

BATMAN



1-296

9-19-73

Prologue:

RAIN. THE WATERFRONT. A FLOATING BODY. FAMILIAR ELEMENTS TO COMMISSIONER GORDON, BUT ALWAYS GRIM ONES. AND THIS NIGHT, MORE GRIM THAN USUAL...



WE GOT HIM, SIR.

I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO MISTAKE...?



I TOOK THAT MARTIAL ARTS COURSE HE AND BATMAN GAVE AT THE POLICE ACADEMY...

IT'S DAN KINGDOM, ALL RIGHT!



WHO'D THINK IT? EX-GREEN BERET, NINTH DEGREE BLACK BELT...

GOOD, BUT NOT AGAINST A SHOTGUN.



USE THE BAT-SIGNAL. WE'VE GOT TO TELL--

S-SIR...!



HE'S... HERE!



BATMAN! HOW--?

DAN SENT WORD TO MEET HIM.

HE FELT HE WAS ON TO SOMETHING...



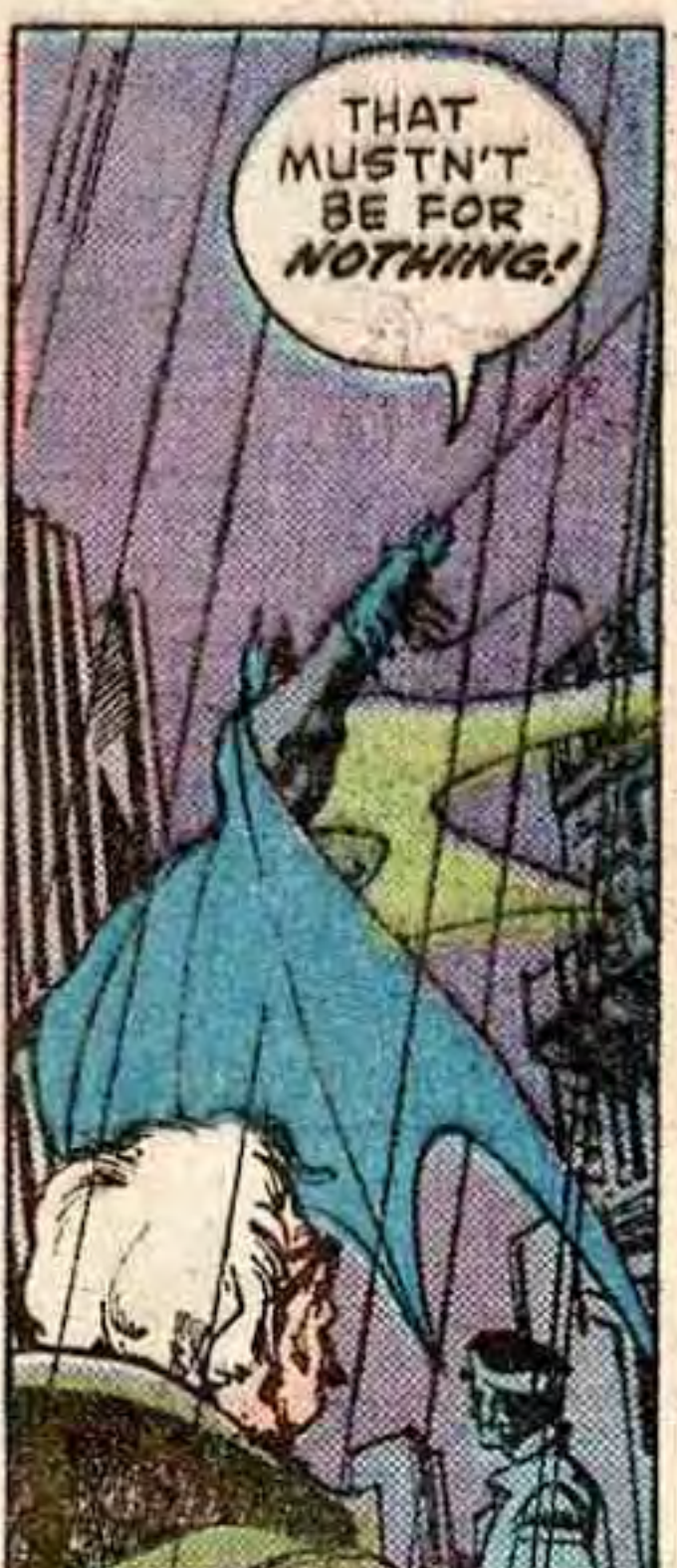
... INVOLVING THE PRIME MINISTER OF CONGOLA.

WHY, THERE'S A PARTY HONORING HIS VISIT... AT BRUCE WAYNE'S MANSION!



WHATEVER DAN LEARNED, IT'S COST GOTHAM A FINE PRIVATE DETECTIVE...

AND ME, A BEST FRIEND!



THAT MUSTN'T BE FOR NOTHING!

TONIGHT, LIGHTS BURN FOR *THIS MAN*...NDELE KSHUMBO, PRIME MINISTER OF THE NEW AFRICAN NATION *CONGOLA*, A LAND ONCE *ENSLAVED* BY MILITARY DICTATORSHIP...



MUCH OF THE YEAR, WAYNