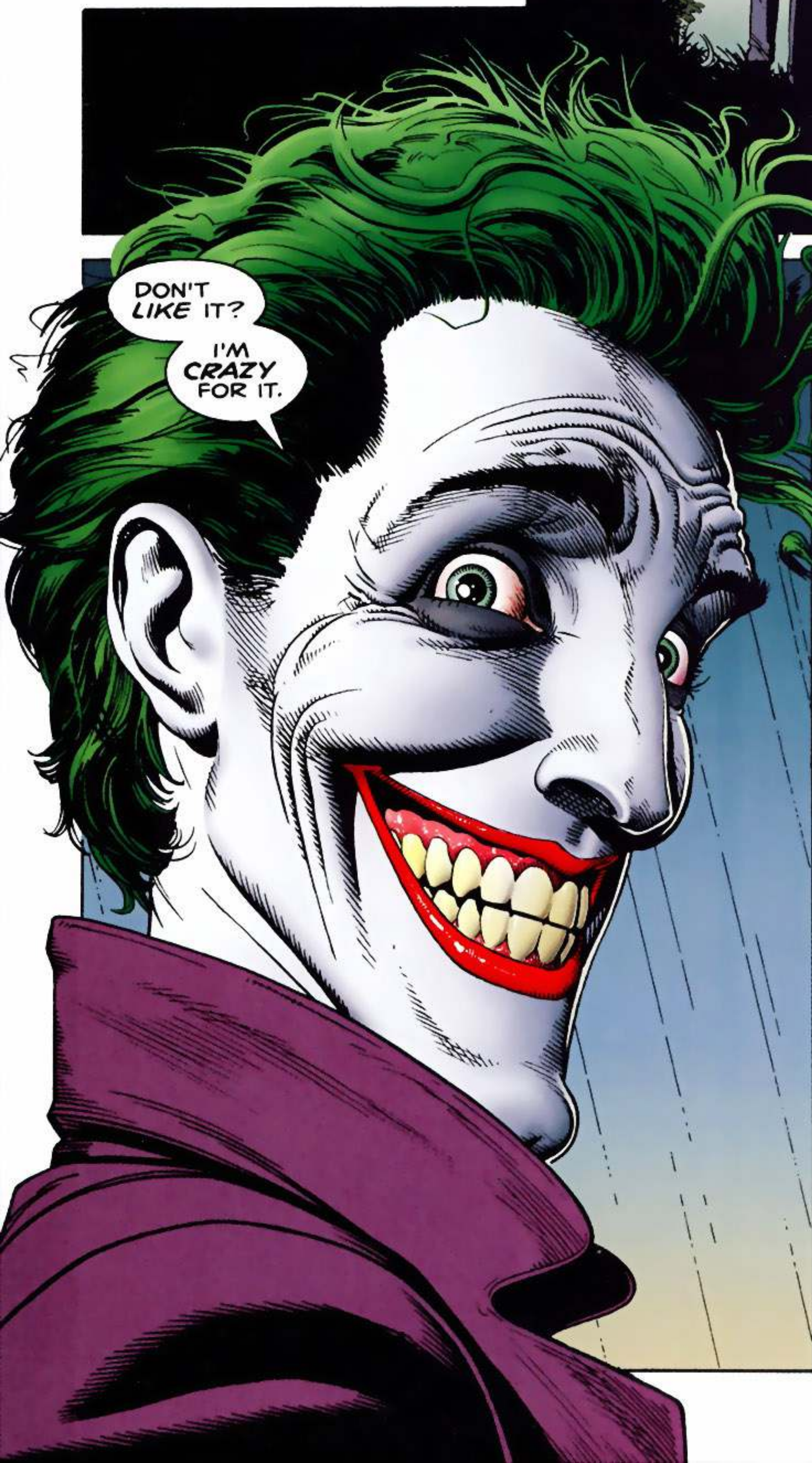
AH! THERE YOU ARE!

HAVE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO INSPECT THE PROPERTY AND DECIDE IF IT'S WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

WELL, IT'S GARISH, UGLY, AND DERELICTS HAVE USED IT FOR A TOILET.

THE RIDES ARE DILAPIDATED TO THE POINT OF BEING LETHAL, AND COULD EASILY MAIM OR KILL INNOCENT LITTLE CHILDREN.

Oh, SO YOU DON'T LIKE IT?



DON'T LIKE IT?

I'M CRAZY FOR IT.

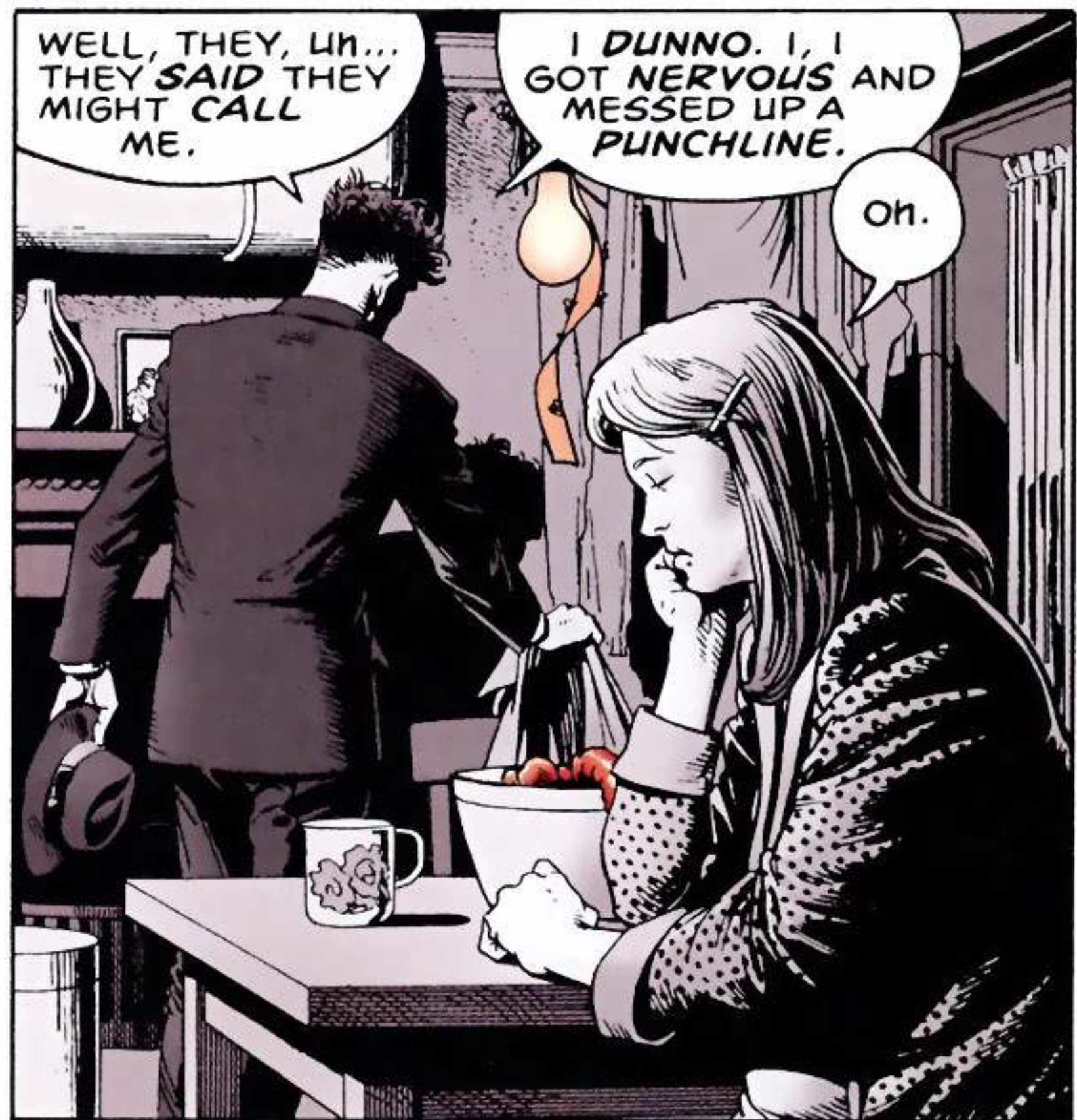
YOU...? YOU REALLY WANT TO BUY IT? AND THE PRICE I MENTIONED, IT ISN'T TOO STEEP...?

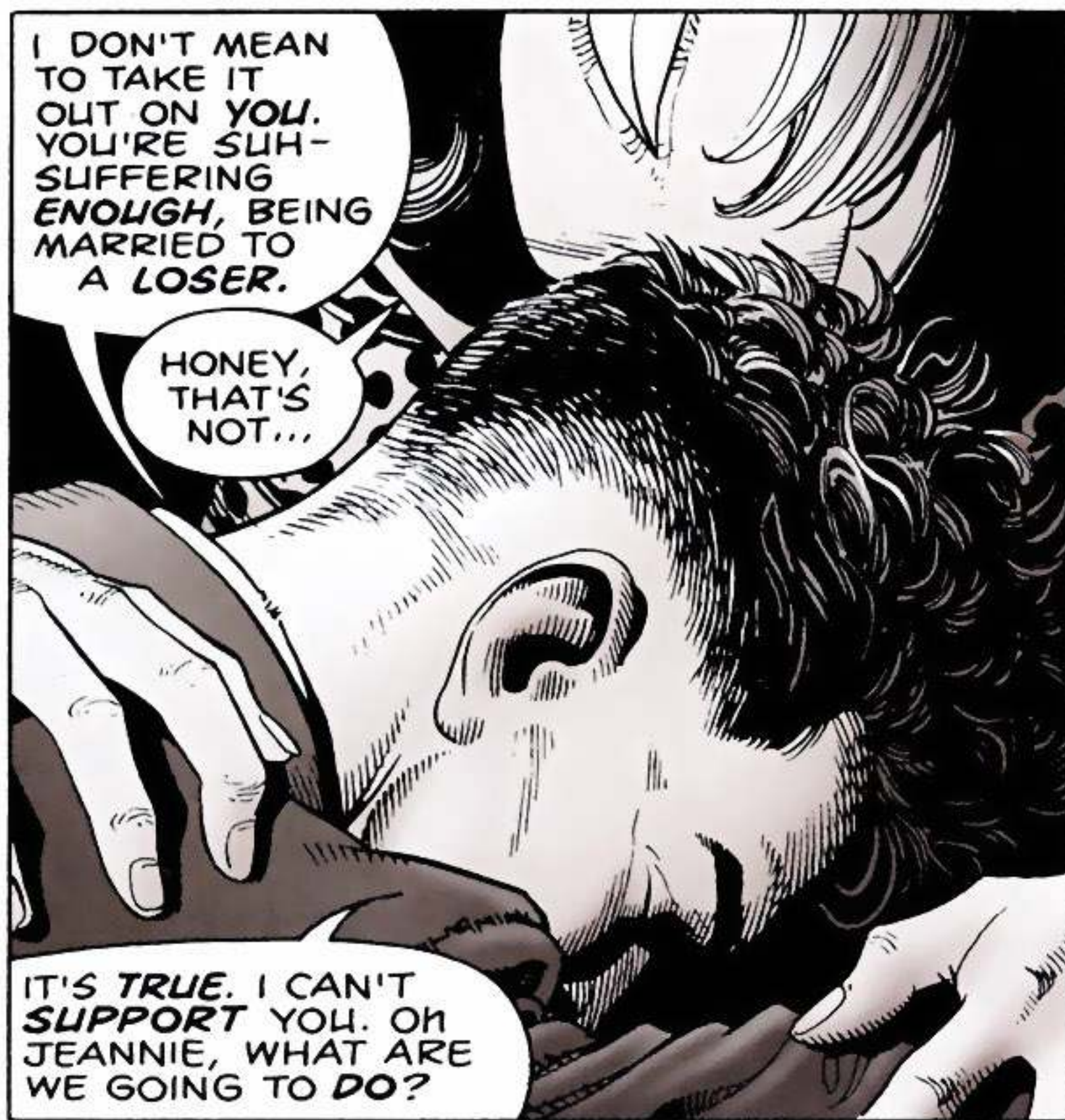
TOO STEEP? MY DEAR SIR, AS I LOOK AT IT I'M MAKING A KILLING...



... AND ANYWAY, MONEY ISN'T REALLY A PROBLEM.







I DON'T MEAN TO TAKE IT OUT ON YOU. YOU'RE SUH-SUFFERING ENOUGH, BEING MARRIED TO A LOSER.

HONEY, THAT'S NOT...

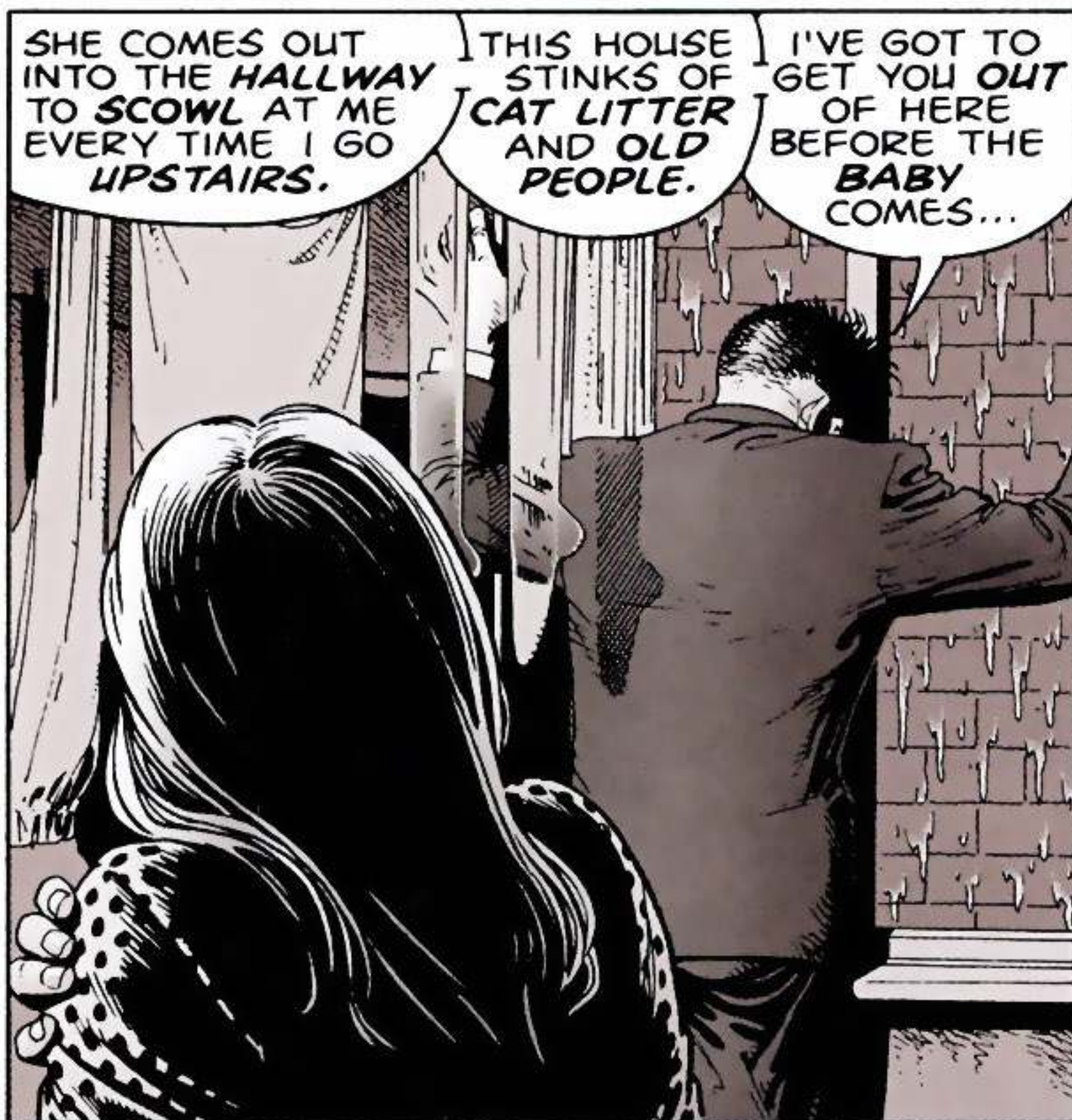
IT'S TRUE. I CAN'T SUPPORT YOU. OH JEANNIE, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?



IT'LL BE OKAY.

JUNIOR WON'T BE HERE FOR ANOTHER THREE MONTHS, AND I THINK MRS. BURKISS WILL LET THE RENT GO A LITTLE LONGER. SHE FEELS SORRY FOR ME.

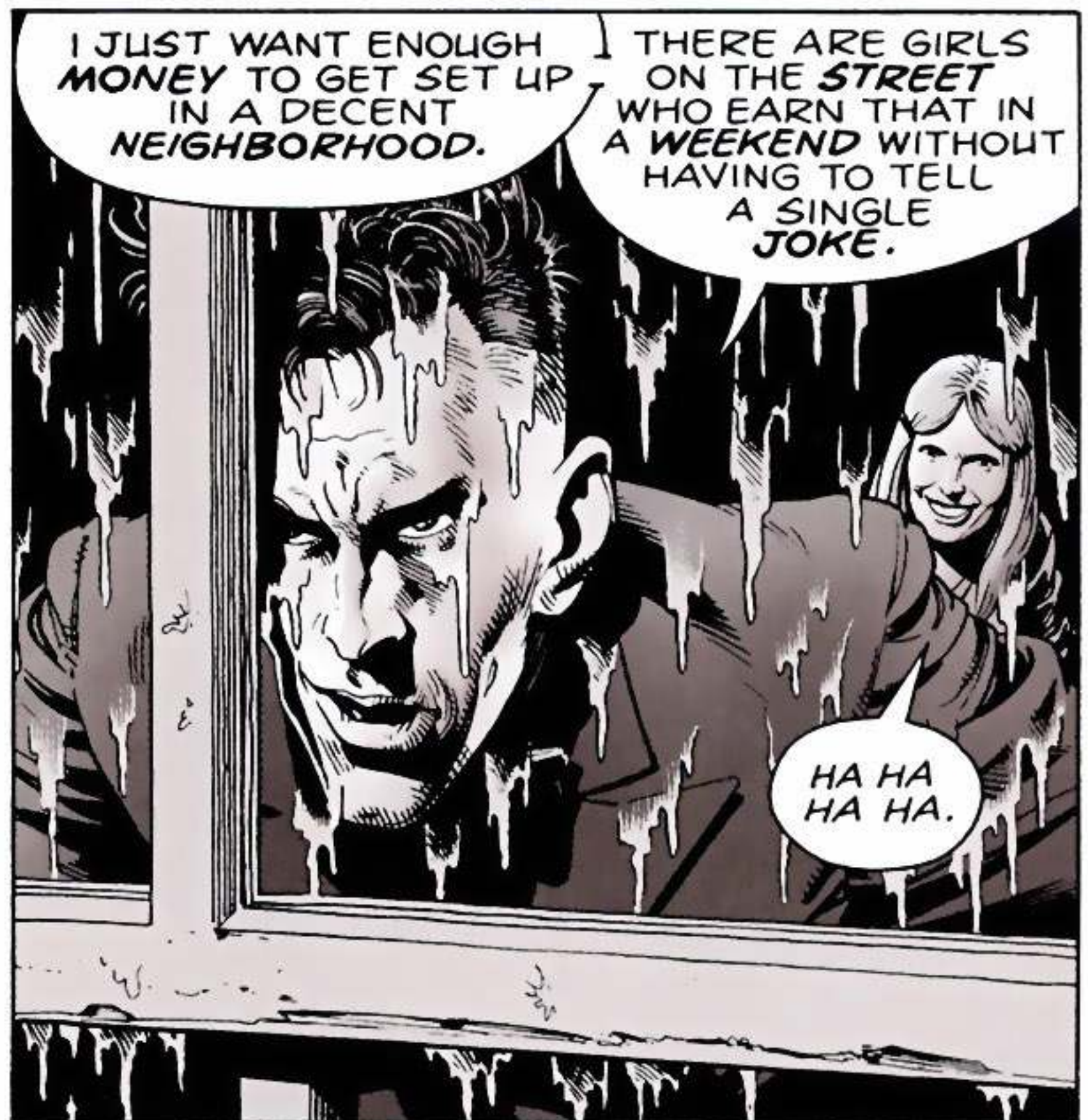
SHE HATES ME.



SHE COMES OUT INTO THE HALLWAY TO SCOWL AT ME EVERY TIME I GO UPSTAIRS.

THIS HOUSE STINKS OF CAT LITTER AND OLD PEOPLE.

I'VE GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE BABY COMES...



I JUST WANT ENOUGH MONEY TO GET SET UP IN A DECENT NEIGHBORHOOD.

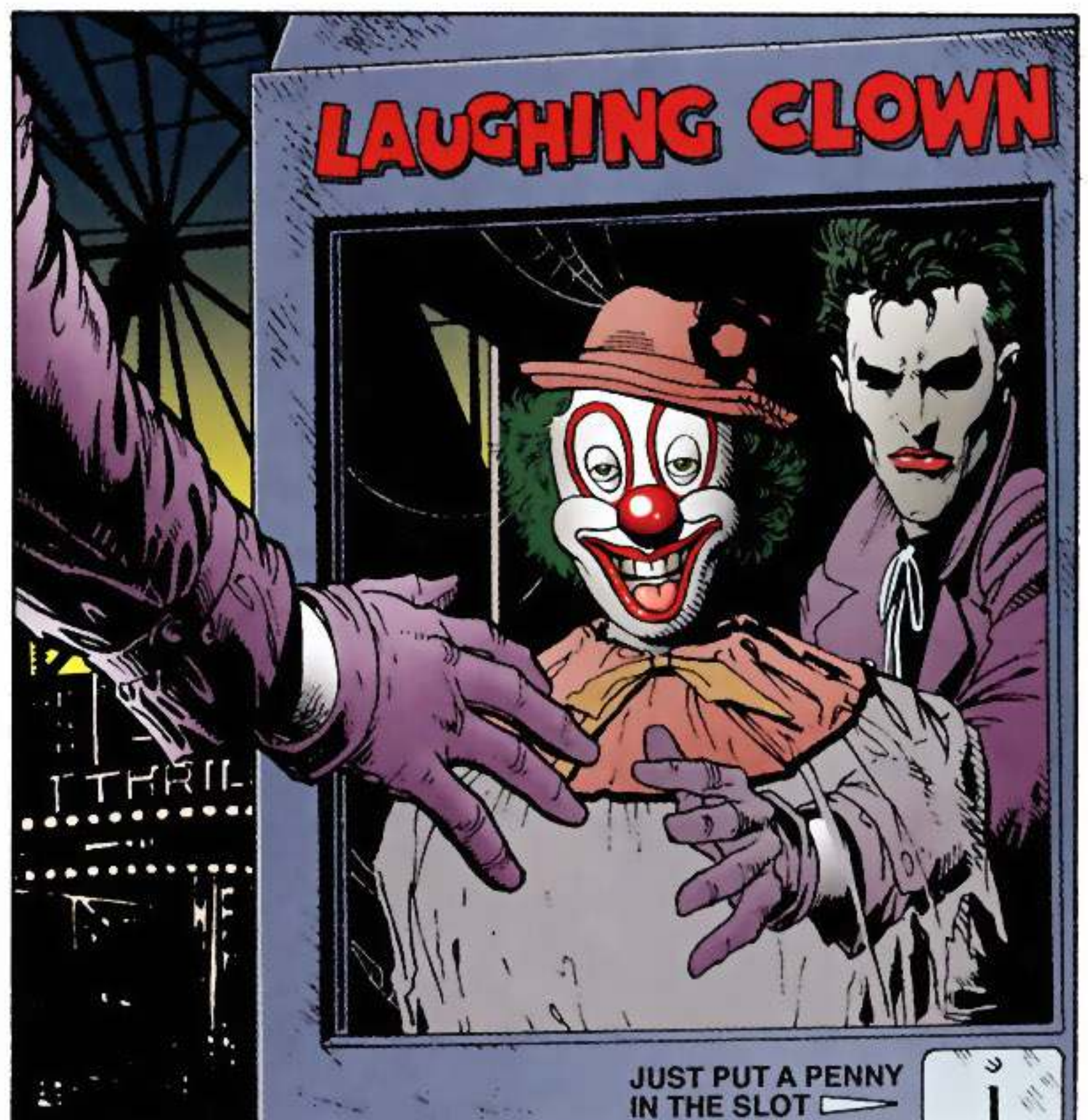
THERE ARE GIRLS ON THE STREET WHO EARN THAT IN A WEEKEND WITHOUT HAVING TO TELL A SINGLE JOKE.

HA HA HA HA.



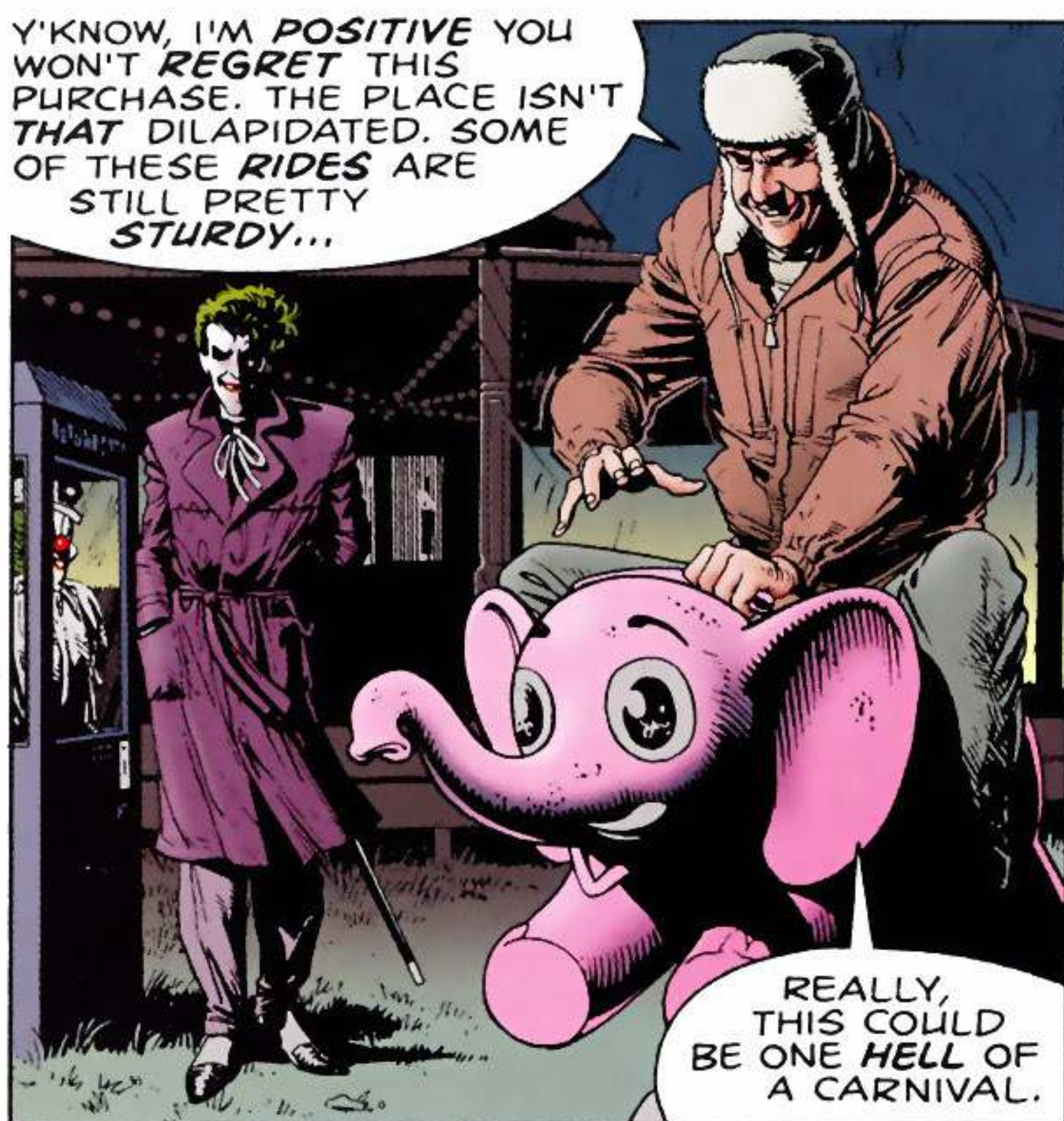
HONEY, DON'T WORRY. NOT ABOUT ANY OF IT. I STILL LOVE YOU, Y'KNOW? JOB OR NO JOB, YOU'RE GOOD IN THE SACK...

... AND YOU KNOW HOW TO MAKE ME LAUGH.



LAUGHING CLOWN

JUST PUT A PENNY IN THE SLOT



Y'KNOW, I'M **POSITIVE** YOU WON'T **REGRET** THIS PURCHASE. THE PLACE ISN'T **THAT** DILAPIDATED. SOME OF THESE **RIDES** ARE STILL PRETTY **STURDY...**

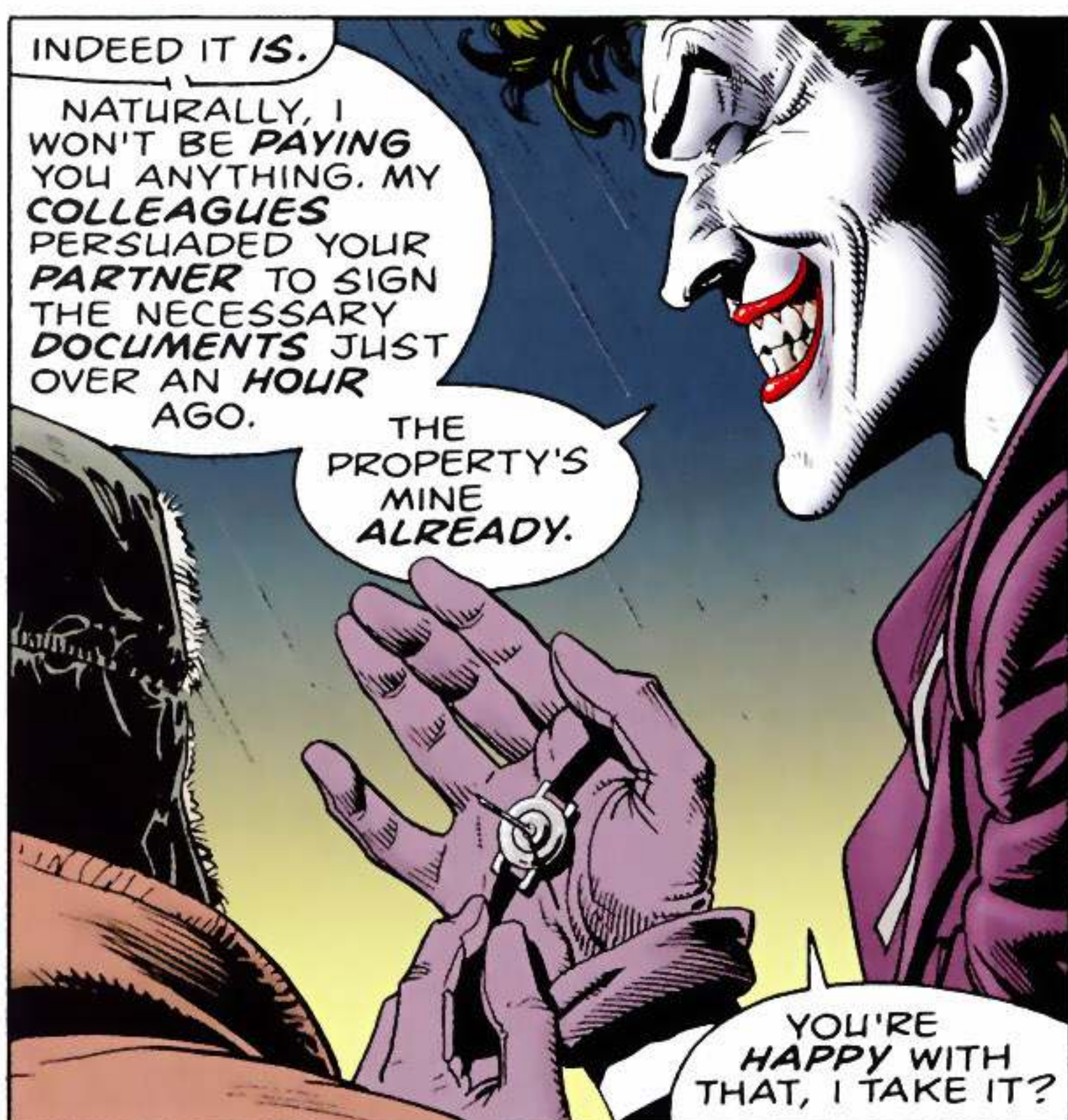
REALLY, THIS COULD BE ONE **HELL** OF A CARNIVAL.



OH, YOU'RE **SO** RIGHT.

THANKS TO YOUR SMOOTH SALESMANSHIP AND YOUR SILVER TONGUE YOU'VE COMPLETELY **SOLD** ME ON THE PLACE. LET'S **SHAKE** ON IT.

UH... WELL, SURE. IT'S MY **PRIVILEGE...**

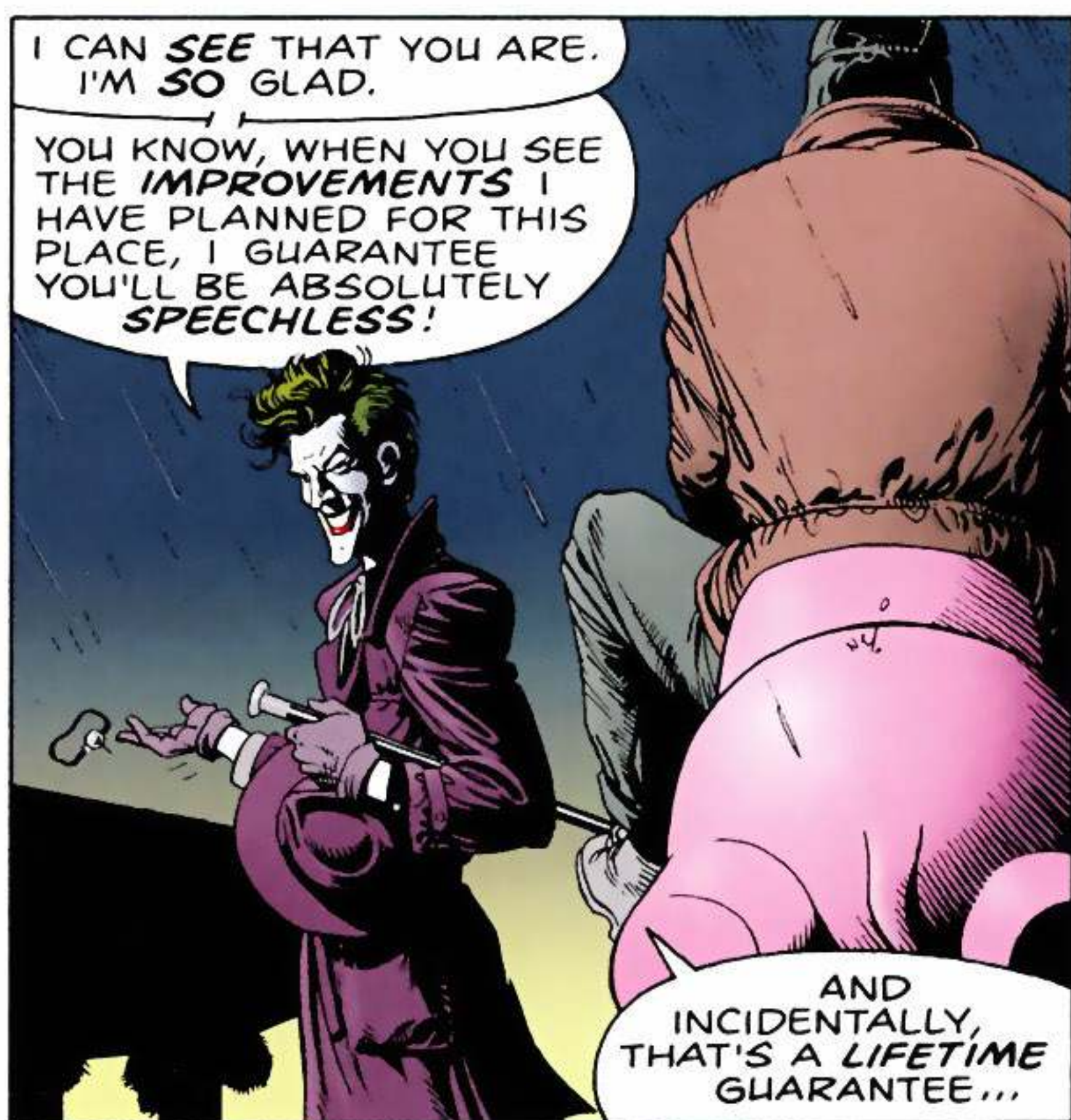


INDEED IT **IS**.

NATURALLY, I WON'T BE **PAYING** YOU ANYTHING. MY **COLLEAGUES** PERSUADED YOUR **PARTNER** TO SIGN THE NECESSARY **DOCUMENTS** JUST OVER AN **HOUR** AGO.

THE PROPERTY'S MINE **ALREADY**.

YOU'RE **HAPPY** WITH THAT, I TAKE IT?



I CAN **SEE** THAT YOU ARE. I'M **SO** GLAD.

YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU SEE THE **IMPROVEMENTS** I HAVE PLANNED FOR THIS PLACE, I GUARANTEE YOU'LL BE ABSOLUTELY **SPEECHLESS!**

AND INCIDENTALLY, THAT'S A **LIFETIME** GUARANTEE...

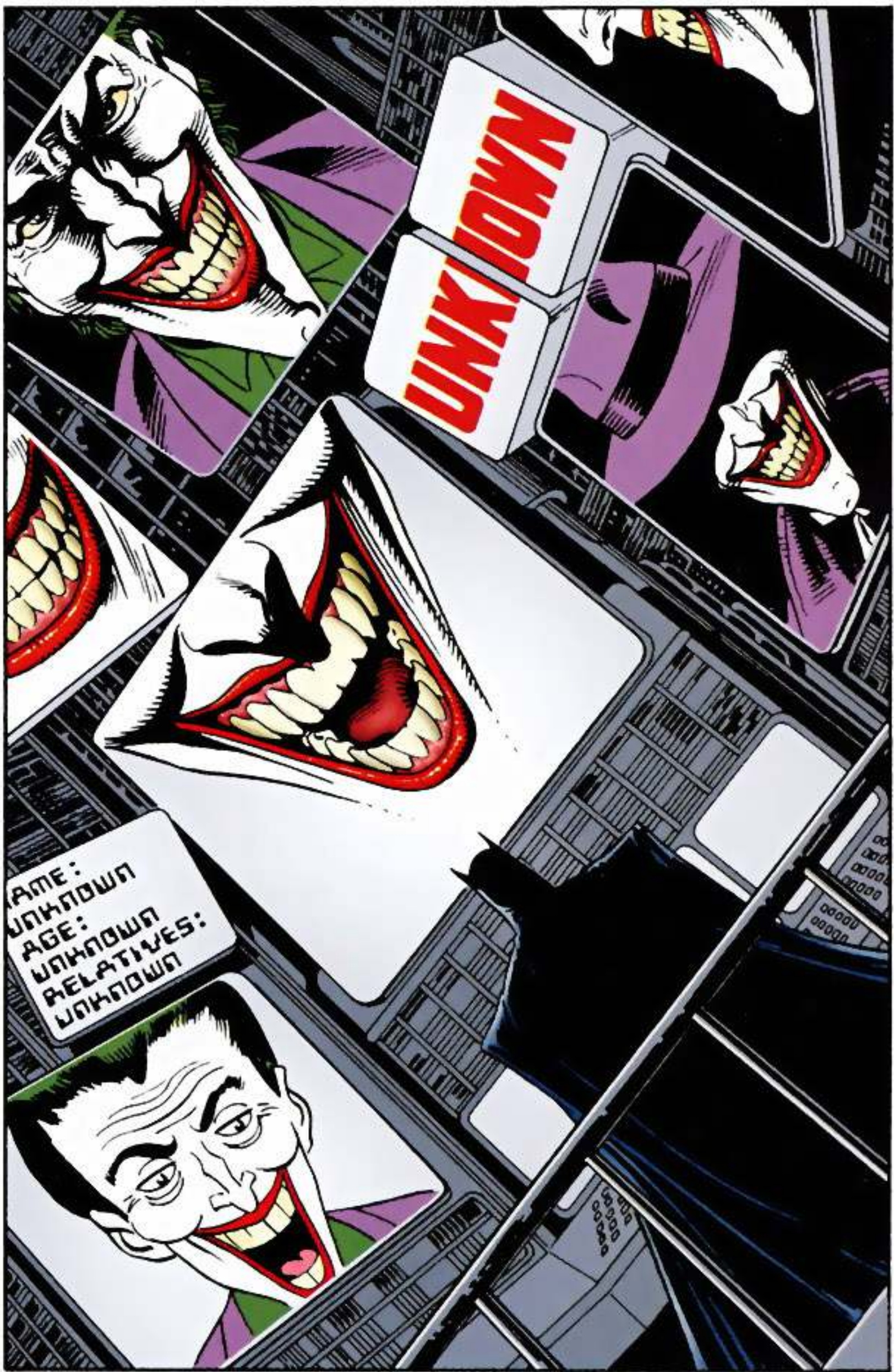
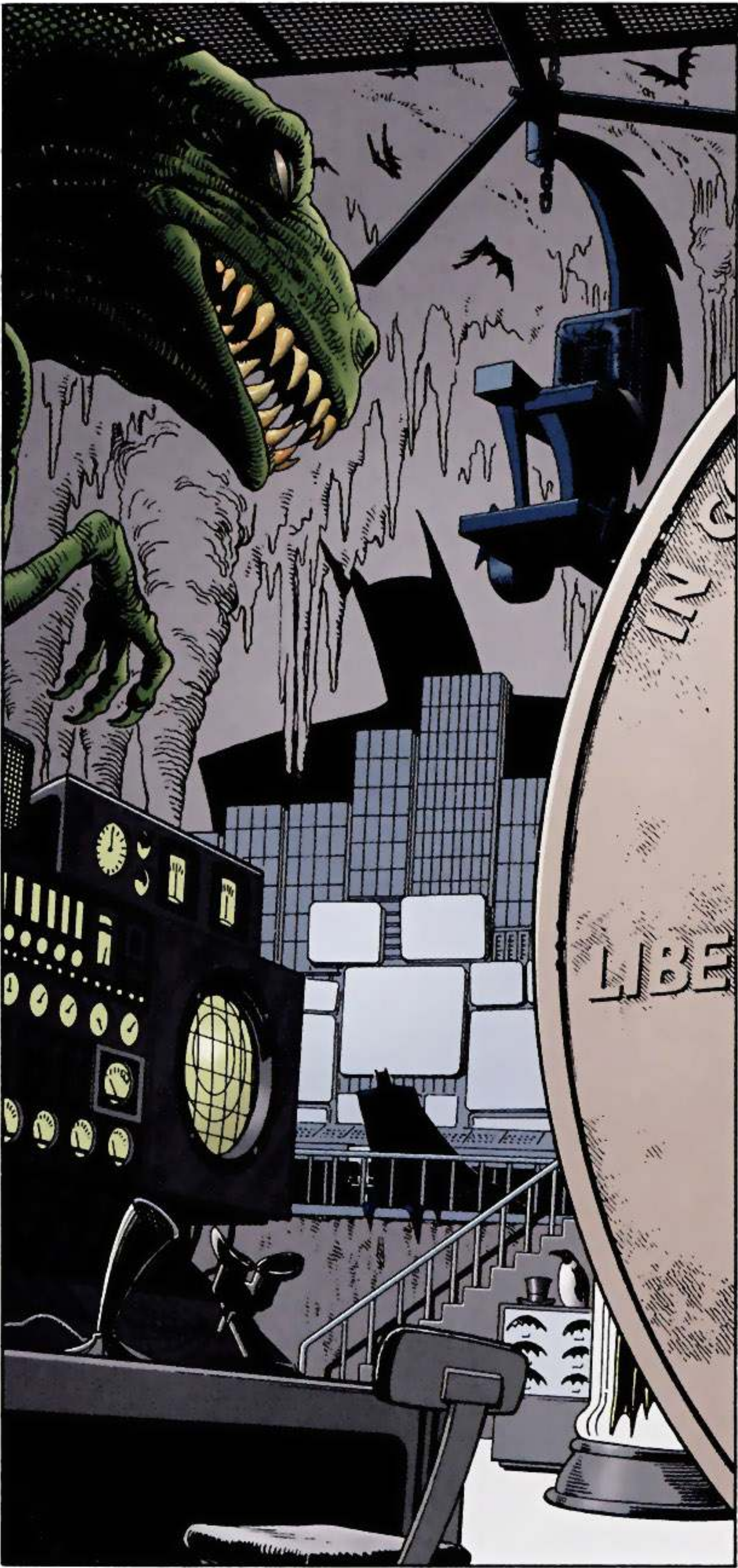


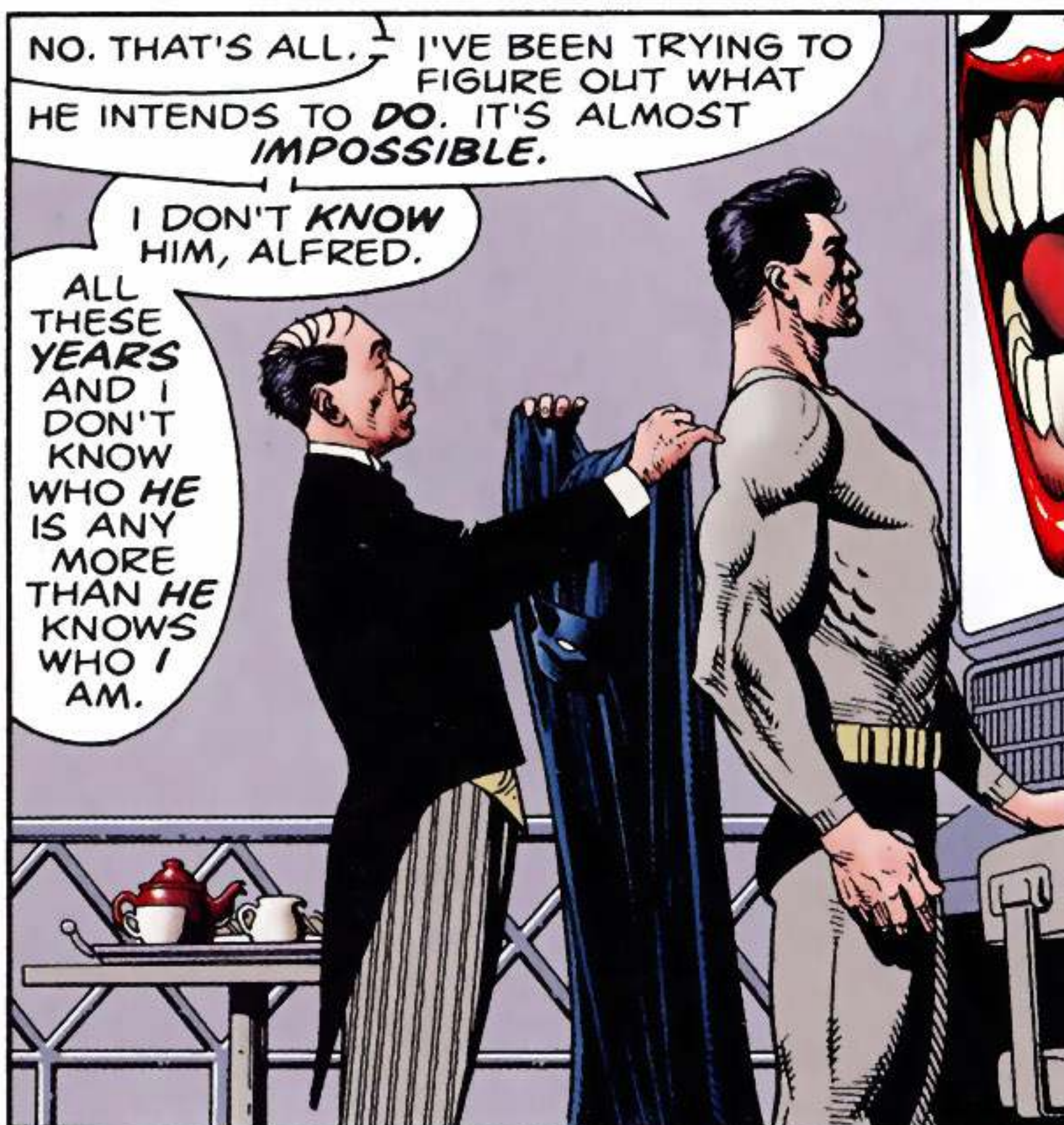
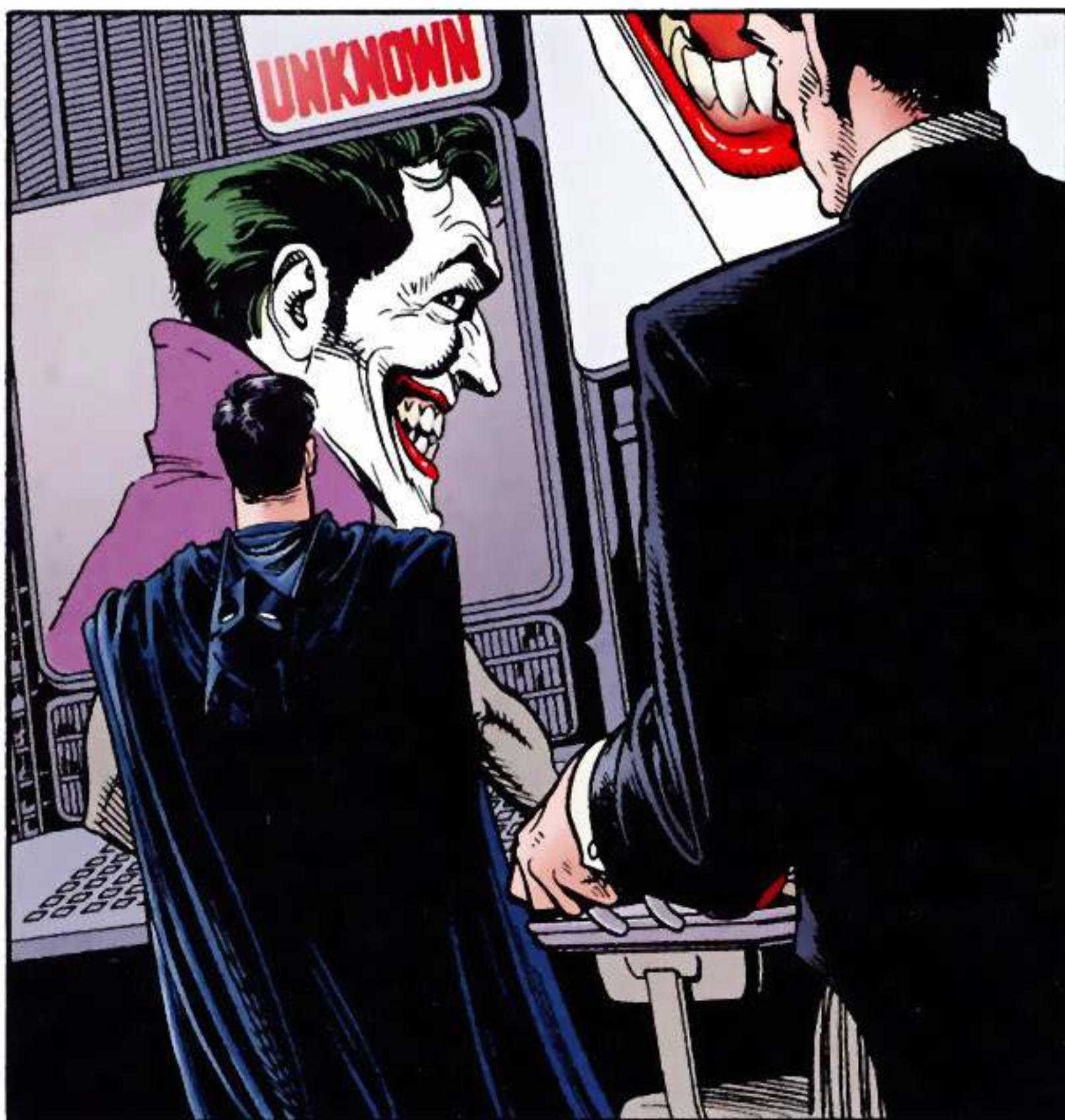
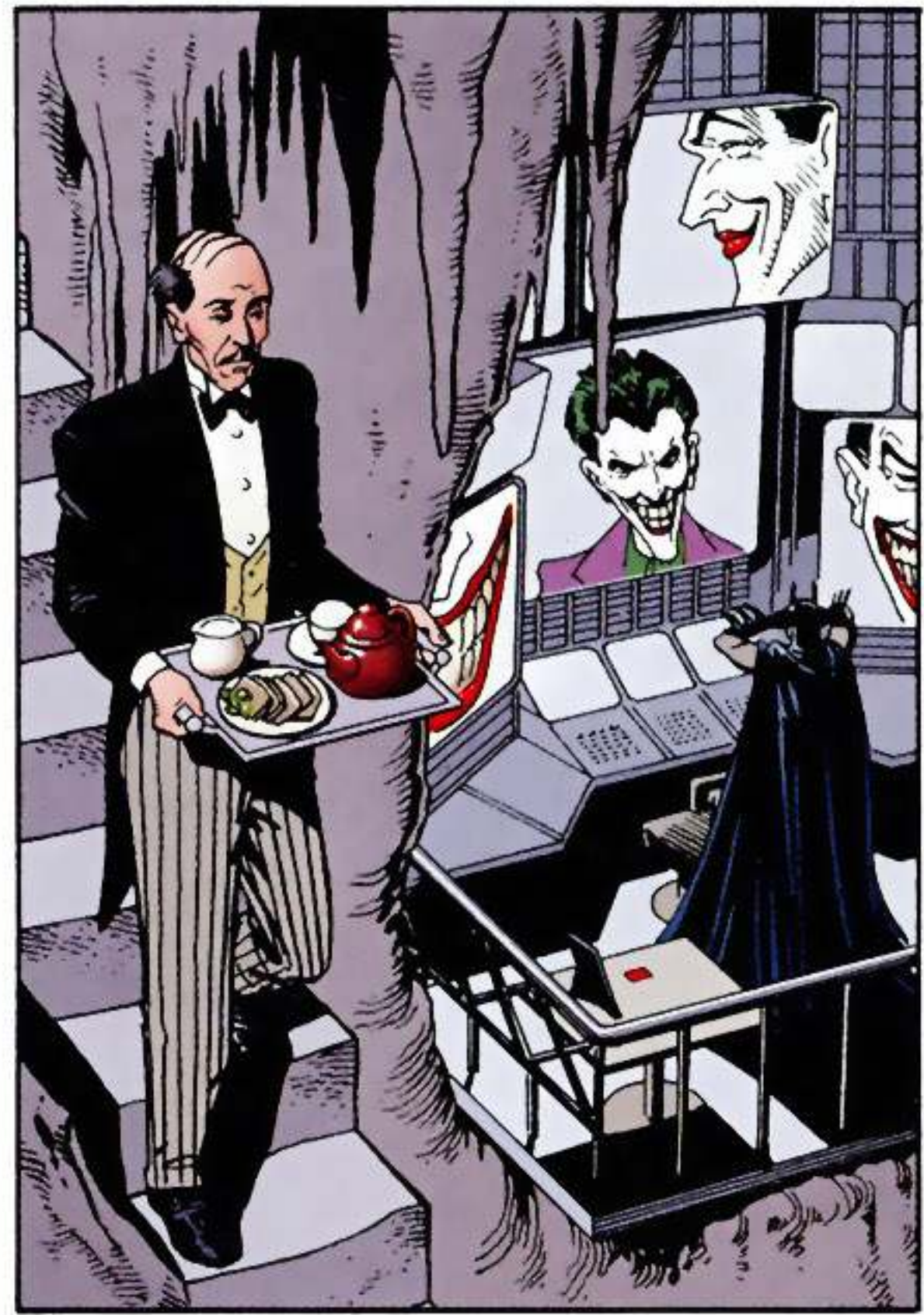
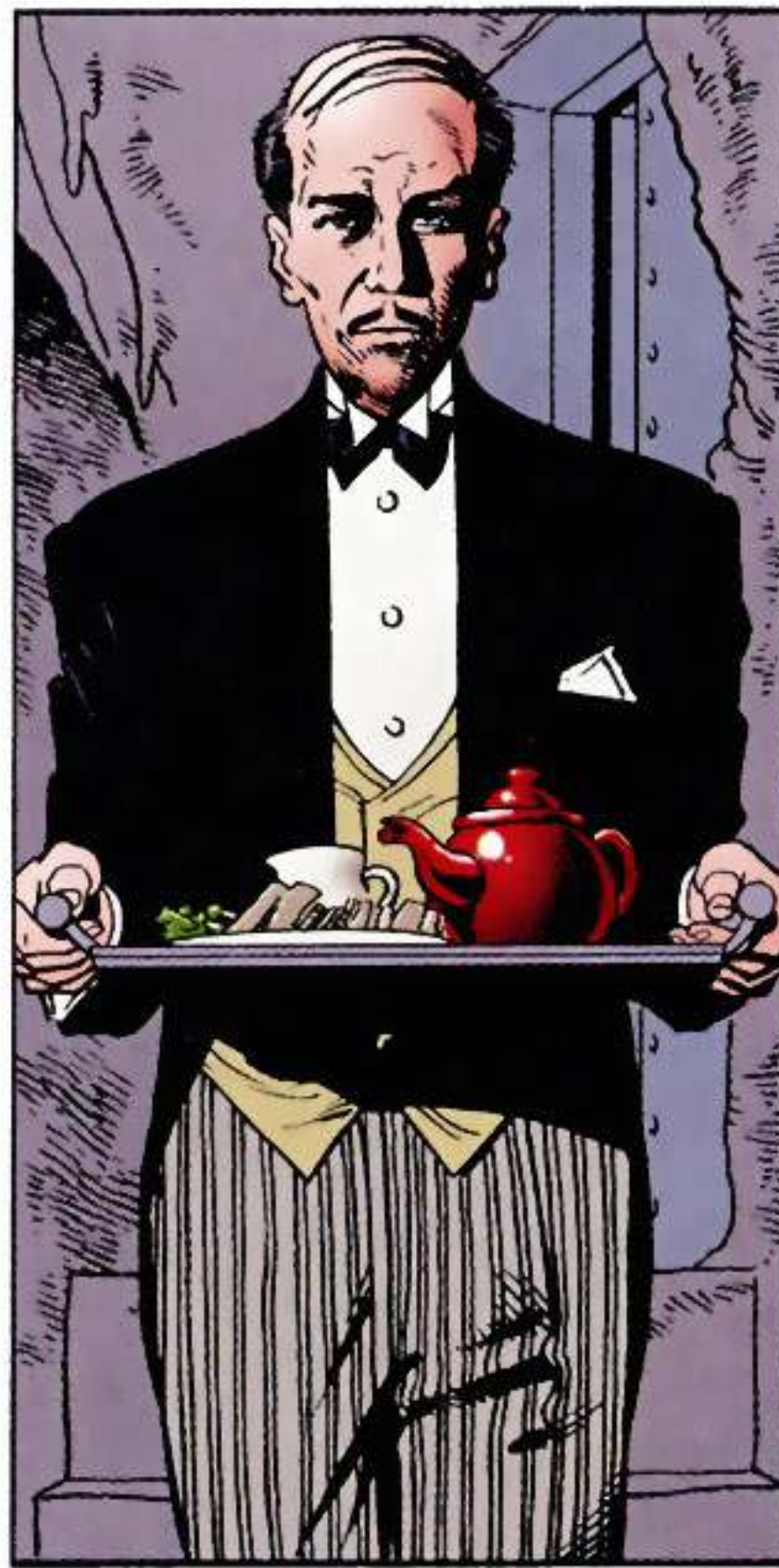
WELL, I MUST **DASH**. THERE'S **EQUIPMENT** TO HIRE, PLUS **WORKERS** WHO'LL SUIT THE GENERAL **TONE** OF THE ESTABLISHMENT...

... AND THEN, OF COURSE, I'VE YET TO SECURE MY **MAIN** ATTRACTION.

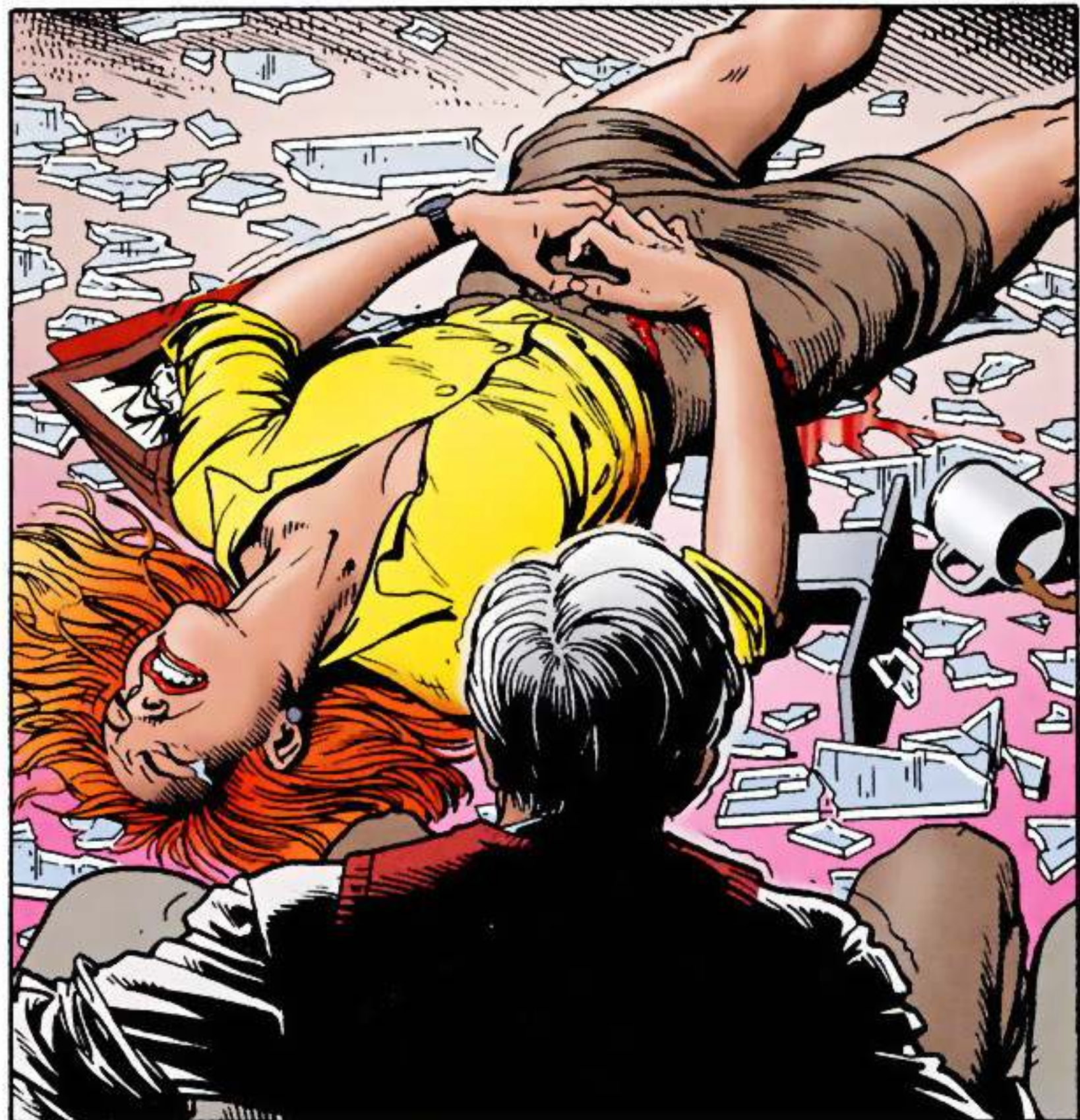
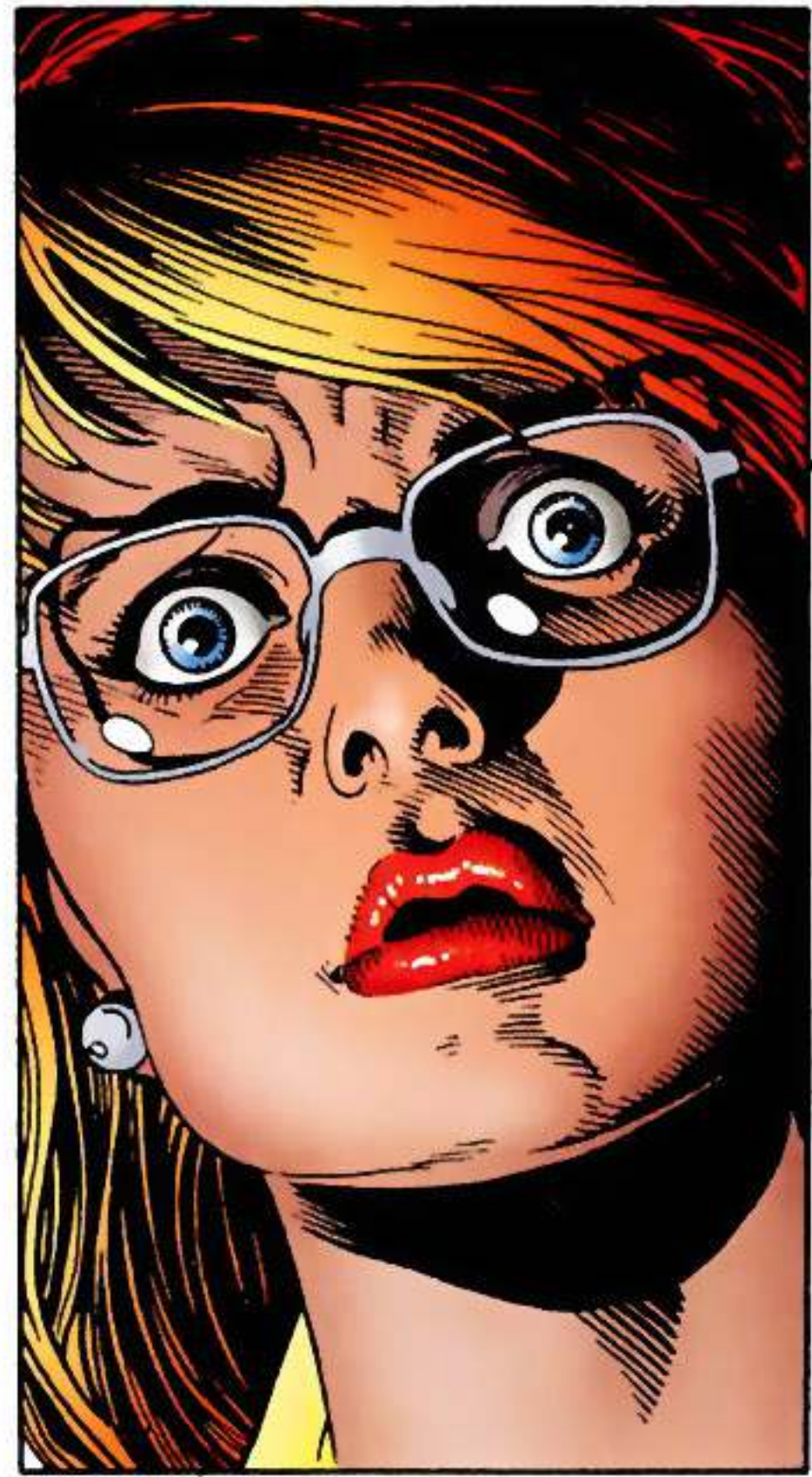
DO FEEL FREE TO STICK **AROUND**.

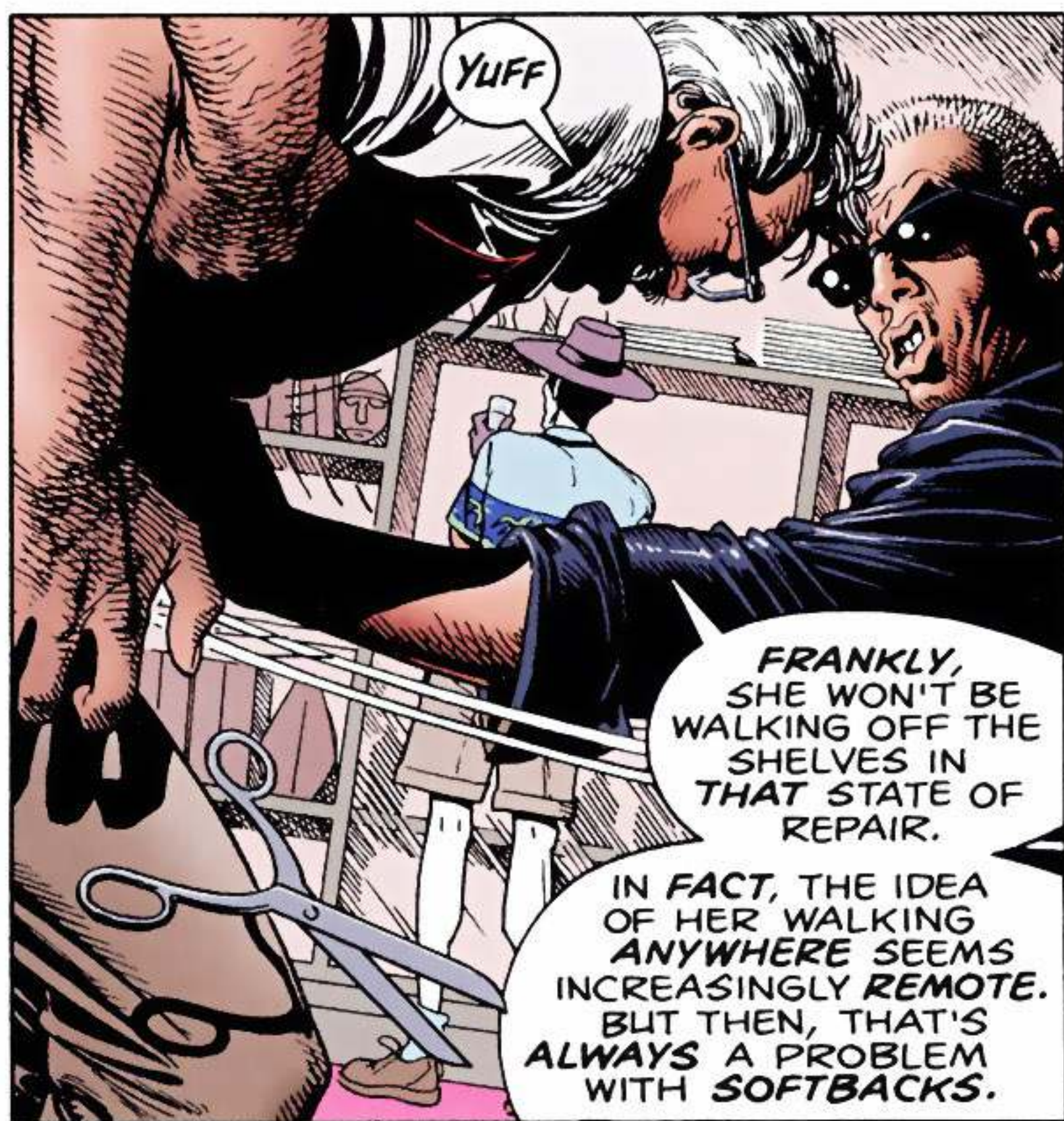
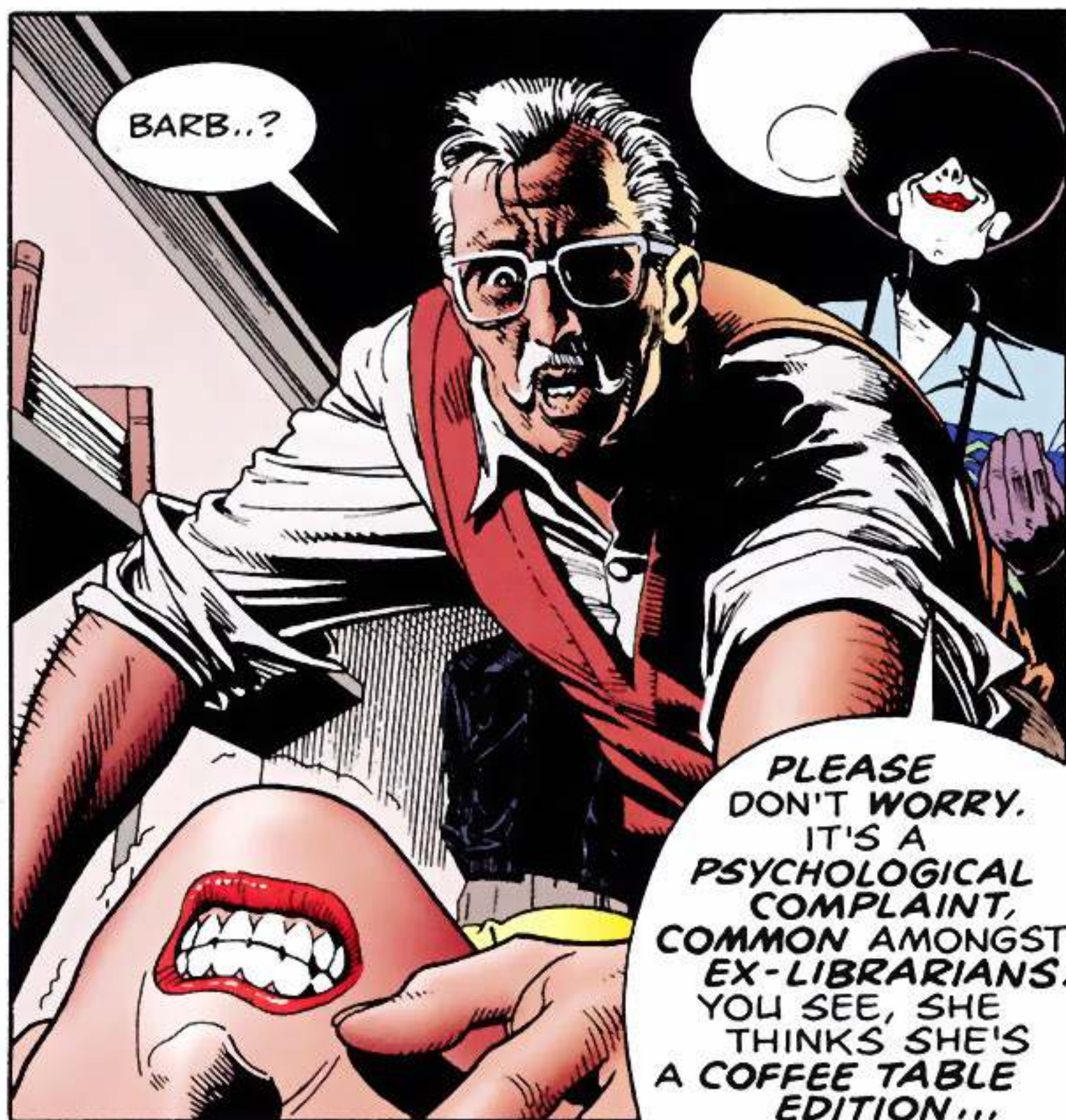




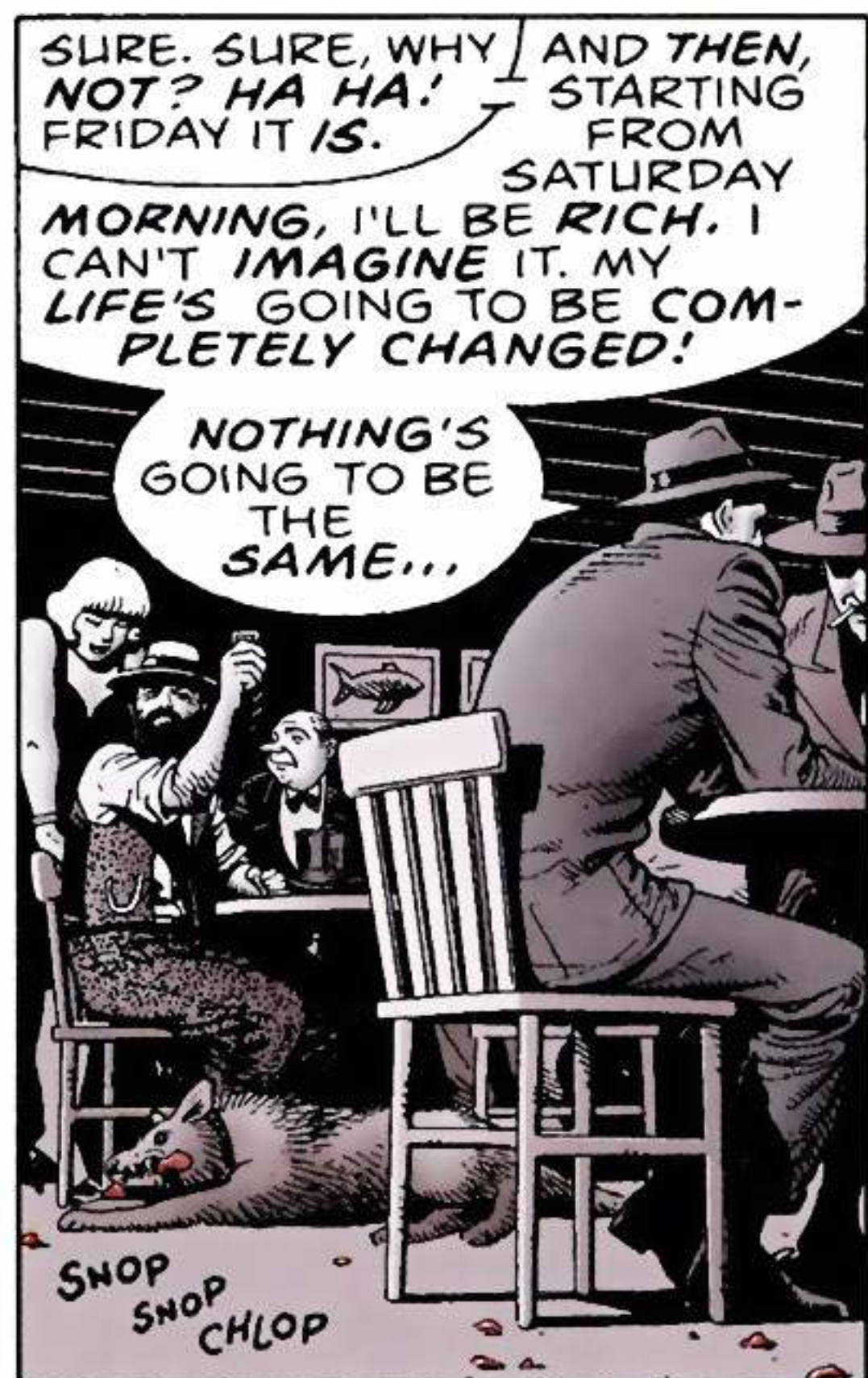
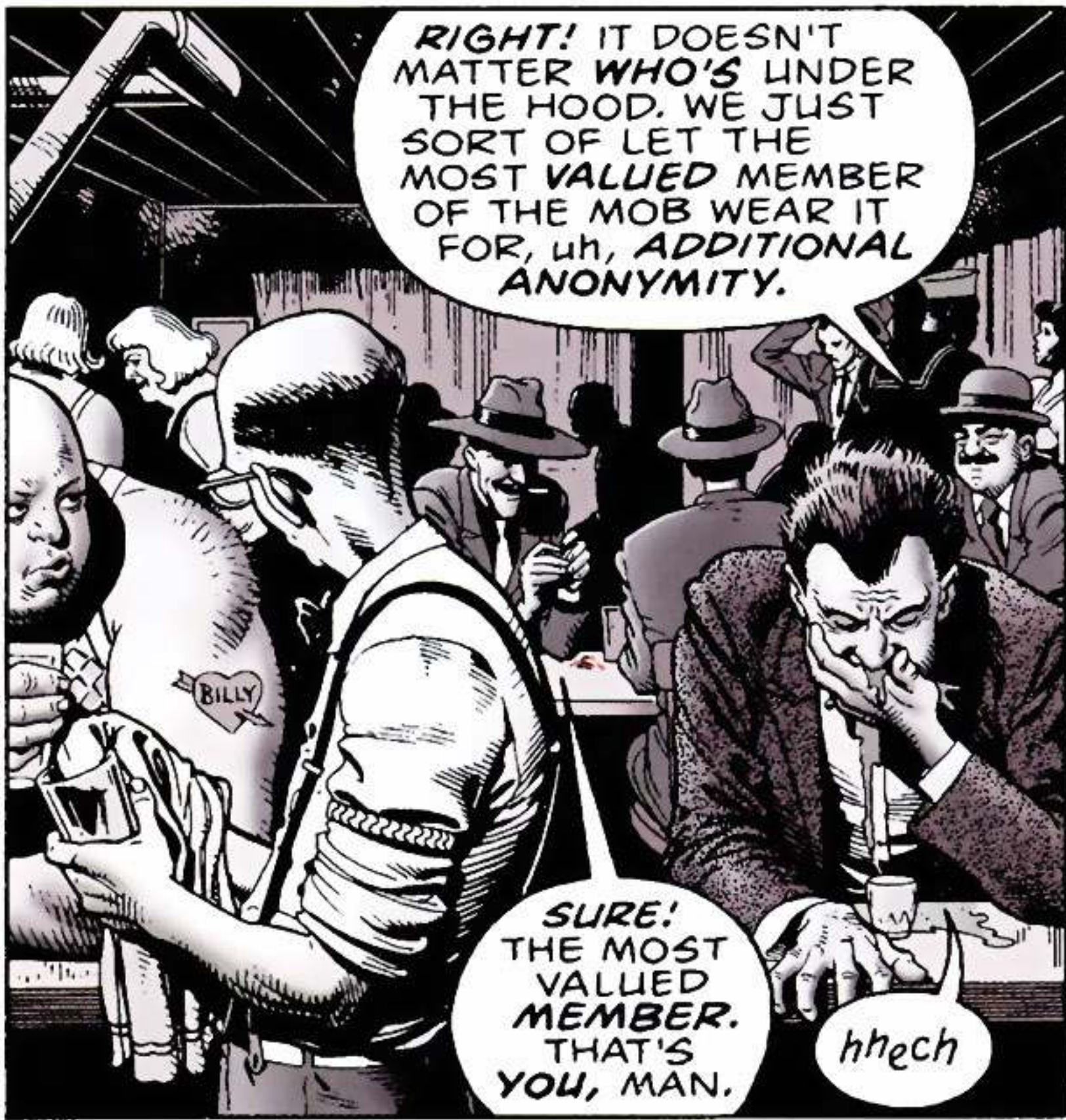
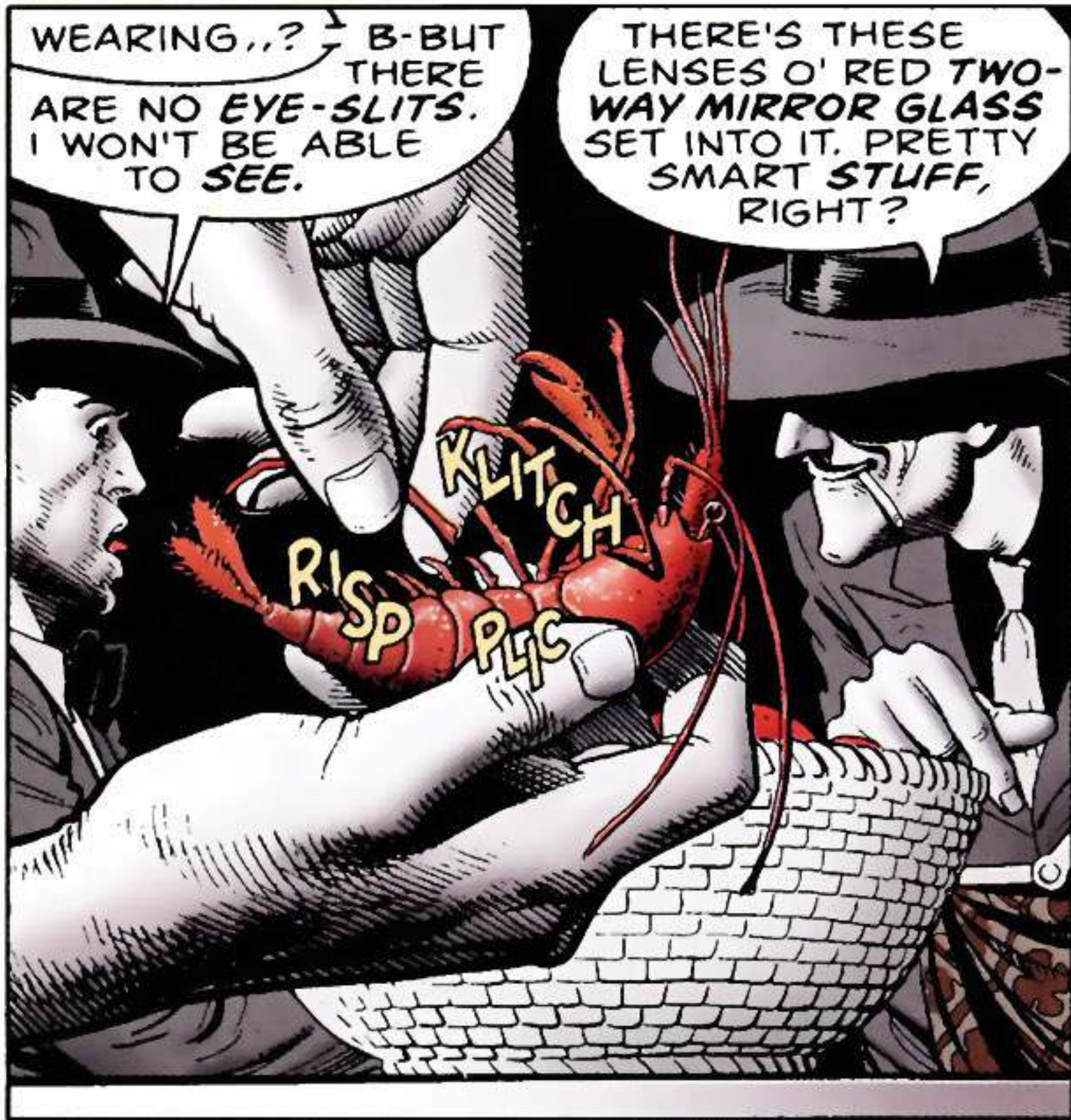


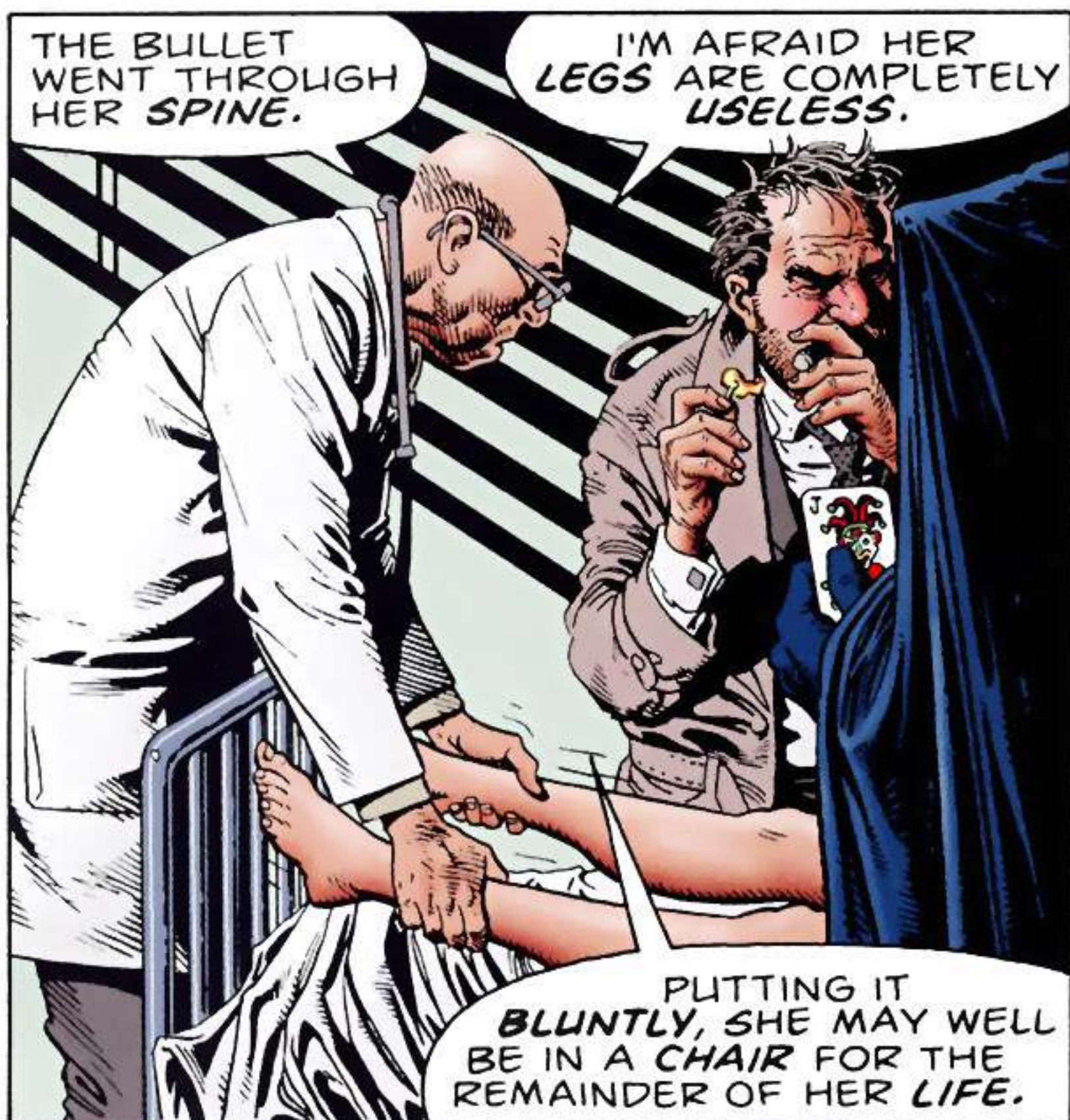








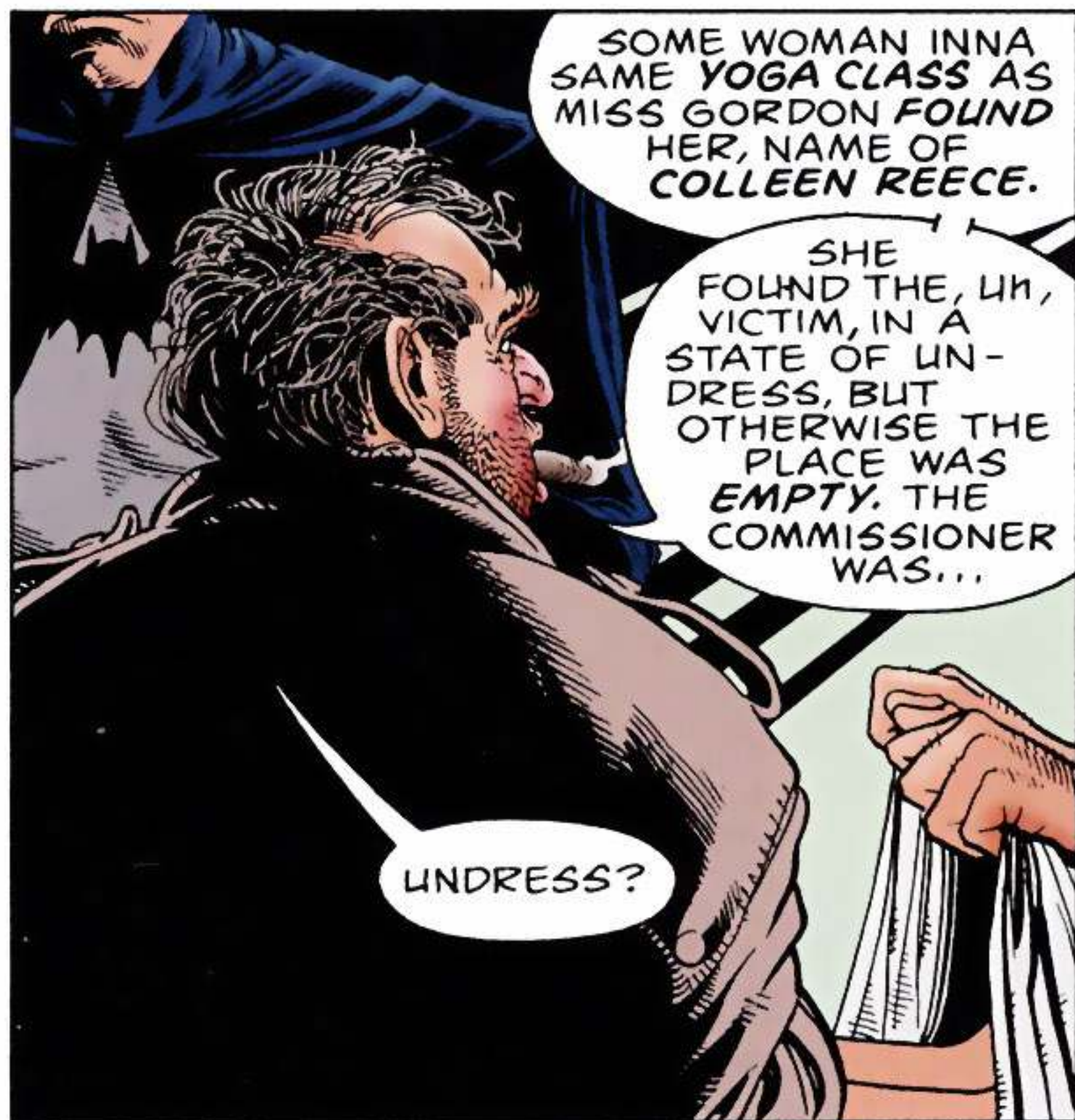




THE BULLET WENT THROUGH HER *SPINE*.

I'M AFRAID HER *LEGS* ARE COMPLETELY *USELESS*.

PUTTING IT *BLUNTLY*, SHE MAY WELL BE IN A *CHAIR* FOR THE REMAINDER OF HER *LIFE*.



SOME WOMAN INNA SAME *YOGA CLASS* AS MISS GORDON FOUND HER, NAME OF *COLLEEN REECE*.

SHE FOUND THE, UH, VICTIM, IN A STATE OF UN-*DRESS*, BUT OTHERWISE THE PLACE WAS *EMPTY*. THE COMMISSIONER WAS...

UNDRESS?



THEY DIDN'T *TELL* YOU? HE'D REMOVED HER *CLOTHING* AFTER *SHOOTING* HER. WE, UH...

WELL, WE FOUND A *LENS-CAP* ON THE FLOOR THAT DIDN'T FIT ANY CAMERA IN THE PLACE. WE BELIEVE THAT, UHH...



WELL, THAT HE TOOK SOME *PICTURES*.

OF HER.

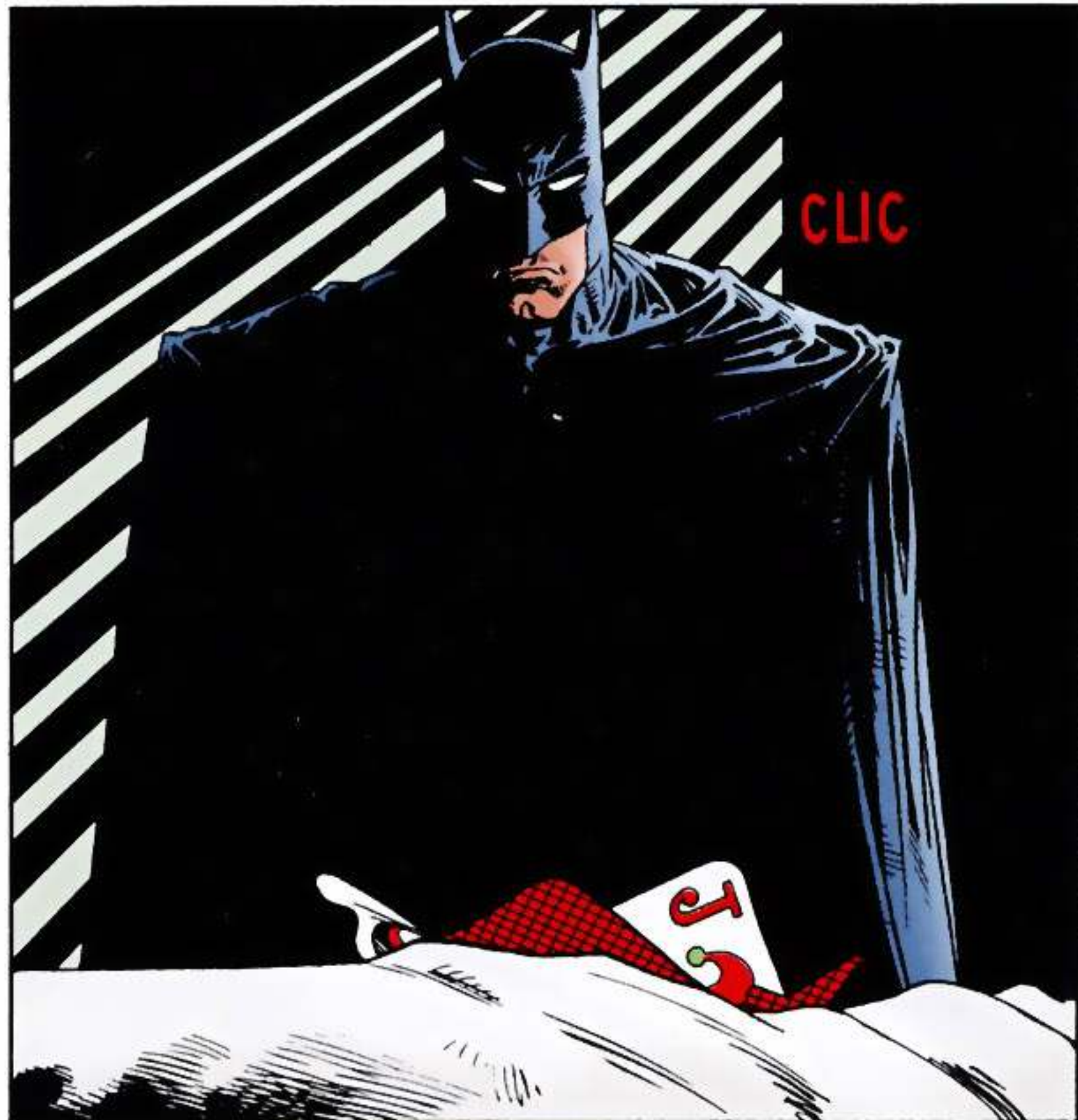
JEEZ, LOOK, REALLY, I'M *SORRY*. I THOUGHT YOU *KNEW*. IT'S PRETTY *SICK*, AIN'T IT?



YES.

PRETTY *SICK*.

PLEASE LEAVE US ALONE FOR A MOMENT.



CLIC



BARBARA?



BARBARA,
CAN YOU HEAR
ME?

IT'S ME.

IT'S
BRUCE.



BRUCE...?



BRUCE... IT
WAS HIM...
TOOK DAD
...H-HE...

OH GOD!
OH GOD, I
REMEMBER!
OH, BRUCE,
WHAT HE
DID...

BARBARA,
TAKE IT EASY.
IT'S OKAY...



NO! NO, IT'S NOT
OKAY! HE'S... HE'S
TAKING IT TO THE
LIMIT THIS
TIME...

YOU
DIDN'T
SEE.

YOU
DIDN'T SEE
HIS EYES.

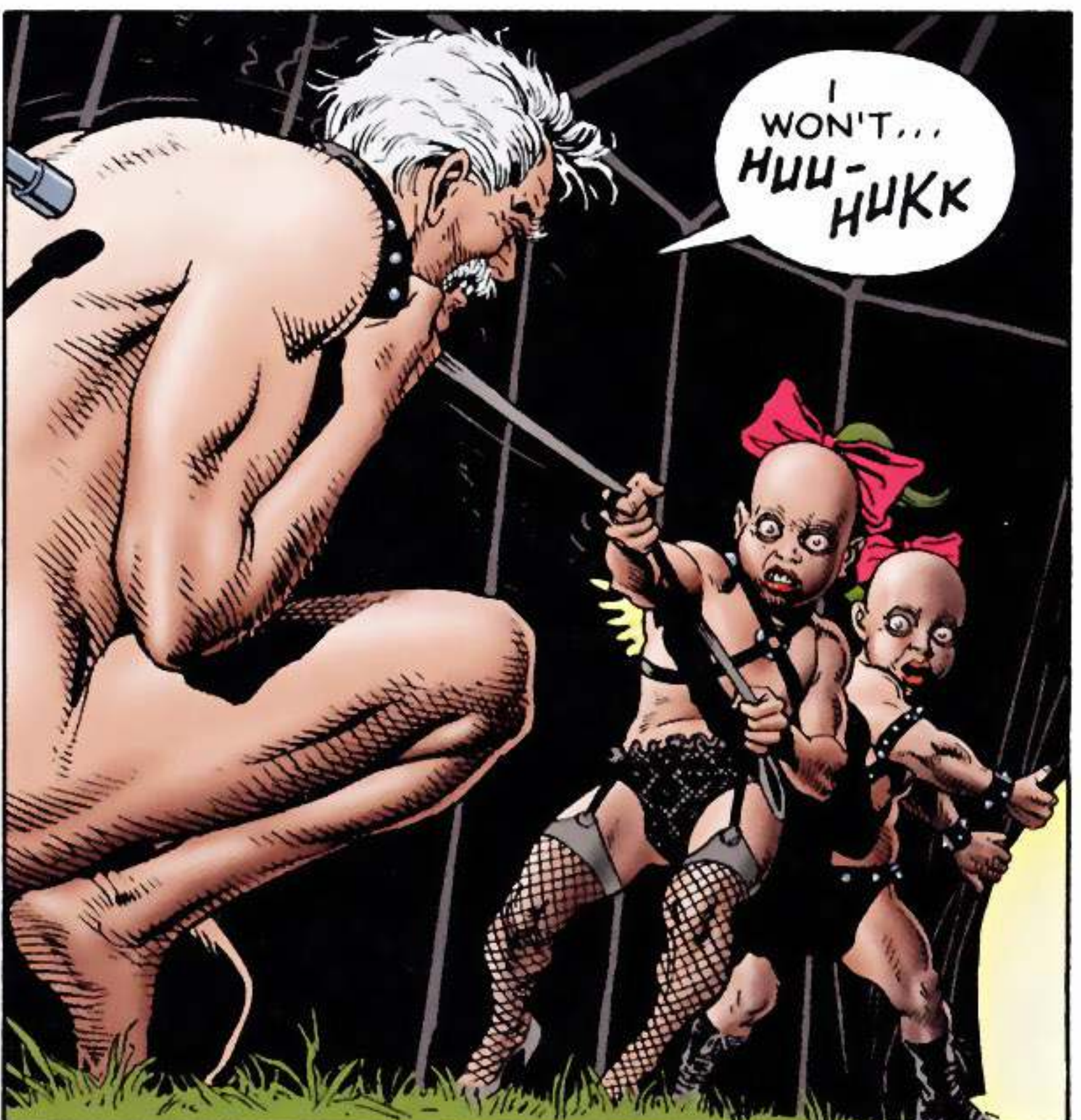
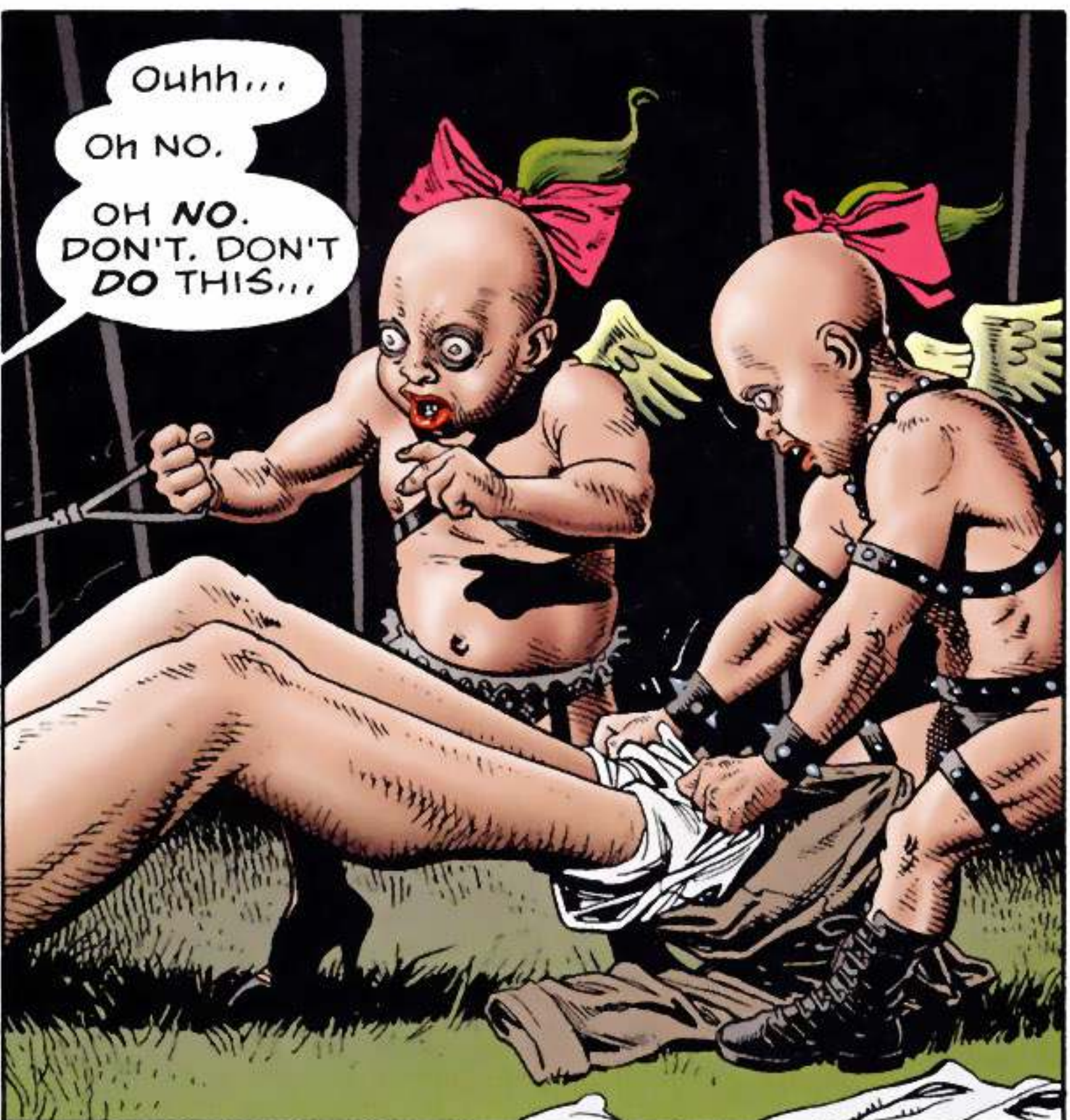


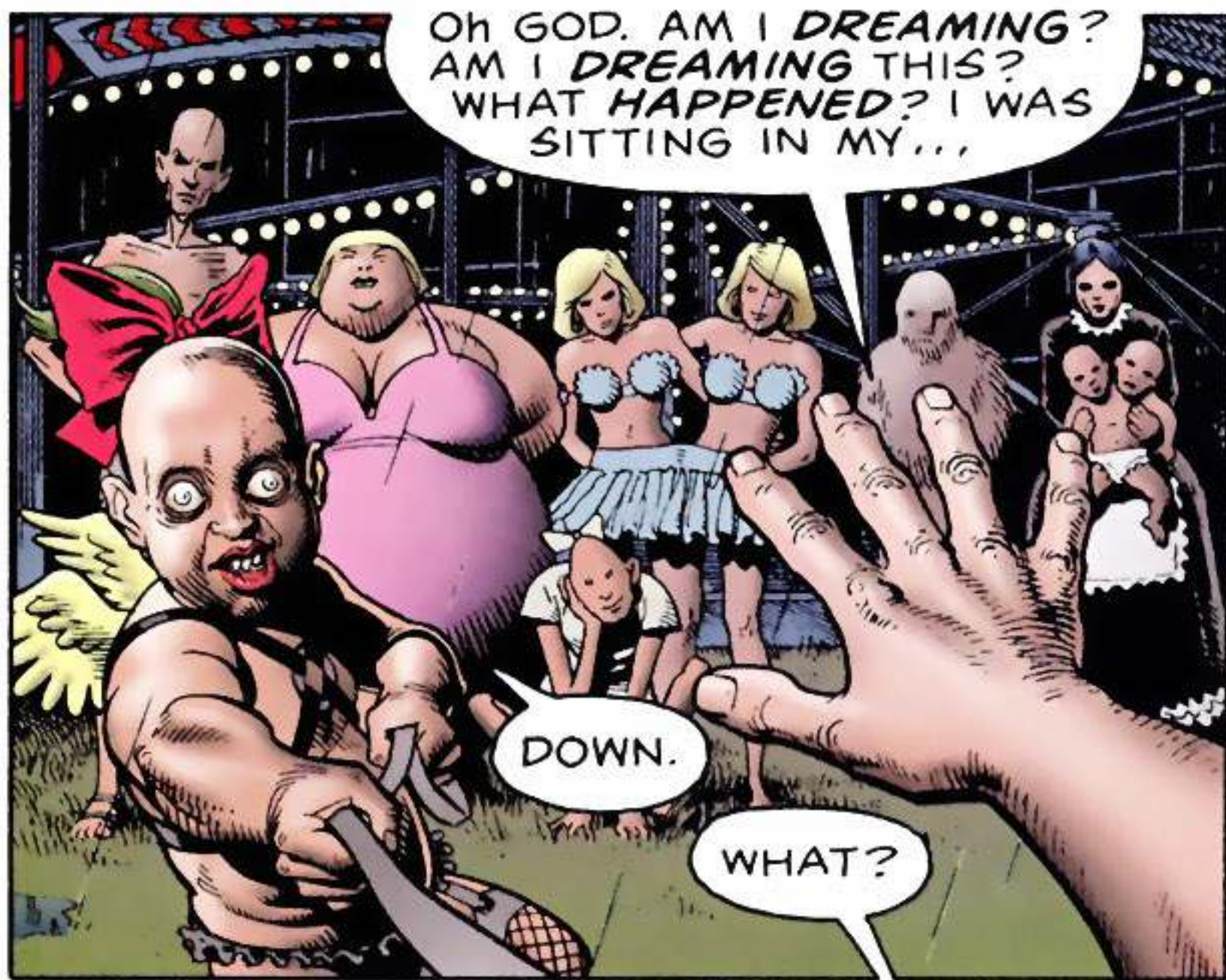
H-HE SAID
HE WANTED TO
PUH-PROVE A
POINT... SAID
...DAD WAS...
TOP OF THE
BILL...

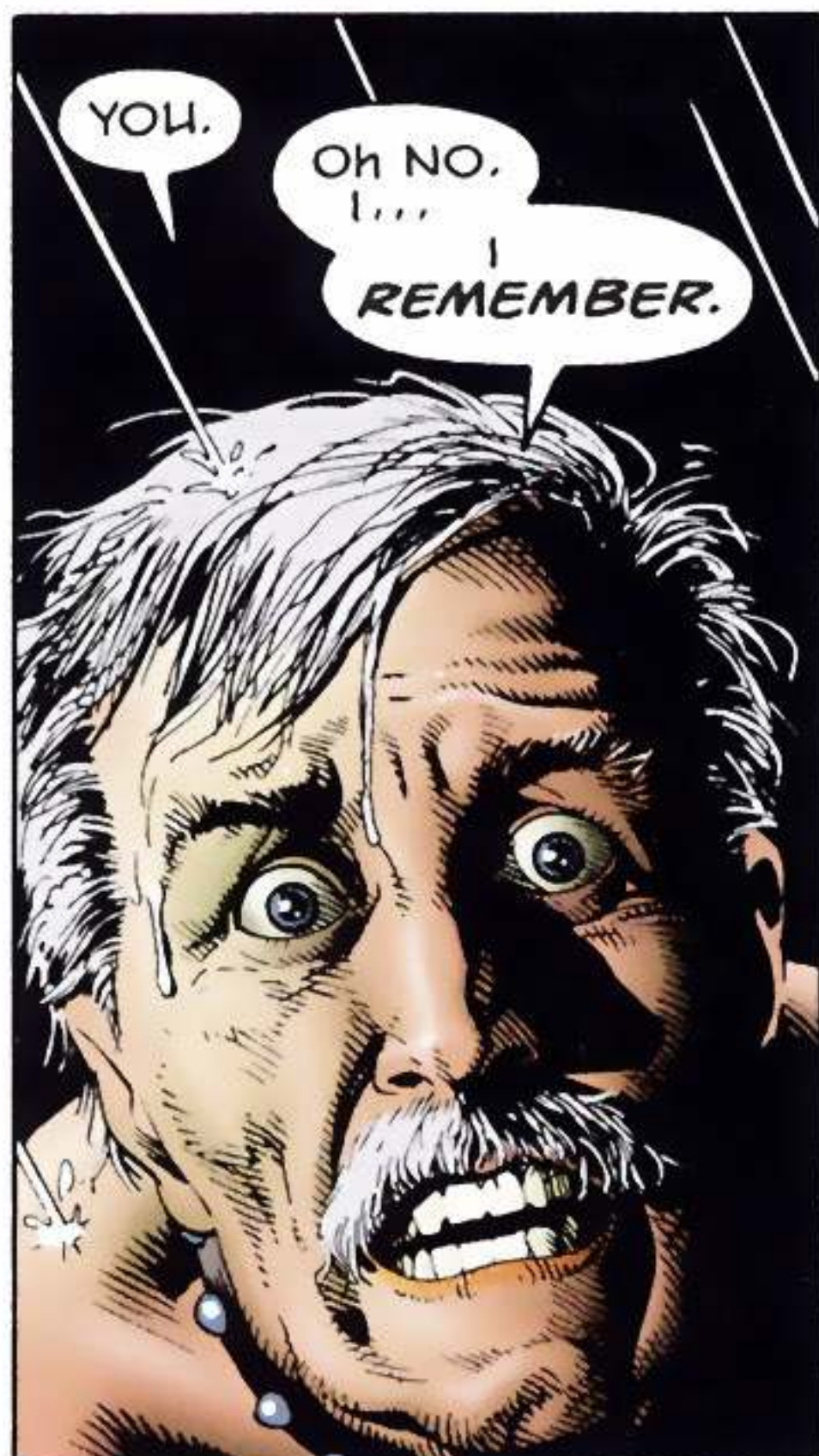
WH-WHAT'S
HE DOING TO
HIM, BRUCE?



WHAT'S
HE DOING TO MY
FATHER?



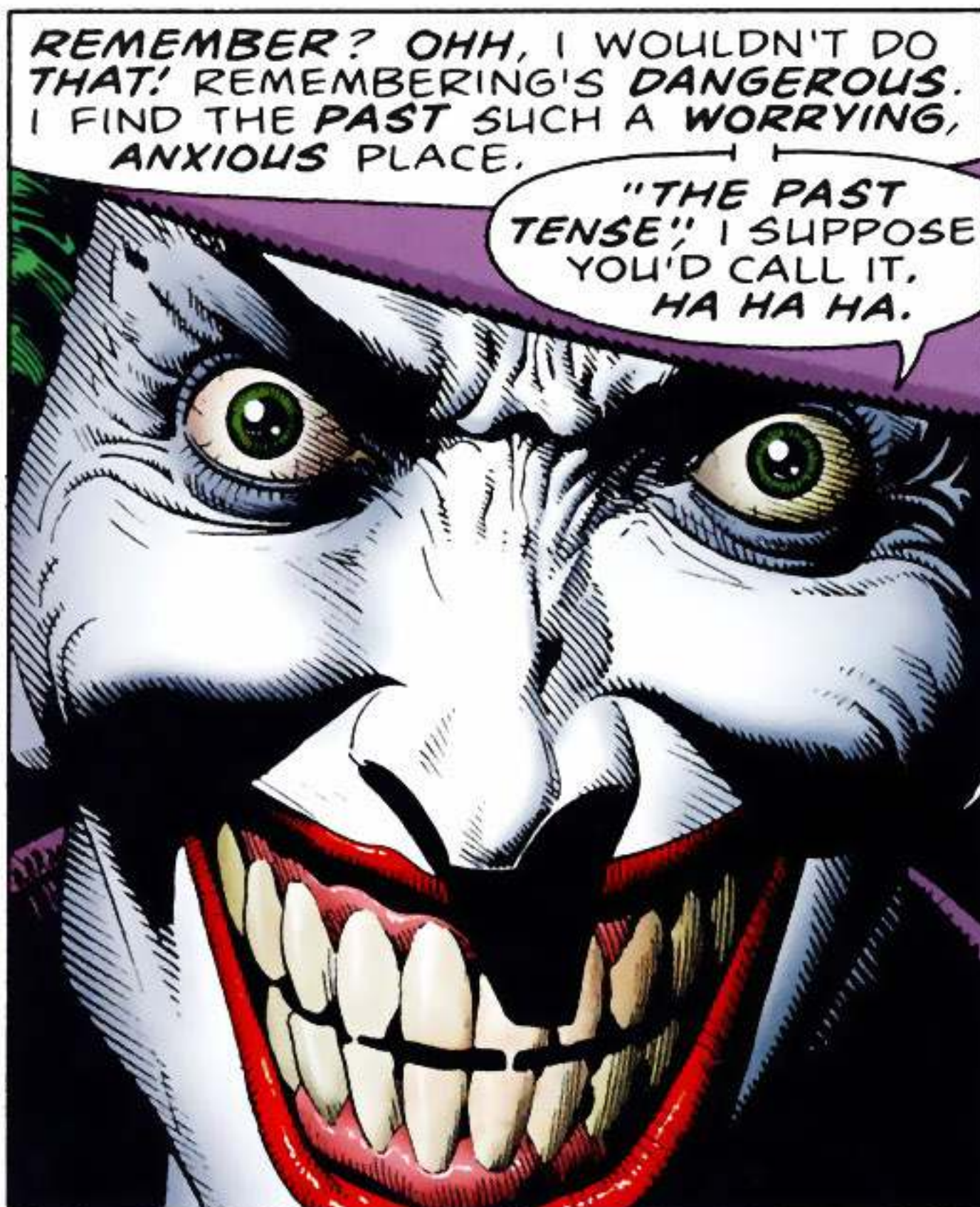




YOU.

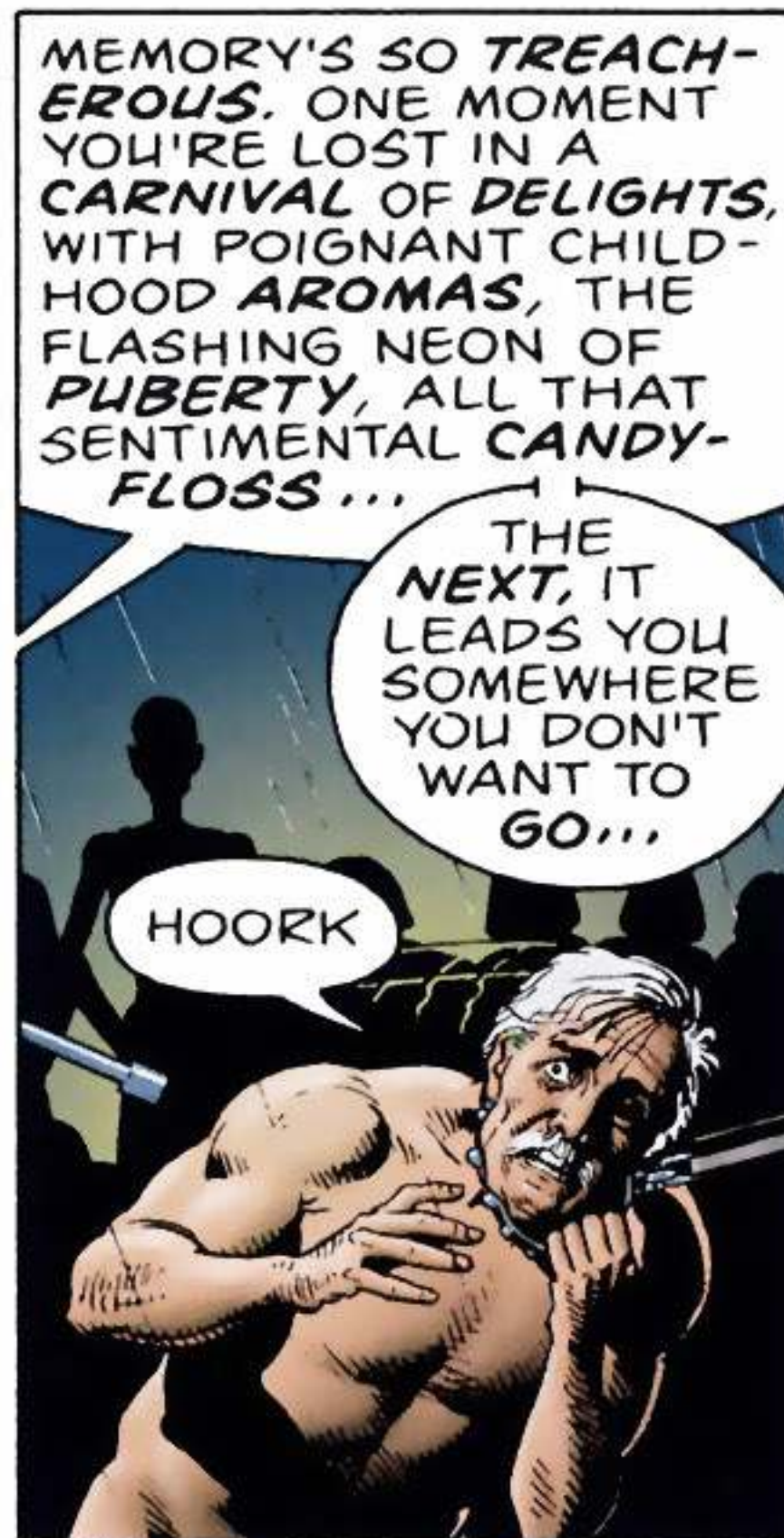
Oh NO.
I...

REMEMBER.



REMEMBER? OHH, I WOULDN'T DO THAT! REMEMBERING'S DANGEROUS. I FIND THE PAST SUCH A WORRYING, ANXIOUS PLACE.

"THE PAST TENSE" I SUPPOSE YOU'D CALL IT. HA HA HA.



MEMORY'S SO TREACHEROUS. ONE MOMENT YOU'RE LOST IN A CARNIVAL OF DELIGHTS, WITH POIGNANT CHILDHOOD AROMAS, THE FLASHING NEON OF PUBERTY, ALL THAT SENTIMENTAL CANDY-FLOSS...

THE NEXT, IT LEADS YOU SOMEWHERE YOU DON'T WANT TO GO...

HOORK



... SOMEWHERE DARK AND COLD, FILLED WITH THE DAMP, AMBIGUOUS SHAPES OF THINGS YOU'D HOPED WERE FORGOTTEN.

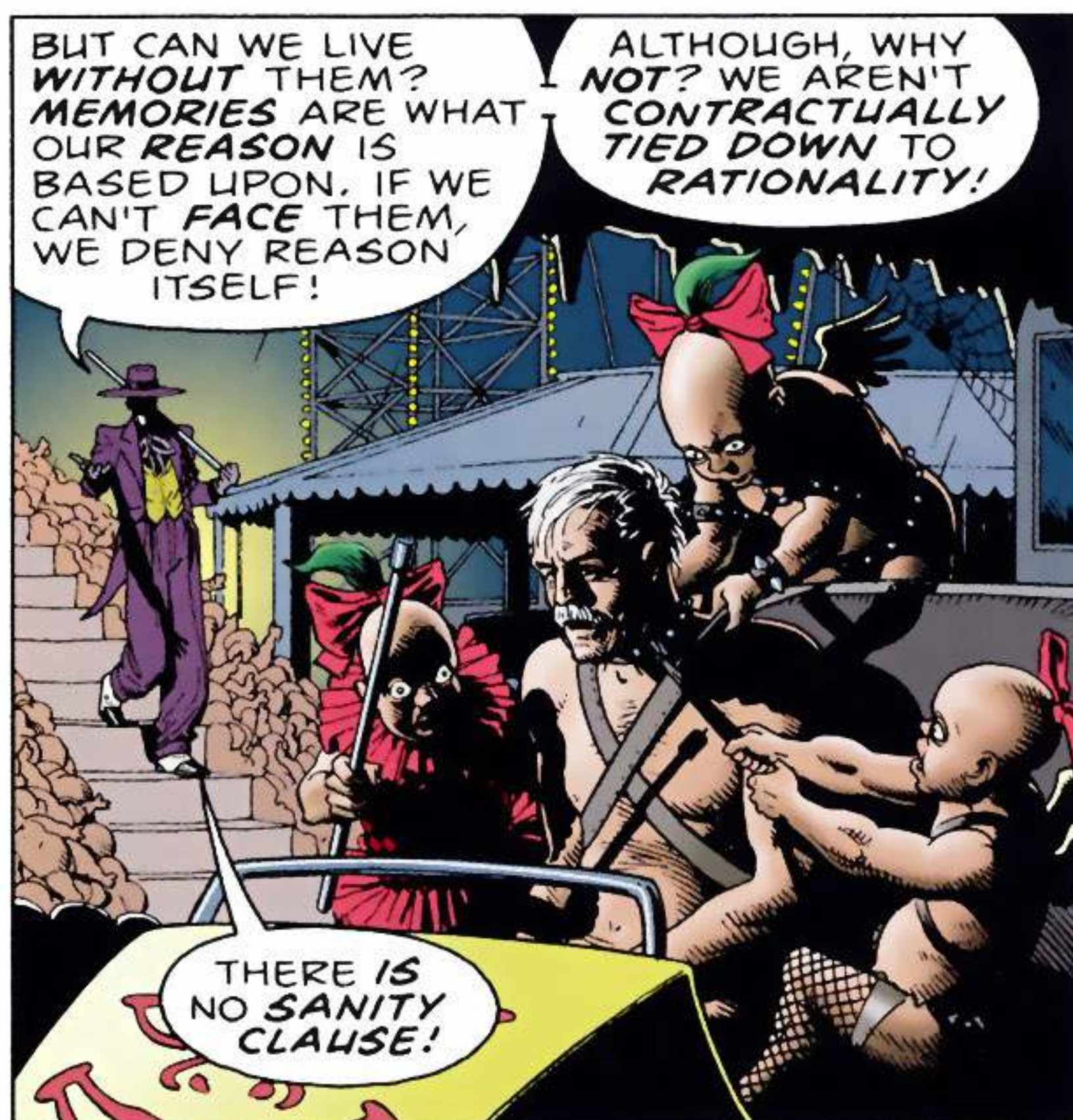
GHOST TRAIN

RANCE

50¢

MEMORIES CAN BE VILE, REPULSIVE LITTLE BRUTES, LIKE CHILDREN, I SUPPOSE. HAHA.

BARBARA. Oh NO. Oh NO...



BUT CAN WE LIVE WITHOUT THEM? MEMORIES ARE WHAT OUR REASON IS BASED UPON. IF WE CAN'T FACE THEM, WE DENY REASON ITSELF!

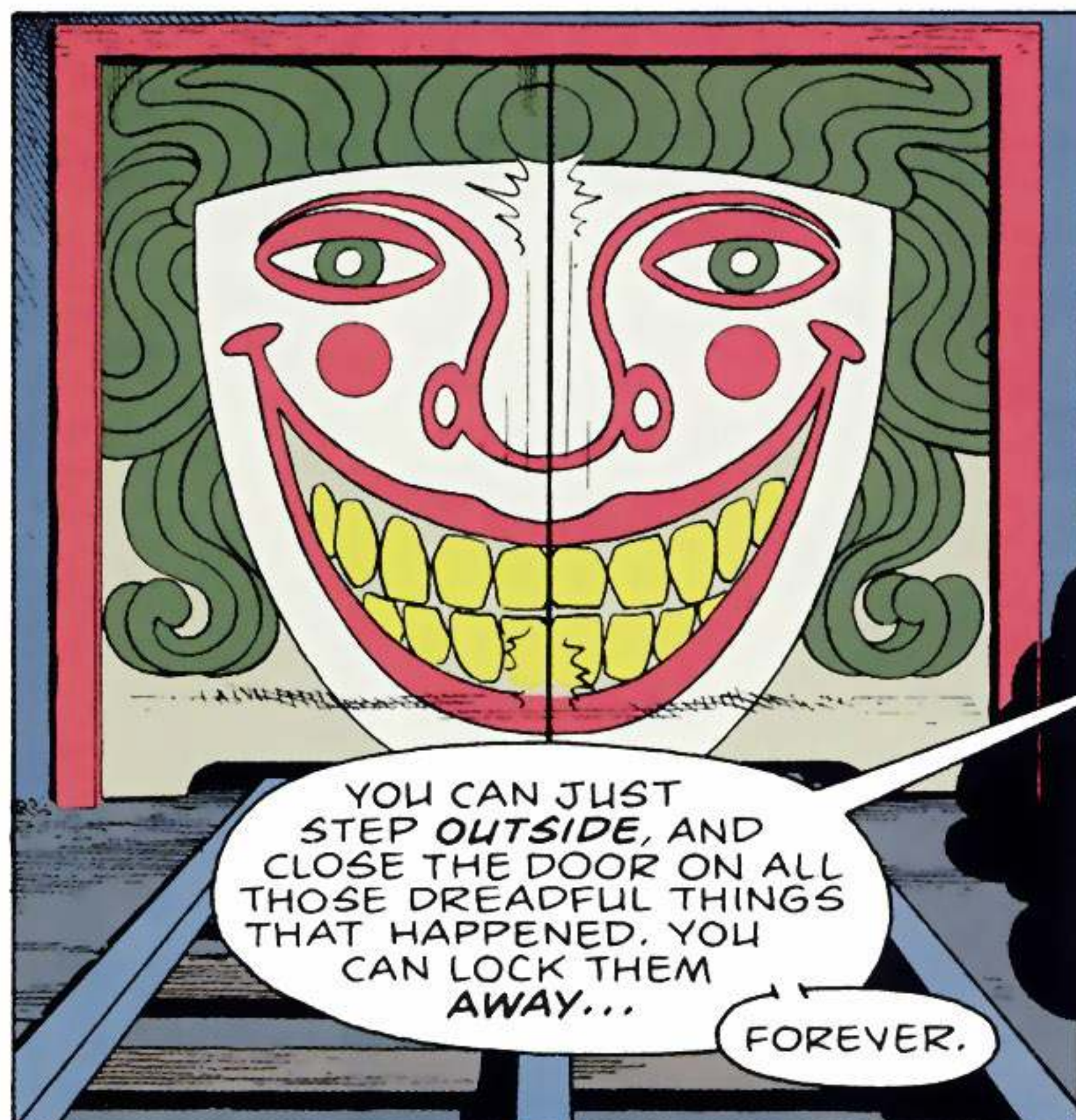
ALTHOUGH, WHY NOT? WE AREN'T CONTRACTUALLY TIED DOWN TO RATIONALITY!

THERE IS NO SANITY CLAUSE!



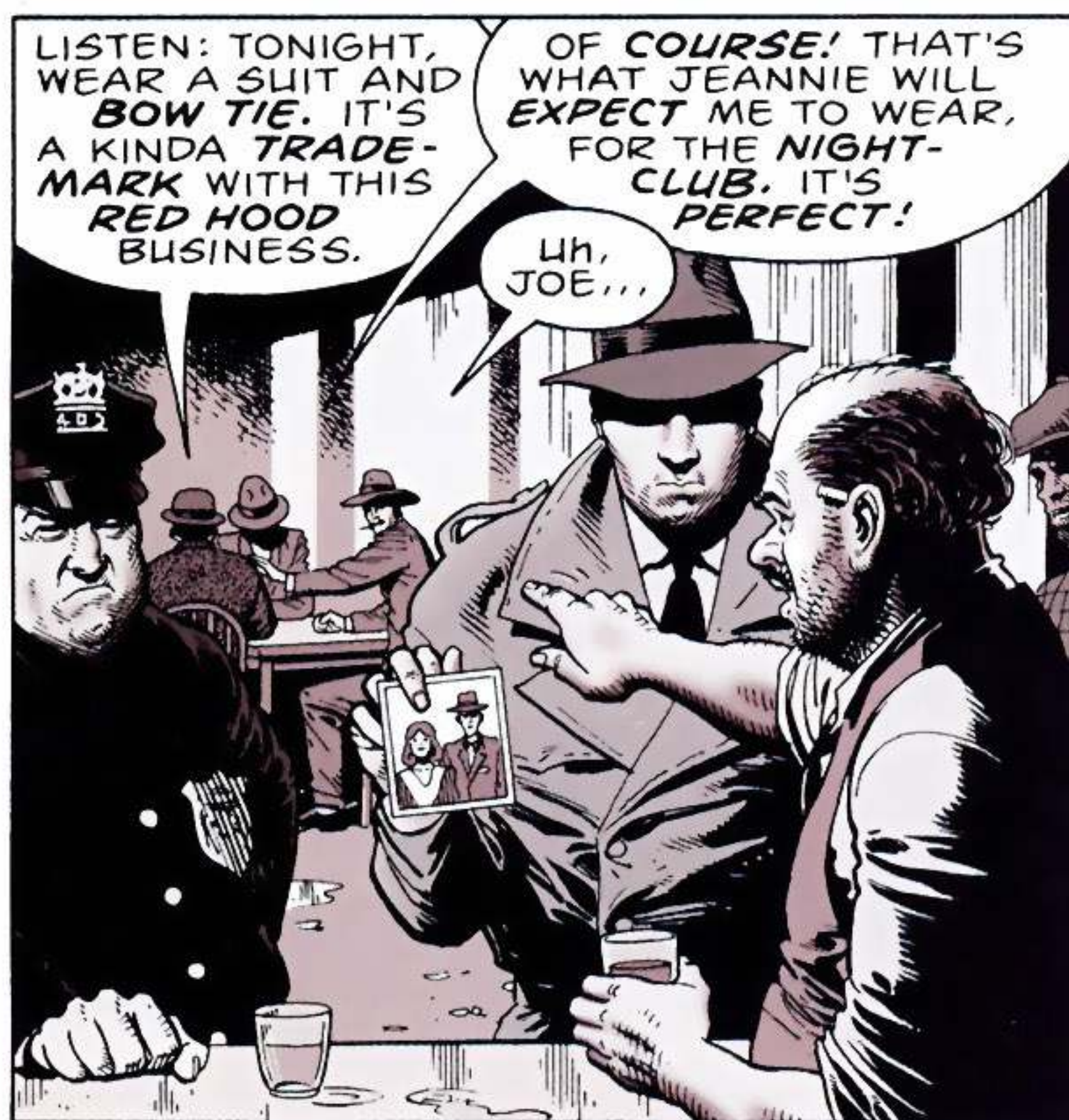
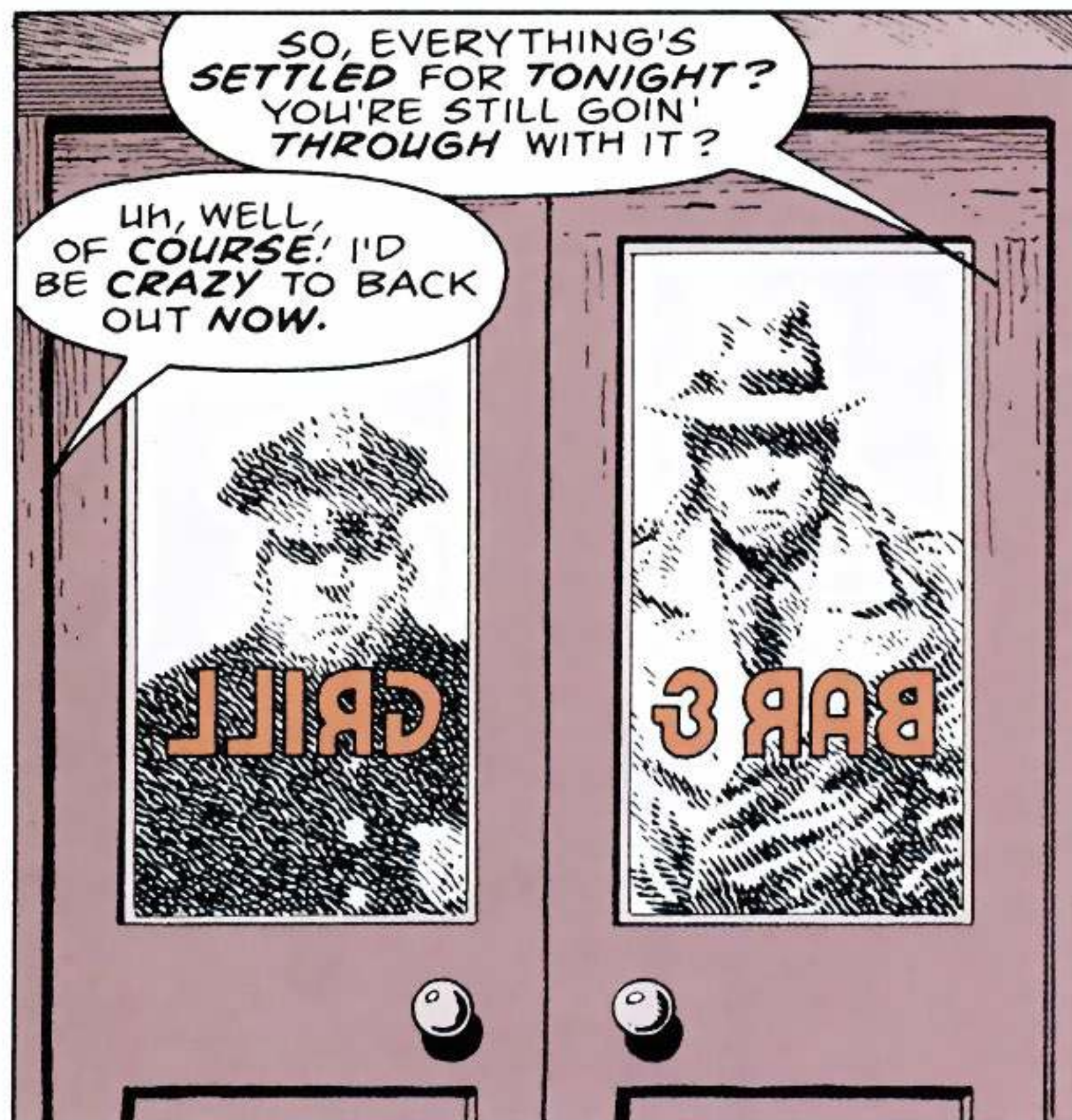
SO WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF LOCKED ONTO AN UNPLEASANT TRAIN OF THOUGHT, HEADING FOR THE PLACES IN YOUR PAST WHERE THE SCREAMING IS UNBEARABLE, REMEMBER THERE'S ALWAYS MADNESS.

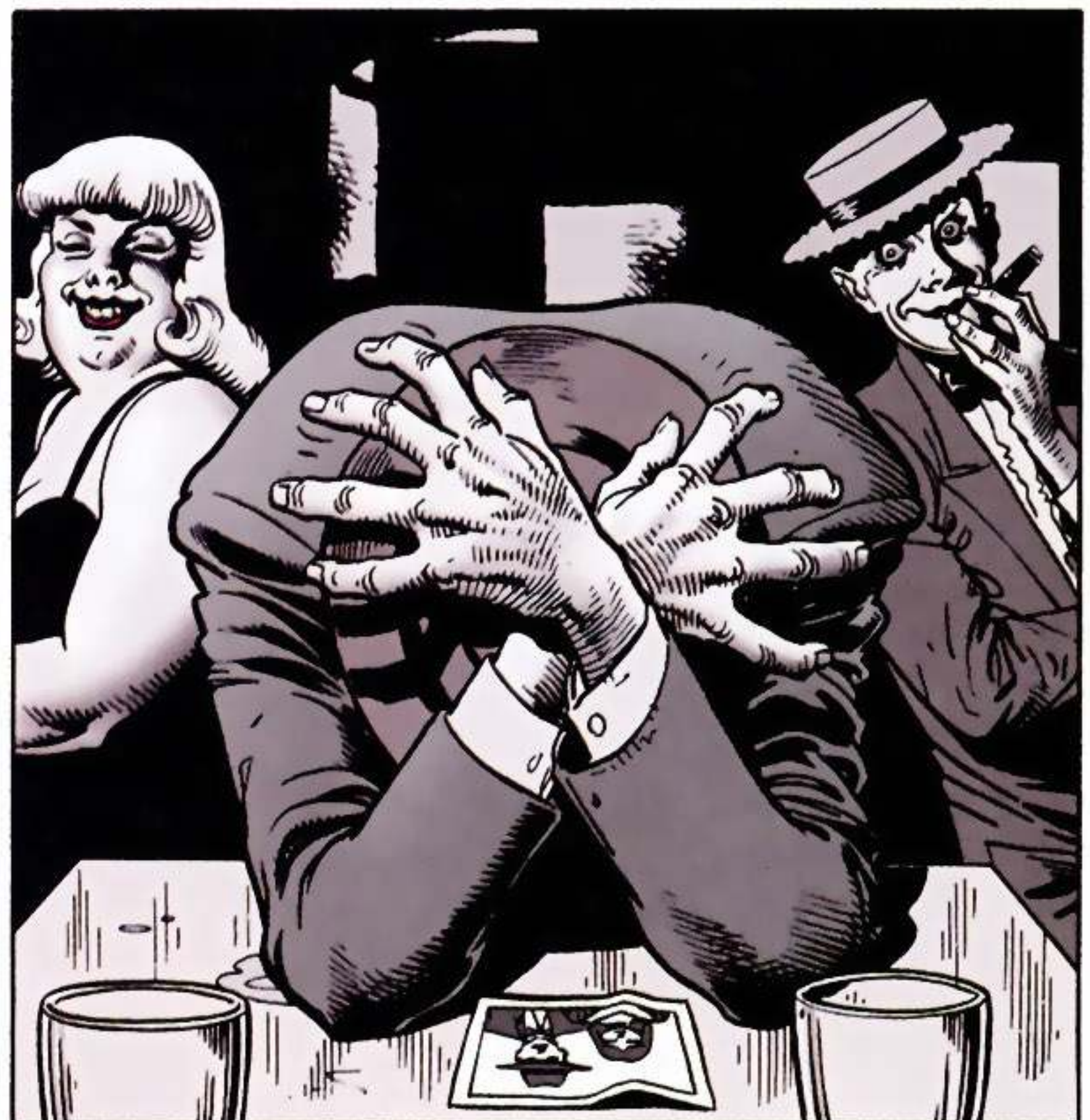
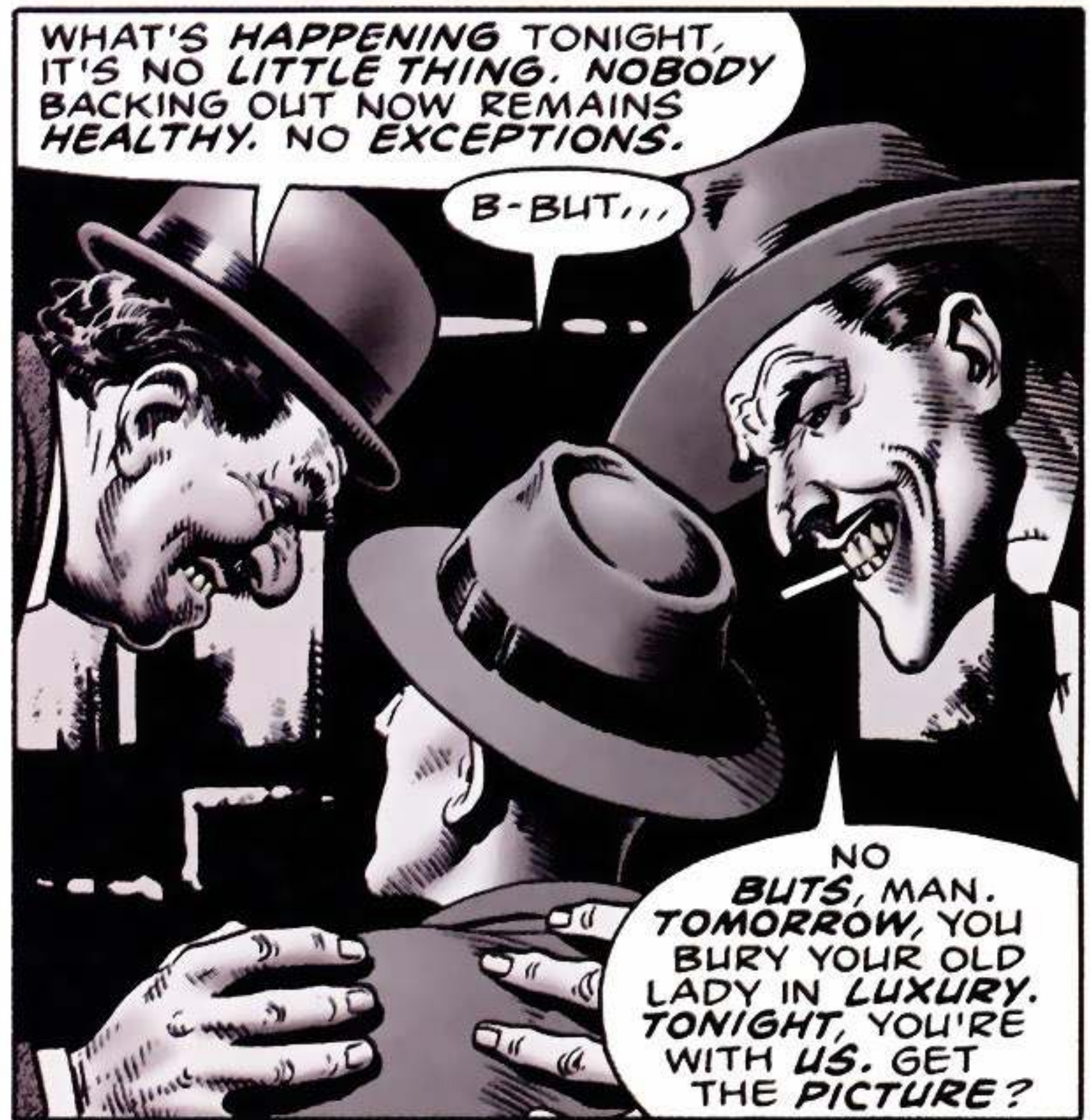
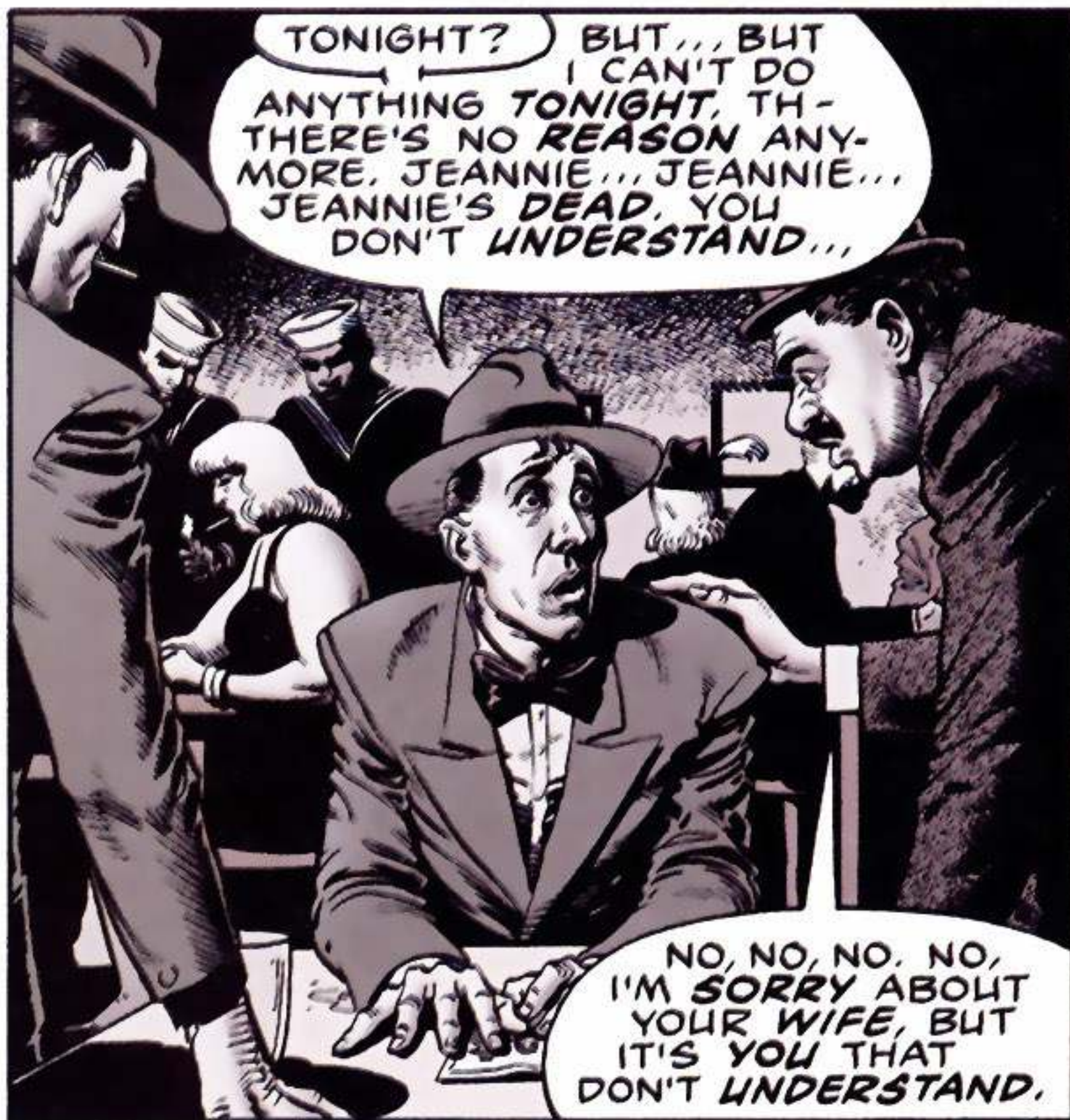
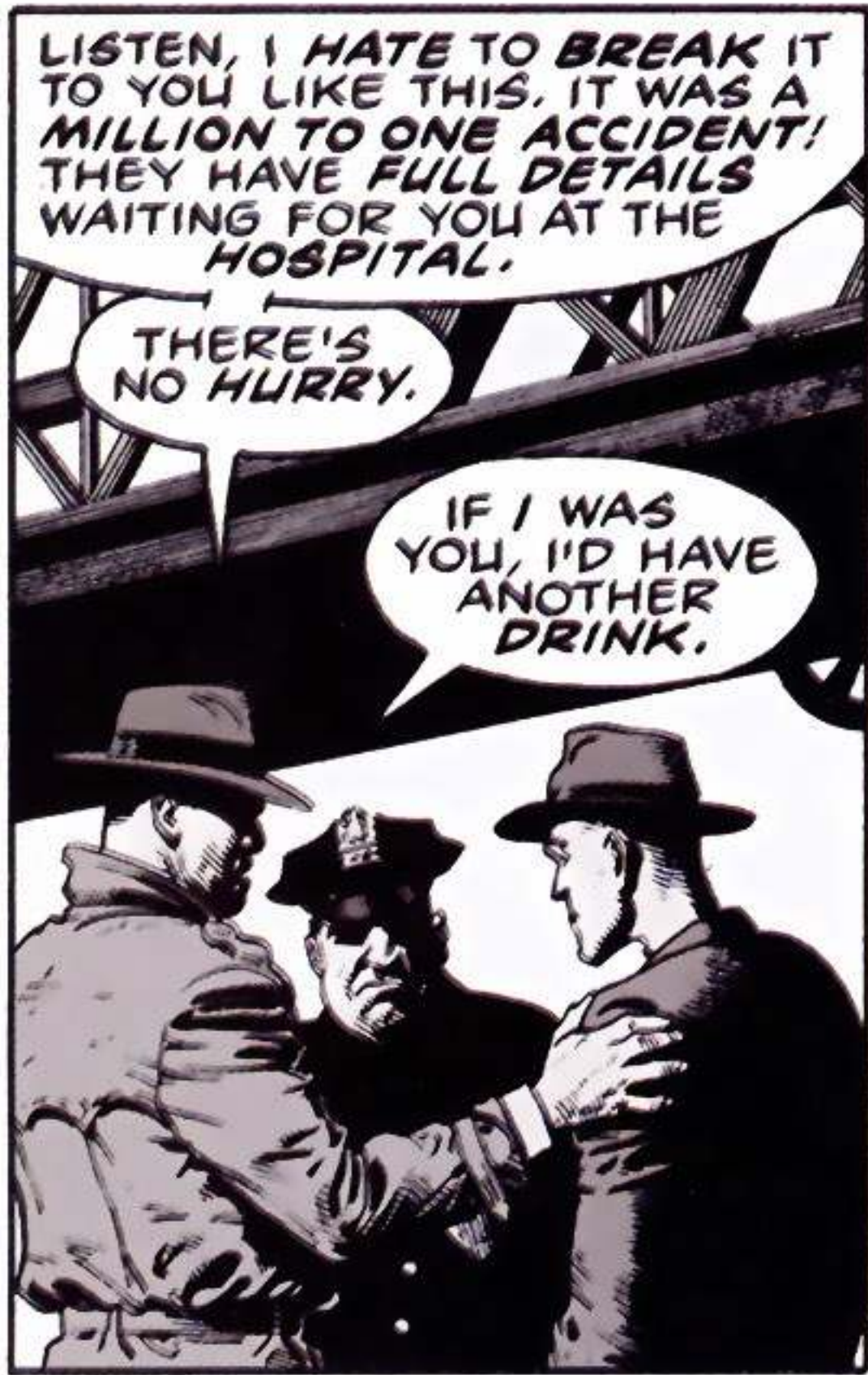
MADNESS IS THE EMERGENCY EXIT...

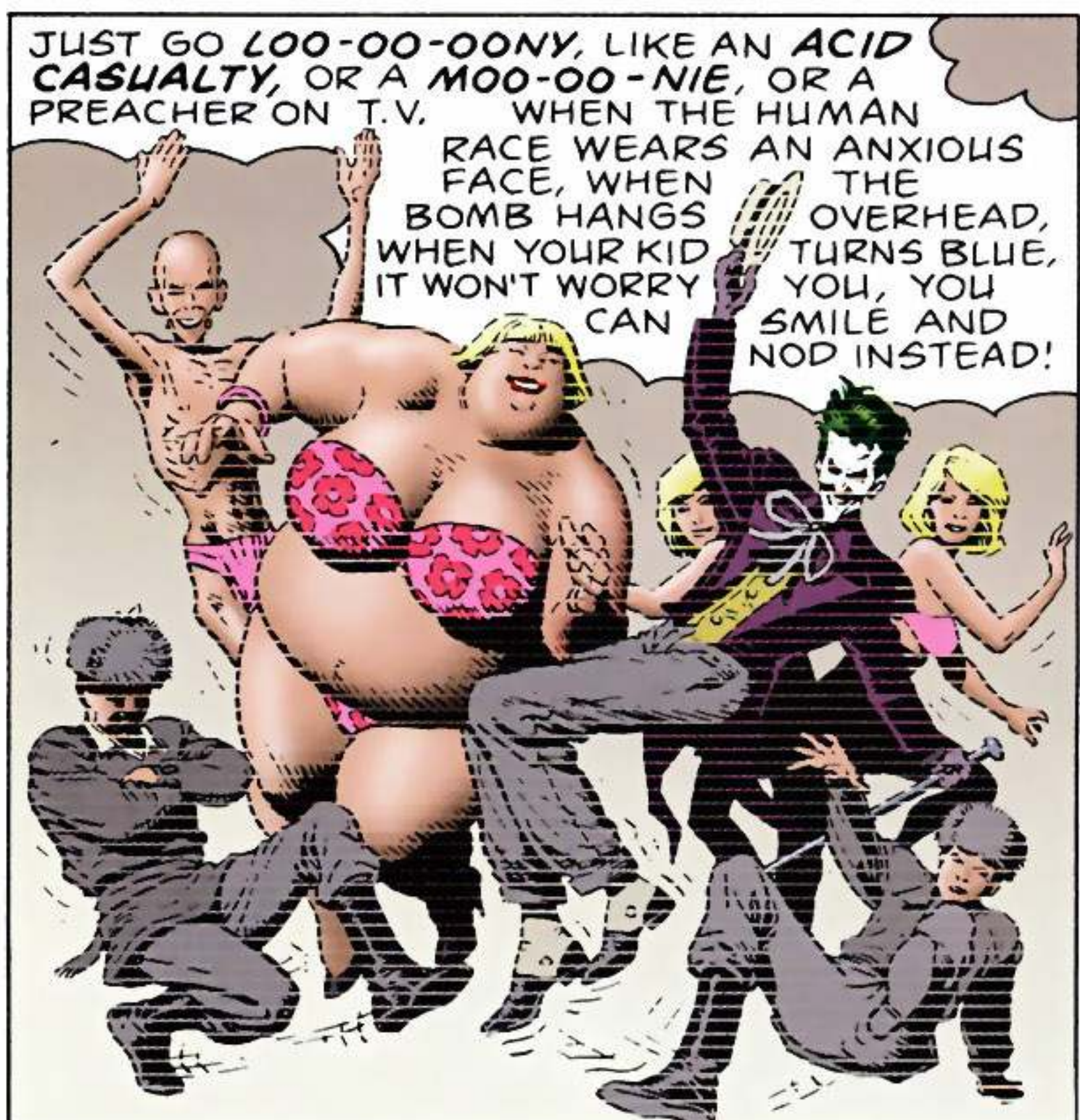
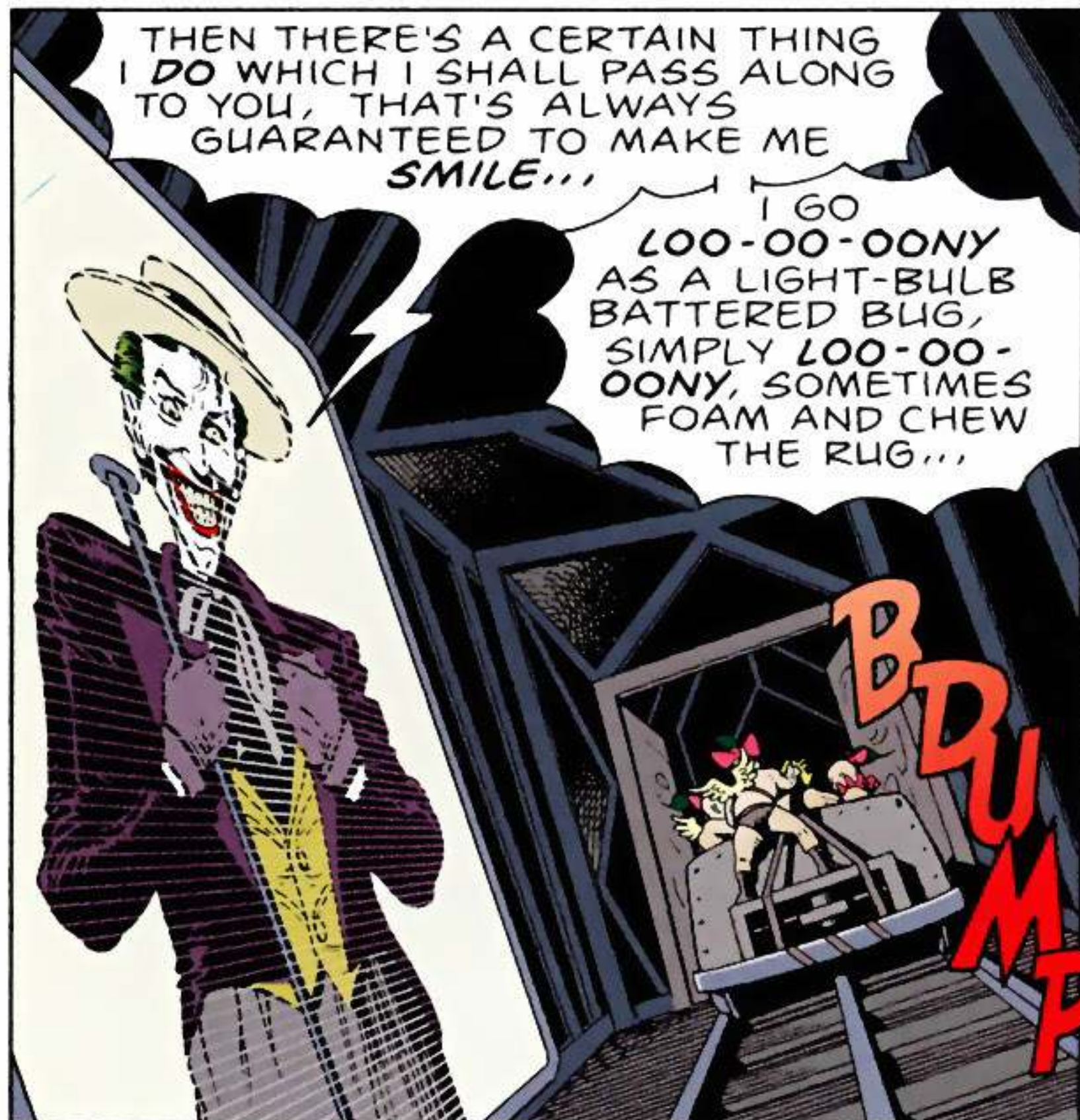
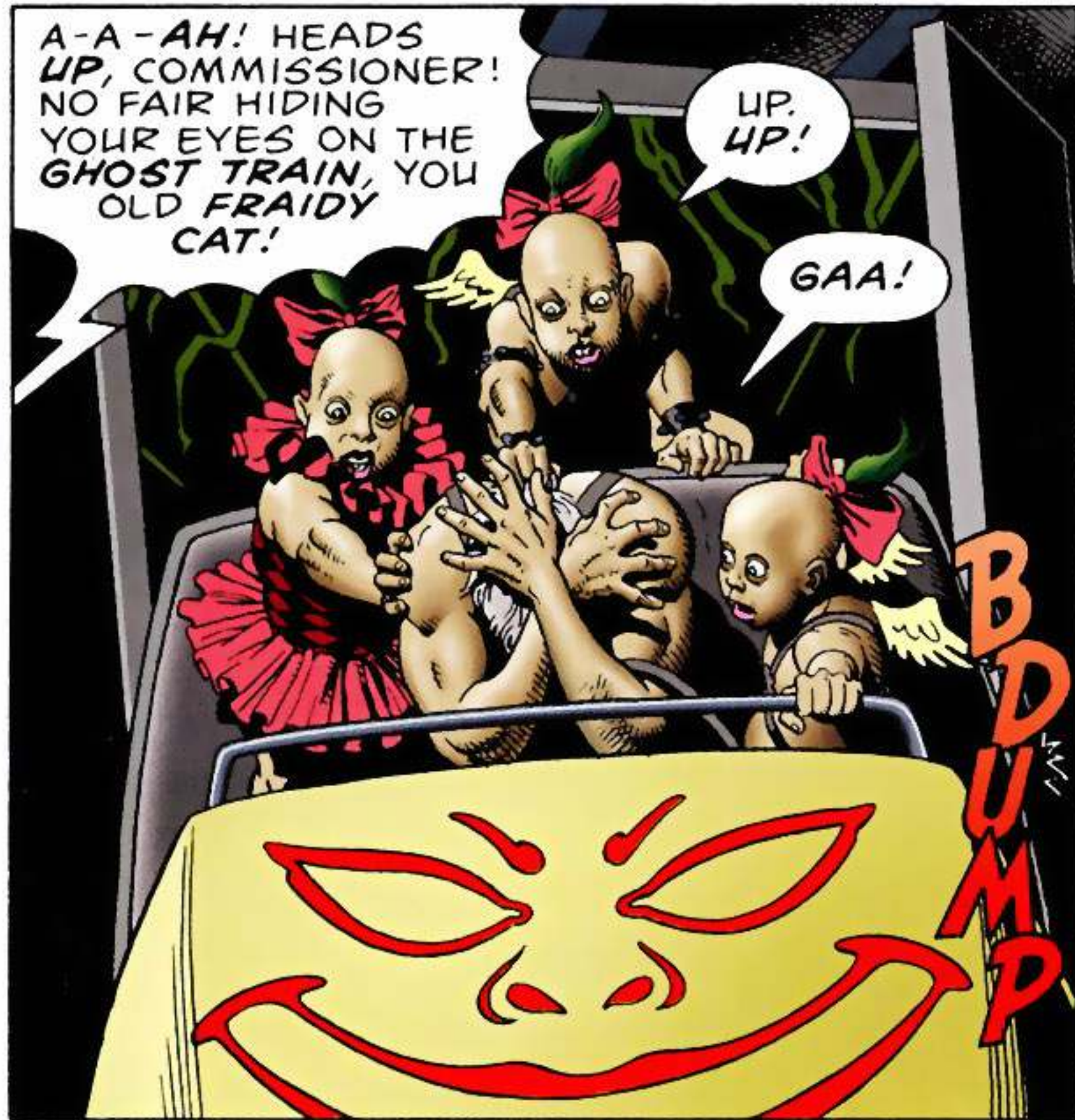


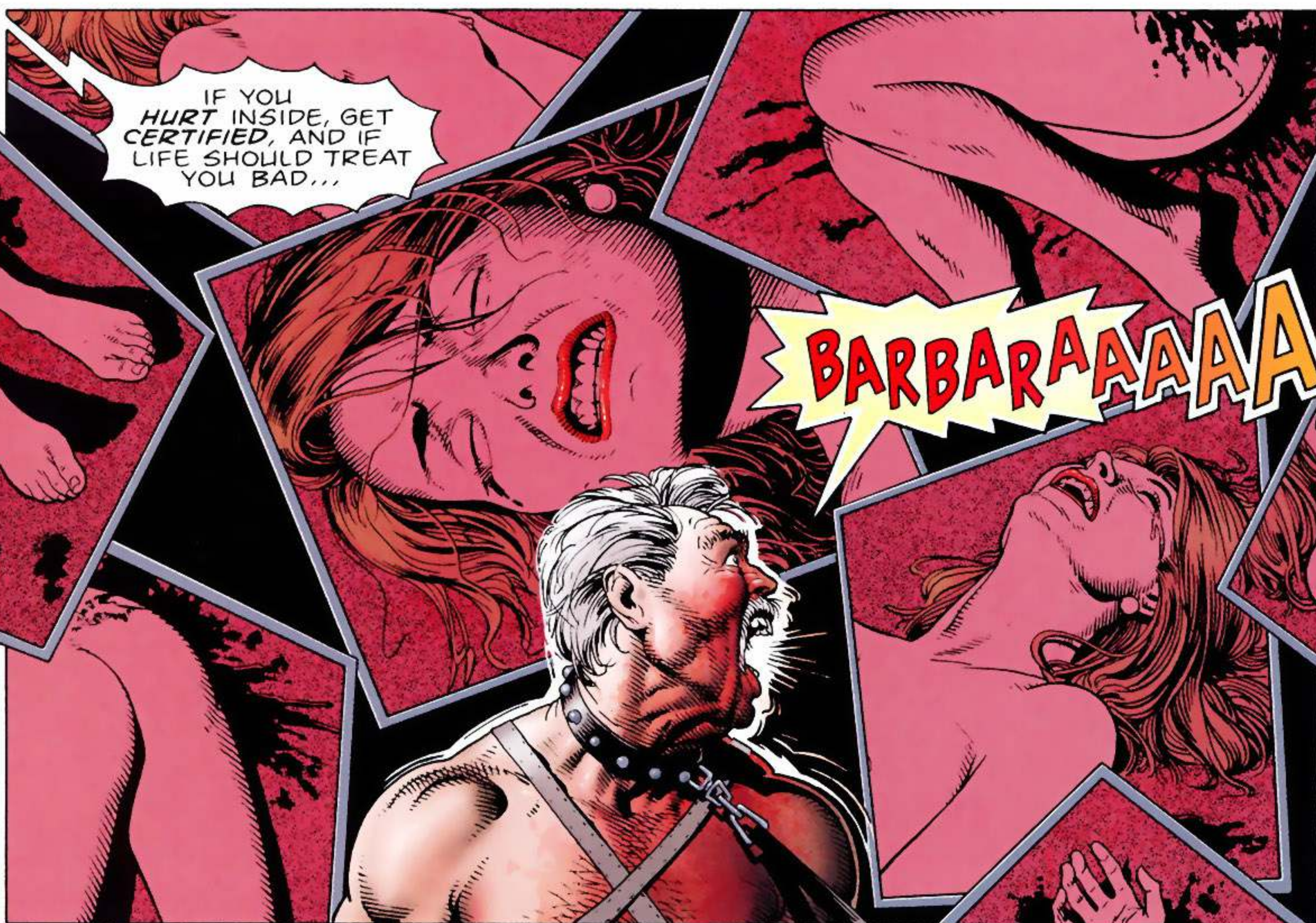
YOU CAN JUST STEP OUTSIDE, AND CLOSE THE DOOR ON ALL THOSE DREADFUL THINGS THAT HAPPENED. YOU CAN LOCK THEM AWAY...

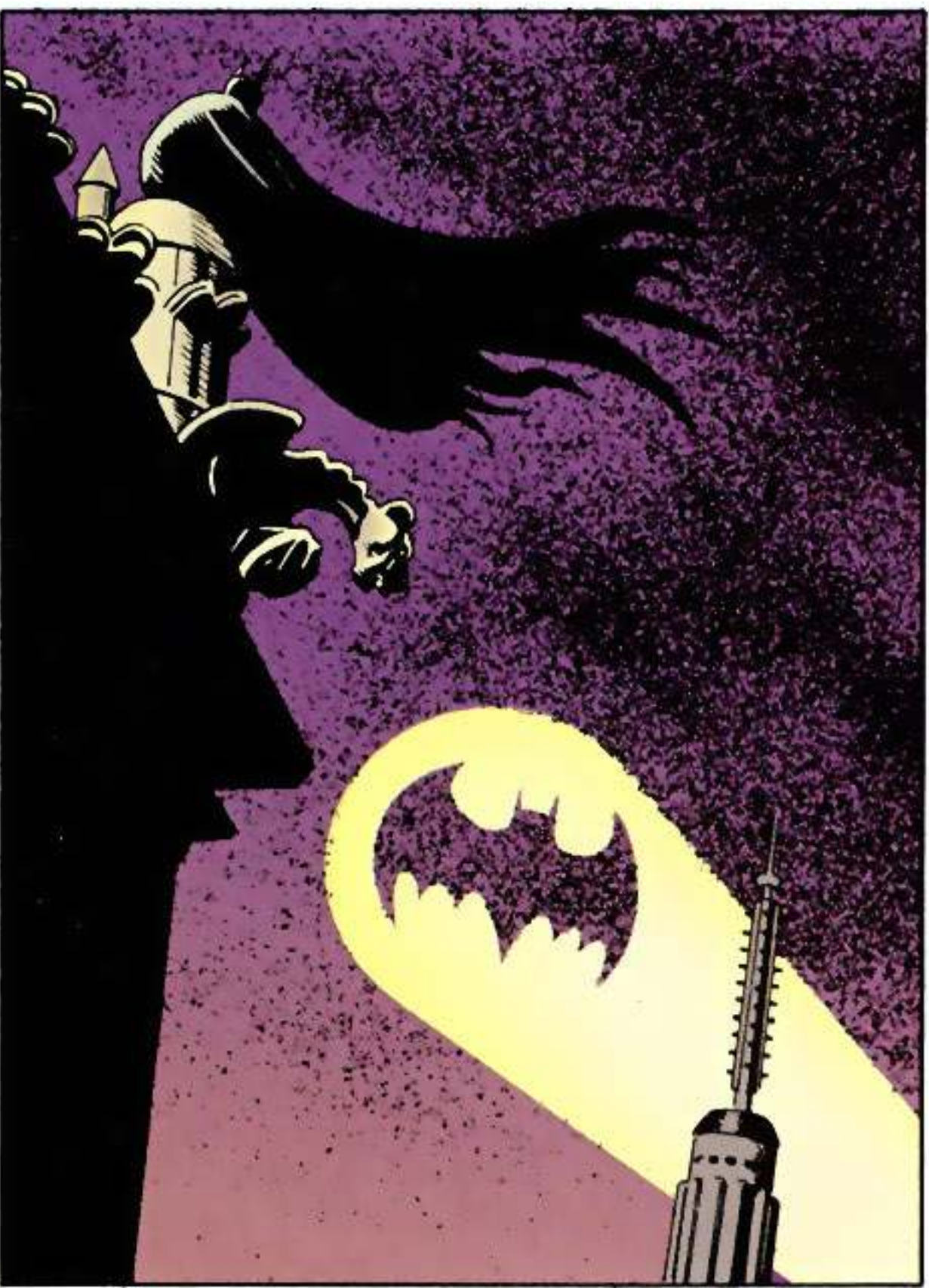
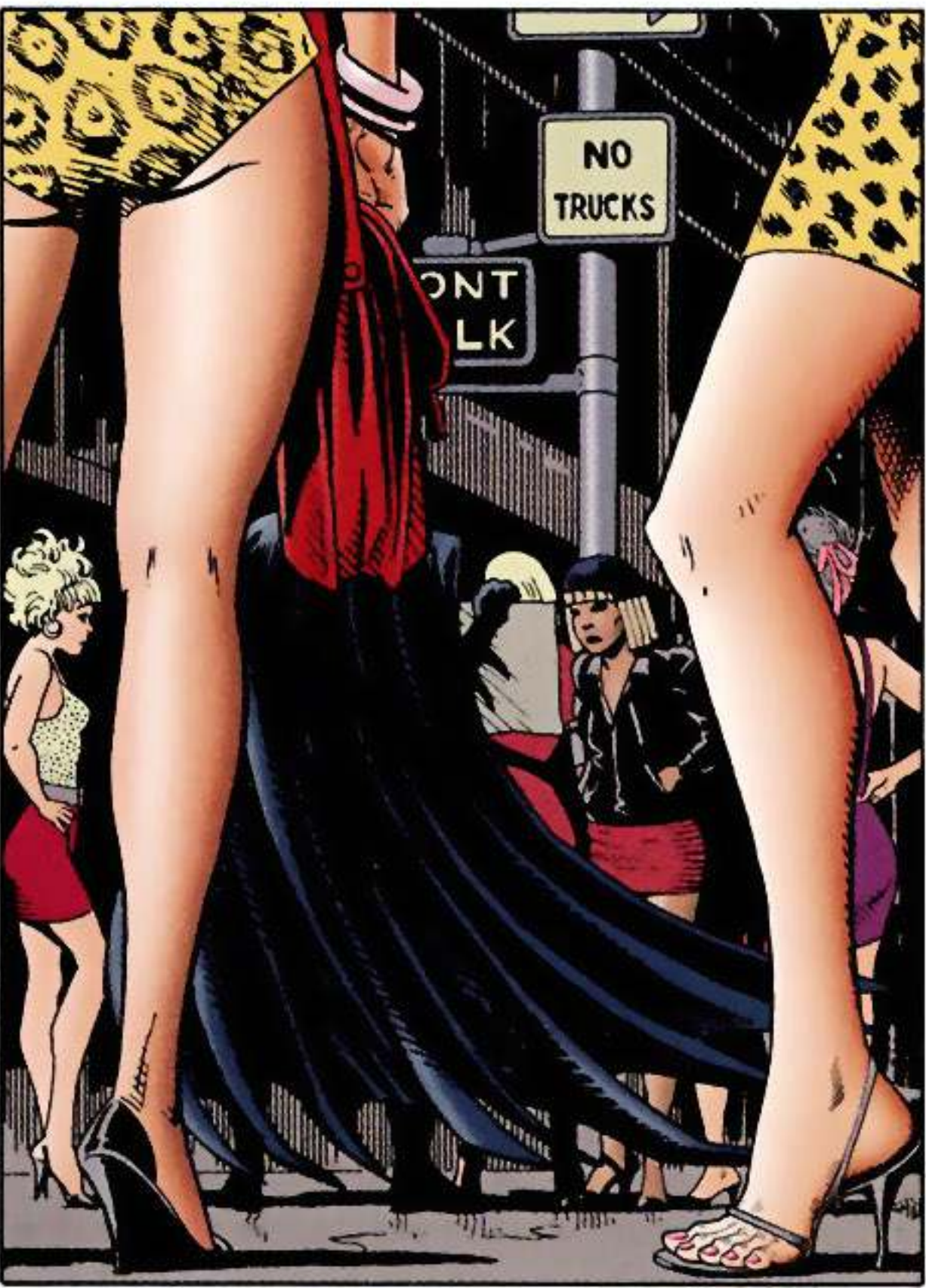
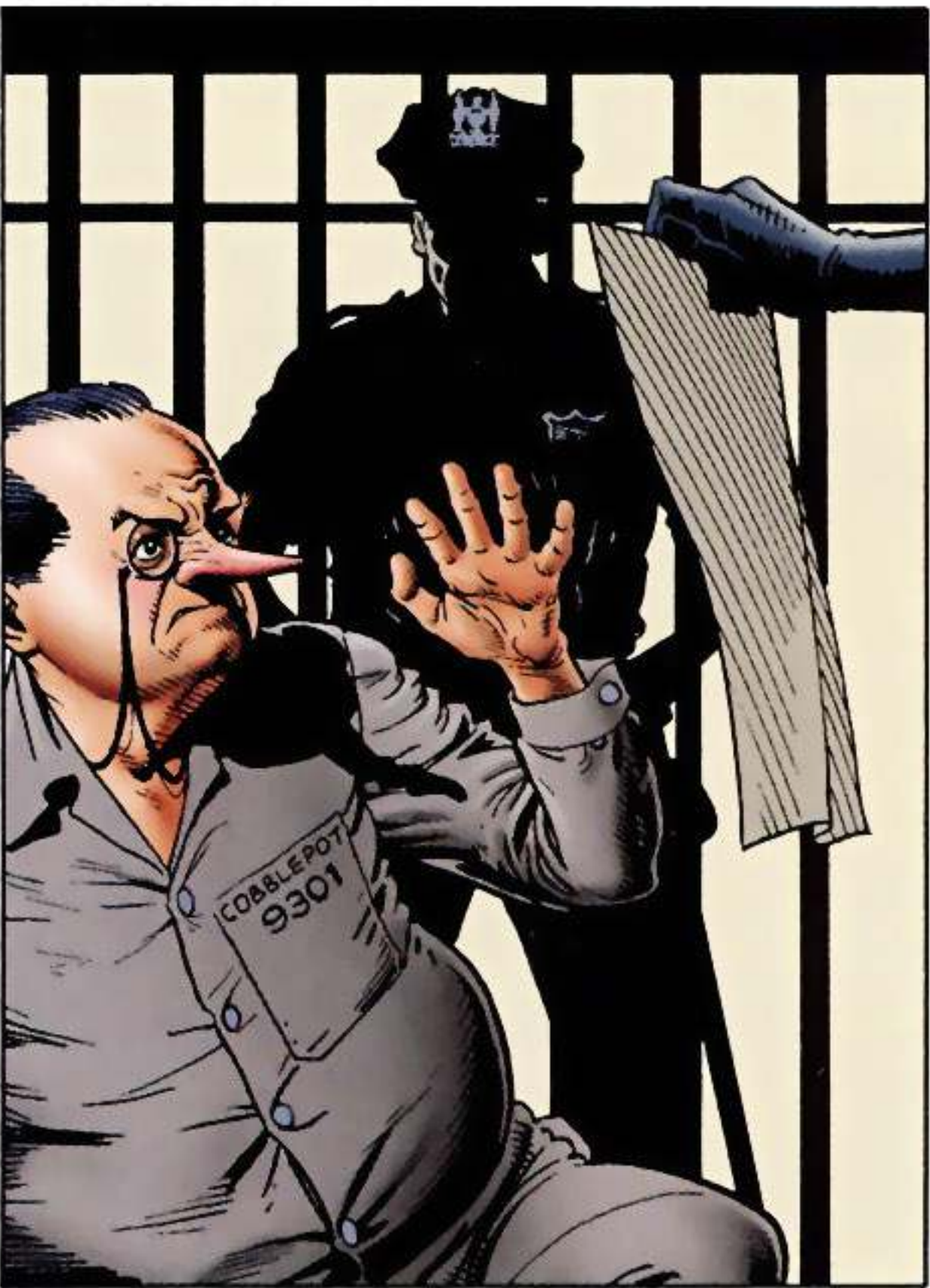
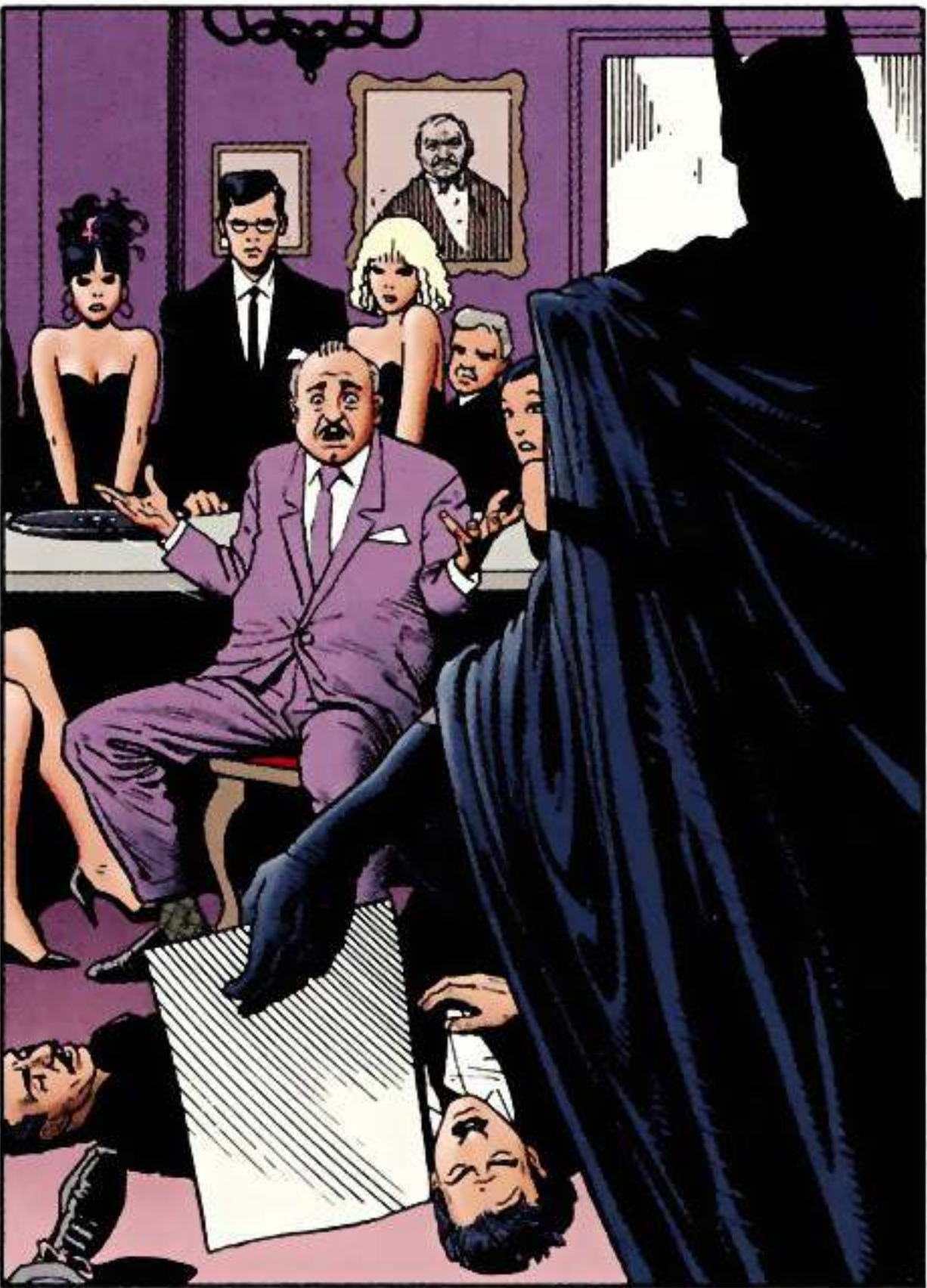
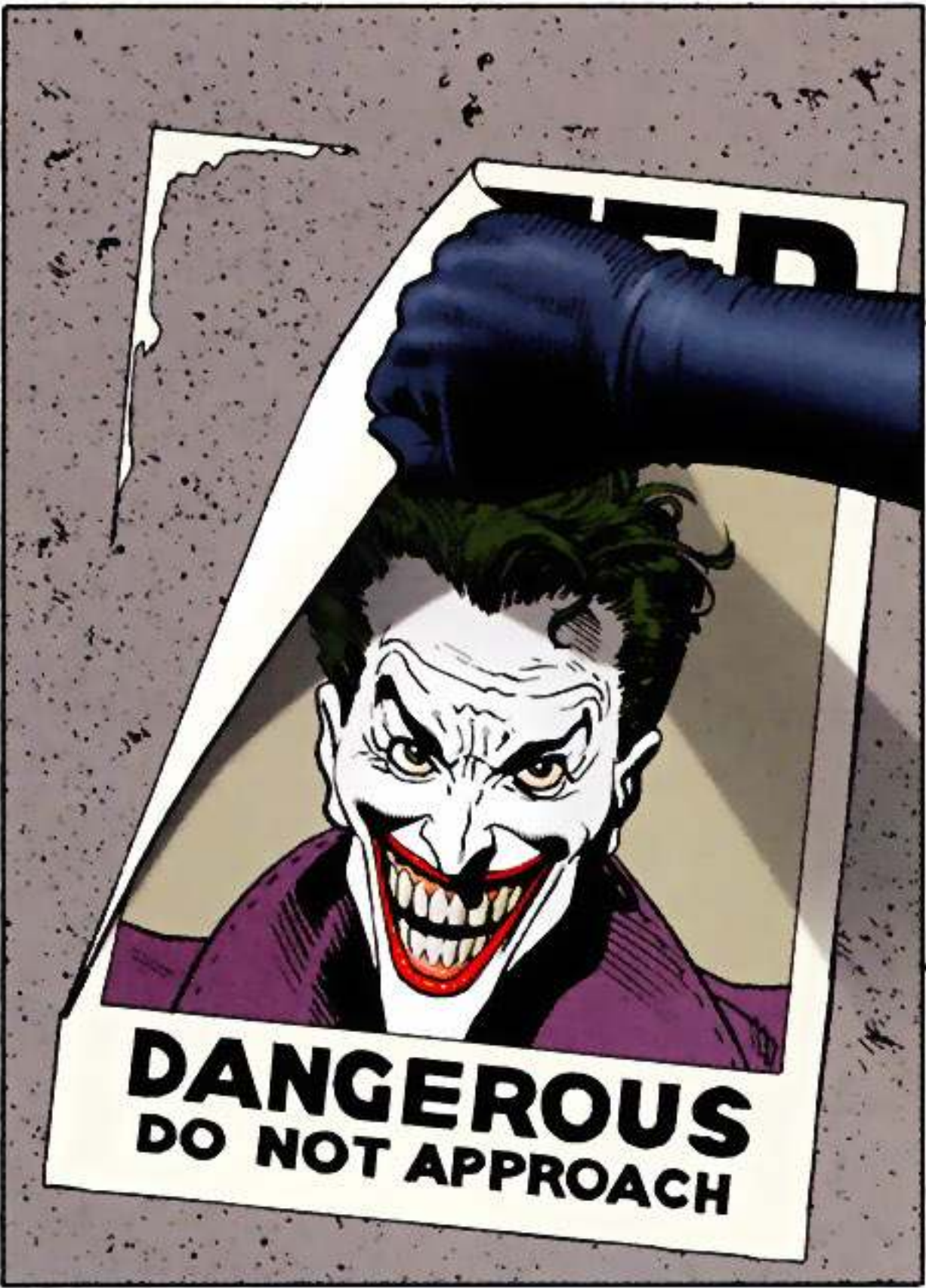
FOREVER.

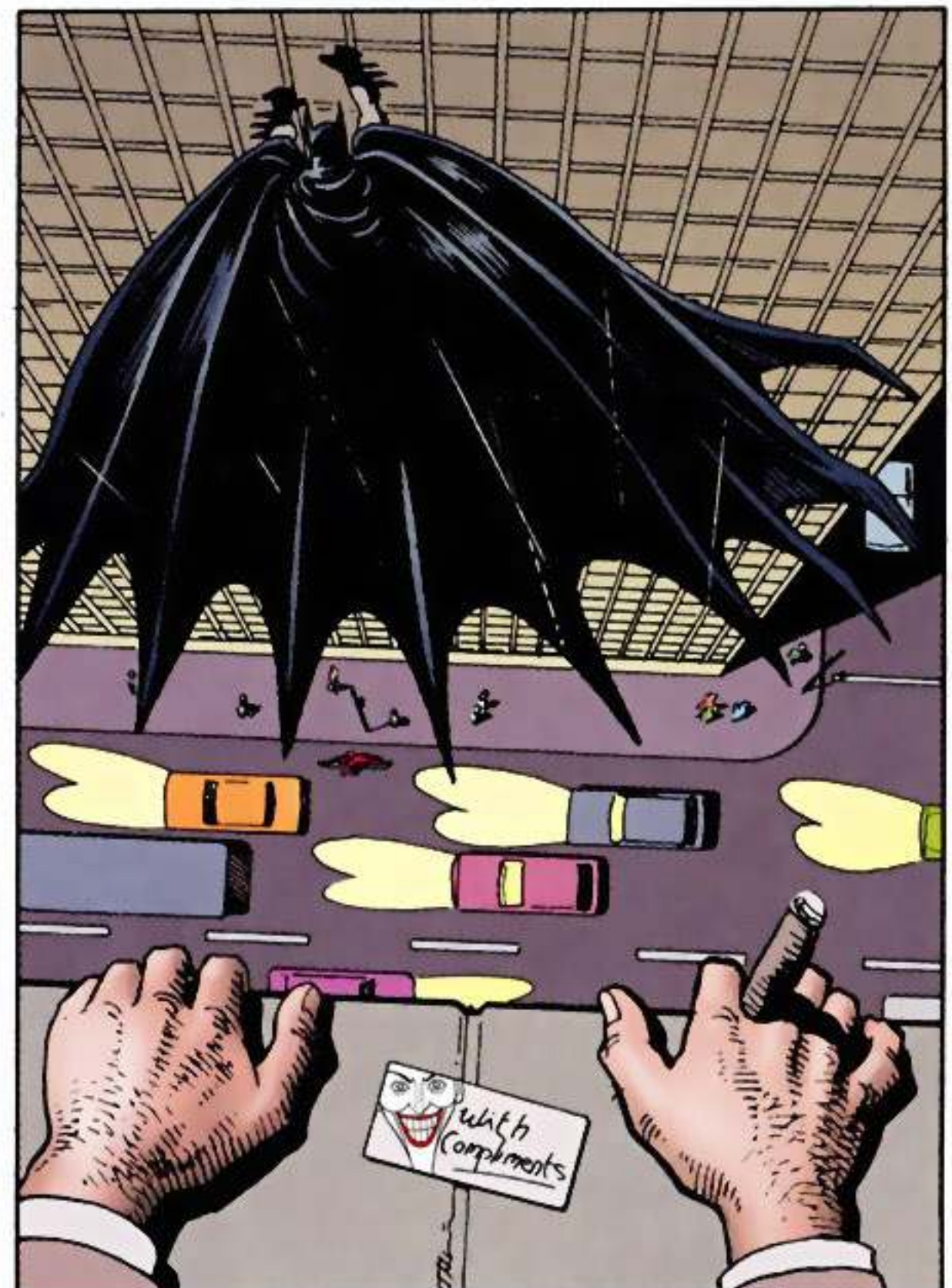
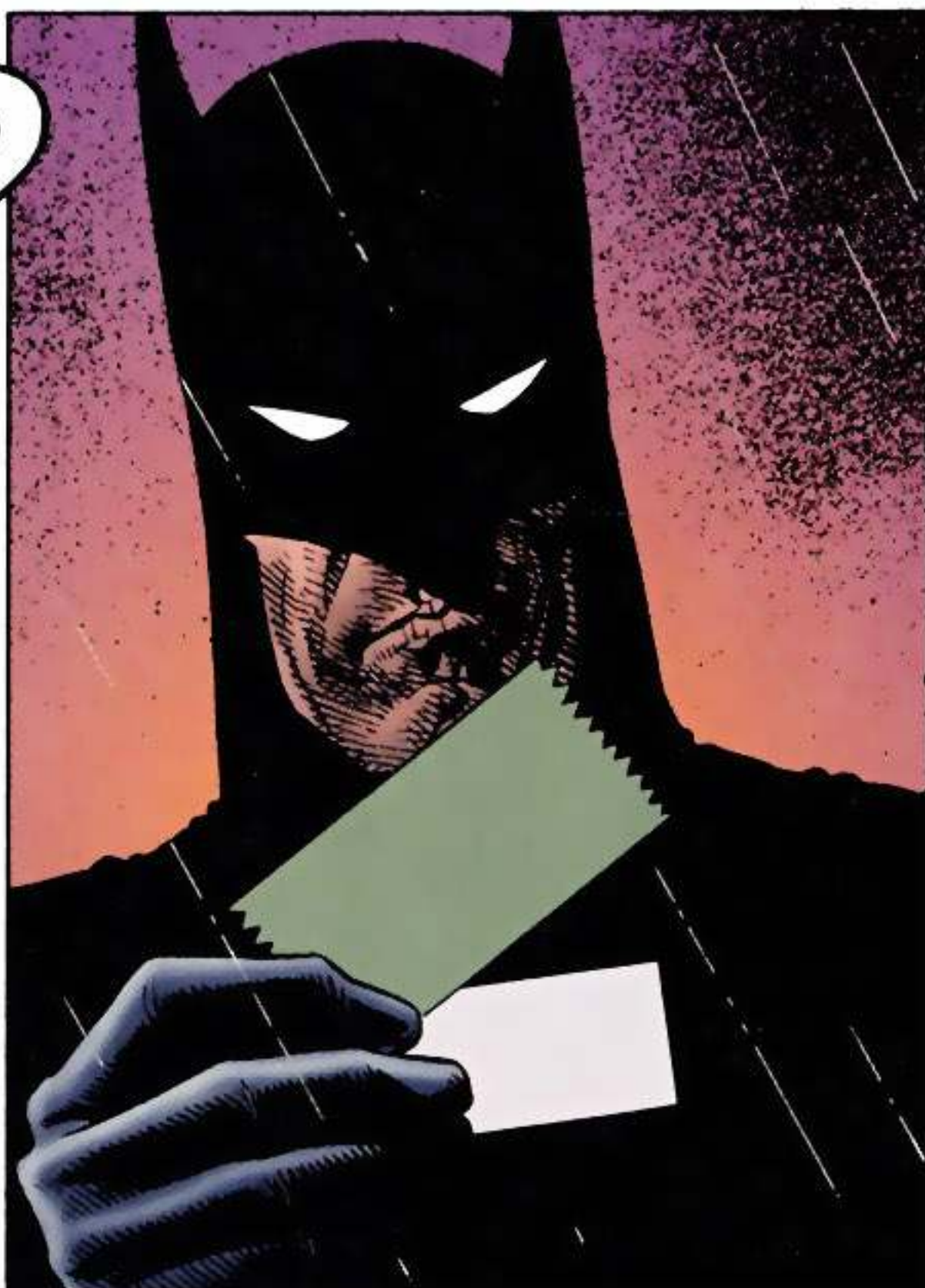
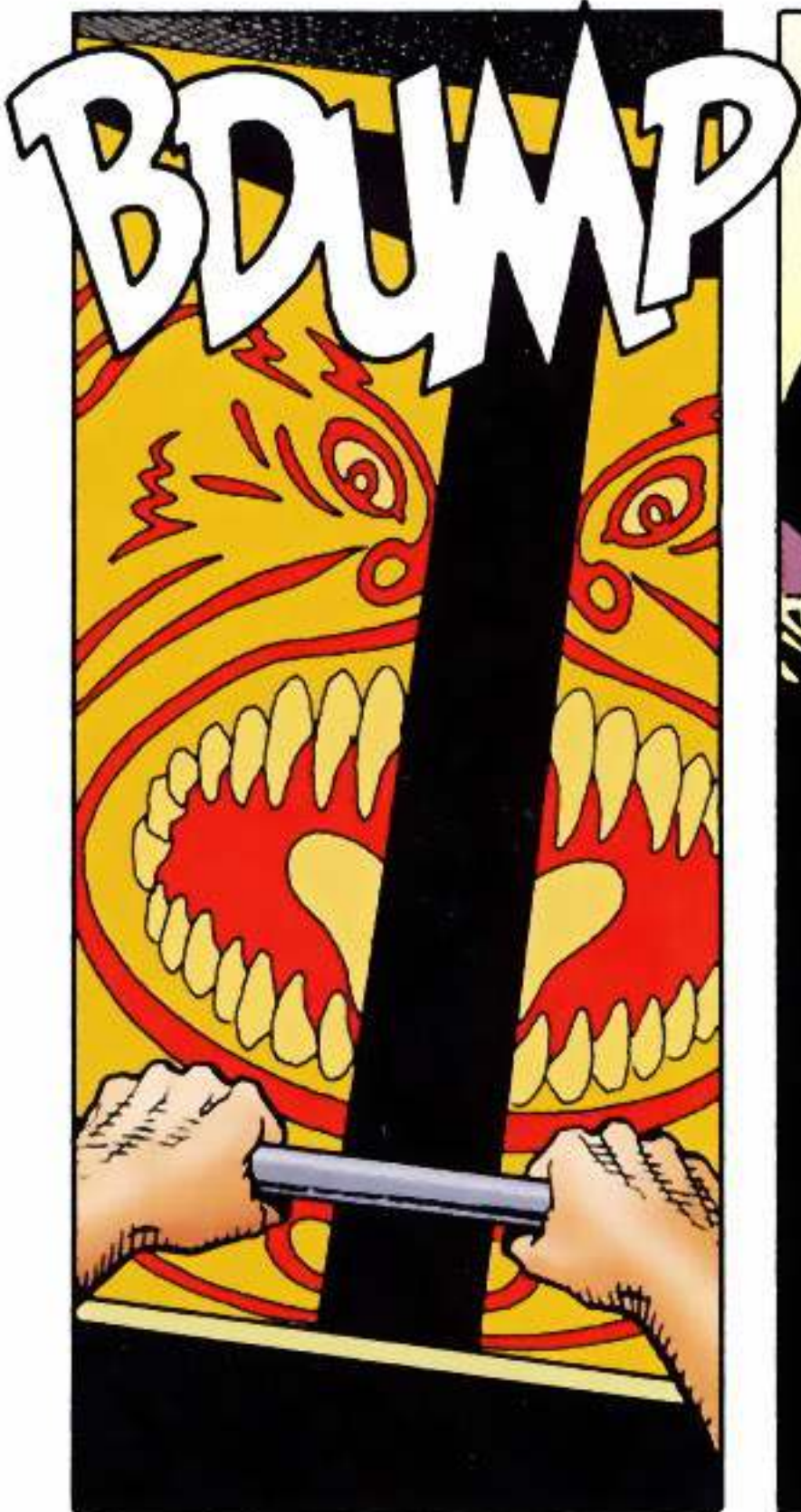




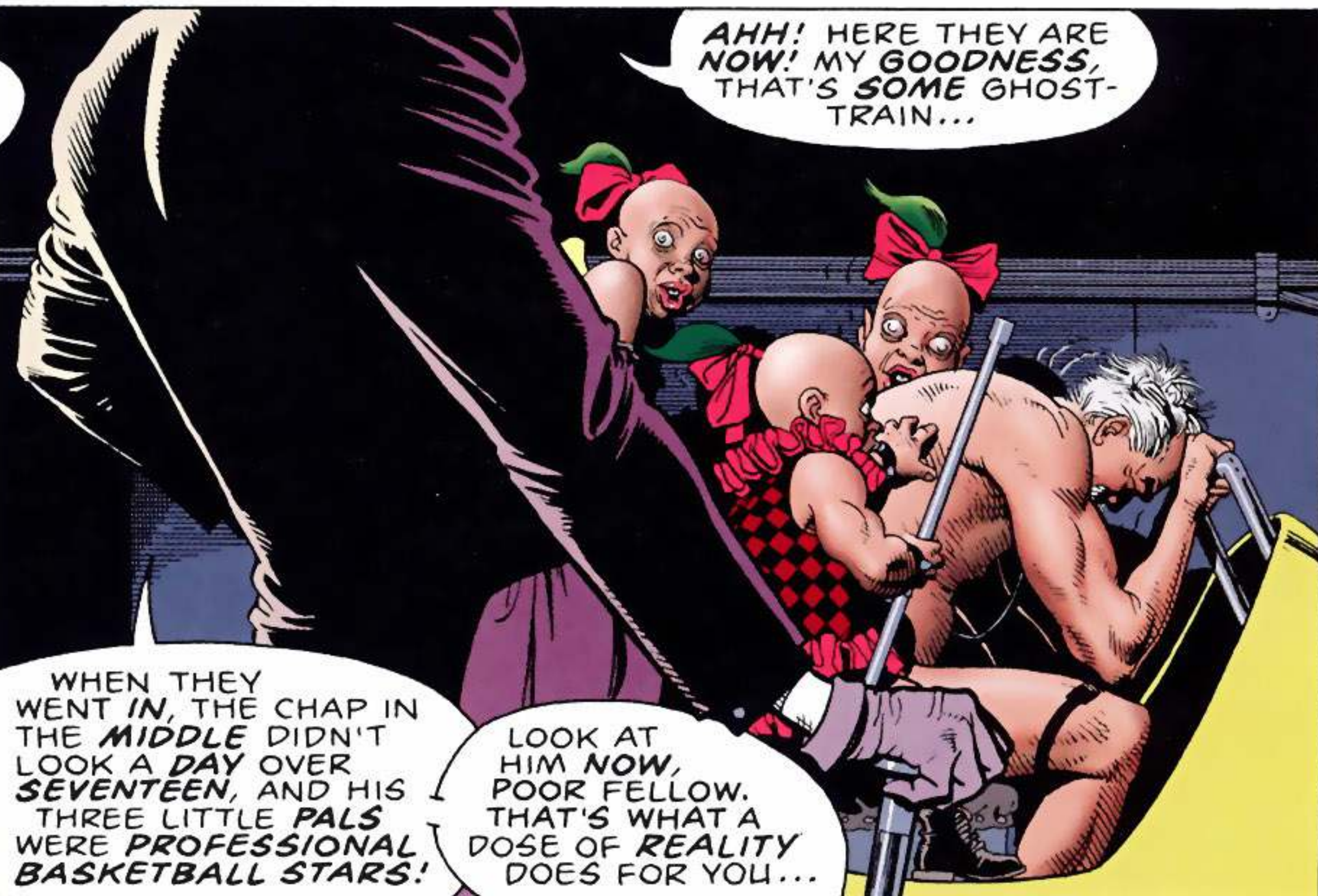








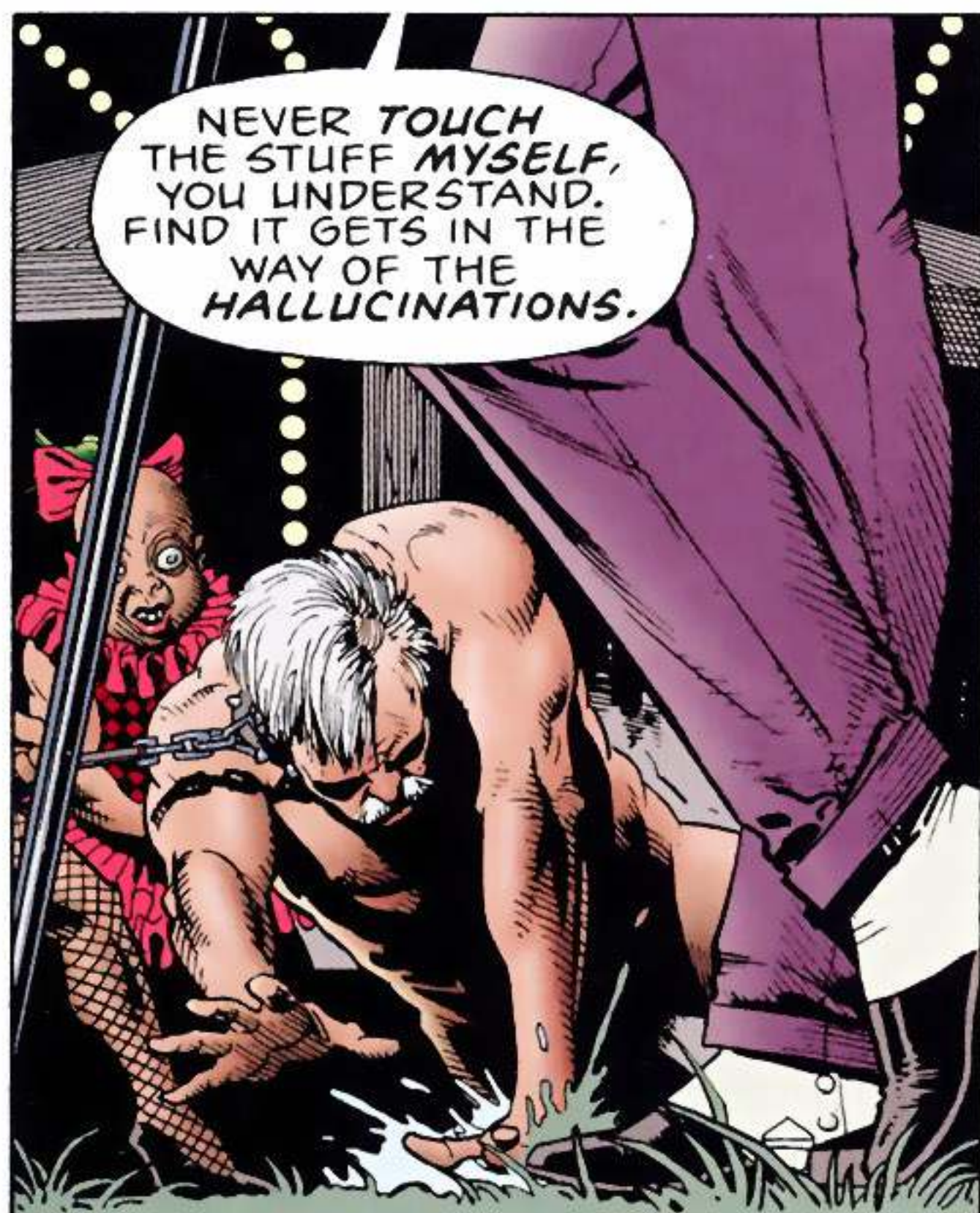
BOUMP



AHH! HERE THEY ARE NOW! MY GOODNESS, THAT'S **SOME** GHOST-TRAIN...

WHEN THEY WENT IN, THE CHAP IN THE **MIDDLE** DIDN'T LOOK A DAY OVER **SEVENTEEN**, AND HIS THREE LITTLE **PALS** WERE **PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL STARS!**

LOOK AT HIM NOW, POOR FELLOW. THAT'S WHAT A DOSE OF **REALITY** DOES FOR YOU...



NEVER **TOUCH** THE STUFF **MYSELF**, YOU UNDERSTAND. FIND IT GETS IN THE WAY OF THE **HALLUCINATIONS.**

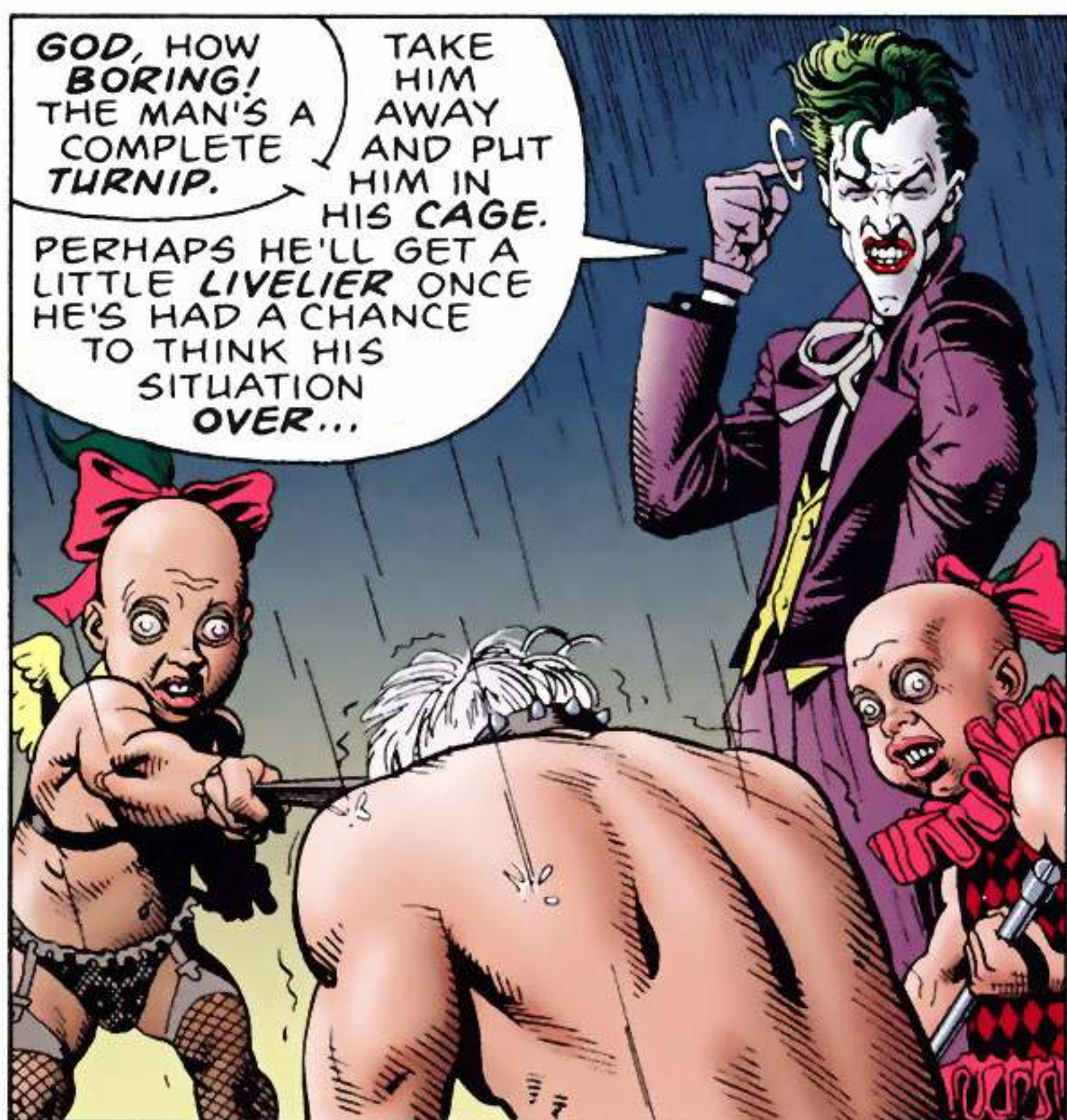


WHY, **HELLO**, COMMISSIONER! HOW'S **THINGS?**

COMMISSIONER?

HELLO?

ANYBODY HOME?



GOD, HOW **BORING!** THE MAN'S A COMPLETE **TURNIP.**

TAKE HIM AWAY AND PUT HIM IN HIS **CAGE.**

PERHAPS HE'LL GET A LITTLE **LIVELIER** ONCE HE'S HAD A CHANCE TO THINK HIS SITUATION **OVER...**



...TO REFLECT UPON **LIFE**, AND ALL ITS RANDOM **INJUSTICE.**



HEY, C'MON! QUIT DAYDREAMIN'! ARE WE DOING THIS THING OR AIN'T WE?

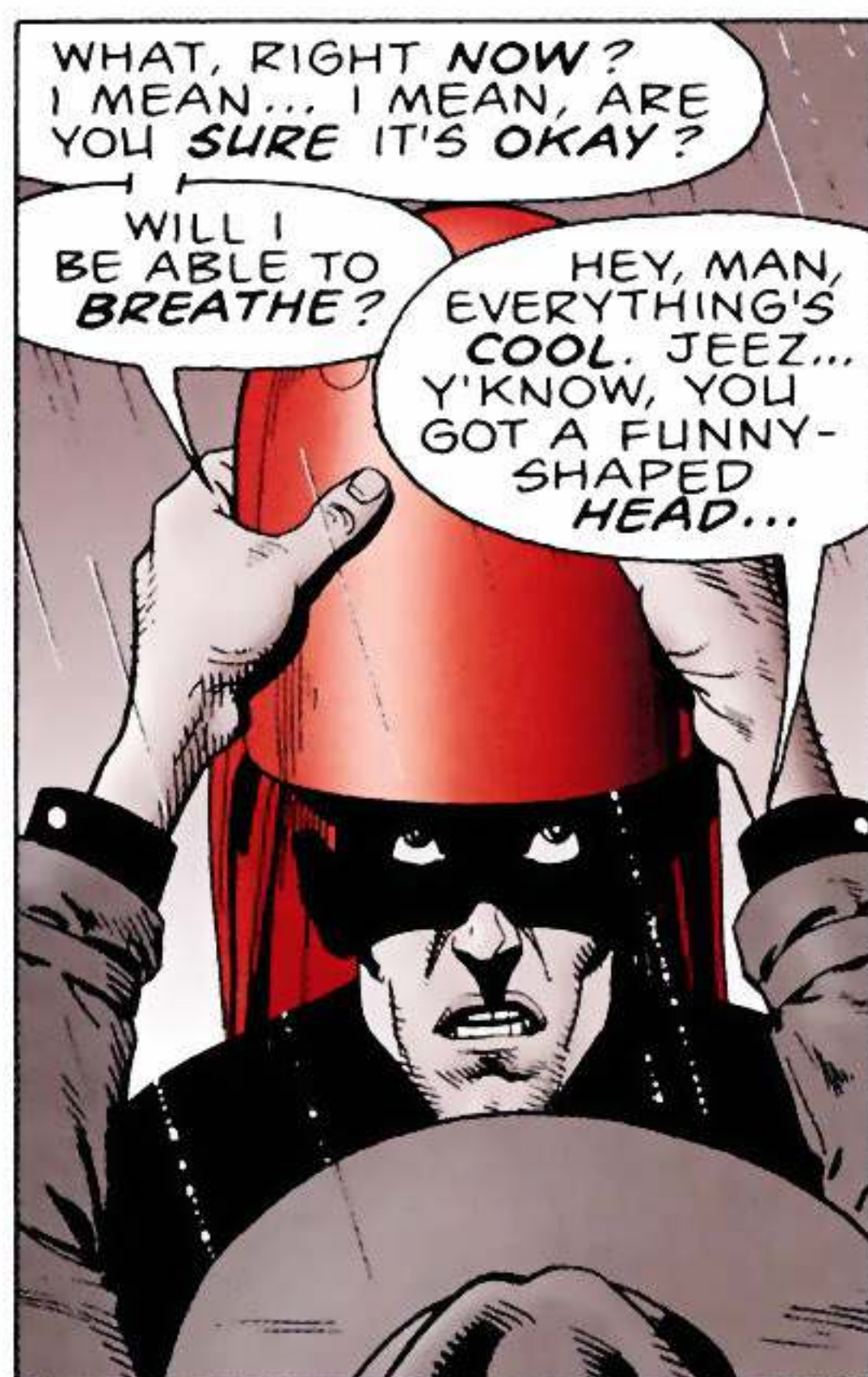
YCE CHEWYAT SKOLE??



UH, YES. YES, OF COURSE.

I WAS, I WAS JUST REMEMBERING... I USED TO WALK ALONG HERE ON THE WAY TO WORK EACH MORNING...

YEAH, YEAH. NOW PUT THIS SUCKER ON, MAN, AN' SHUT UP.



WHAT, RIGHT NOW? I MEAN... I MEAN, ARE YOU SURE IT'S OKAY?

WILL I BE ABLE TO BREATHE?

HEY, MAN, EVERYTHING'S COOL. JEEZ... Y'KNOW, YOU GOT A FUNNY-SHAPED HEAD...



THERE. YOU STILL SEE OKAY, MAN?

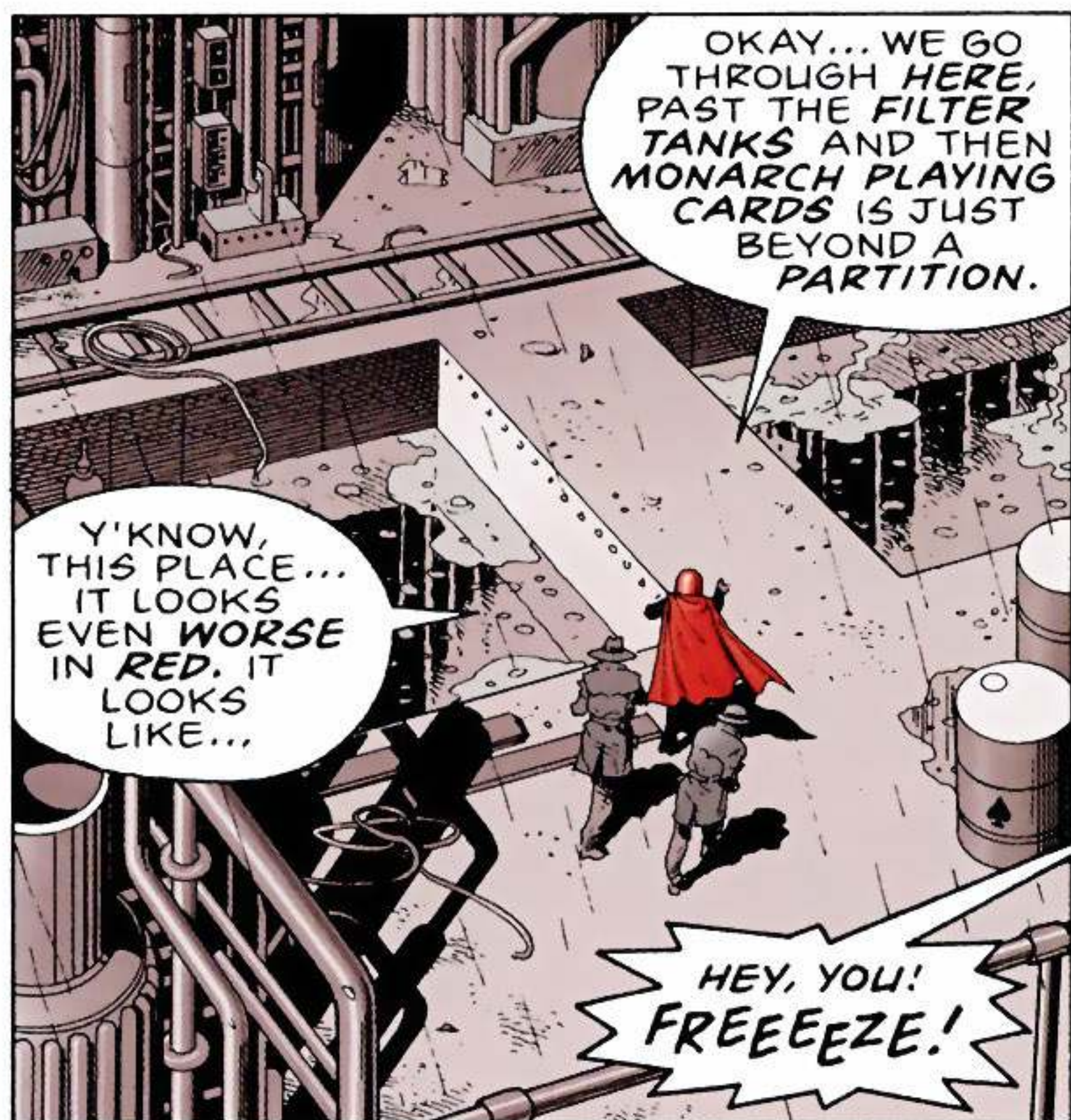
WUH, WELL, YEAH. I GUESS, EXCEPT EVERYTHING'S RED... IT'S KINDA STUFFY TOO, AND IT SMELLS FUNNY. DOES MY VOICE SOUND ECHOEY TO YOU?



YOU SOUND GREAT. NOW... HOW ABOUT GUIDIN' US THROUGH THIS STINKIN' FACTORY TO THE JOINT NEXT DOOR?

SURE. SURE THING, Y'KNOW... THIS FEELS KINDA WEIRD. LIKE A DREAM. I KEEP REMEMBERING JEANNIE...

WATCH OUT, MAN. STEPS.



OKAY... WE GO THROUGH HERE, PAST THE FILTER TANKS AND THEN MONARCH PLAYING CARDS IS JUST BEYOND A PARTITION.

Y'KNOW, THIS PLACE... IT LOOKS EVEN WORSE IN RED. IT LOOKS LIKE...

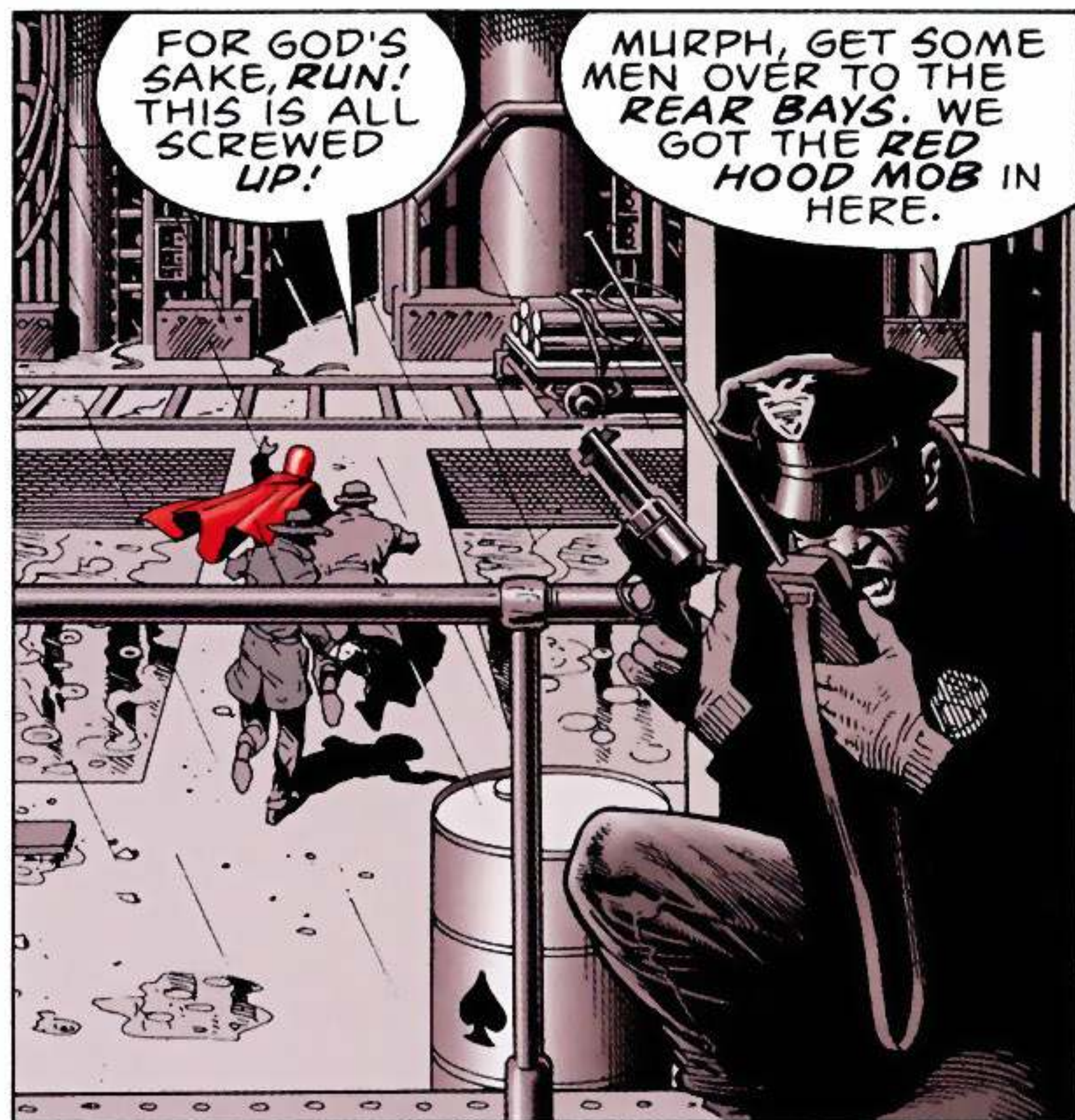
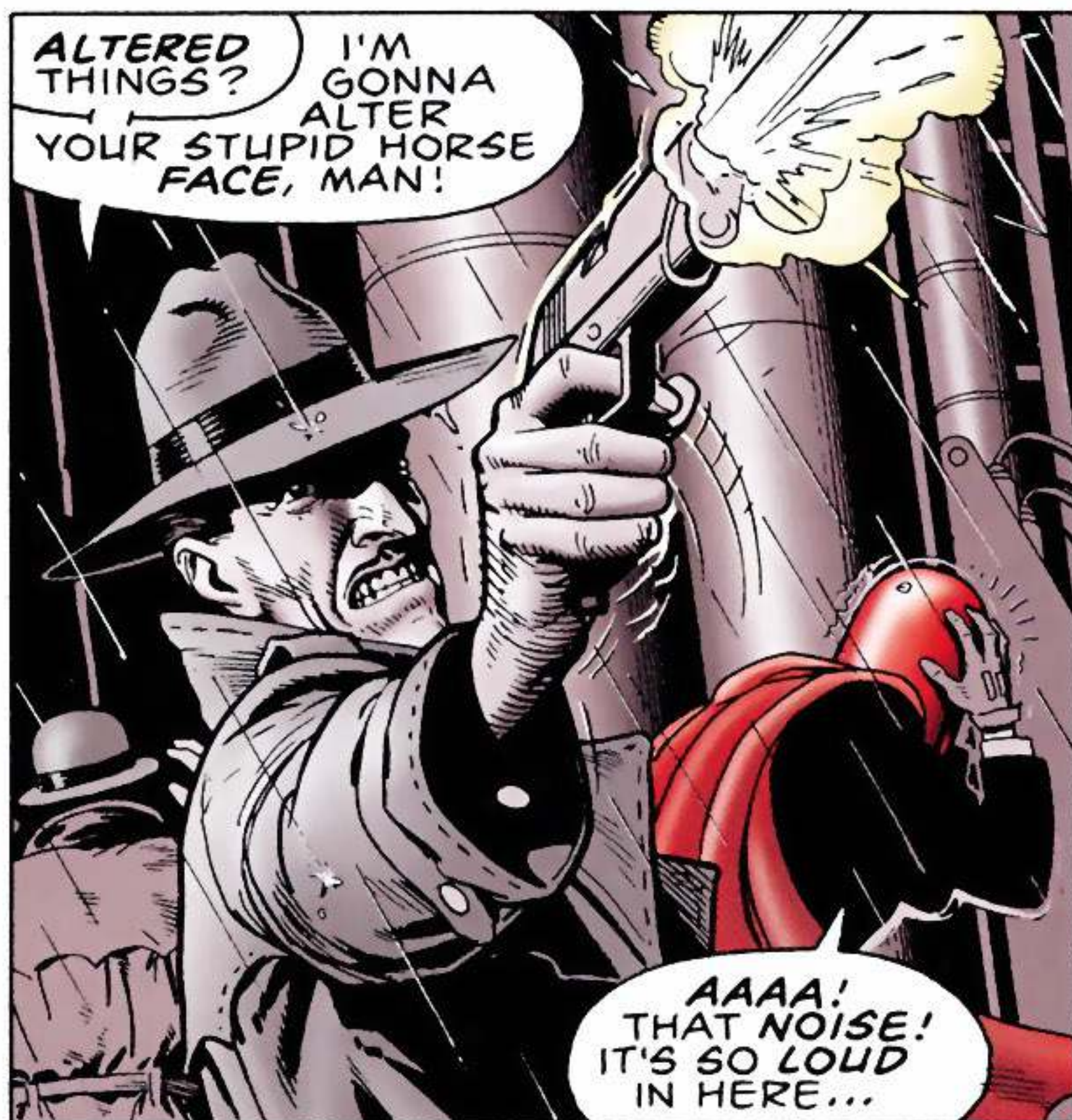
HEY, YOU! FREEEEZE!



C'MON, C'MON, GET 'EM UP!

YOU ASSHOLE! YOU SAID THERE WAS NO SECURITY!

THEY... THEY MUST HAVE ALTERED THINGS SINCE I LEFT...





I'M
HERE
NOW.

I'LL TAKE
CARE OF IT
MY WAY.



JEEZ,
WHAT...?

IT'S THAT
HUMAN BAT
GUY, IN ALL
THE PAPERS
LATELY...



SO,
RED HOOD, WE
MEET AGAIN.

NO. NO NO NO.
THIS ISN'T **HAPPENING**.
OH DEAR GOD, WHAT
HAVE YOU SENT TO
PUNISH ME?
DON'T COME
CLOSER! DON'T COME
ANY CLOSER, OR
I'LL...



...JUMP...



HHHUUHHH

HHHUUHHH

PPFFUGH



Guhh



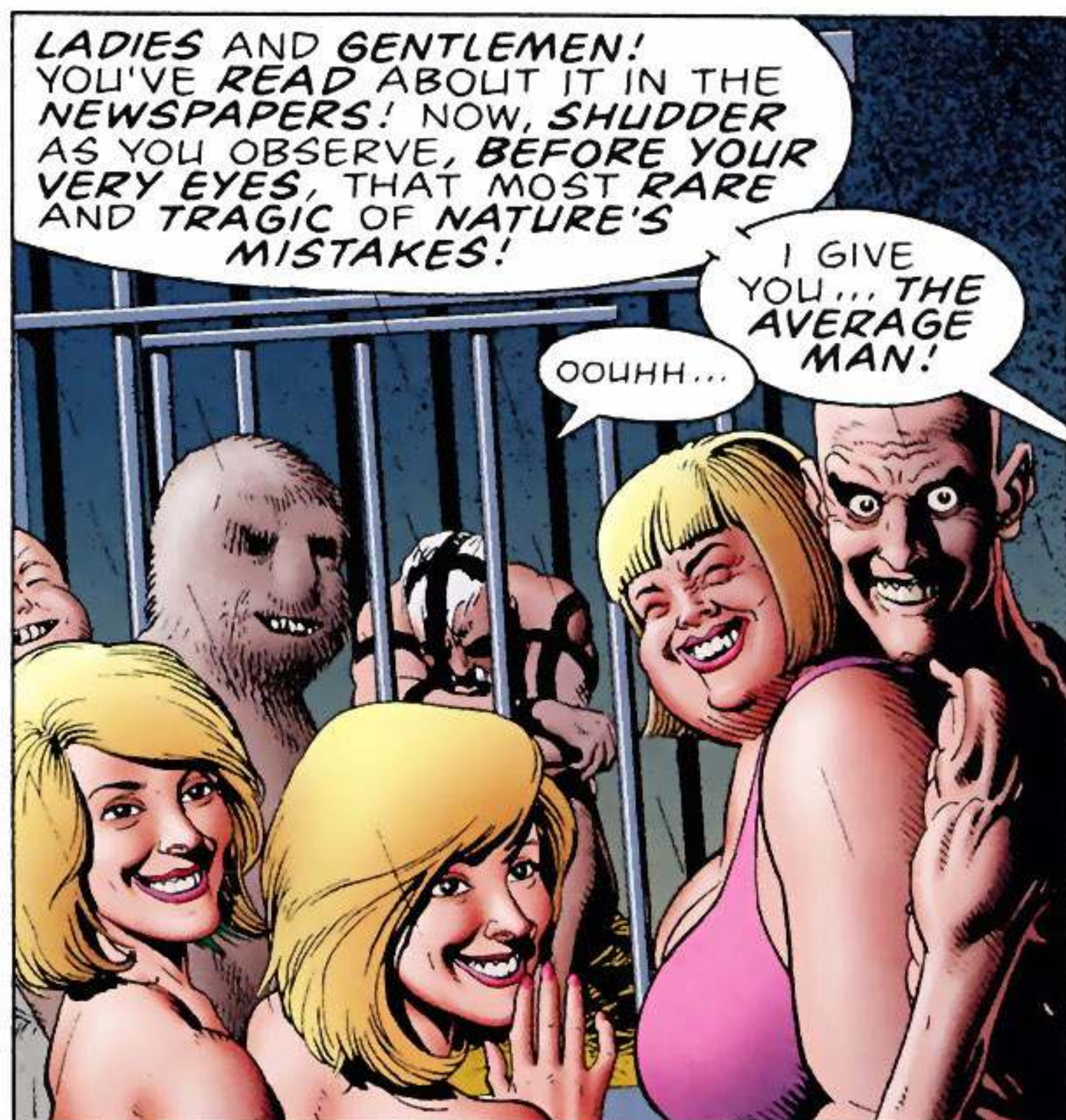


AHIIIIIIIIHI...
AHIIIIIIIIHI.

THAT'S
SO FUNNY.

THAT'S
SO FUNNY.

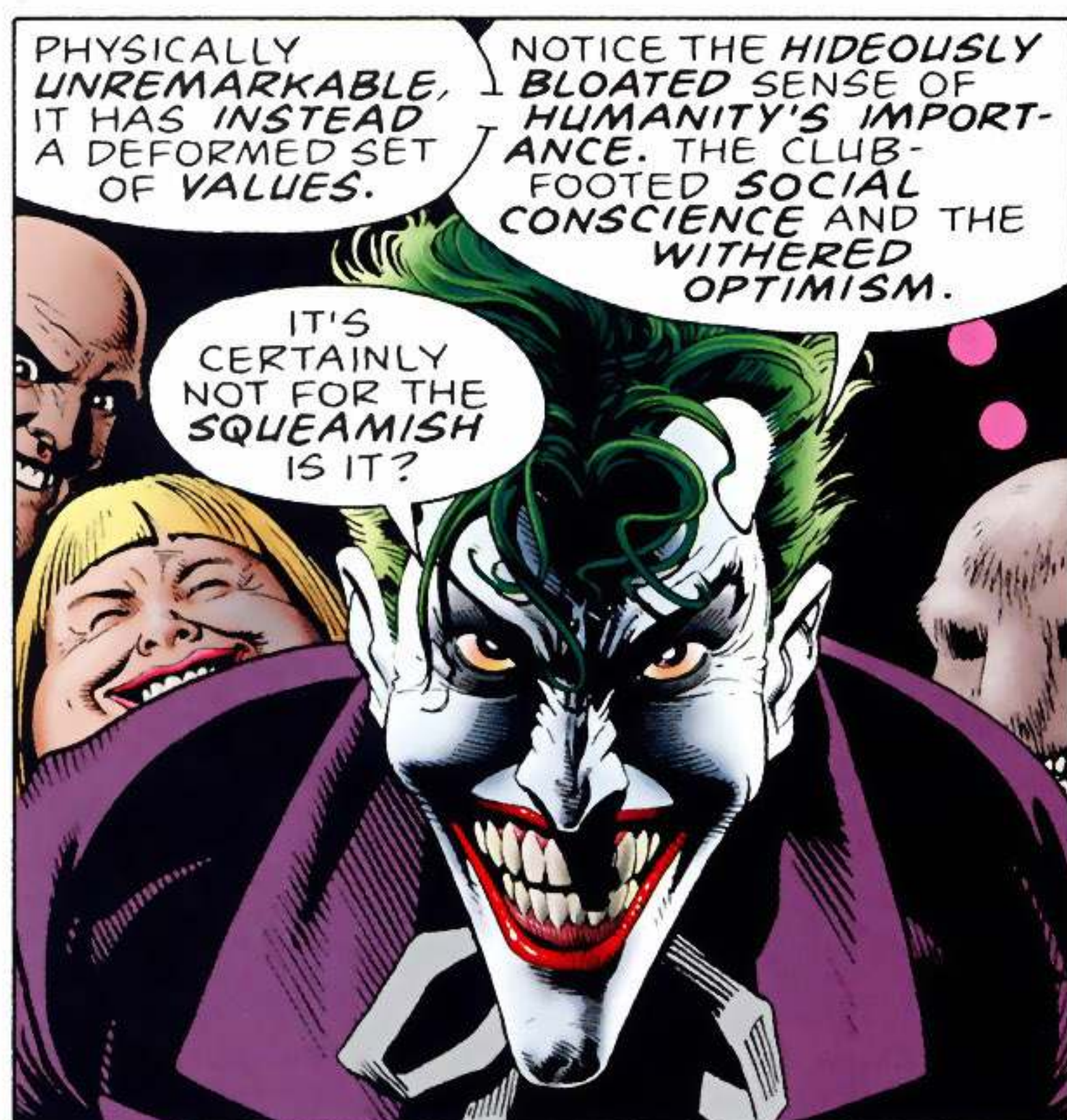
AUF!
HA-AUFF!



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
YOU'VE READ ABOUT IT IN THE
NEWSPAPERS! NOW, SHUDDER
AS YOU OBSERVE, BEFORE YOUR
VERY EYES, THAT MOST RARE
AND TRAGIC OF NATURE'S
MISTAKES!

I GIVE
YOU... THE
AVERAGE
MAN!

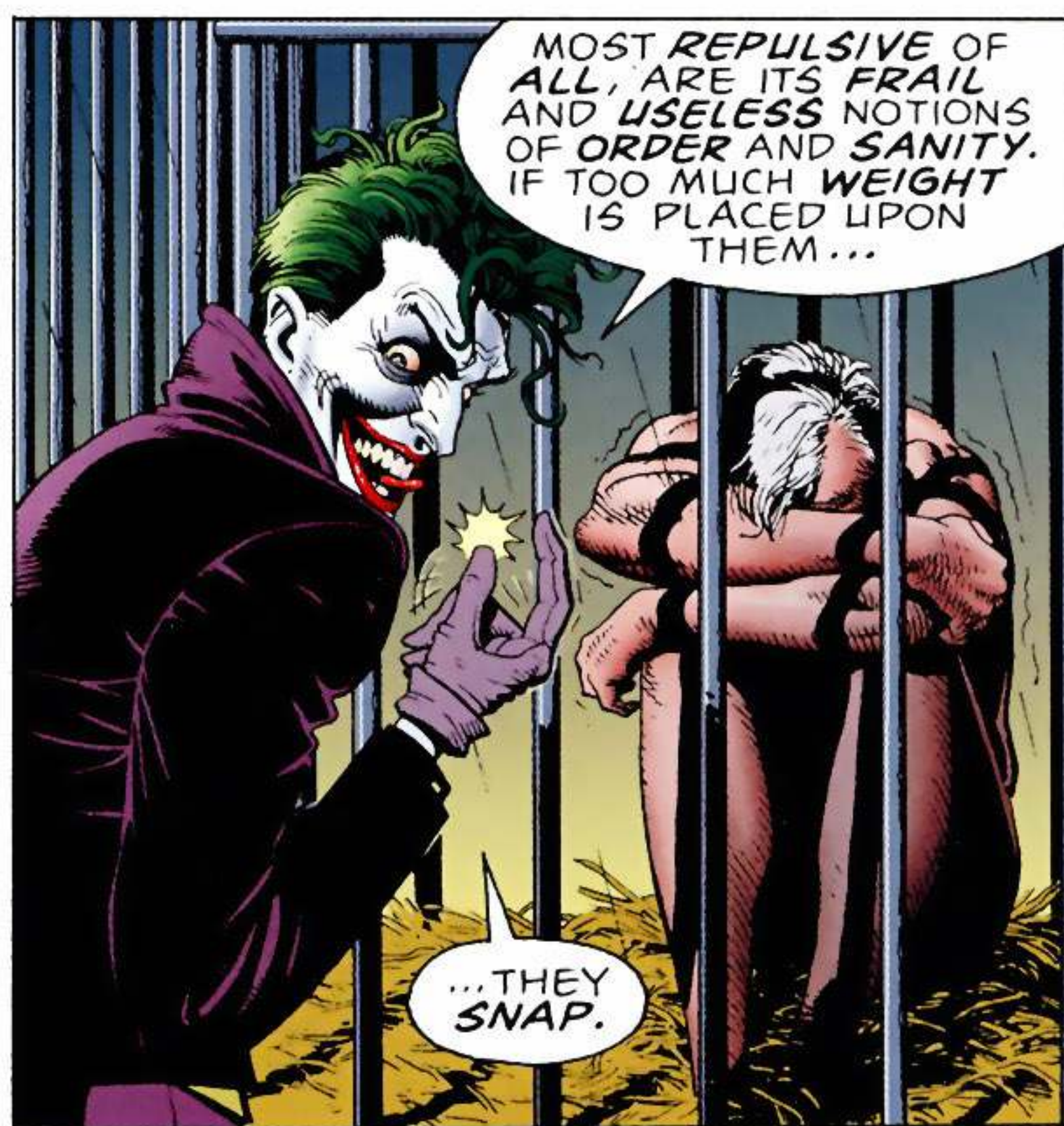
OOOHHH...



PHYSICALLY
UNREMARKABLE,
IT HAS INSTEAD
A DEFORMED SET
OF VALUES.

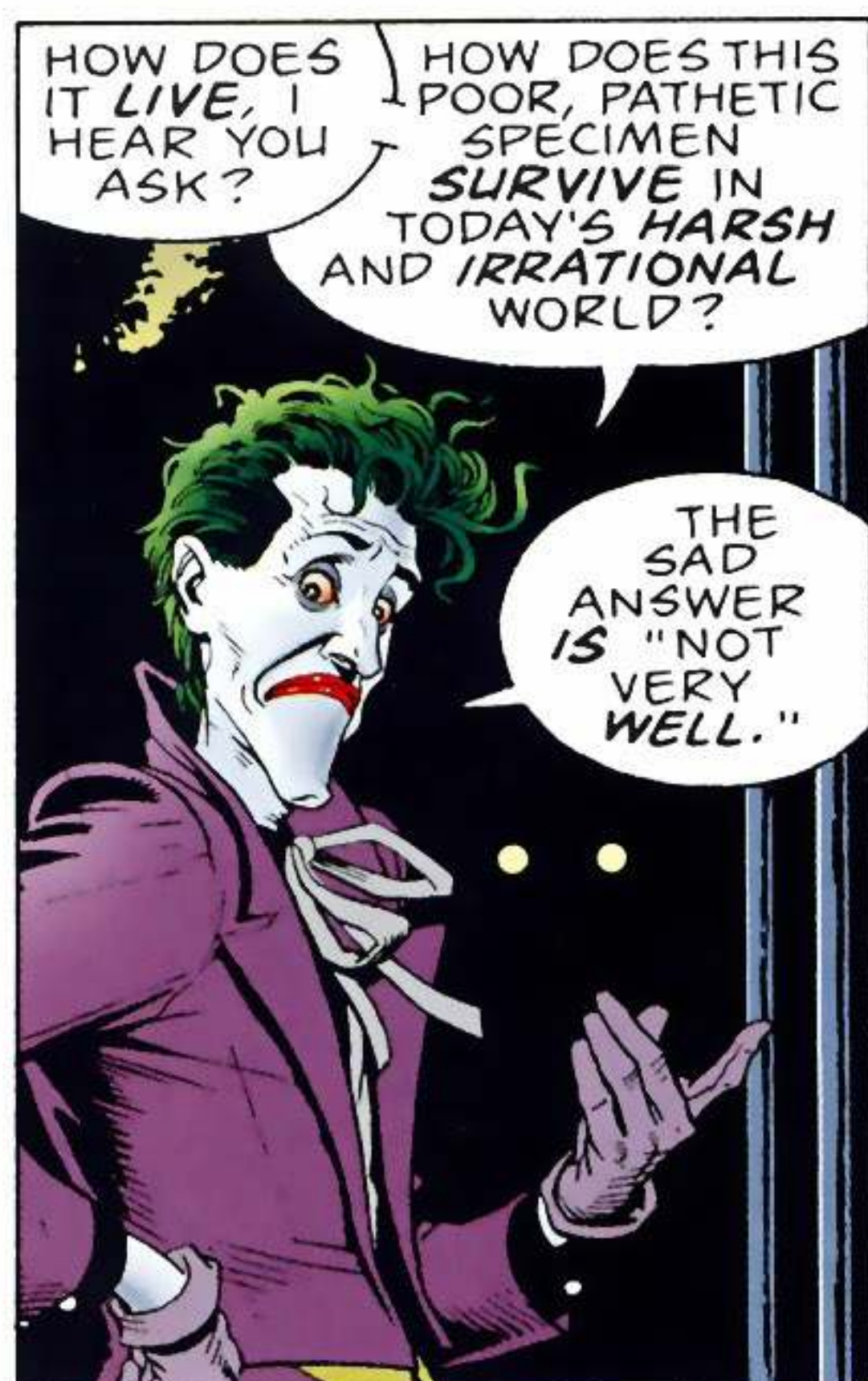
NOTICE THE *HIDEOUSLY*
BLOATED SENSE OF
HUMANITY'S IMPORT-
ANCE. THE CLUB-
FOOTED SOCIAL
CONSCIENCE AND THE
WITHERED
OPTIMISM.

IT'S
CERTAINLY
NOT FOR THE
SQUEAMISH
IS IT?



MOST REPULSIVE OF
ALL, ARE ITS FRAIL
AND USELESS NOTIONS
OF ORDER AND SANITY.
IF TOO MUCH WEIGHT
IS PLACED UPON
THEM...

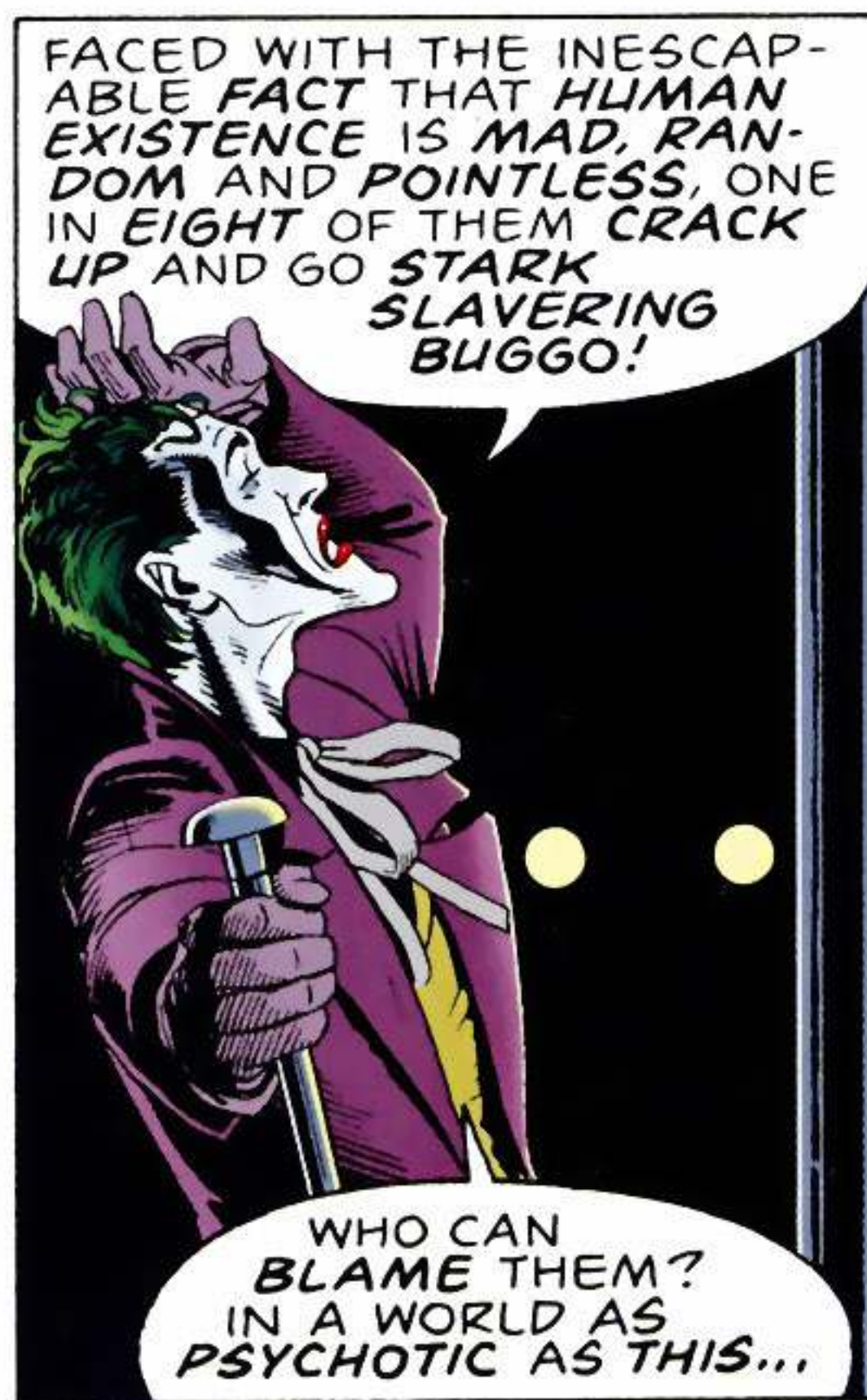
...THEY
SNAP.



HOW DOES
IT LIVE, I
HEAR YOU
ASK?

HOW DOES THIS
POOR, PATHETIC
SPECIMEN
SURVIVE IN
TODAY'S HARSH
AND IRRATIONAL
WORLD?

THE
SAD
ANSWER
IS "NOT
VERY
WELL."



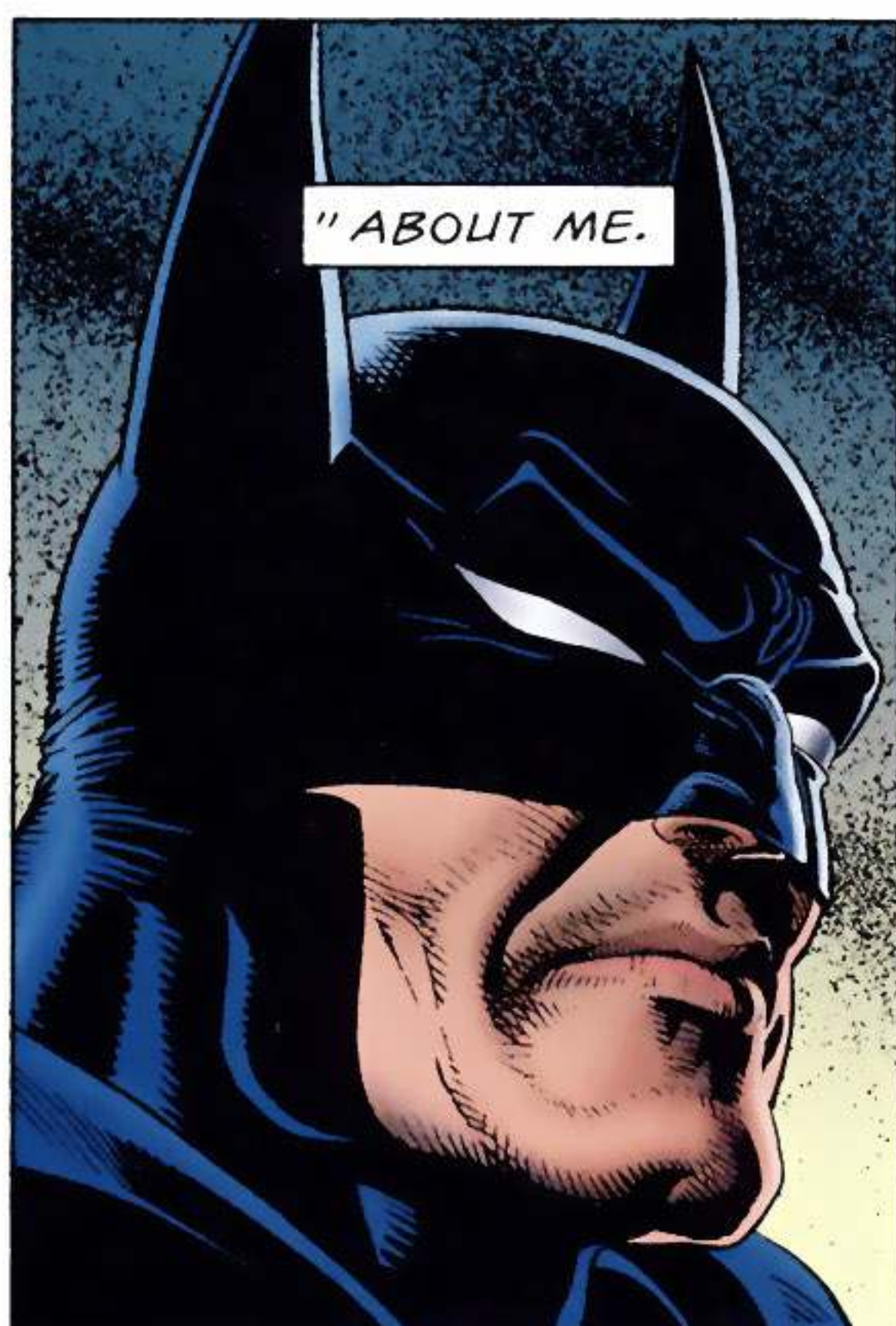
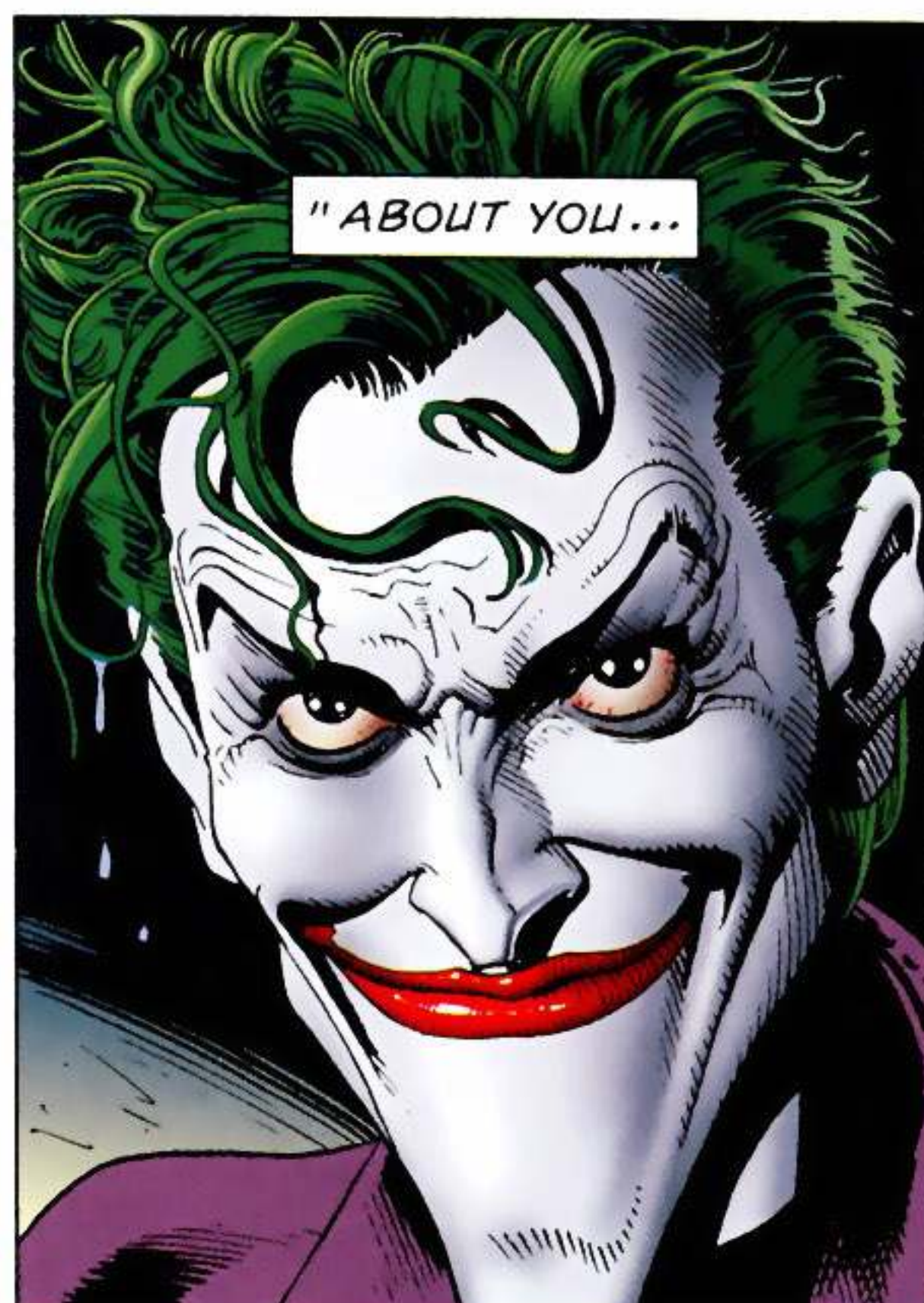
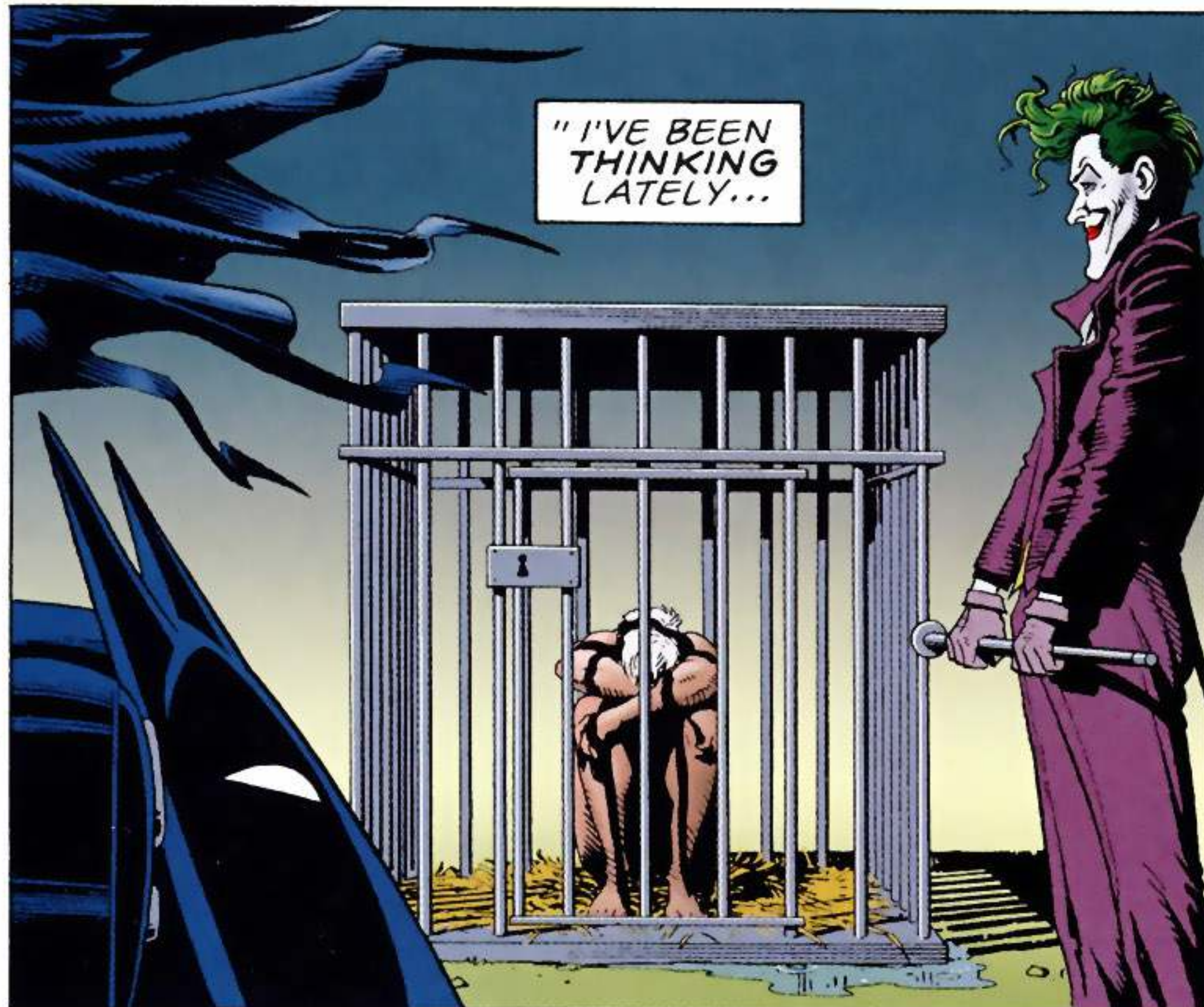
FACED WITH THE INESCAP-
ABLE FACT THAT HUMAN
EXISTENCE IS MAD, RAN-
DOM AND POINTLESS, ONE
IN EIGHT OF THEM CRACK
UP AND GO STARK
SLAVERING
BUGGO!

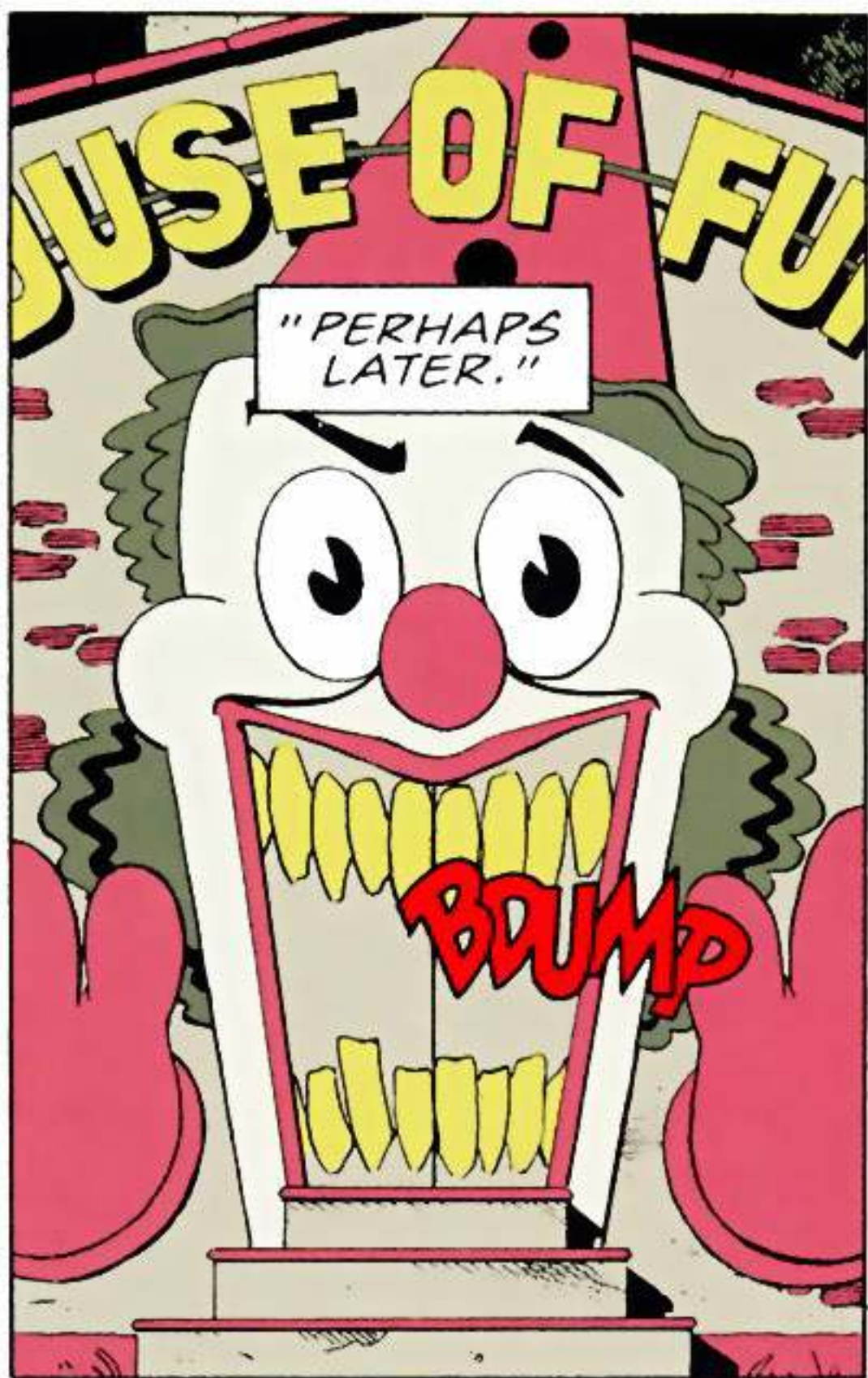
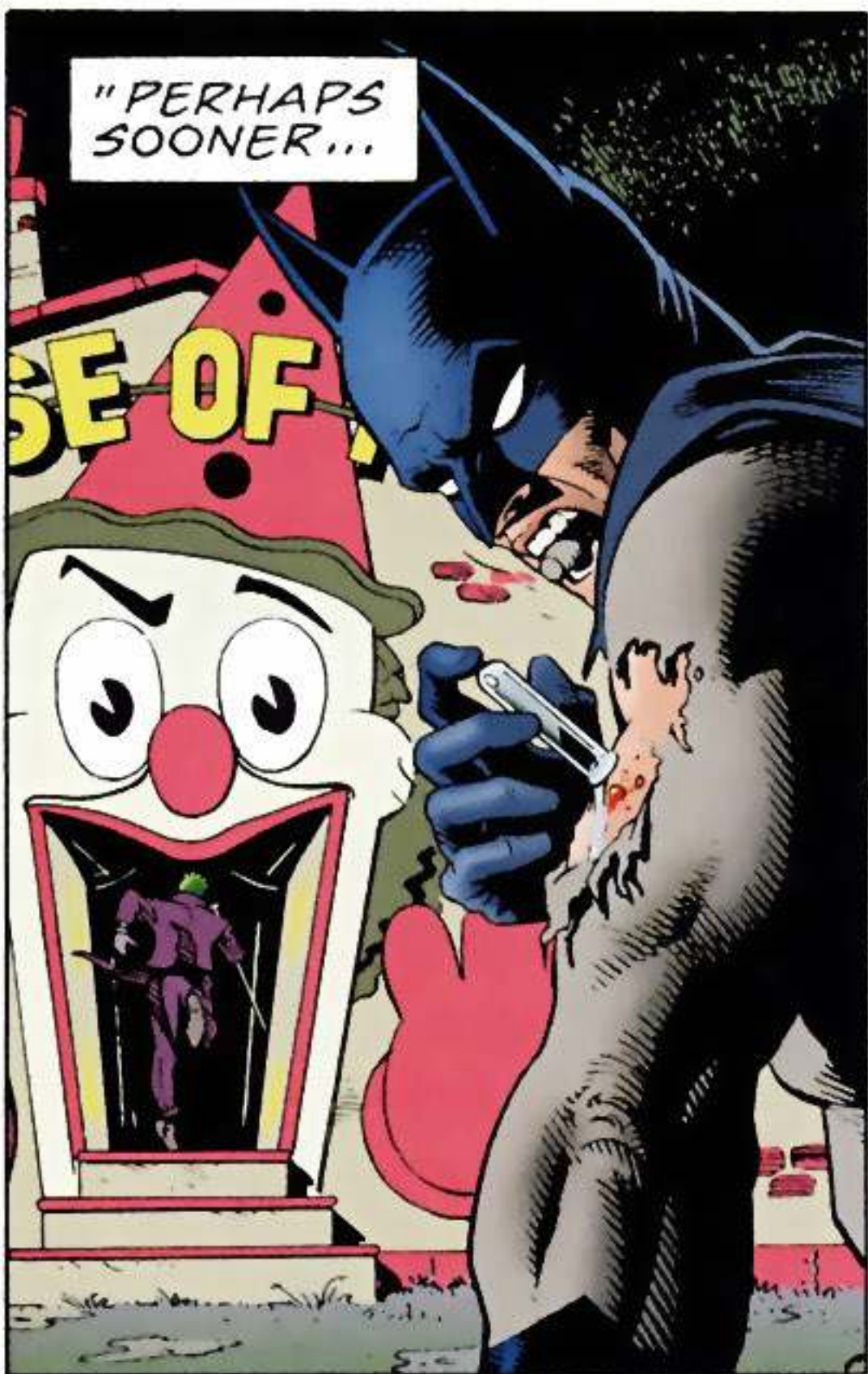
WHO CAN
BLAME THEM?
IN A WORLD AS
PSYCHOTIC AS THIS...

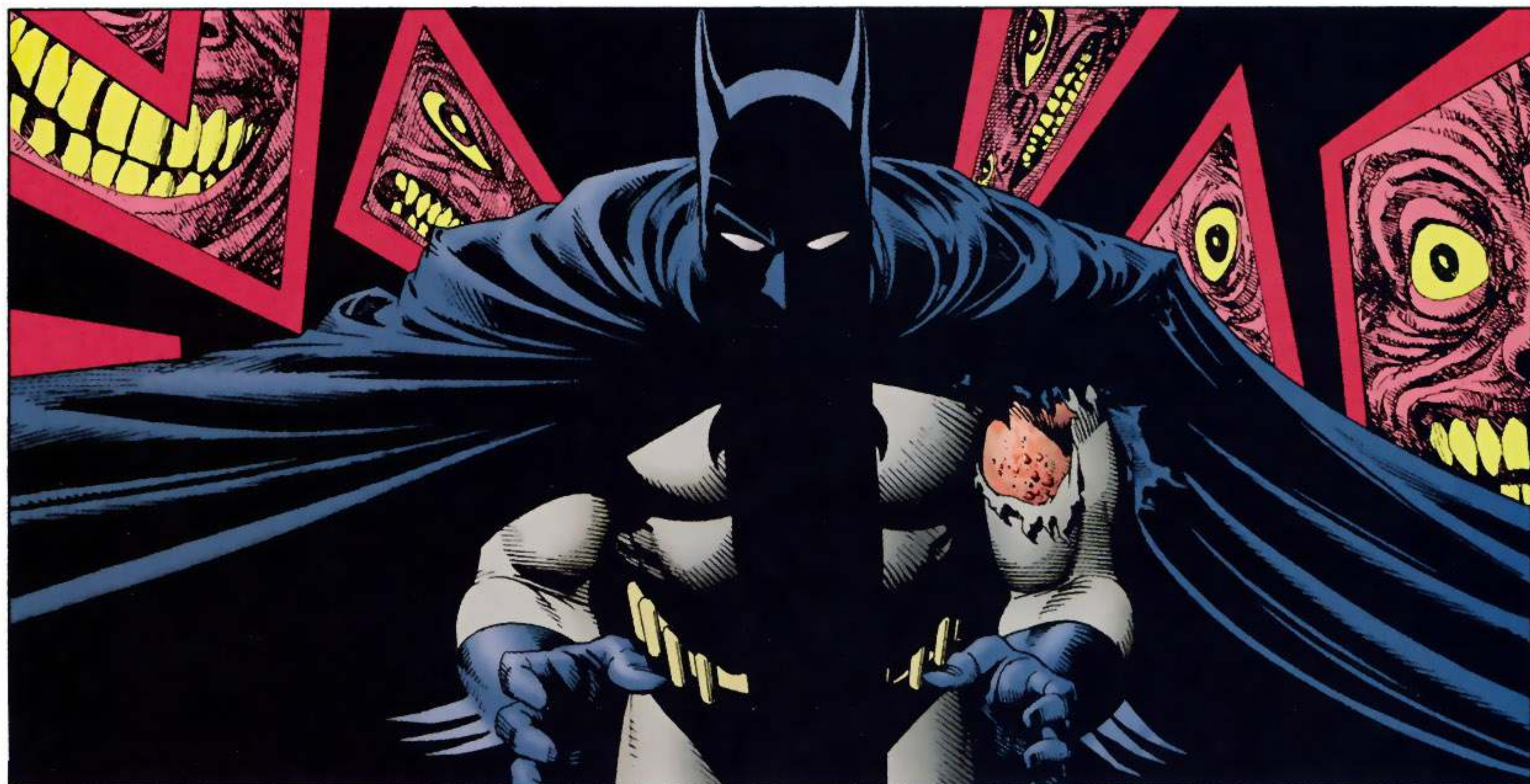
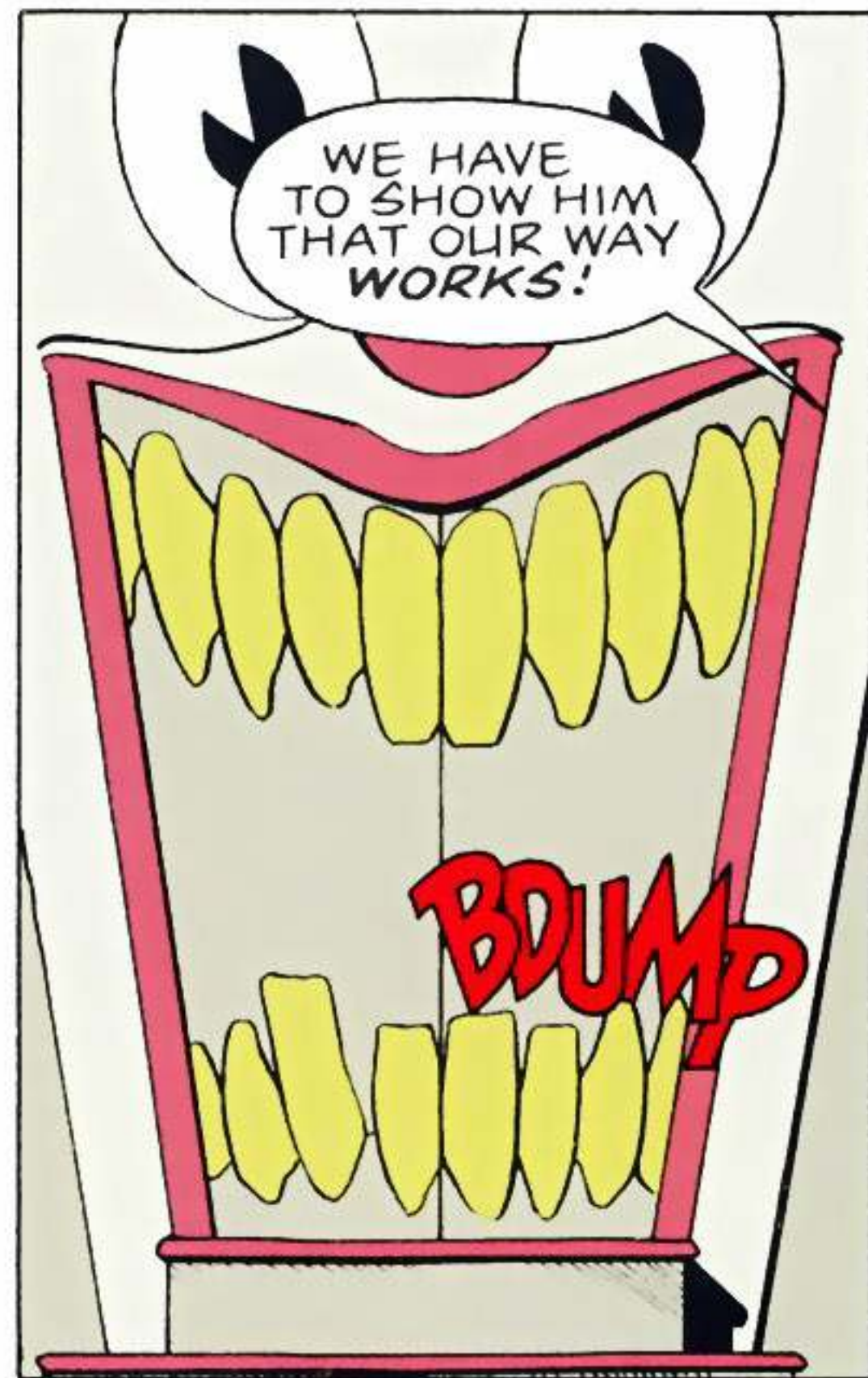


... ANY
OTHER
RESPONSE
WOULD BE
CRAZY!











SO... I SEE YOU RECEIVED THE **FREE TICKET** I SENT YOU.

I'M **GLAD**. I DID **SO** WANT YOU TO BE HERE.



YOU SEE, IT DOESN'T **MATTER** IF YOU **CATCH** ME AND SEND ME BACK TO THE **ASYLUM**...

GORDON'S BEEN DRIVEN **MAD**.

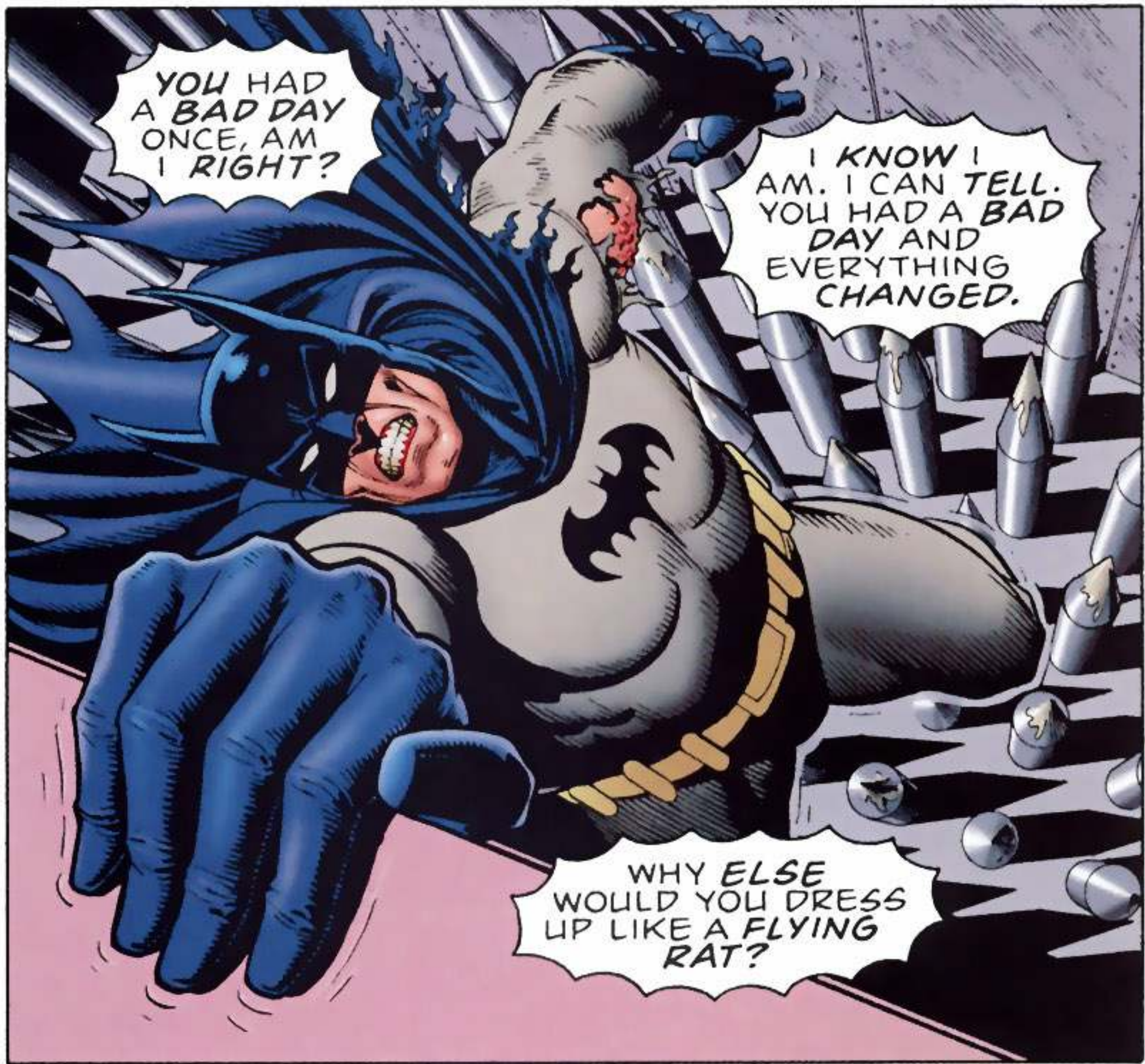
I'VE PROVED MY POINT.



I'VE DEMONSTRATED THERE'S NO **DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN ME AND EVERYONE **ELSE**!

ALL IT TAKES IS ONE **BAD DAY** TO REDUCE THE **SANEST** MAN ALIVE TO **LUNACY**.

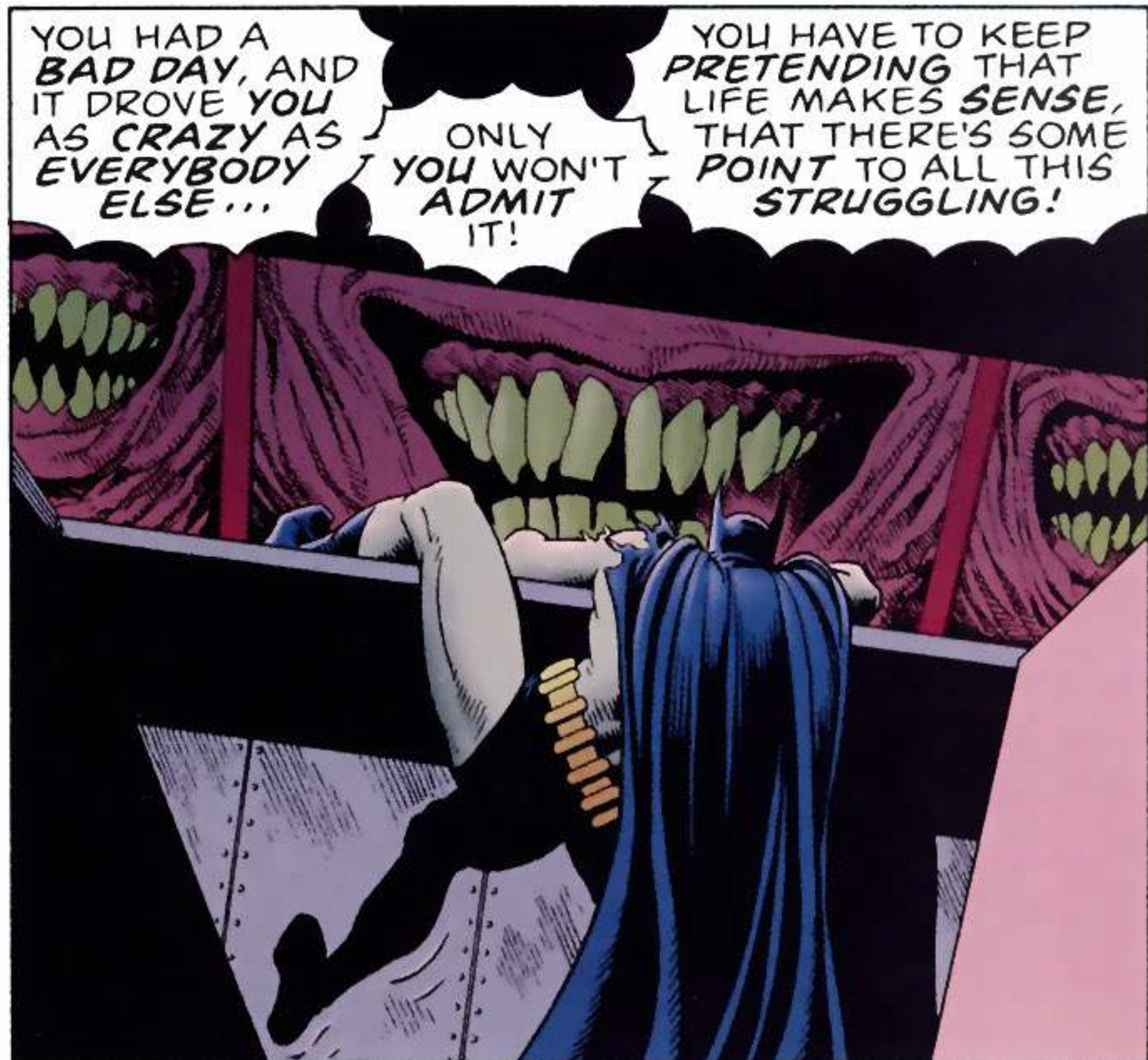
THAT'S HOW FAR THE **WORLD** IS FROM WHERE I AM. JUST ONE **BAD DAY**.



YOU HAD A **BAD DAY** ONCE, AM I RIGHT?

I KNOW I AM. I CAN TELL. YOU HAD A **BAD DAY** AND EVERYTHING **CHANGED**.

WHY **ELSE** WOULD YOU DRESS UP LIKE A **FLYING RAT**?



YOU HAD A **BAD DAY**, AND IT DROVE YOU AS **CRAZY** AS **EVERYBODY ELSE**...

ONLY YOU WON'T ADMIT IT!

YOU HAVE TO KEEP **PRETENDING** THAT LIFE MAKES **SENSE**, THAT THERE'S SOME **POINT** TO ALL THIS **STRUGGLING**!



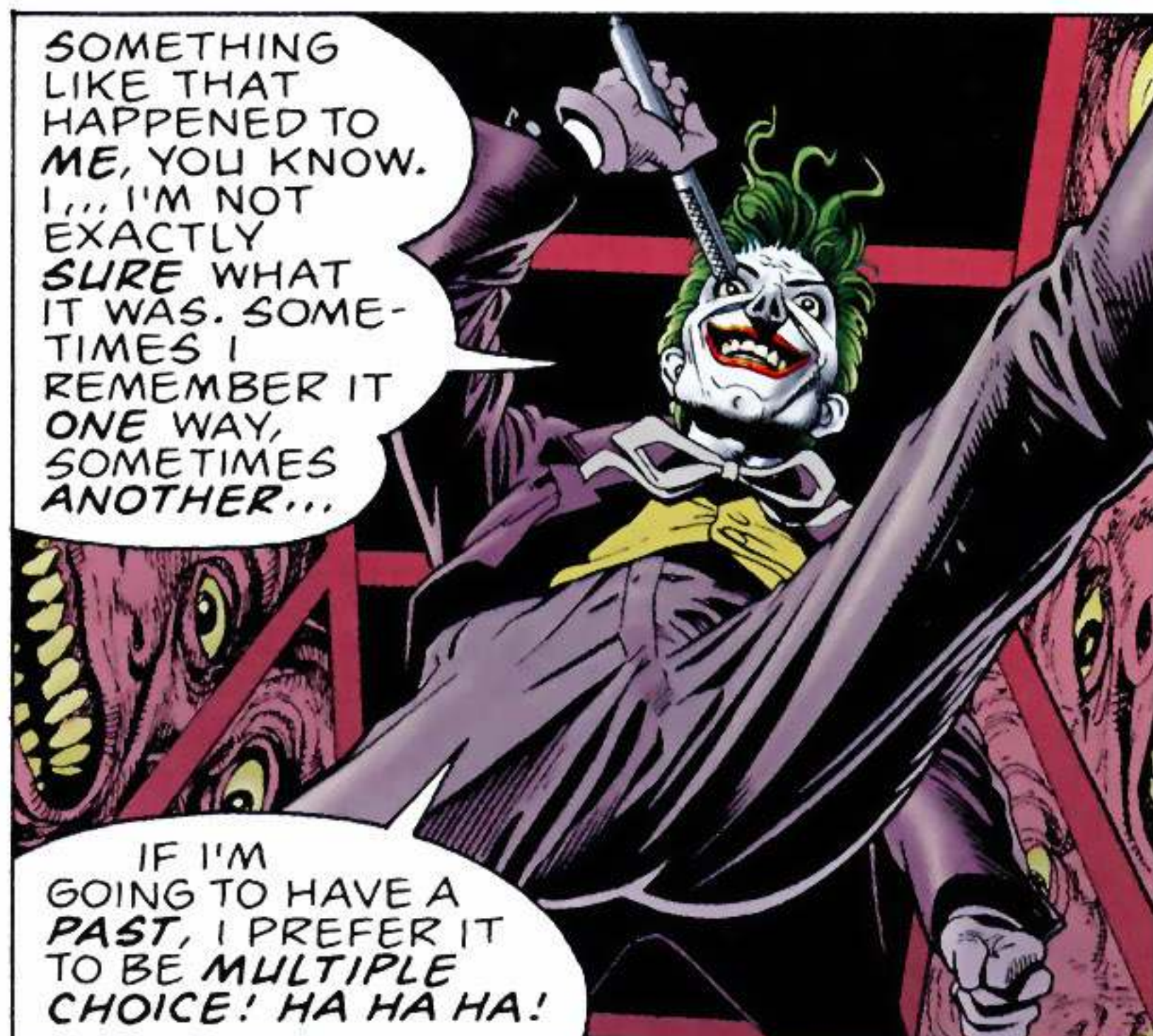
GOD, YOU MAKE ME WANT TO **PUKE**.



I MEAN, WHAT IS IT WITH YOU? WHAT MADE YOU WHAT YOU ARE?

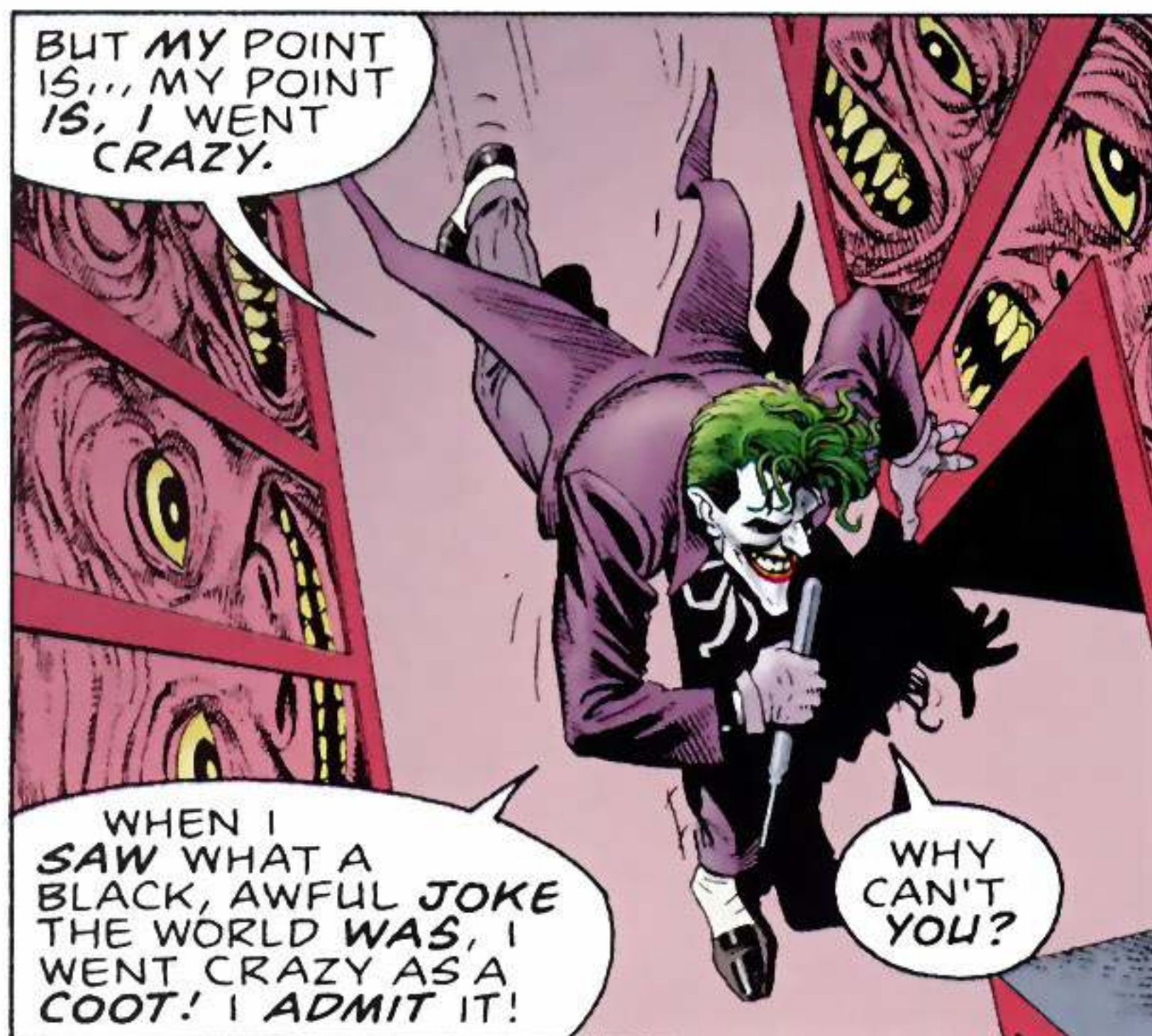
GIRLFRIEND
KILLED BY THE
MOB, MAYBE?
BROTHER CARVED
UP BY SOME
MUGGER?

SOME-
THING LIKE
THAT, I BET.
SOMETHING
LIKE THAT...



SOMETHING
LIKE THAT
HAPPENED TO
ME, YOU KNOW.
I... I'M NOT
EXACTLY
SURE WHAT
IT WAS. SOME-
TIMES I
REMEMBER IT
ONE WAY,
SOMETIMES
ANOTHER...

IF I'M
GOING TO HAVE A
PAST, I PREFER IT
TO BE MULTIPLE
CHOICE! HA HA HA!



BUT MY POINT
IS... MY POINT
IS, I WENT
CRAZY.

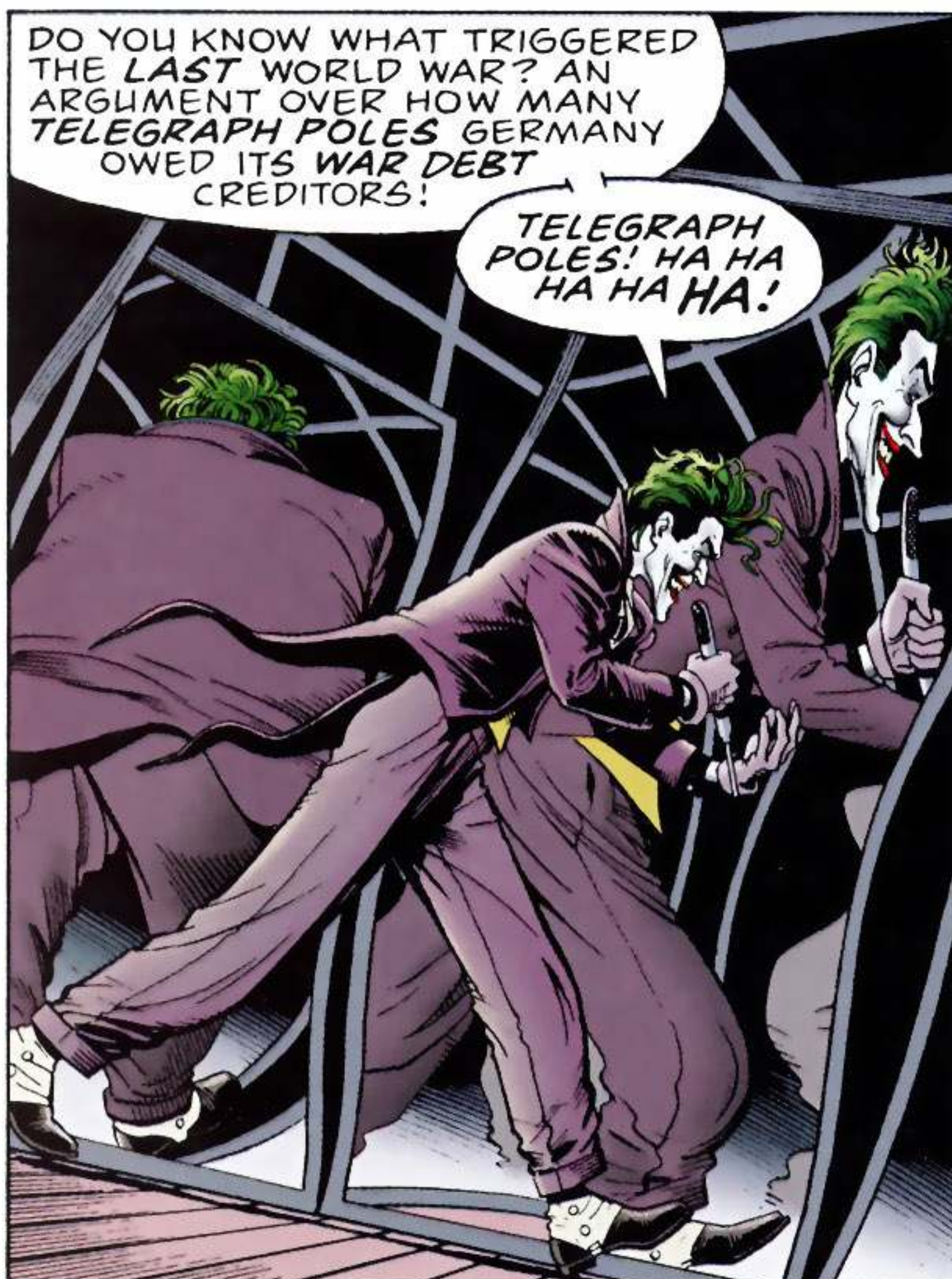
WHEN I
SAW WHAT A
BLACK, AWFUL JOKE
THE WORLD WAS, I
WENT CRAZY AS A
COOT! I ADMIT IT!

WHY
CAN'T
YOU?



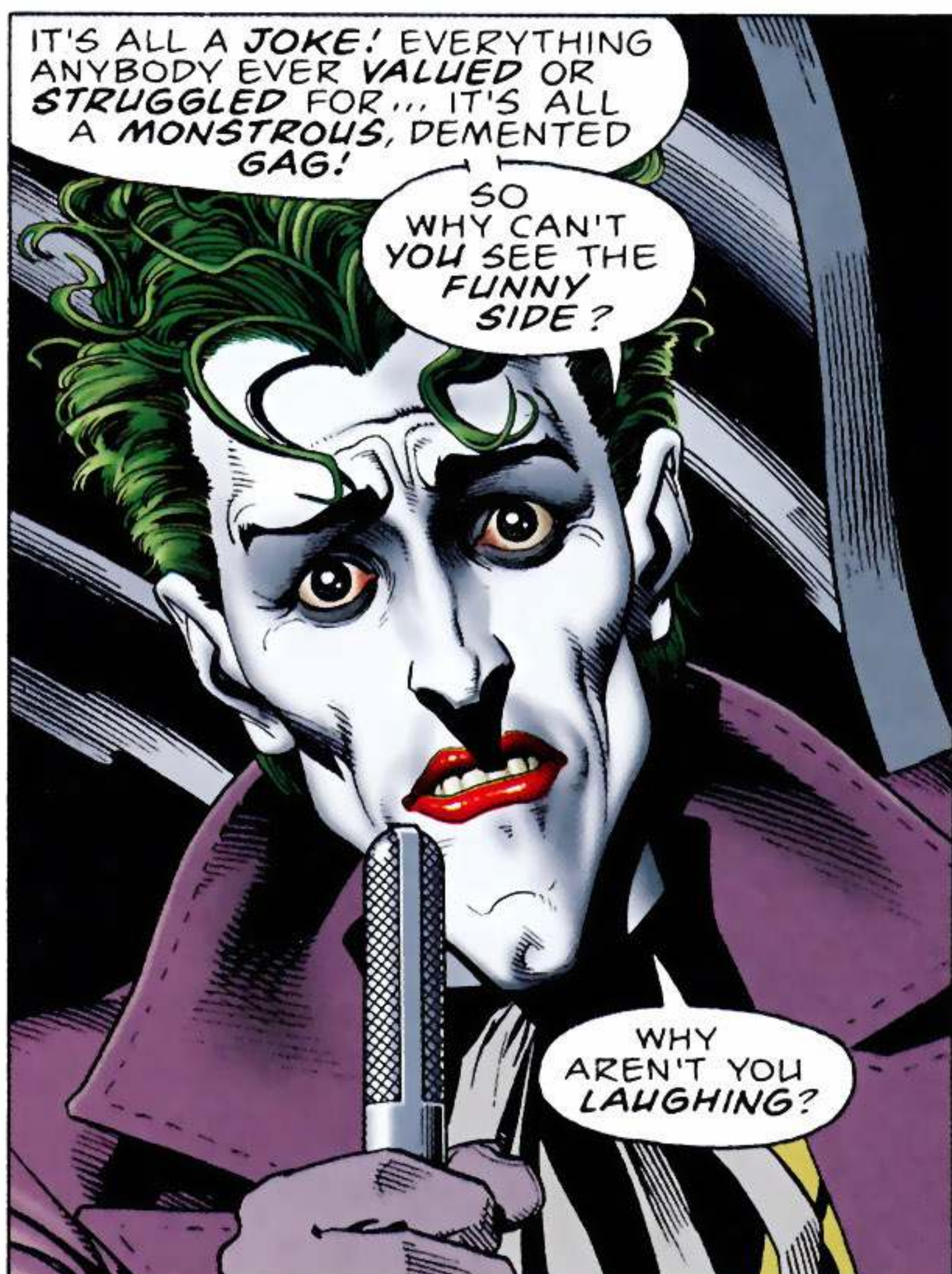
I MEAN, YOU'RE NOT
UNINTELLIGENT! YOU
MUST SEE THE
REALITY OF THE
SITUATION.

DO YOU
KNOW HOW MANY
TIMES WE'VE COME
CLOSE TO WORLD
WAR THREE OVER A
FLOCK OF GEESE ON
A COMPUTER SCREEN?



DO YOU KNOW WHAT TRIGGERED
THE LAST WORLD WAR? AN
ARGUMENT OVER HOW MANY
TELEGRAPH POLES GERMANY
OWED ITS WAR DEBT
CREDITORS!

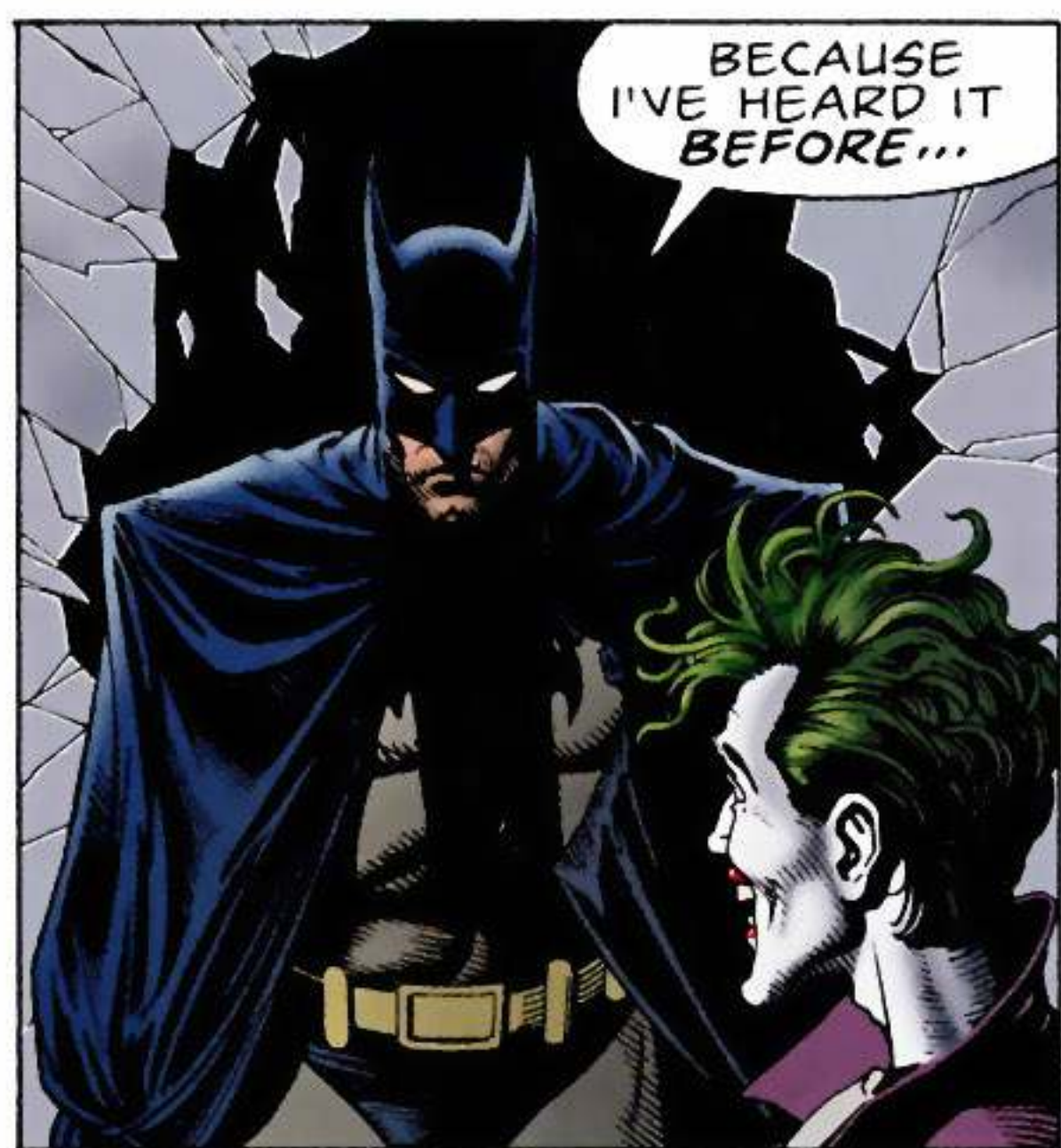
TELEGRAPH
POLES! HA HA
HA HA HA!

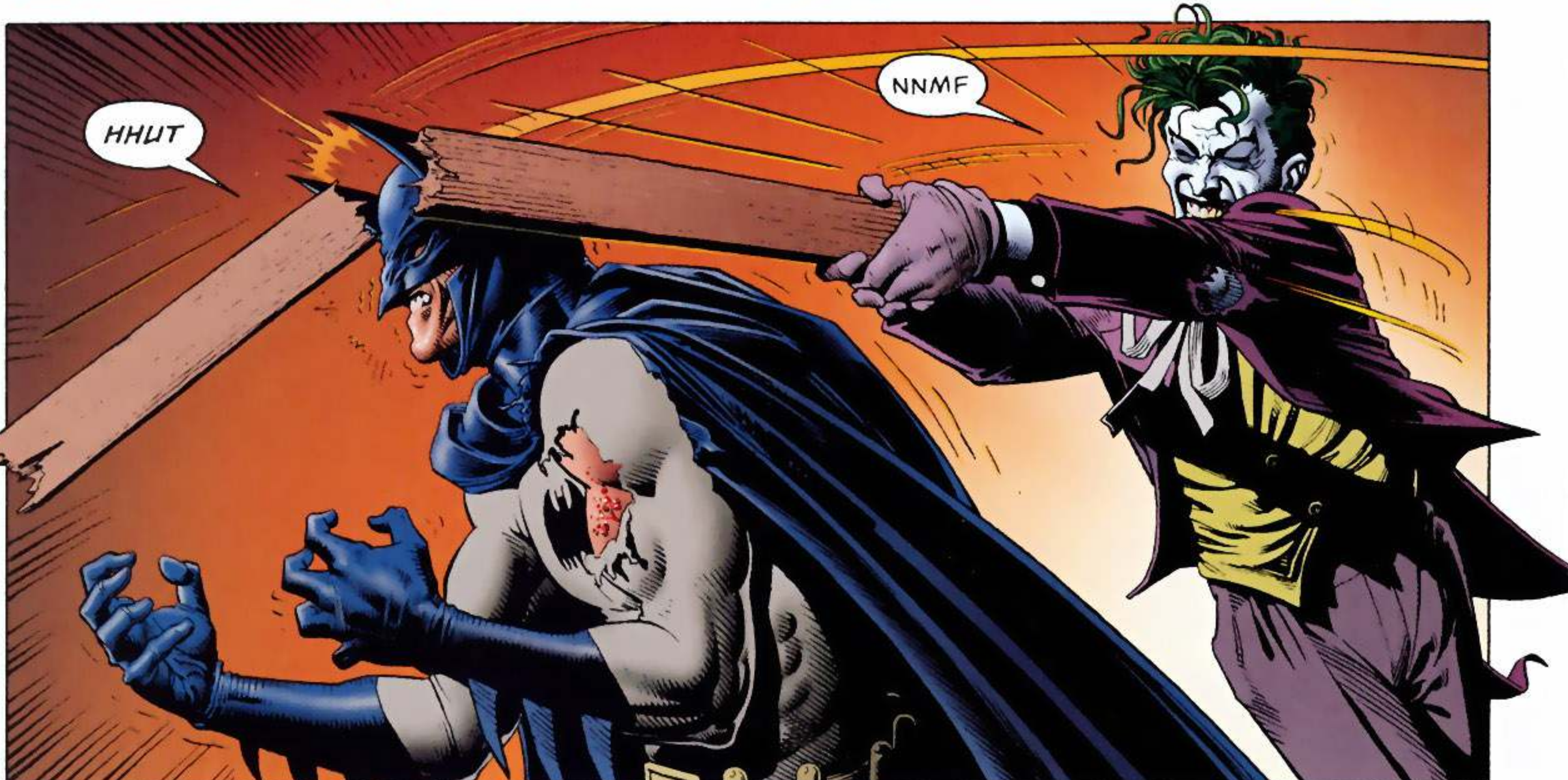
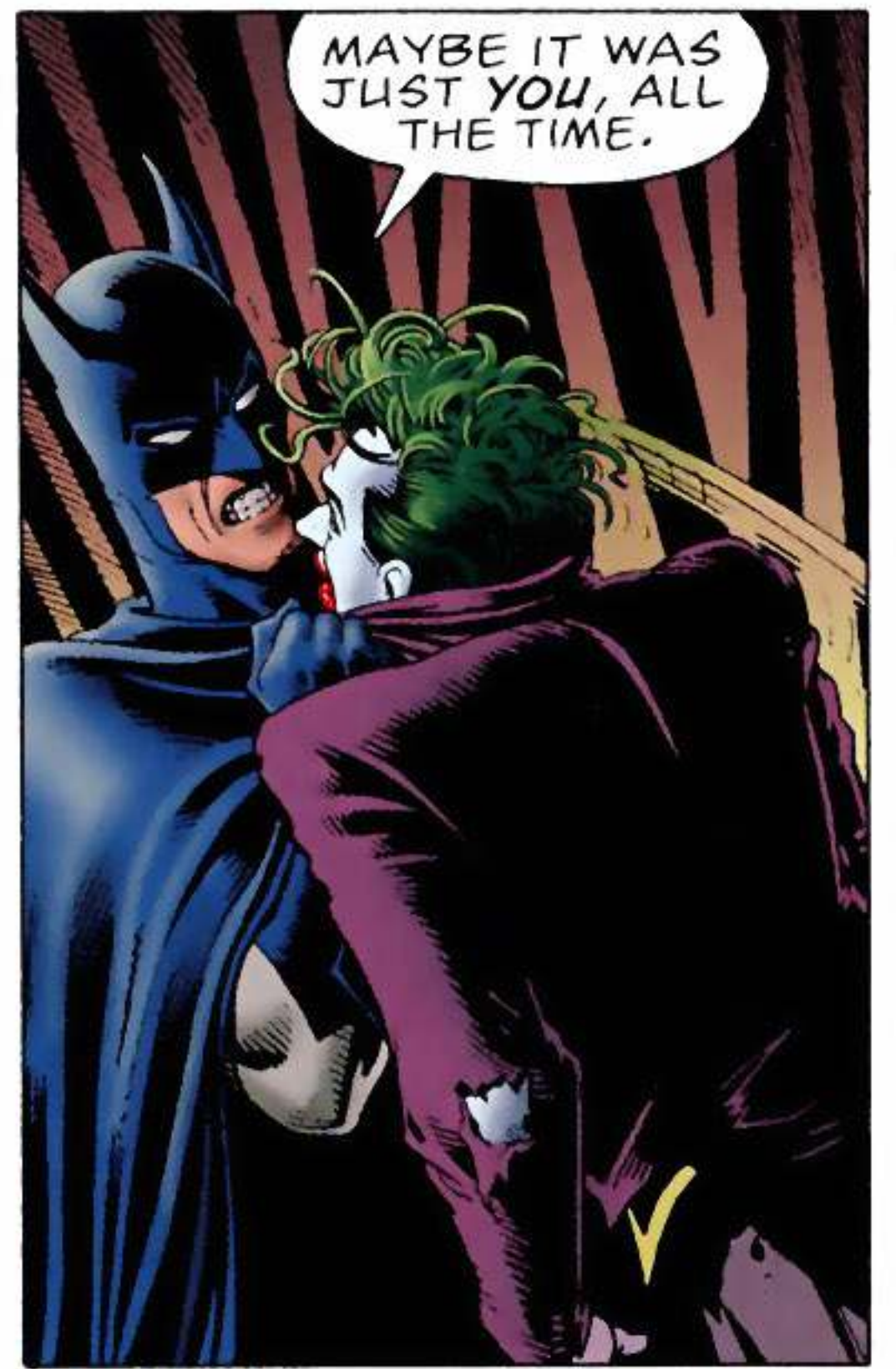
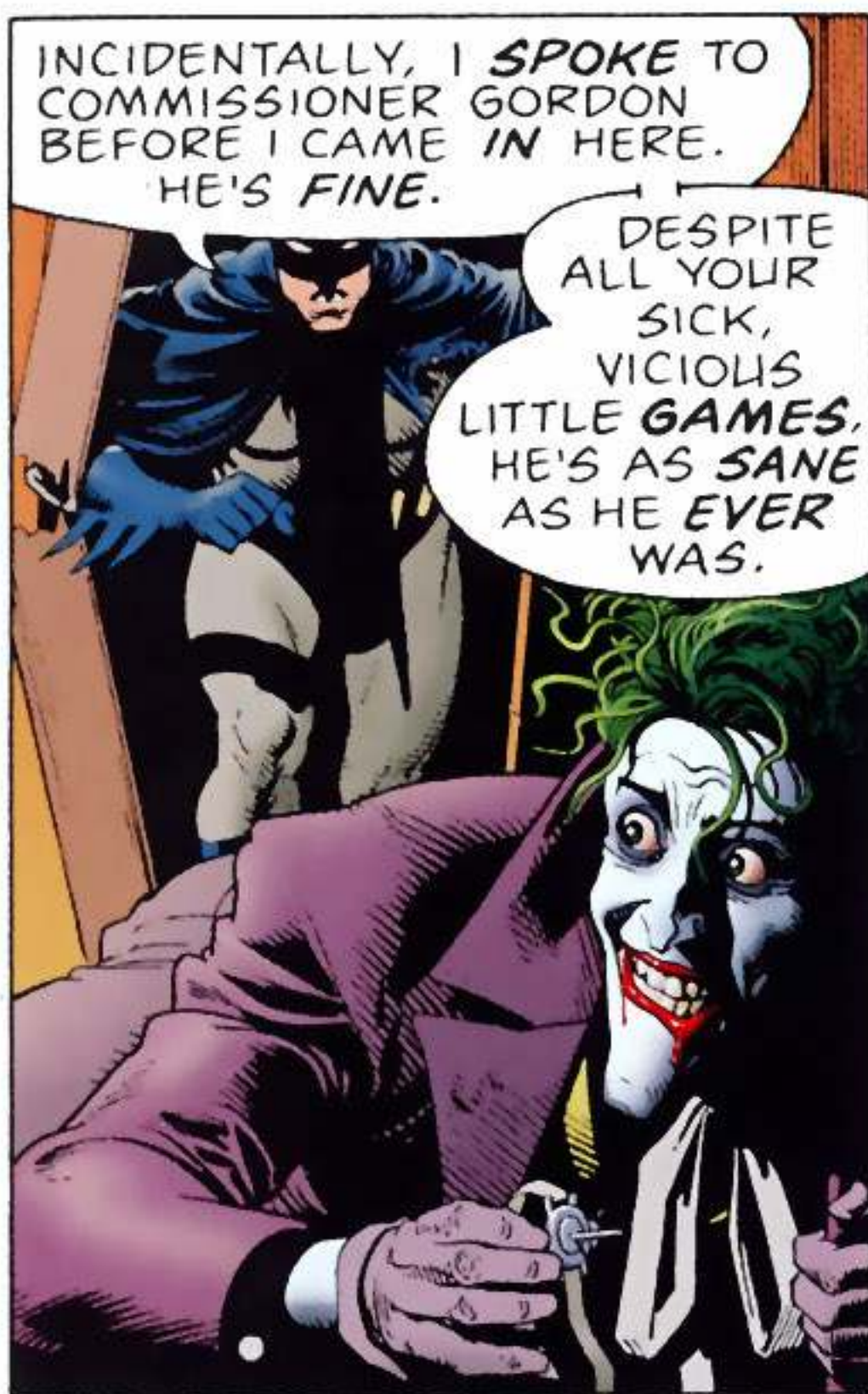


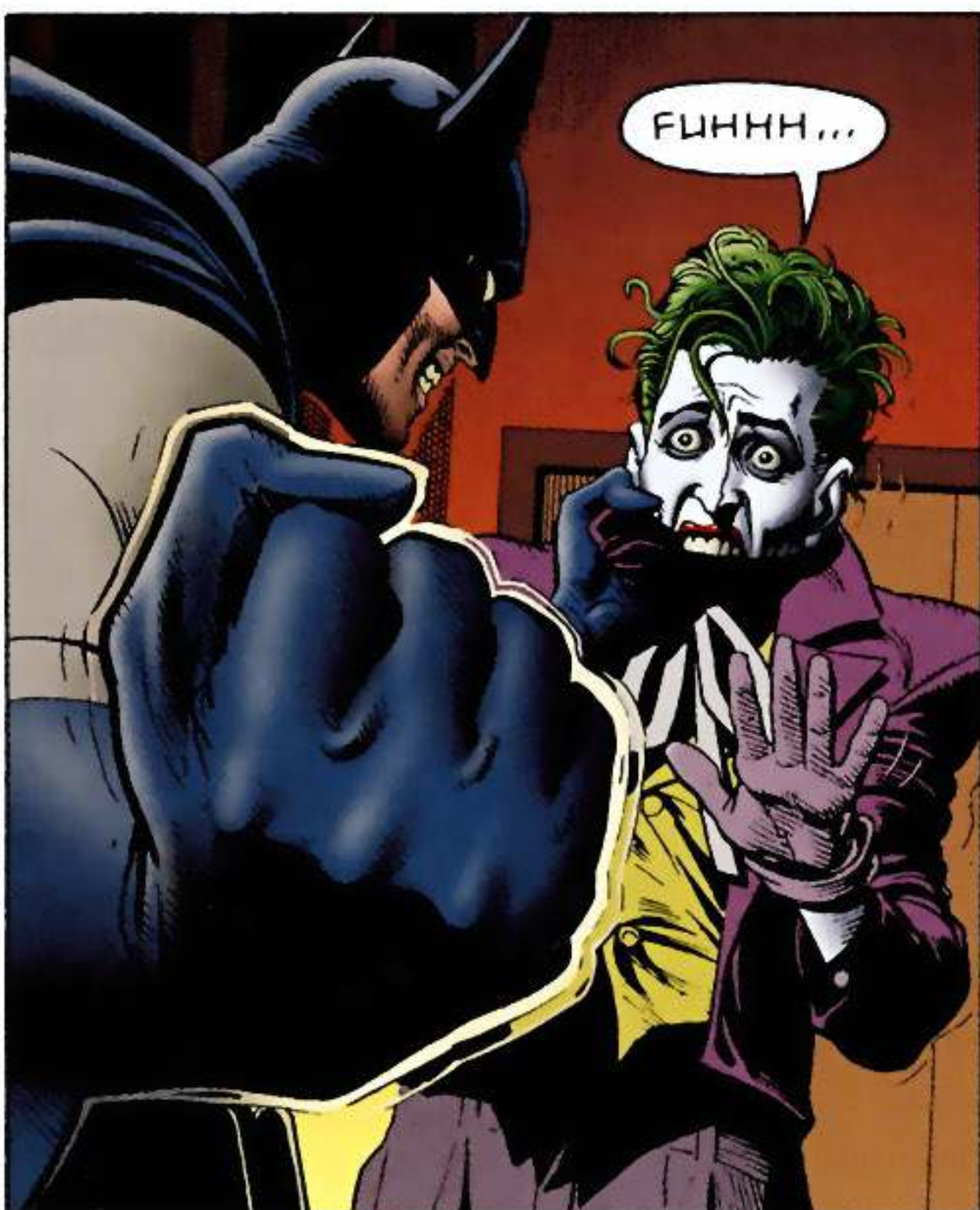
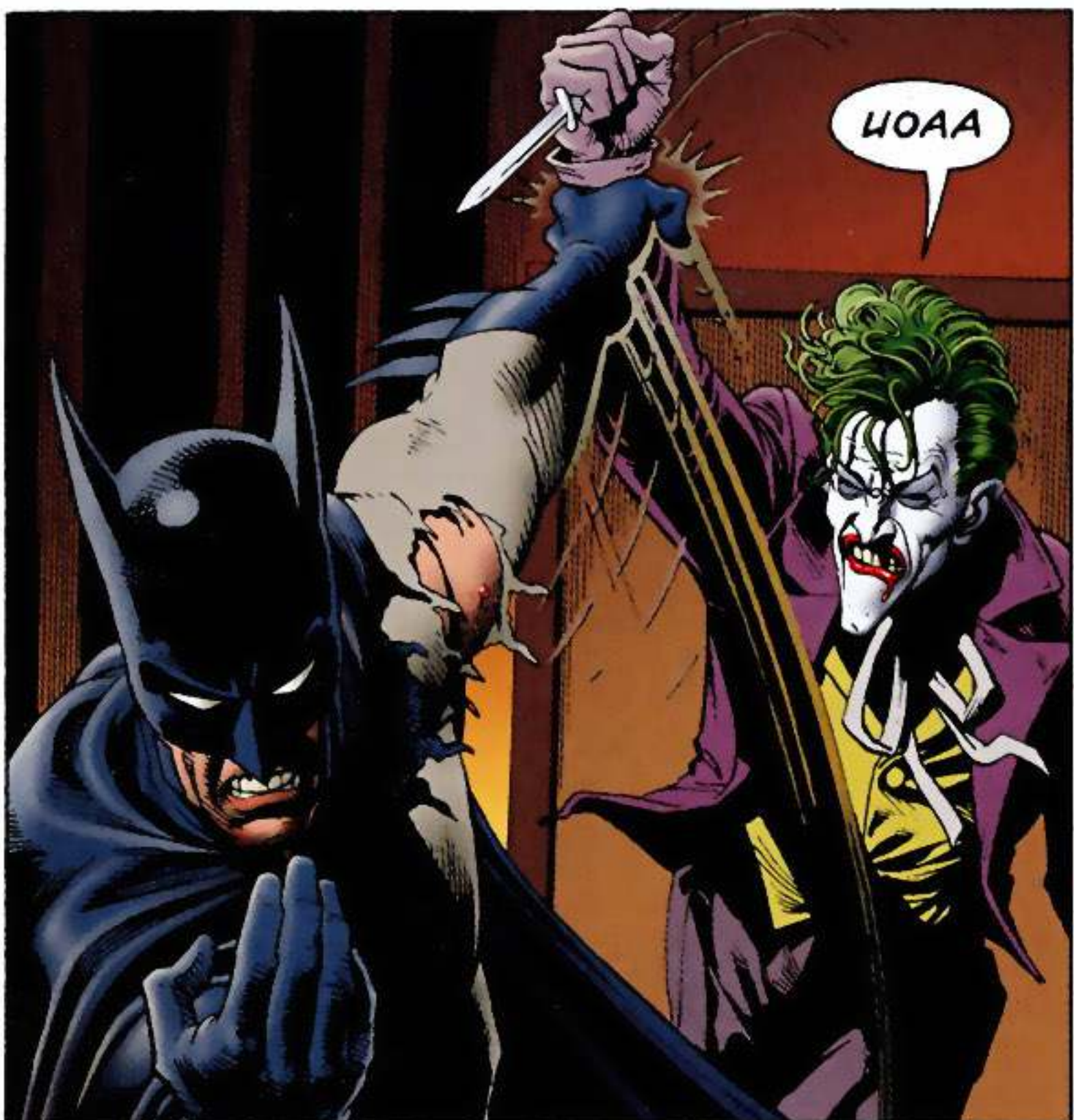
IT'S ALL A JOKE! EVERYTHING
ANYBODY EVER VALUED OR
STRUGGLED FOR... IT'S ALL
A MONSTROUS, DEMENTED
GAG!

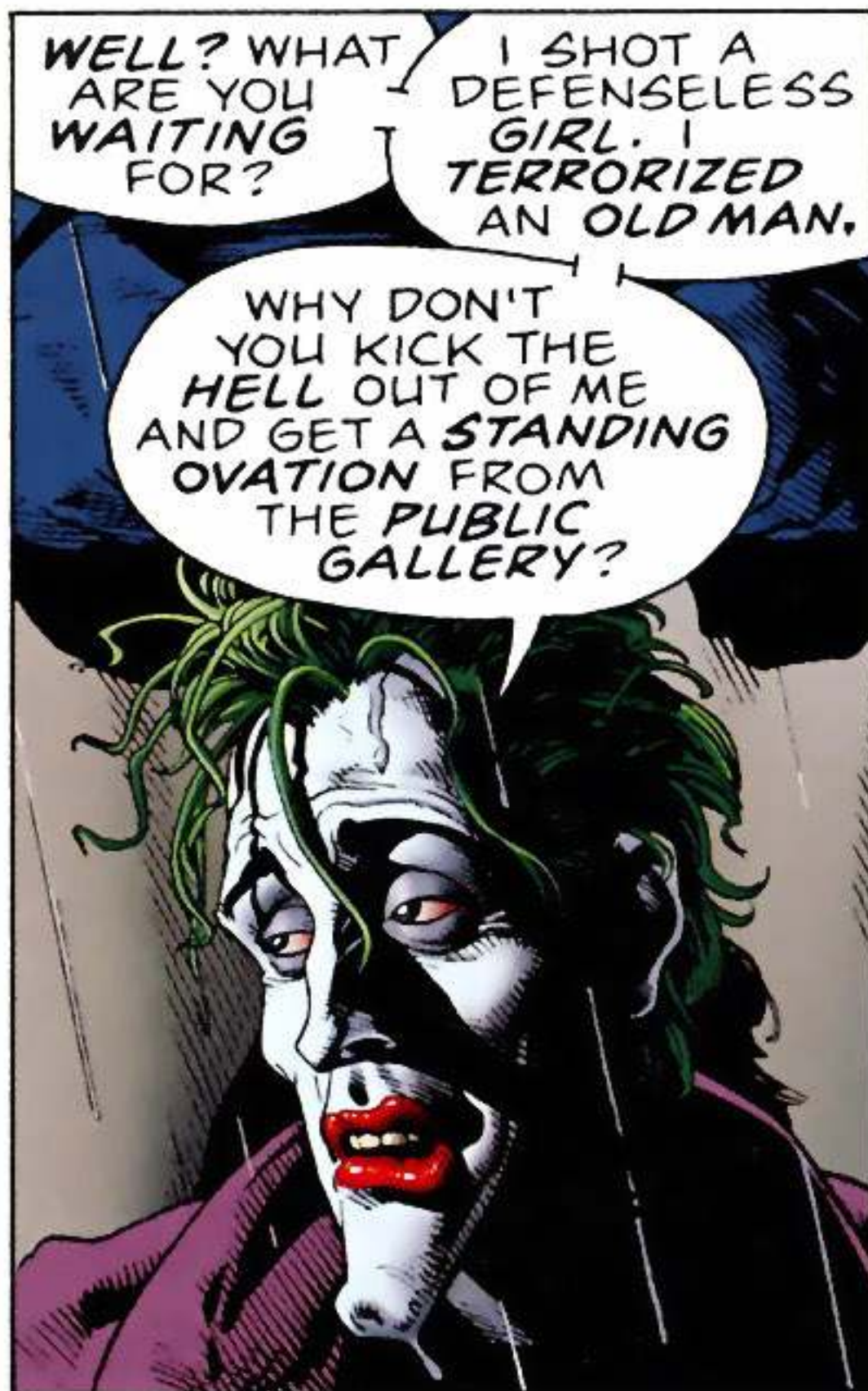
SO
WHY CAN'T
YOU SEE THE
FUNNY
SIDE?

WHY
AREN'T YOU
LAUGHING?









GOD DAMN IT...

IT'S EMPTY!

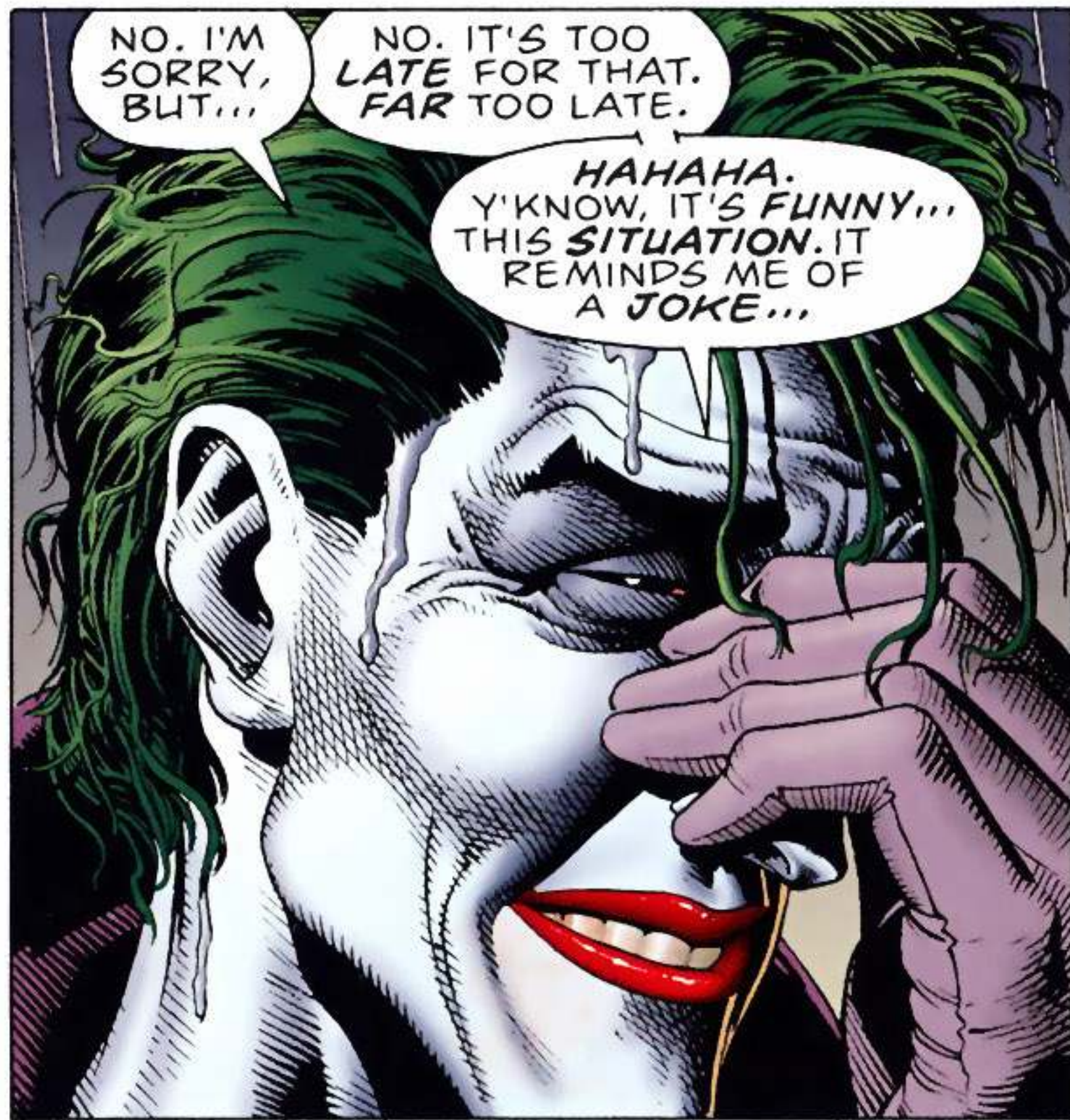
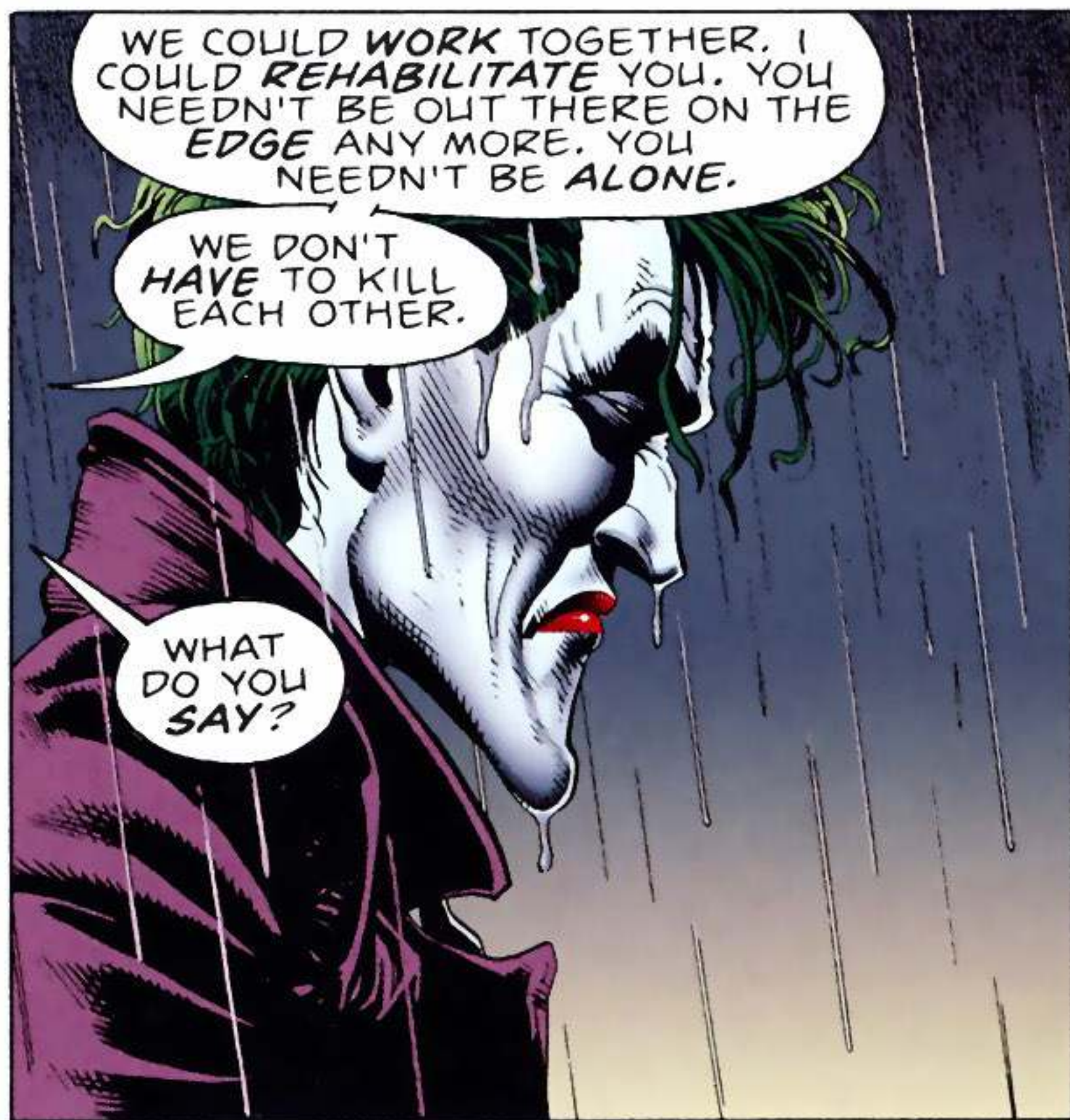
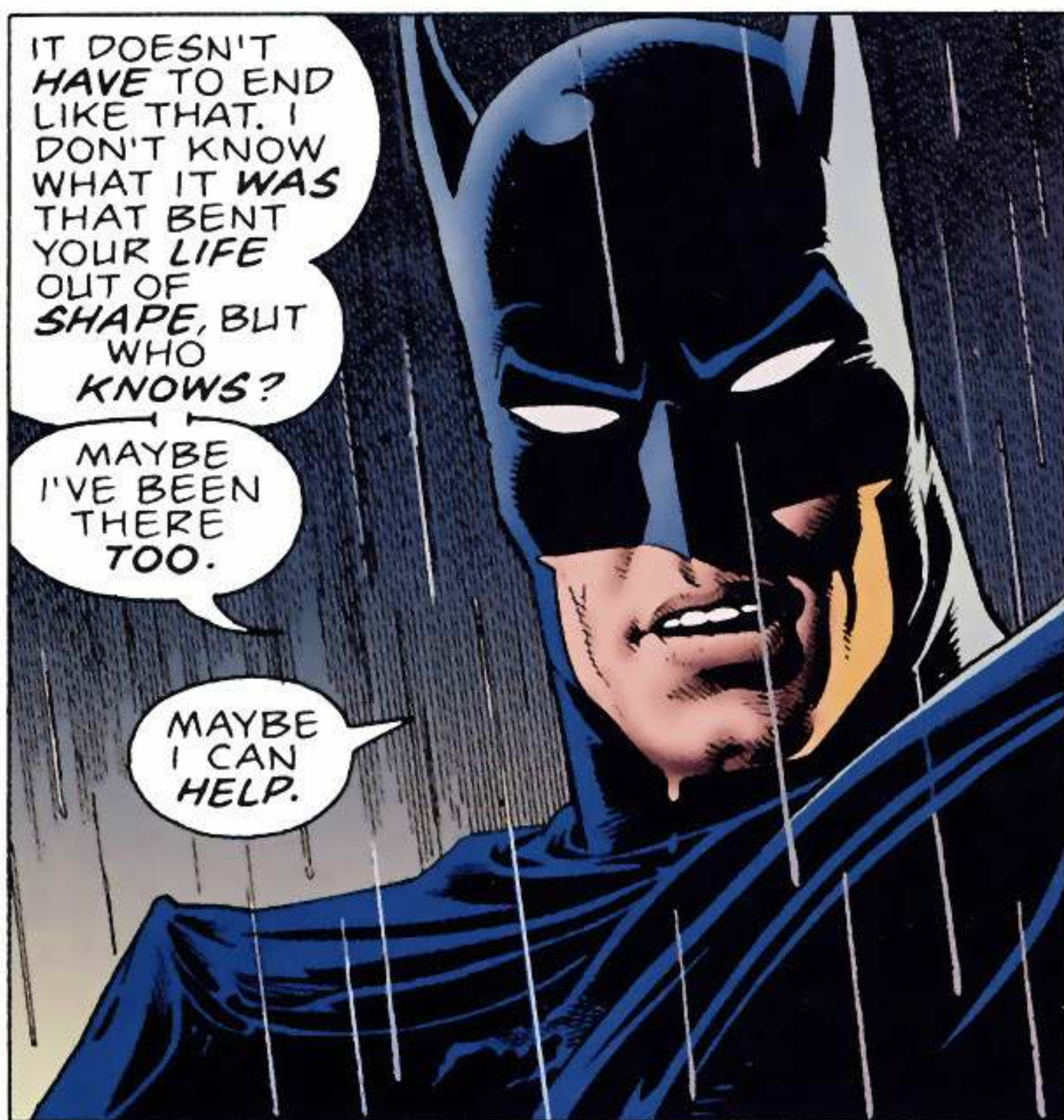
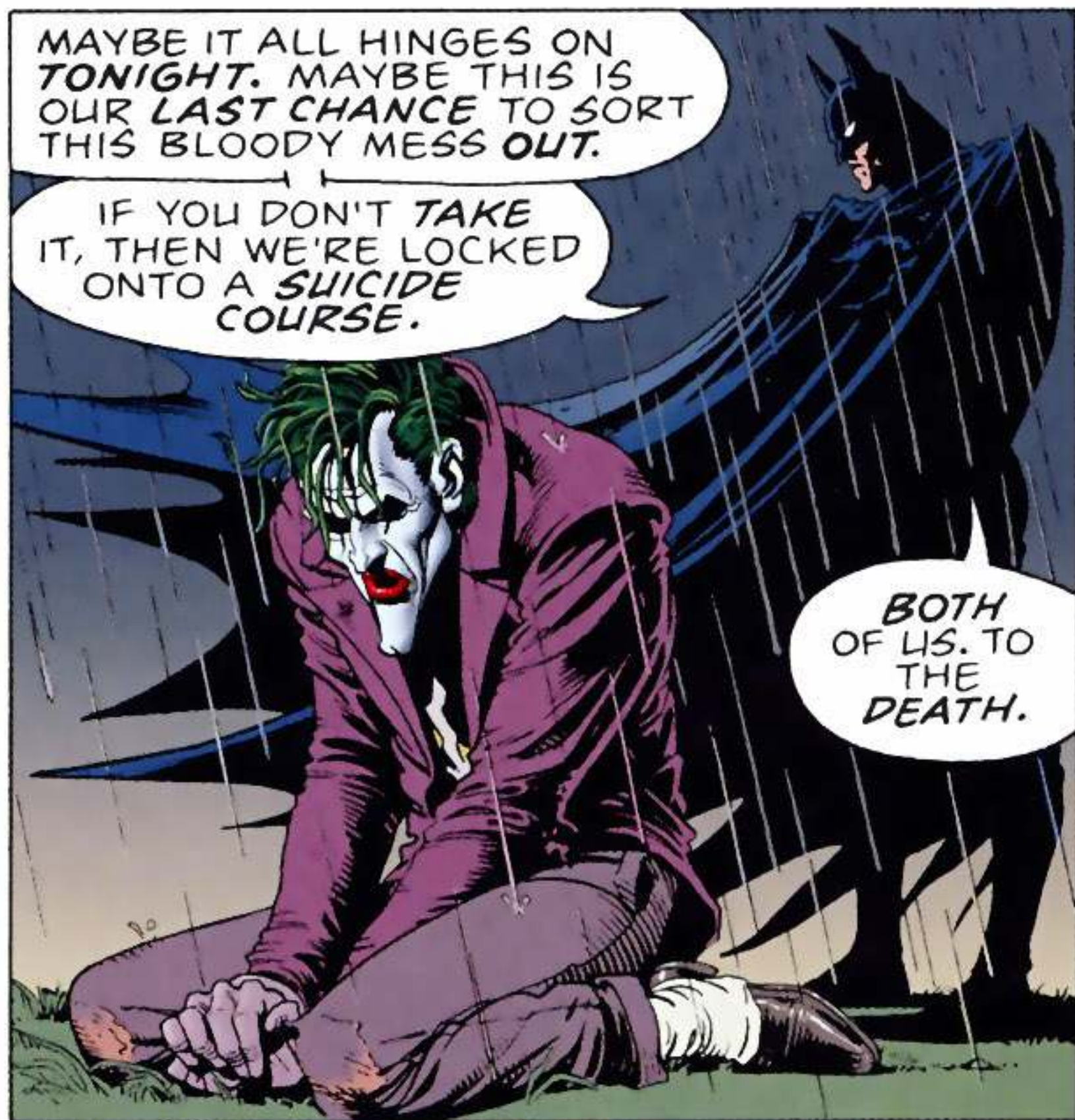
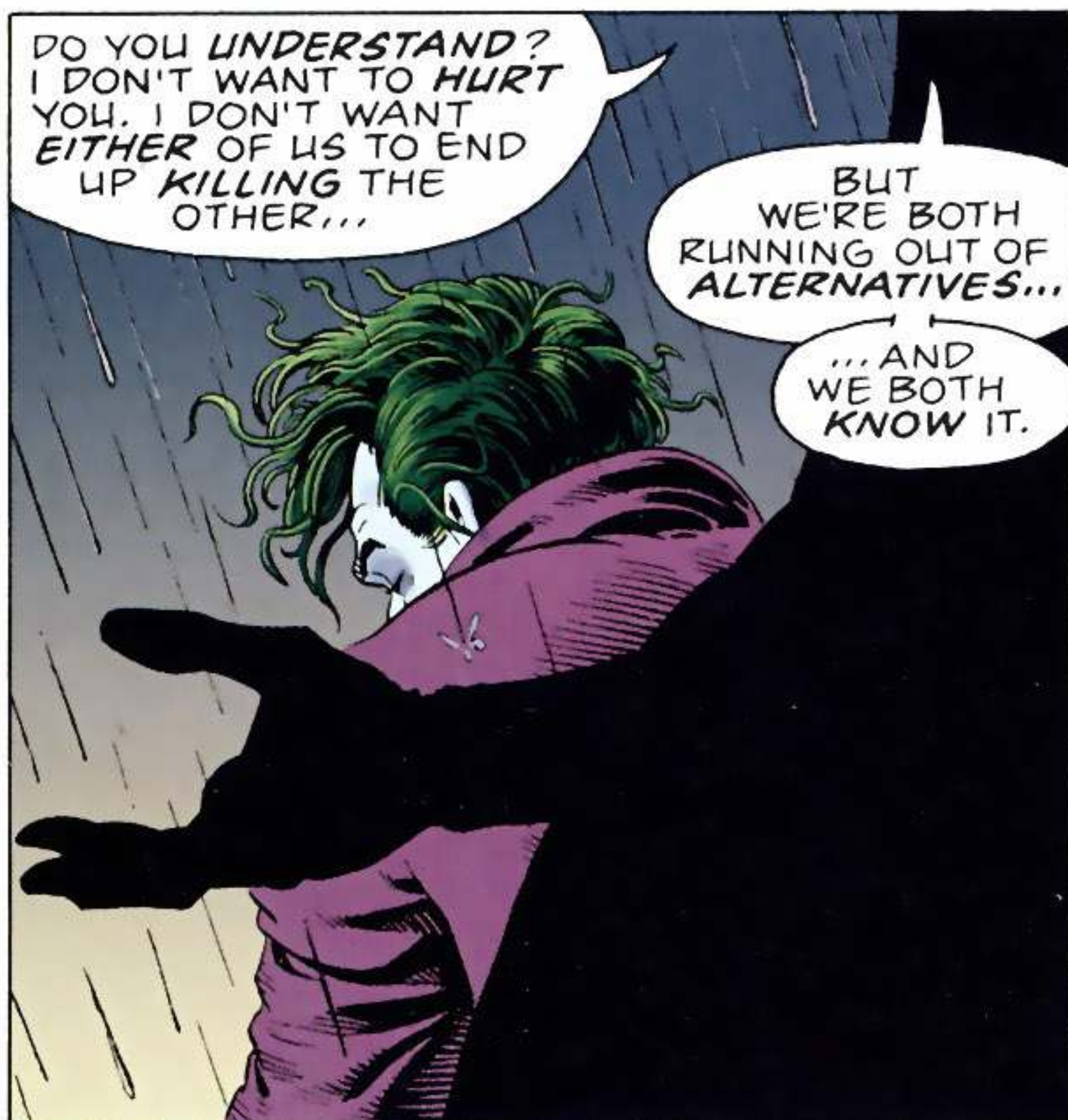
WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

I SHOT A DEFENSELESS GIRL. I TERRORIZED AN OLD MAN.

WHY DON'T YOU KICK THE HELL OUT OF ME AND GET A *STANDING OVATION* FROM THE *PUBLIC GALLERY*?

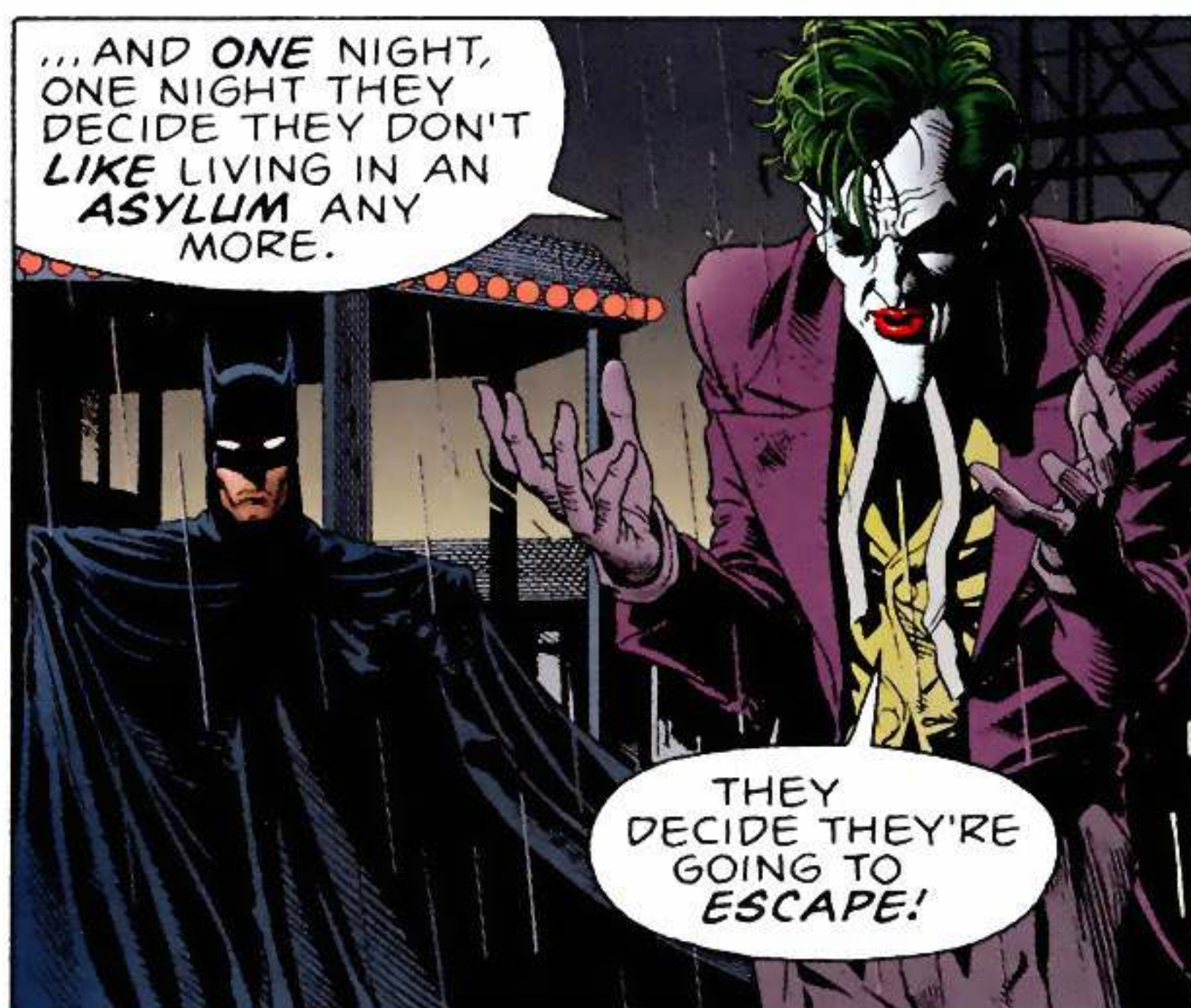
BECAUSE I'M DOING THIS ONE BY THE *BOOK*...

...AND BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO.





SEE, THERE WERE THESE TWO GUYS IN A LUNATIC ASYLUM...



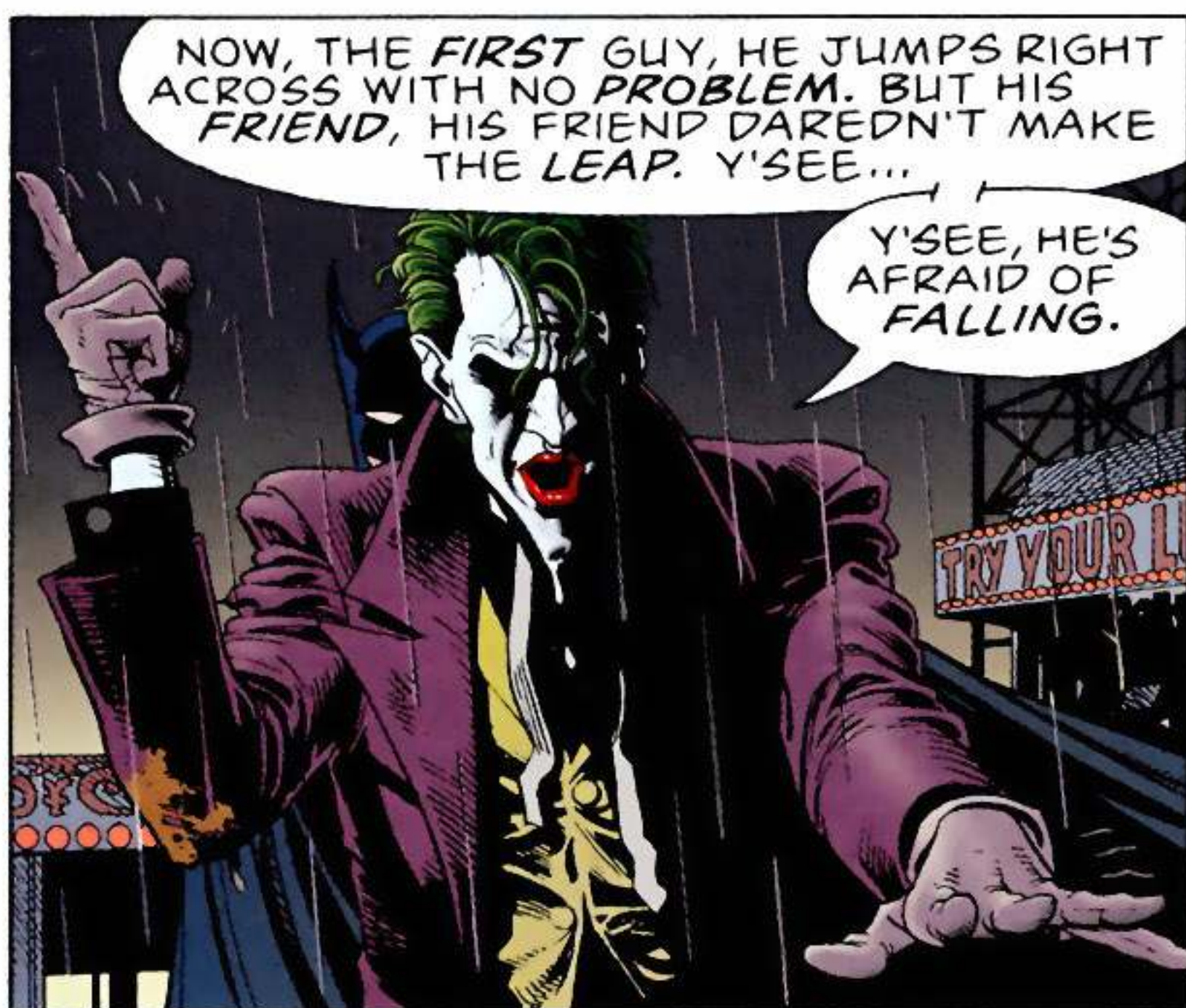
...AND ONE NIGHT, ONE NIGHT THEY DECIDE THEY DON'T LIKE LIVING IN AN ASYLUM ANY MORE.

THEY DECIDE THEY'RE GOING TO ESCAPE!



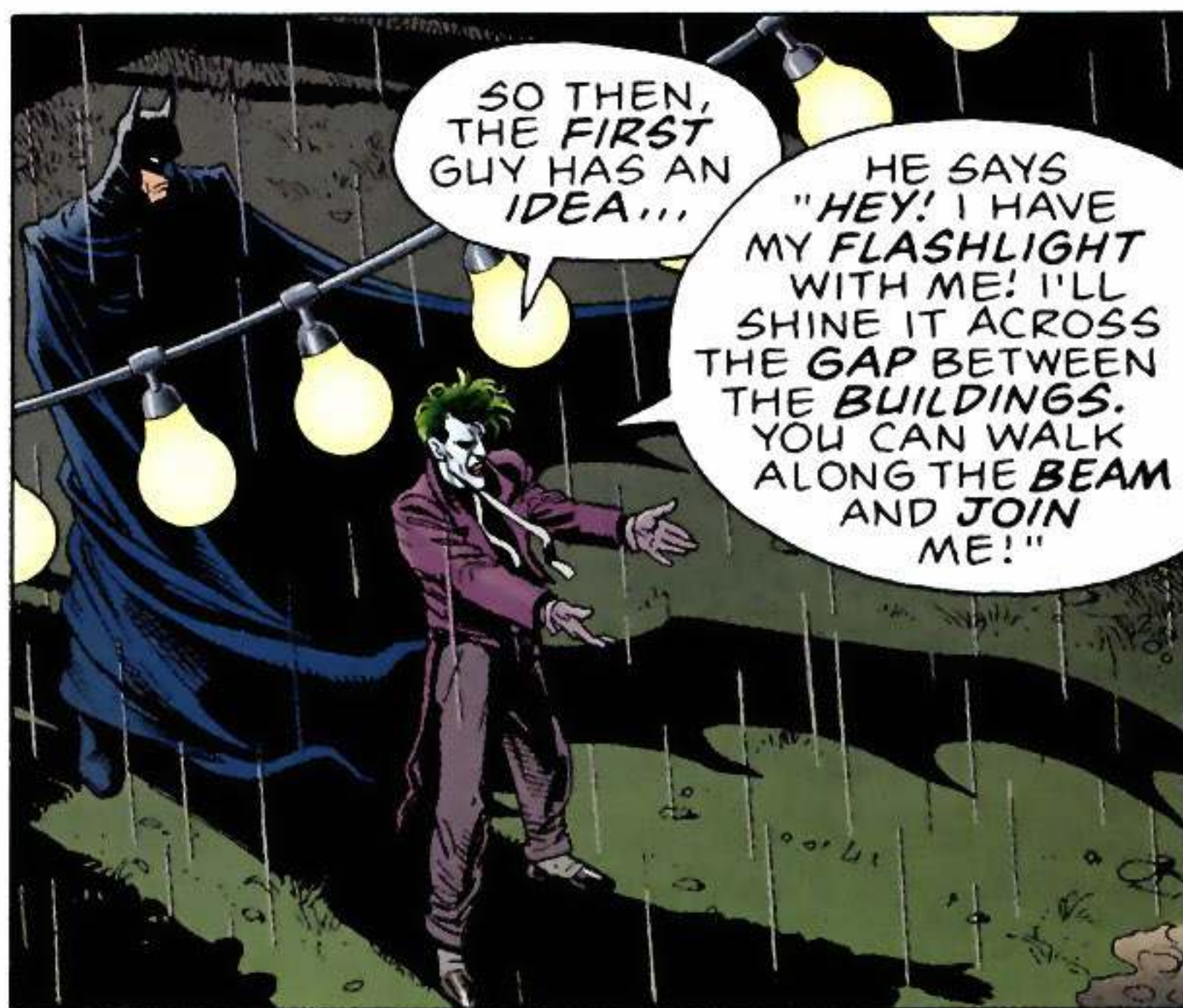
SO, LIKE, THEY GET UP ONTO THE ROOF, AND THERE, JUST ACROSS THIS NARROW GAP, THEY SEE THE ROOFTOPS OF THE TOWN, STRETCHING AWAY IN THE MOONLIGHT...

STRETCHING AWAY TO FREEDOM.



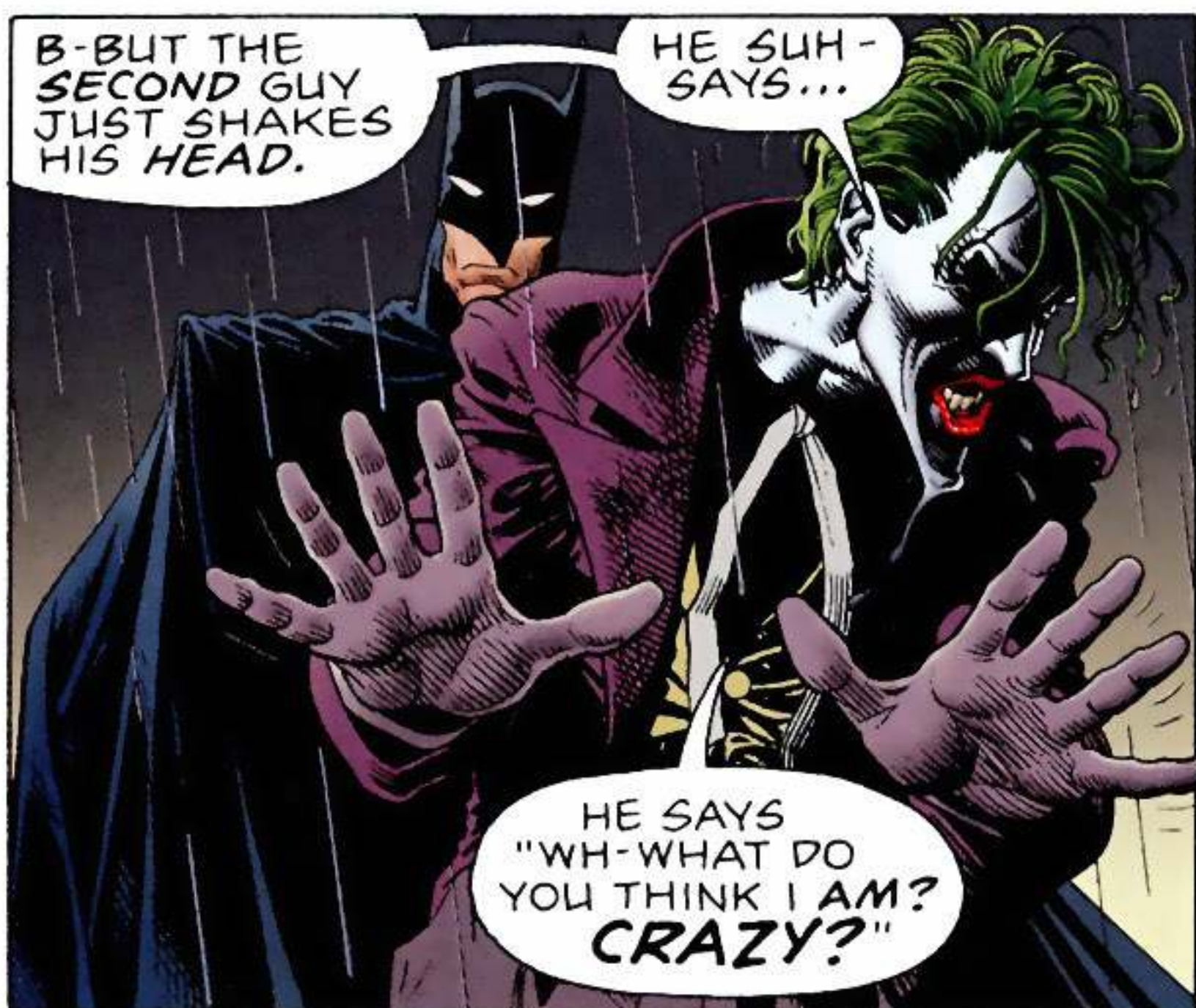
NOW, THE FIRST GUY, HE JUMPS RIGHT ACROSS WITH NO PROBLEM. BUT HIS FRIEND, HIS FRIEND DAREDN'T MAKE THE LEAP. Y'SEE...

Y'SEE, HE'S AFRAID OF FALLING.



SO THEN, THE FIRST GUY HAS AN IDEA...

HE SAYS "HEY! I HAVE MY FLASHLIGHT WITH ME! I'LL SHINE IT ACROSS THE GAP BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS. YOU CAN WALK ALONG THE BEAM AND JOIN ME!"



B-BUT THE SECOND GUY JUST SHAKES HIS HEAD.

HE SUH-SAYS...

HE SAYS "WH-WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM? CRAZY?"



"YOU'D TURN IT OFF WHEN I WAS HALF WAY ACROSS!"



I've been asked to write the "afterword" to this book — or should that be the "in between"? I'm told by my editor Bob Harras that there's room for up to 800 words. If I go on longer we have to start dropping pages of art and we wouldn't want that, would we? So, reader, if I should stop in mid-sentence it's because I've run out of space.

There's a minor detail that Tim got wrong, actually. It was me that asked Alan to write the book and not the other way round. THE KILLING JOKE was not a project instigated by Alan, nor was it, as far as I know, a labor of love for him, and it doesn't usually appear in a list of his greatest works. I was glad he agreed to write it, though. At the time we'd known each other for quite a while and narrowly missed working together a couple of times. In a peculiar form of homage to him I haven't drawn a comic book story written by any other writer in the last 22 years. When you've worked with the best, anything else would seem like a backward step.

The most notable absentee from this edition is THE KILLING JOKE's original colorist, John Higgins, and I want to thank him for jumping in when he did and finishing the book so promptly. Back in the pre-computer days of "blue line," airbrush and poster colors, even though I had specific views on how I wanted it to look, I wouldn't have been able to color it myself. It's probably well known that John's choice of colors turned out to be startlingly at odds with what I had in mind so, in February 2007, when Bob Harras told me about this edition, I said, "PLEASE can I recolor the whole thing?"

THE KILLING JOKE of 20 years ago. There's at least one figure that wasn't there the first time around. Think of it as a Spot-the-Difference book.

"An Innocent Guy" (that's what it's called even though it doesn't say so on it) is of special significance to me. As I became less inclined to work with writers or colorists it was particularly tempting to write a Batman story that was, for better or worse, completely by me. It gave me the opportunity to draw all the scenes I hadn't had a chance to draw in *THE KILLING JOKE*, including my homage to the unsettlingly surreal Dick Sprang-era Batman that I loved as a kid but combine it with a darker, more morally ambiguous theme that I'd stolen shamelessly from other sources. In so doing I managed to upset at least one mother of a seven-year-old boy who wrote me a letter of protest. Jeb supervised the meticulous painting out of the Zipatone that covered the artwork for the original black and white printing (he didn't quite get it all. You'll see bits of it lingering here and there) and I colored it up for the first time ever. I hope you enjoy these and the preceding 46 pages.

Speaking of which, it's time I revealed what really happened at the end of THE KILLING JOKE: as our protagonists stood there in the rain laughing at the final joke, the police lights reflecting in the pools of filthy water underfoot, the Batman's hand reached out and.....

Brian Bolland

Not far from Six Mile Bottom, UK 2008

I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF
A **BAD** PERSON,

ON THE WHOLE I
CONSIDER MYSELF A
GOOD PERSON,



I'M GOOD TO MY PARENTS.
I TREAT MY GIRL RIGHT... TAKE
HER OUT AND BUY HER STUFF.
AND I GO TO CHURCH
EVERY SUNDAY,



BUT I'VE DECIDED THAT JUST
ONCE I WANNA DO A REALLY
BAD THING. I MEAN A REALLY
SERIOUSLY BAD THING.



'CAUSE, YA KNOW, LIKE, WE'RE PUT ON THIS
EARTH WITH FREE WILL. WE CAN CHOOSE TO
DO THIS OR THAT. WE CAN CHOOSE TO BE
GOOD OR BAD. BUT SOMETIMES I THINK
MOST PEOPLE ARE GOOD AND NOT BAD
ONLY BECAUSE THEY'RE SCARED
THEY MIGHT GO TO JAIL OR HELL
OR SOMEPLACE.

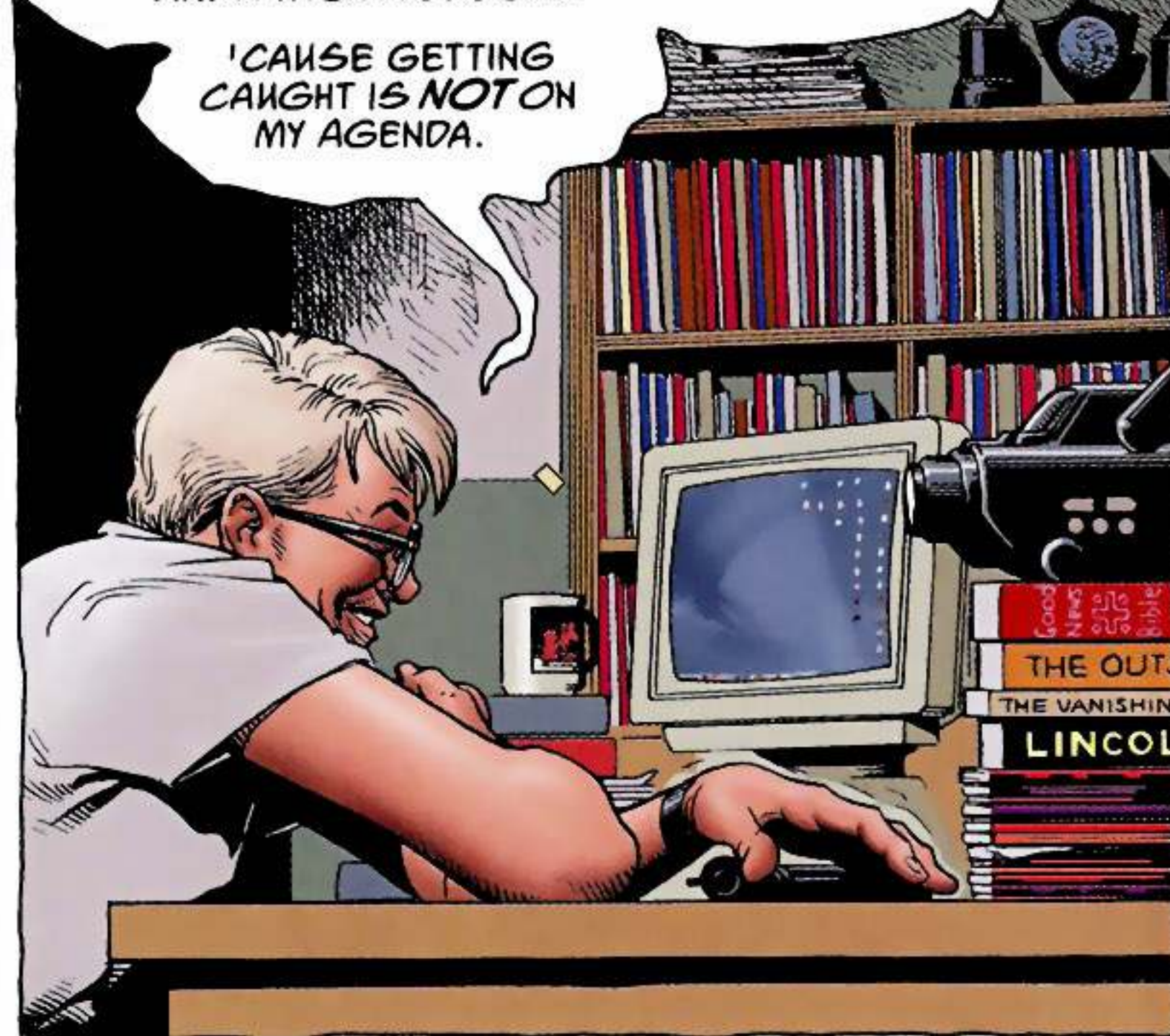


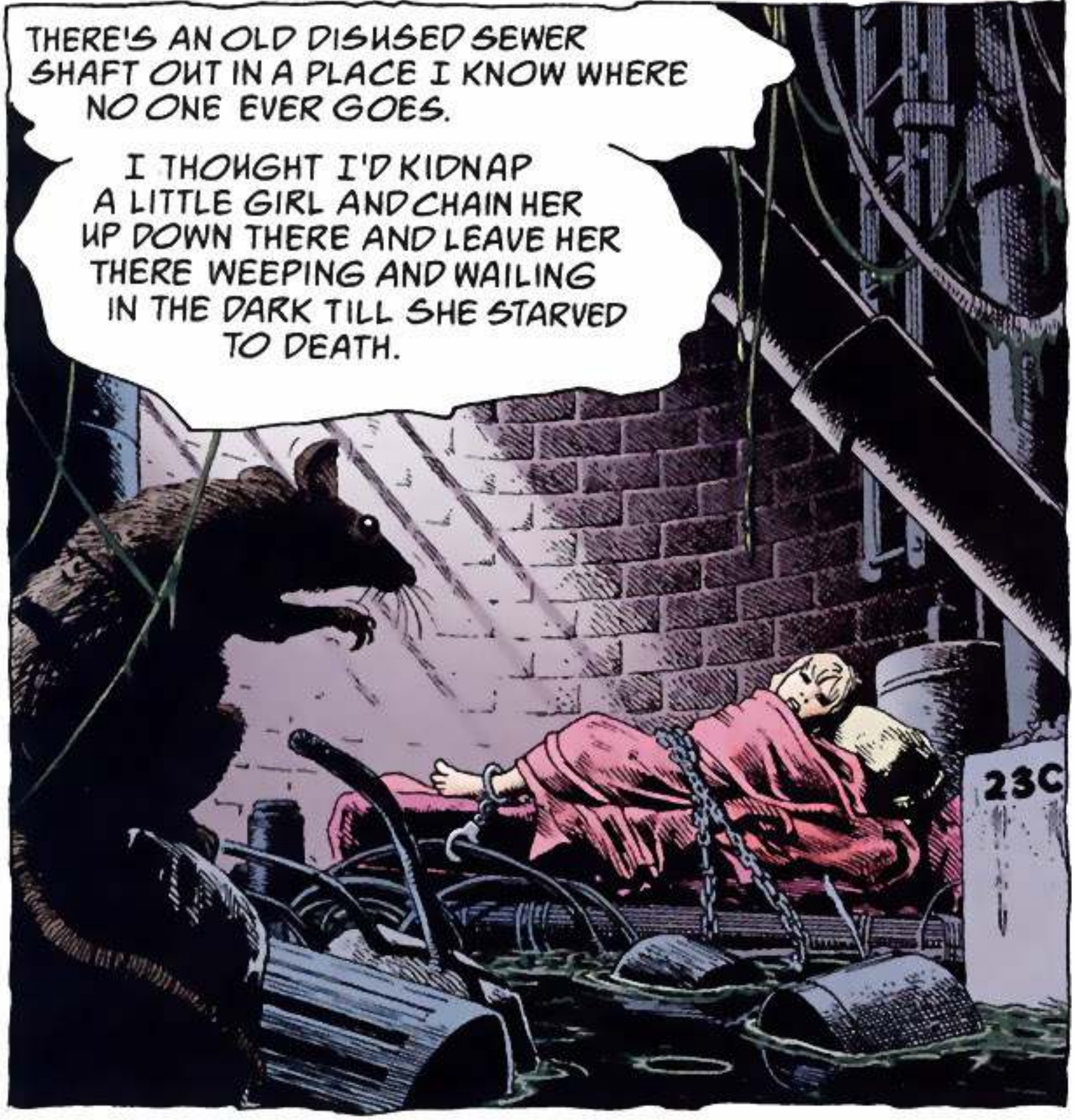
SOME GUY ONCE SAID: "ANYTHING DONE OUT
OF FEAR HAS NO MORAL VALUE." WELL, I THINK
THAT'S RIGHT. I FIGURE THE ONLY WAY YOU
CAN BE TRULY **GOOD** IS IF YOU'VE TRIED
BEING **GOOD**, AND YOU'VE TRIED BEING
BAD, AND BEING **GOOD**
FEELS BETTER.



SO WHAT IS IT TO BE, THIS ONE **BAD THING**?
IT'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING COMPLETELY **CRUEL**
AND **HORRIBLE**... AND **UNNECESSARY**... AND...
AND... **MOTIVELESS.**

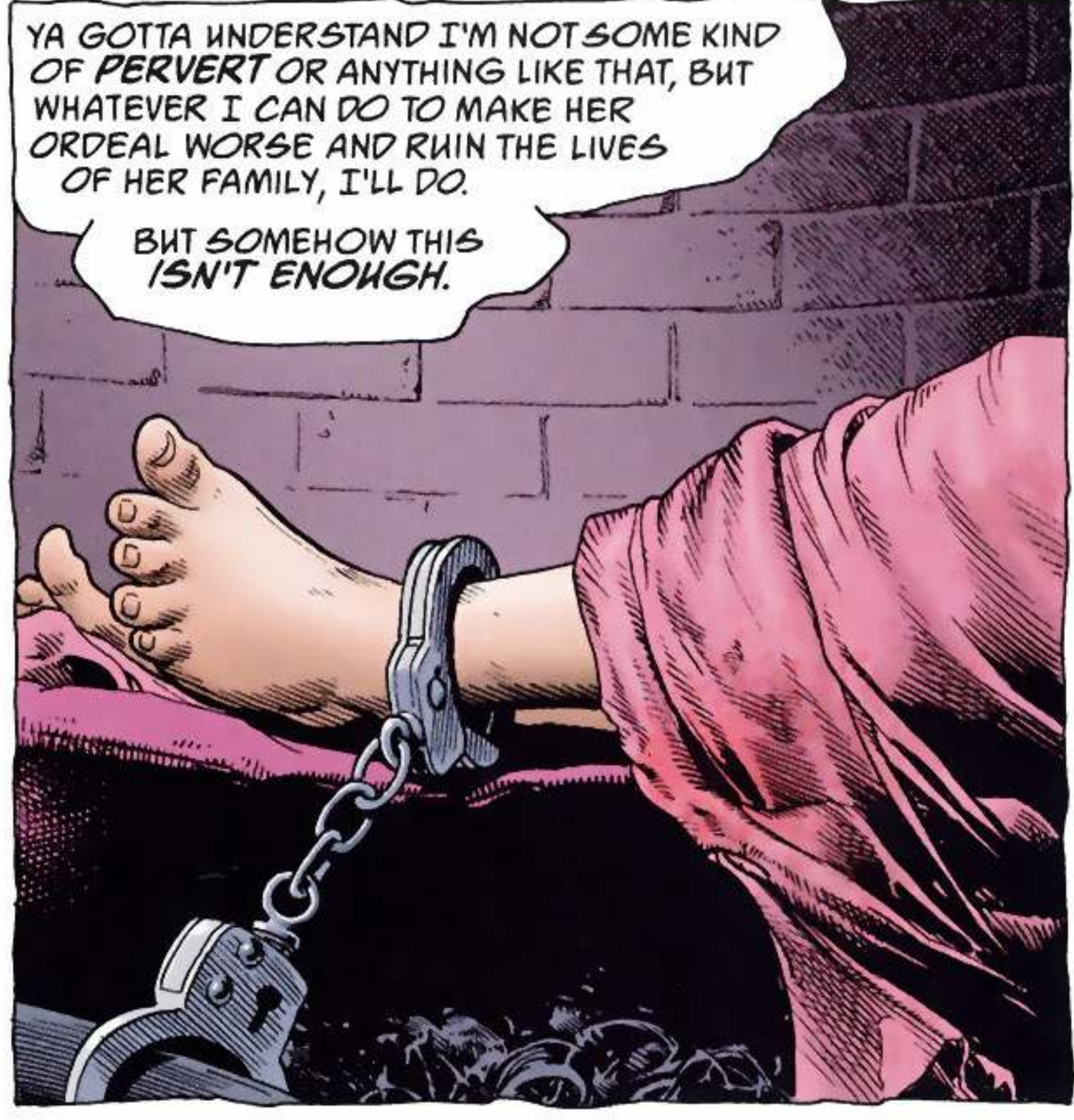
'CAUSE GETTING
CAUGHT IS **NOT** ON
MY AGENDA.





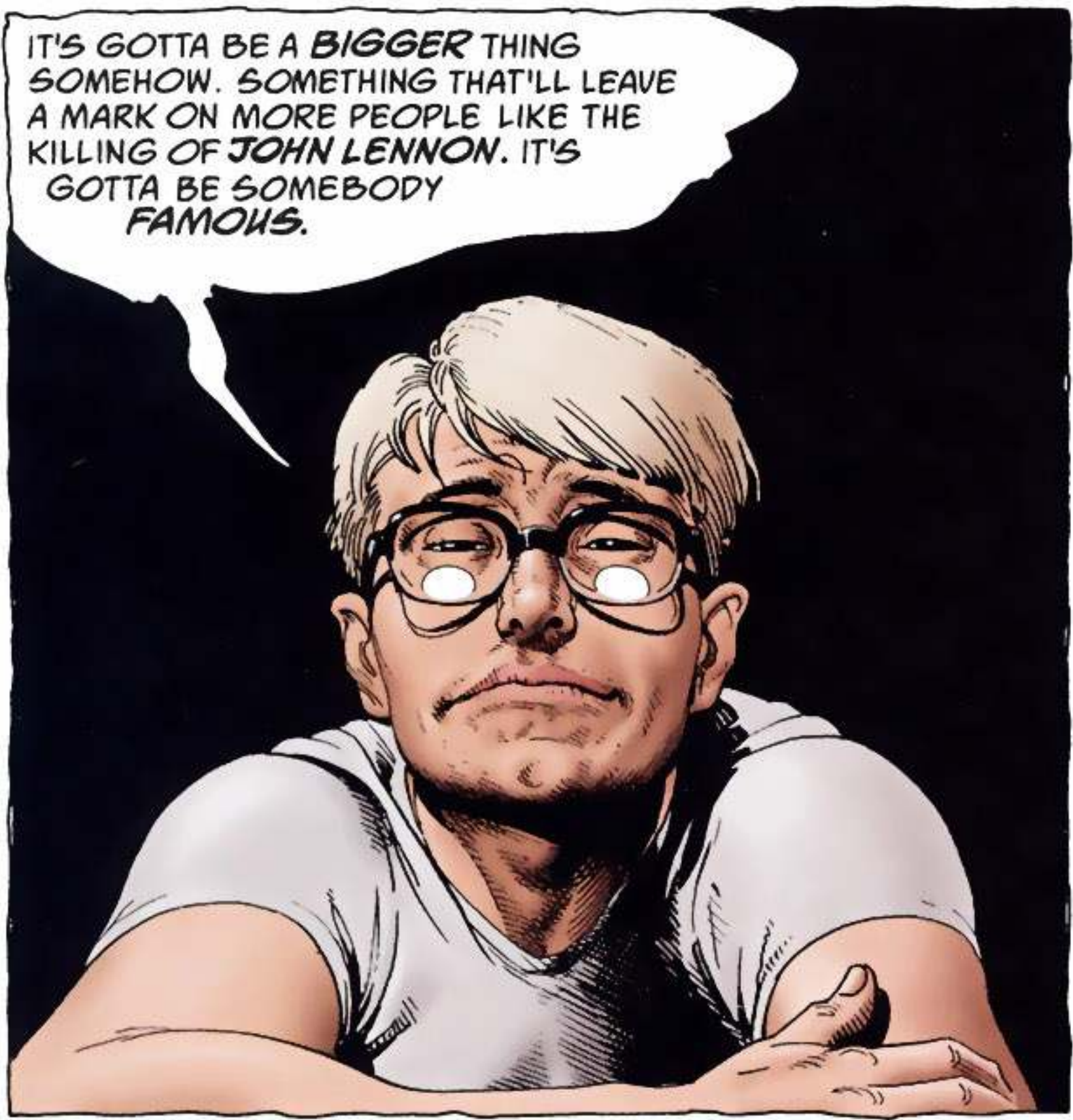
THERE'S AN OLD DISUSED SEWER
SHAFT OUT IN A PLACE I KNOW WHERE
NO ONE EVER GOES.

I THOUGHT I'D KIDNAP
A LITTLE GIRL AND CHAIN HER
UP DOWN THERE AND LEAVE HER
THERE WEEPING AND WAILING
IN THE DARK TILL SHE STARVED
TO DEATH.

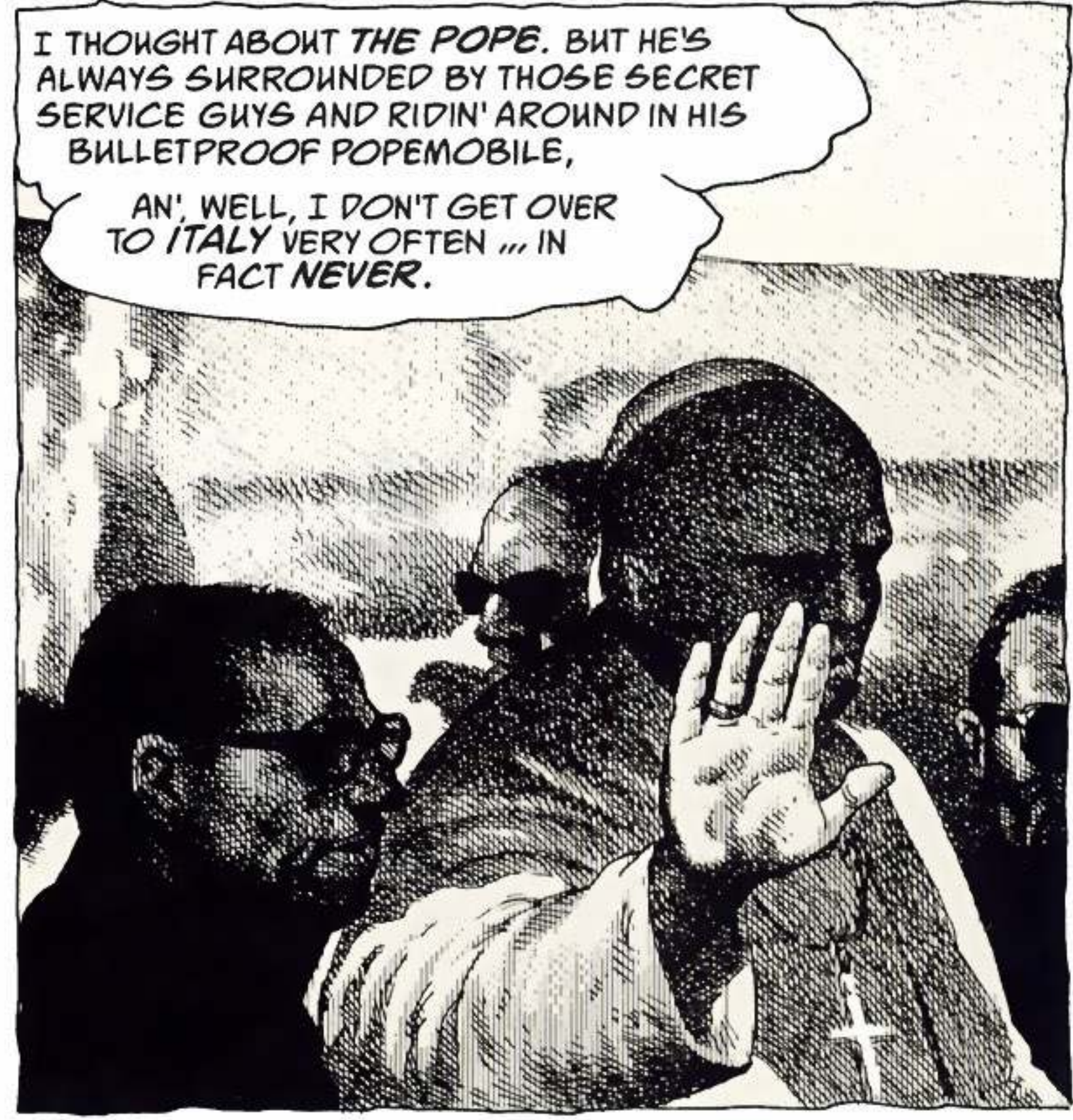


YA GOTTA UNDERSTAND I'M NOT SOME KIND
OF *PERVERT* OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, BUT
WHATEVER I CAN DO TO MAKE HER
ORDEAL WORSE AND RUIN THE LIVES
OF HER FAMILY, I'LL DO.

BUT SOMEHOW THIS
ISN'T ENOUGH.



IT'S GOTTA BE A *BIGGER* THING
SOMEHOW. SOMETHING THAT'LL LEAVE
A MARK ON MORE PEOPLE LIKE THE
KILLING OF *JOHN LENNON*. IT'S
GOTTA BE SOMEBODY
FAMOUS.



I THOUGHT ABOUT *THE POPE*. BUT HE'S
ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY THOSE SECRET
SERVICE GUYS AND RIDIN' AROUND IN HIS
BULLETPROOF *POPEMOBILE*,

AN', WELL, I DON'T GET OVER
TO *ITALY* VERY OFTEN ... IN
FACT *NEVER.*



I'VE GOTTA CHOOSE MY VICTIM FOR
THE SAKE OF *CONVENIENCE*. IT'S GOTTA
BE SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T HAVE AN
ARMED GUARD. SOMEONE RIGHT
HERE IN *GOTHAM.*

IT'S GOTTA BE *THE BATMAN.*

IT'LL BE NO PROBLEM. I'VE GOT A **GUN**. MY DAD GAVE IT TO ME. HE HAS A WHOLE COLLECTION. HE'S A GREAT BELIEVER IN A CITIZEN'S RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS. IT'S A GUN LIKE A MILLION OTHERS IN THIS CITY.

I'LL DO THE DEED... MY DAD TAUGHT ME HOW TO SHOOT, TOO... THEN I'LL LEAVE THE SCENE. I WON'T LEAVE A CALLING CARD, A DOUBLE-HEADED COIN, A CODED RIDDLE, AND I WON'T LAUGH LIKE A MADMAN. I'LL JUST LEAVE WITHOUT A TRACE.

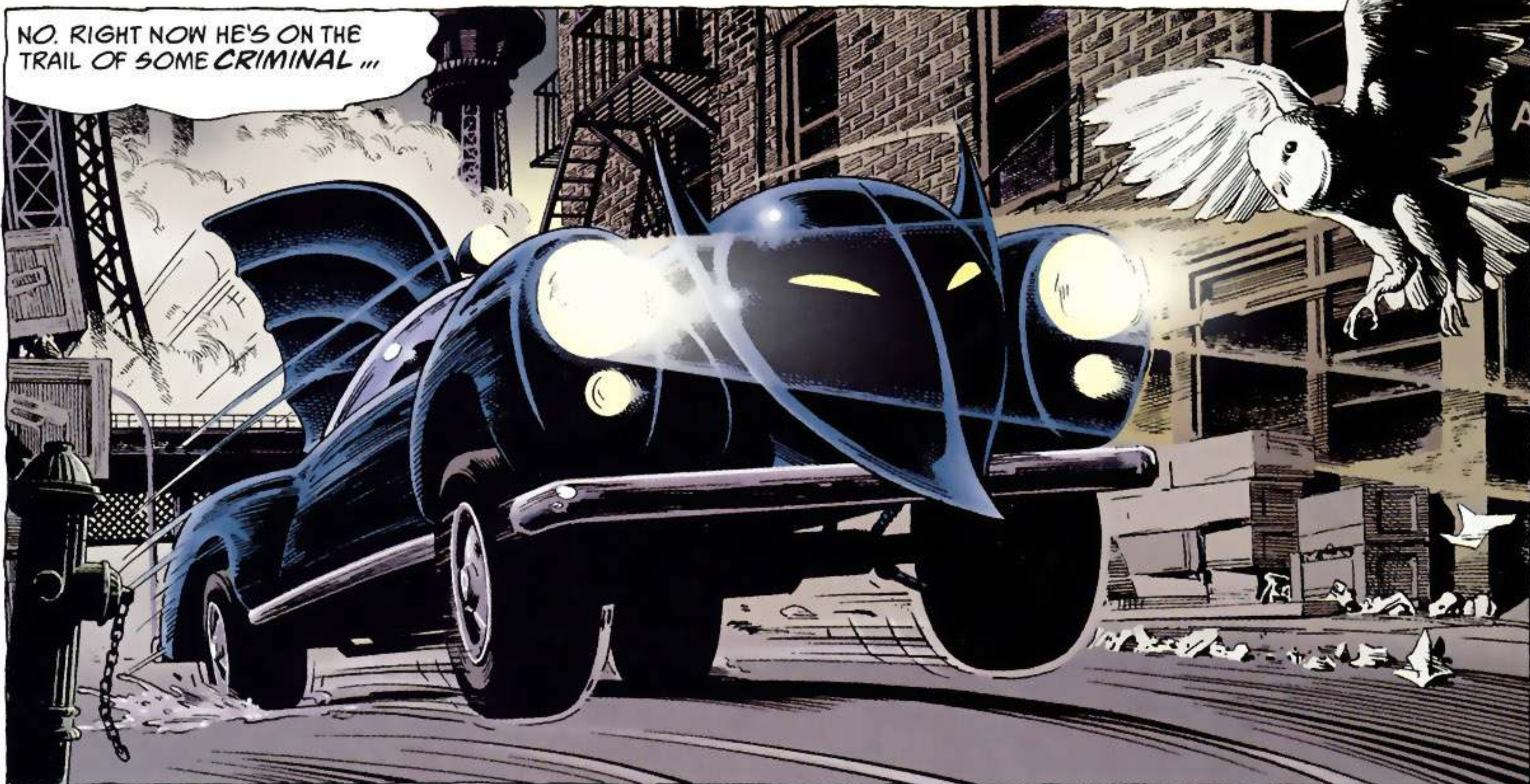


I MEAN, FOR ALL I KNOW, RIGHT NOW HE COULD BE IN HIS **SECRET HIDEOUT** SOMEWHERE HUNCHED OVER HIS **SECRET SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM** MONITORING EVERYTHING I RECORD ON THIS TAPE,

BUT I'M SURE HE ISN'T. 'CAUSE HE'S **ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS** AND SPYIN' ON INNOCENT PEOPLE WOULD BE **WRONG**.



NO. RIGHT NOW HE'S ON THE TRAIL OF SOME **CRIMINAL**...



HIS GREAT BAT-WINGS
UNFURLED AGAINST
THE NIGHT SKY...

STRIKING TERROR INTO THE
HEARTS OF THE GUILTY,

AN INSPIRATION AND
A COMFORT TO THE
INNOCENT.

HE'LL BE SADLY MISSED.

ESPECIALLY BY ME.

ONE DAY HE'LL BE FACE TO FACE
WITH TWO-FACE...

OR HE'LL BE TANGLING WITH
POISON IVY...

OR IN THE LAIR OF... THOSE
THREE GUYS WITH ANIMAL
MASKS WHOSE NAMES I
CAN NEVER REMEMBER!

AT LAST THE VILLAIN WILL
KNOW THE GAME'S UP.

THROW DOWN YOUR
UMBRELLA, PENGUIN.

AWWWWWK!

MAKE
ME!

THERE'LL BE A
FIGHT. AND A
THRILLING CHASE
INVOLVING AN
ENORMOUS
TYPEWRITER OR
SOMETHING,


A SWIFT AND
DECISIVE CLIMAX.



THE *GOOD GUY*'LL MAKE
A DRAMATIC EXIT

LEAVING THE *BAD GUY*
TO PONDER THE ERROR
OF HIS WAYS.

'CAUSE, LET'S FACE IT,
CRIME DOESN'T PAY.



AND JUST FOR ONE MOMENT
THE BATMAN WILL PAUSE. THRN.
HIS FACE ILLUMINATED BY A SINGLE
LIGHT... A SPLENDID AVENGER
OF THE NIGHT.

AND THEN FROM A DARK ALLEY,

OR A WINDOW
HIGH UP,

OR A GRASSY
KNOLL,

OR SOME OTHER
PLACE,

THERE'LL BE
A GLINT,

AND THEN

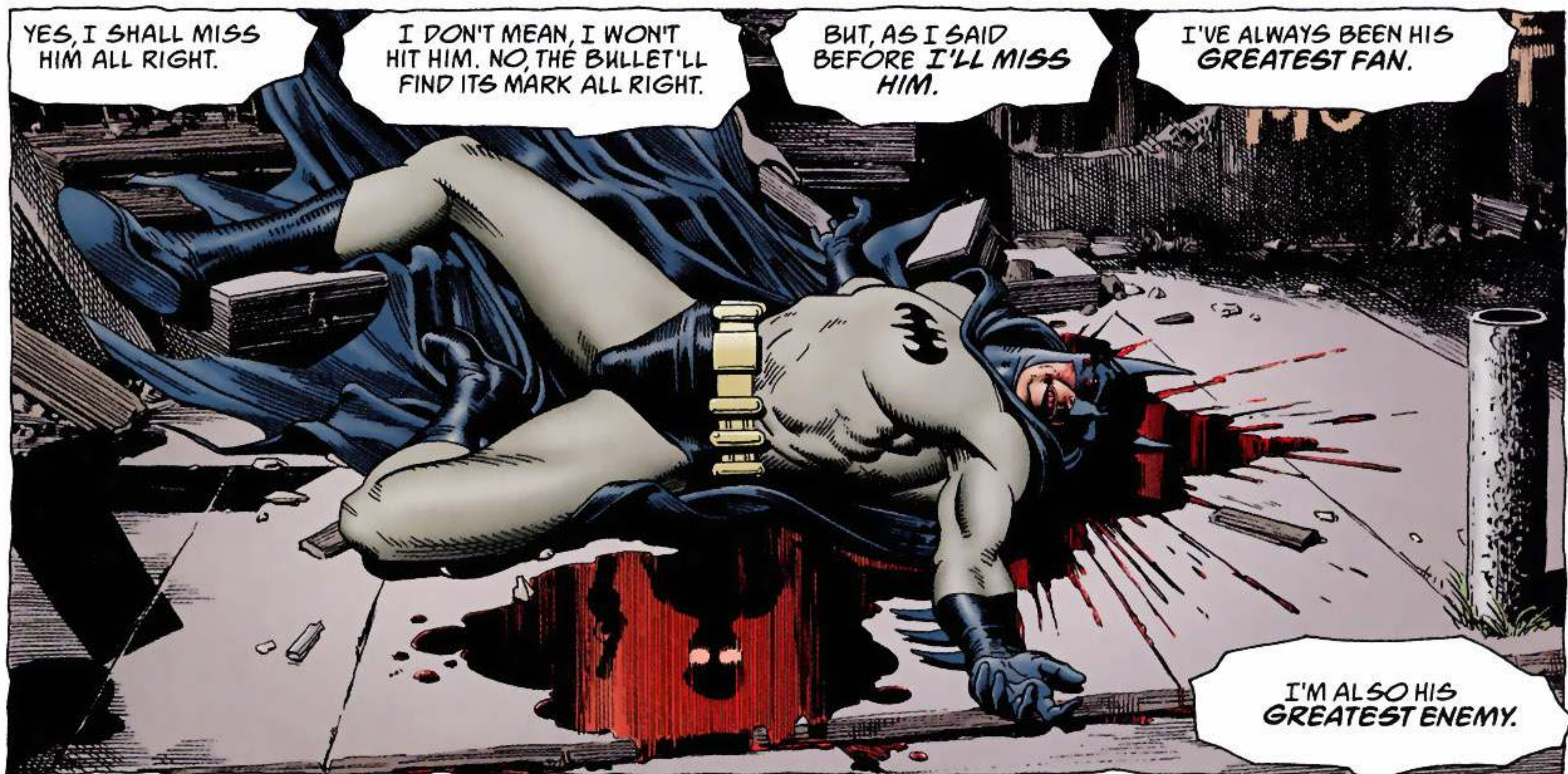


BANG





AND HE'LL
BE DEAD.



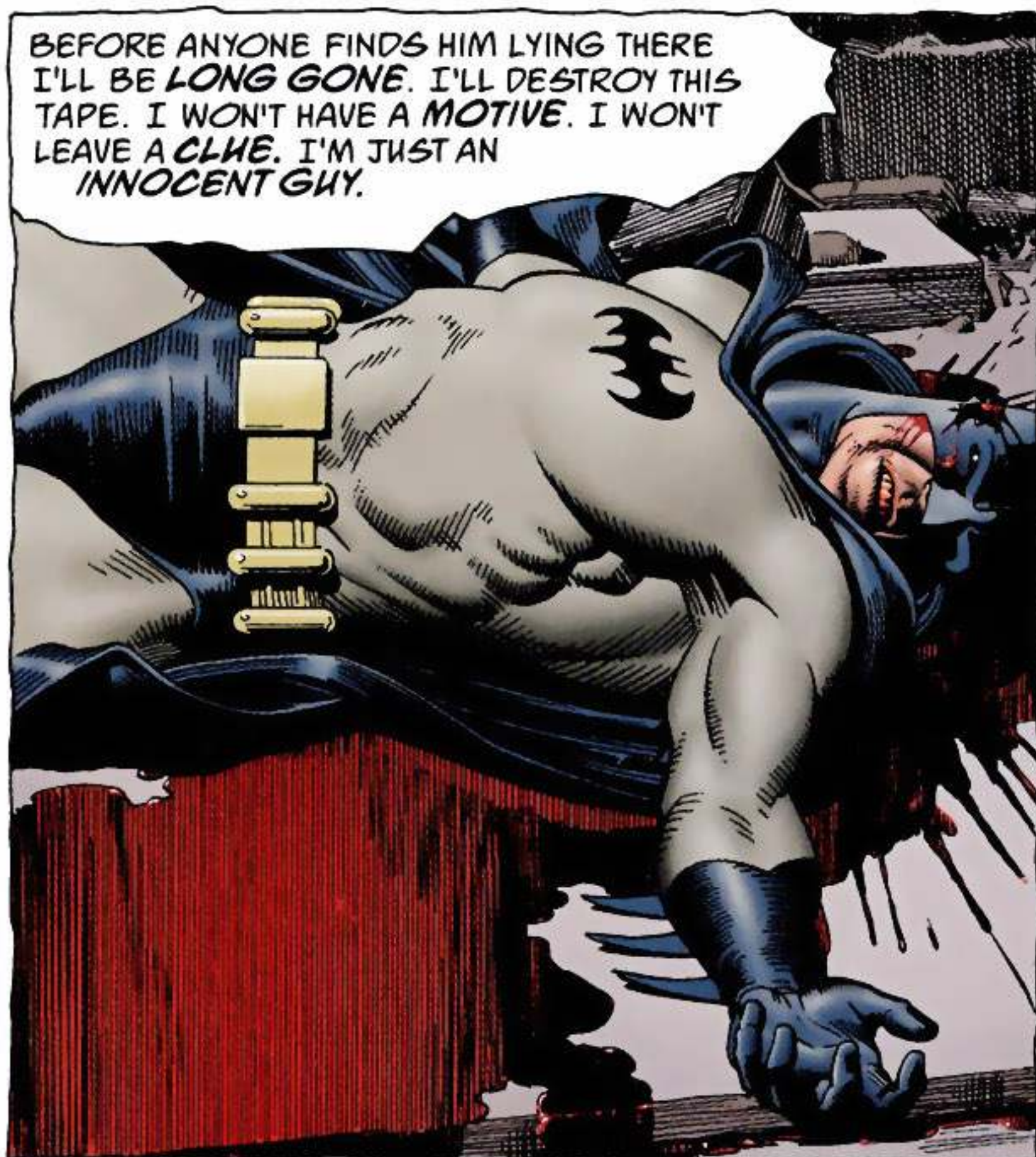
YES, I SHALL MISS
HIM ALL RIGHT.

I DON'T MEAN, I WON'T
HIT HIM. NO, THE BULLET'LL
FIND ITS MARK ALL RIGHT.

BUT, AS I SAID
BEFORE I'LL MISS
HIM.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HIS
GREATEST FAN.

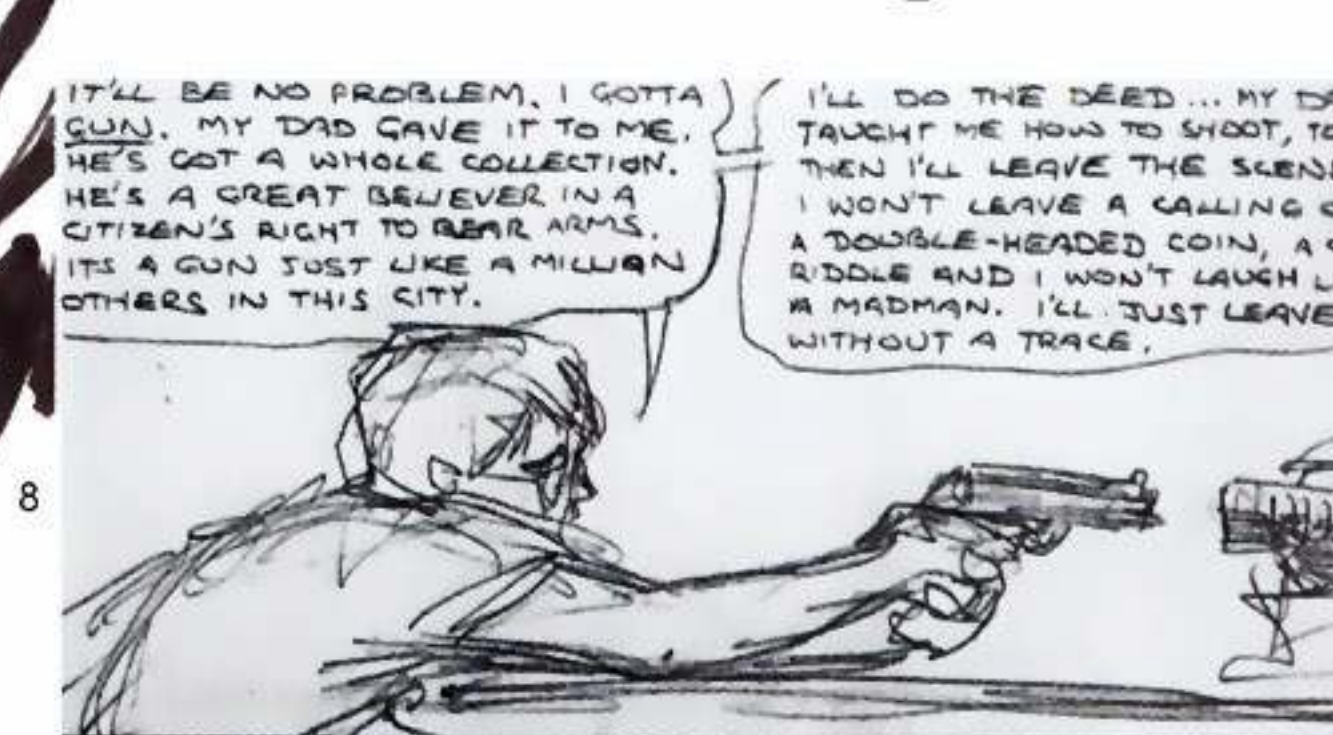
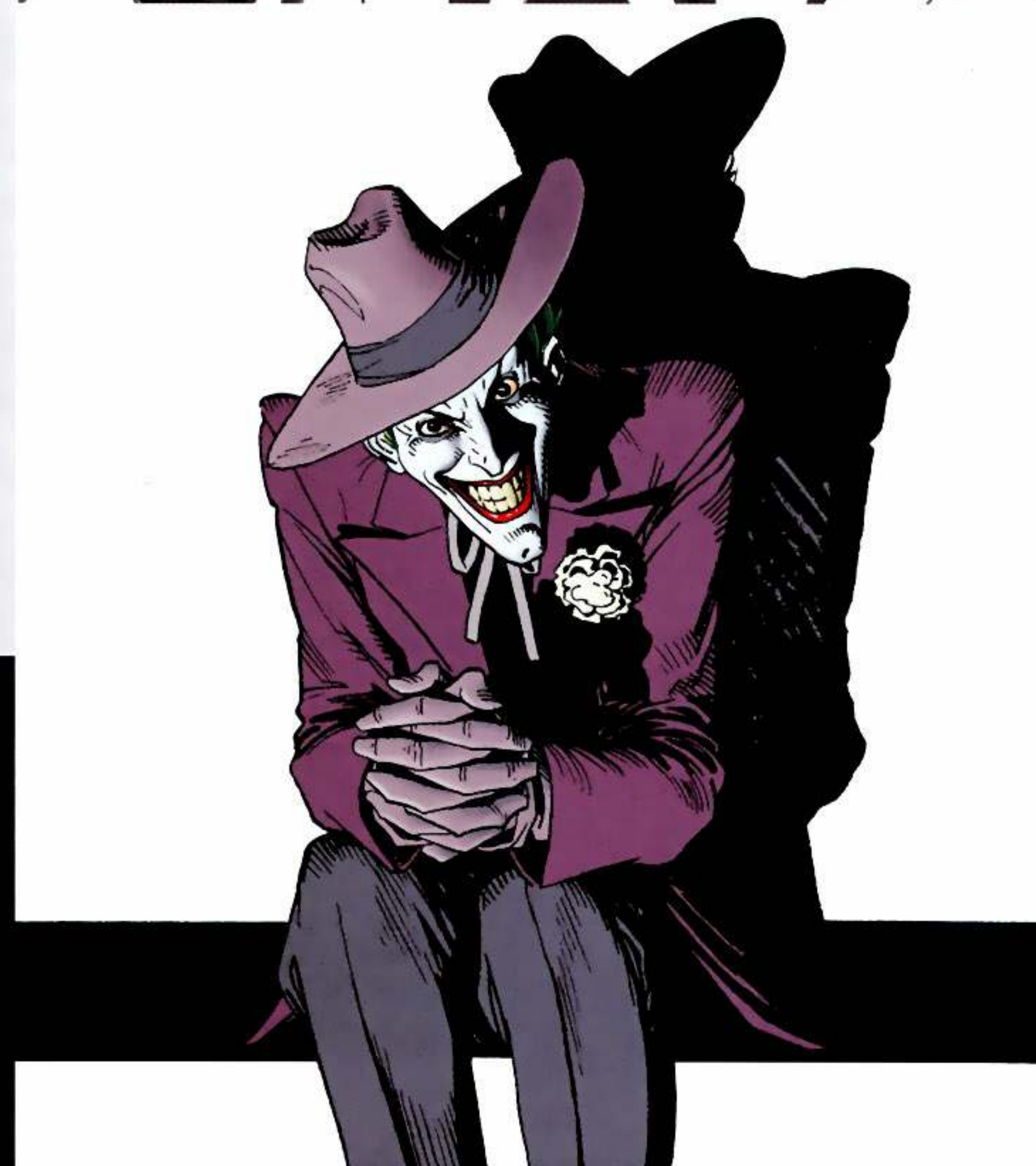
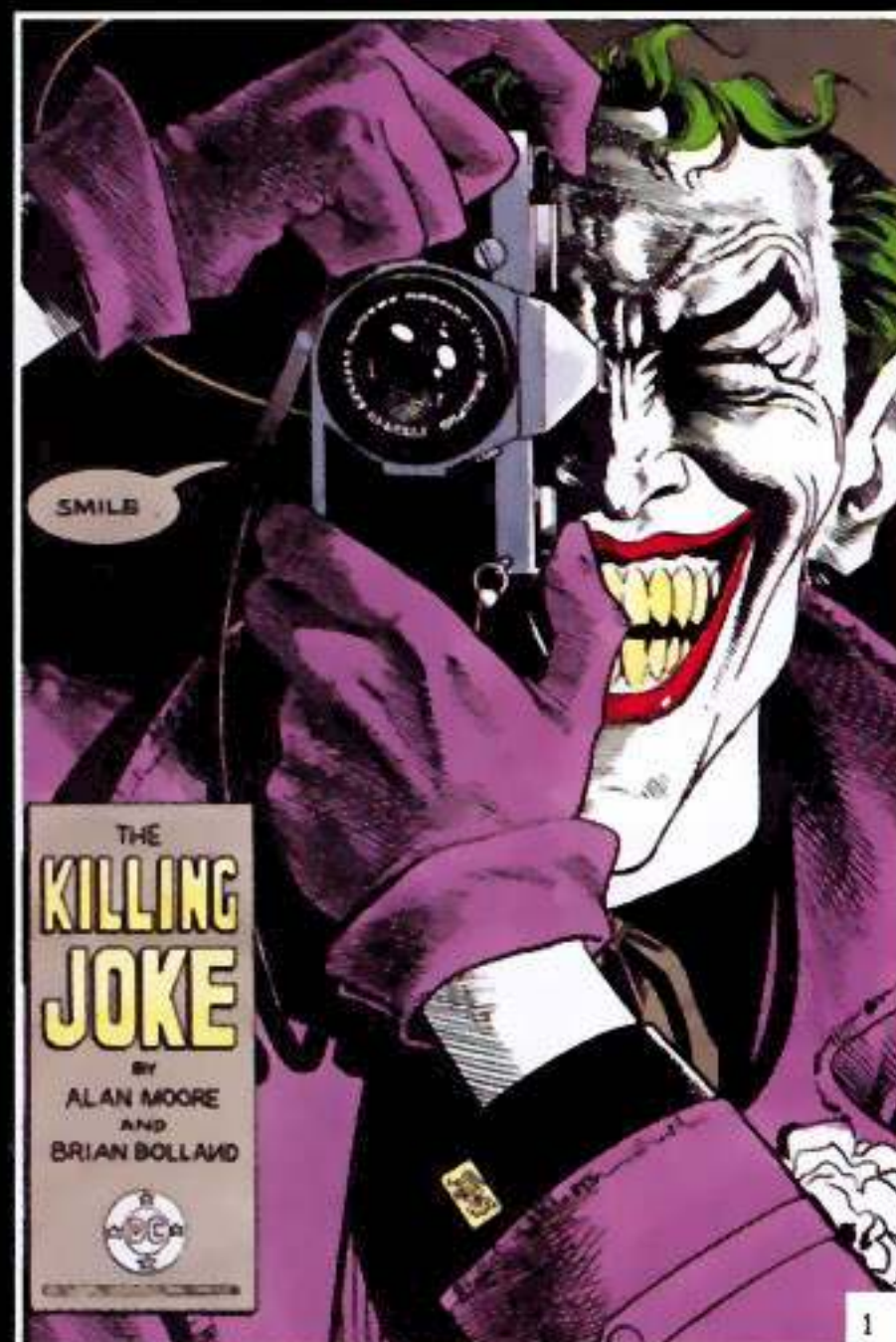
I'M ALSO HIS
GREATEST ENEMY.



BEFORE ANYONE FINDS HIM LYING THERE
I'LL BE **LONG GONE**. I'LL DESTROY THIS
TAPE. I WON'T HAVE A **MOTIVE**. I WON'T
LEAVE A **CLUE**. I'M JUST AN
INNOCENT GUY.

THEN I THINK I'LL FINISH MY COLLEGE
EDUCATION. MARRY MY GIRLFRIEND AND
HAVE A COUPLE OF KIDS. A BOY AND
A GIRL WOULD BE NICE. LIVE A
GOOD AND BLAMELESS
LIFE, AND GO TO HEAVEN
WHEN I DIE.





From the files of Brian Bolland

Figures 1 and 2 are giving away a closely guarded professional secret. Yes, I did use photographic reference for the cover of THE KILLING JOKE! Since it's a mirror image of me in the photo you'll notice that it's actually the thumb of my left hand that's pressing the button to take the picture. The resulting sketch is probably the most thorough cover rough I've ever drawn and the only one in color. I must have been very keen to push the idea.

The evil dwarves (figure 3) were written into the script by Alan and given the names of three characters owned by another major company — so they can't be repeated here. I always wanted to apologize to any persons of diminutive stature who might be reading this for our lack of political correctness.

As with the artwork, all the small "prelim" pages are now in the hands of collectors, and figure 4 is the only one we could track down. I had more success with the *Innocent Guy* prelims. I have copies of some of them here (figures 5,9,10). This, incidentally, was the form in which I originally wrote the story and presented it to my editor, Mark Chiarello.

Figure 6 was drawn in Paris (with a series of markers that were running low on ink, by the looks of things) and Italian artist Tanino Liberatore produced a painted version of it for the French edition of THE KILLING JOKE. Figures 7 and 8 are sketches of the Joker in his various guises.

ALAN MOORE

Alan Moore is perhaps the most acclaimed writer in the graphic story medium, having garnered countless awards for such works as *WATCHMEN*, *V FOR VENDETTA*, *From Hell*, *Miracleman* and *SWAMP THING*. He is also the mastermind behind the America's Best Comics line, through which he has created (along with many talented illustrators) *THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN*, *PROMETHEA*, *TOM STRONG*, *TOMORROW STORIES* and *TOP TEN*. As one of the medium's most important innovators since the early 1980s, Moore has influenced an entire generation of comics creators, and his work continues to inspire an ever-growing audience. Moore resides in central England.

BRIAN BOLLAND

After making his professional debut in 1975, Brian Bolland perfected his clean-line style and meticulous attention to detail on a series of popular strips for the British comics magazine *2000 AD*, most notably its signature feature *Judge Dredd*. He went on to illustrate the 12-issue maxiseries *CAMELOT 3000* and *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE* for DC before shifting his focus to work almost exclusively on cover illustrations. Since then, he has earned a reputation as one of the best cover artists in the industry, and his elegantly composed and beautifully rendered pieces have graced a host of titles, including *ANIMAL MAN*, *BATMAN*, *THE FLASH*, *THE INVISIBLES*, *WONDER WOMAN* and many more.



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"Easily the greatest Joker story ever told, *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE* is also one of Alan Moore's finest works. If you've read it before, go back and read it again. You owe it to yourself."

— IGN.com

"...a genuinely chilling portrayal of Batman's greatest foe."

— Booklist

One bad day.

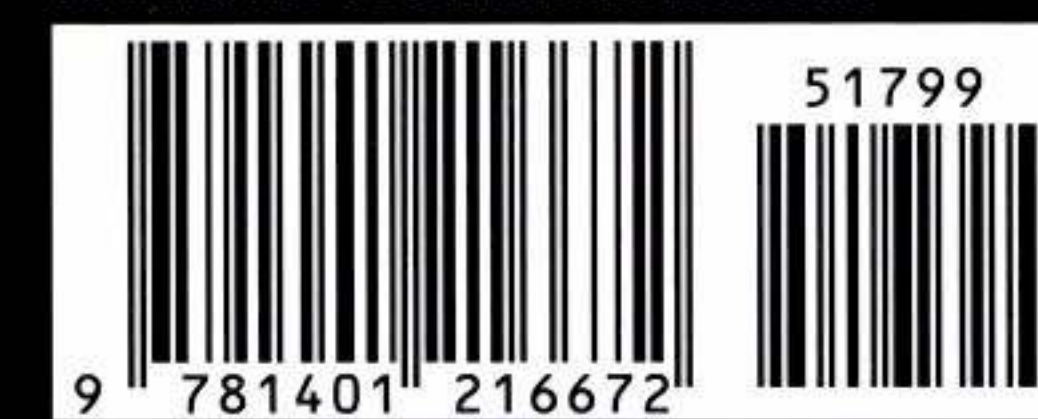
According to the grinning engine of madness and mayhem known as The Joker, that's all that separates the sane from the psychotic. Freed once again from the confines of Arkham Asylum, he's out to prove his deranged point. And he's going to use Gotham City's top cop, Commissioner Jim Gordon, and his brilliant and beautiful daughter Barbara to do it.

Now Batman must race to stop his archnemesis before his reign of terror claims two of the Dark Knight's closest friends. Can he finally put an end to the cycle of bloodlust and lunacy that links these two iconic foes before it leads to its fatal conclusion? And as the horrifying origin of the Clown Prince of Crime is finally revealed, will the thin line that separates Batman's nobility and The Joker's insanity snap once and for all?

Legendary writer, Alan Moore redefined the super-hero with *WATCHMEN* and *V FOR VENDETTA*. In *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE*, he takes on the origin of comics' greatest super-villain, The Joker — and changes Batman's world forever.

Stunningly illustrated, *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE*, *THE DELUXE EDITION* has been lushly re-colored by artist Brian Bolland, presenting his original vision of this modern classic for the first time.

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS



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BATMAN THE KILLING JOKE

ALAN MOORE

BRIAN BOLLAND

DC
COMICS

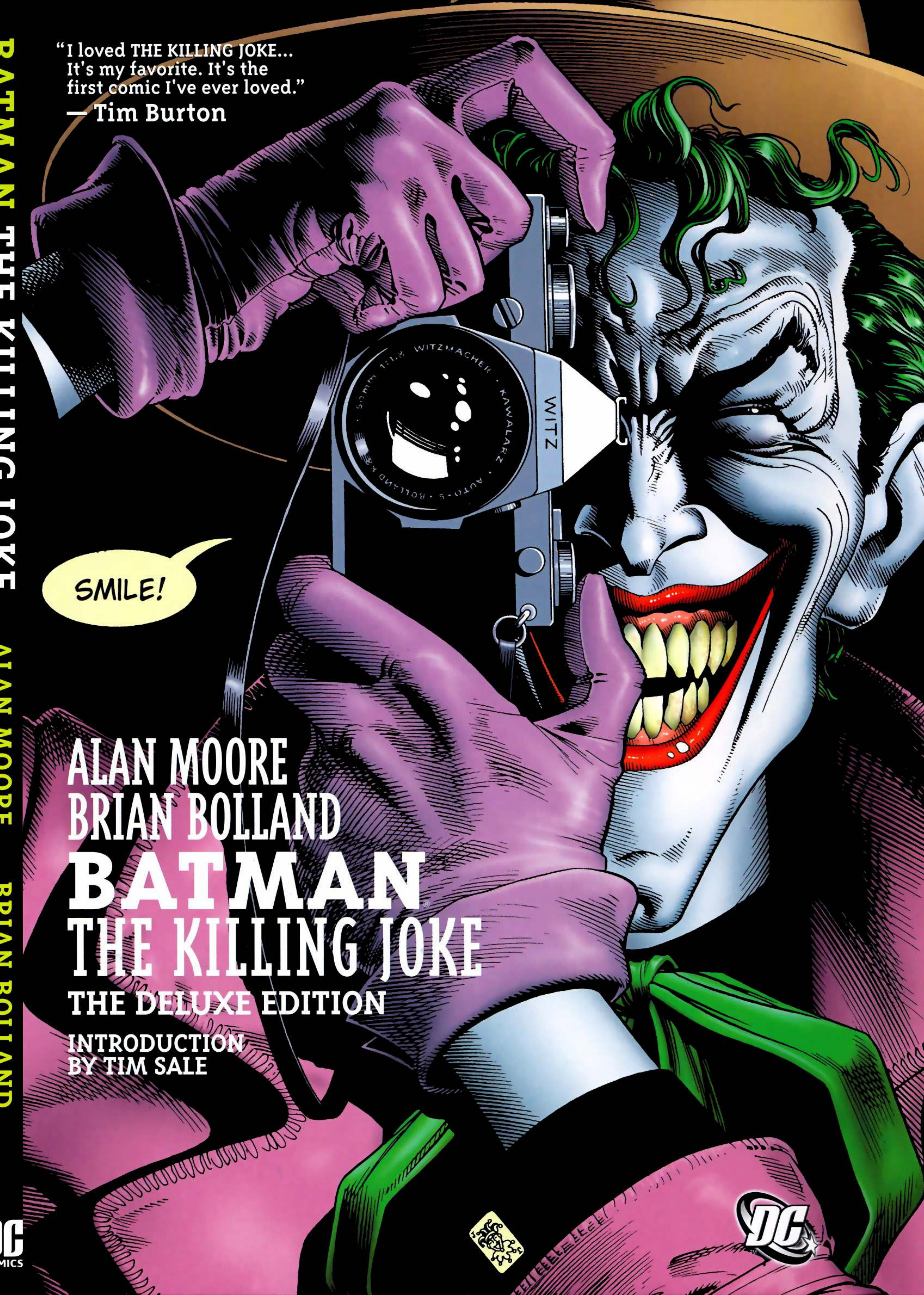
"I loved *THE KILLING JOKE*...
It's my favorite. It's the
first comic I've ever loved."

— Tim Burton

SMILE!

ALAN MOORE BRIAN BOLLAND BATMAN THE KILLING JOKE THE DELUXE EDITION

INTRODUCTION
BY TIM SALE



Twenty years ago, writer Alan Moore and artist Brian Bolland gave the world a glimpse of the events that made The Joker who he is. Now their brilliantly nightmarish vision returns in a new, definitive edition.

He's the Batman's most implacable foe, a mad criminal genius whose bizarre rampages baffle even the world's greatest detective. But *The Joker* was not always this way. Before he became the Clown Prince of Crime, before a single, fateful day scarred his face and warped his mind forever, he was just the sort of person the Dark Knight has dedicated his life to protecting — a common man.

What happened to transform this average citizen into the greatest evil Gotham City has ever known? Can Batman stop the Joker from dragging Commissioner Gordon and his daughter Barbara into his world of murderous madness? And can these two enemies put a stop to their eternal duel before it's too late for both of them?

Presented for the first time with stark, stunning new coloring by Bolland, *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE* is Alan Moore's unforgettable meditation on the razor-thin line between sanity and insanity, heroism and villainy, comedy and tragedy.



BATMAN THE KILLING JOKE

BATMAN THE KILLING JOKE ALAN MOORE BRIAN BOLLAND

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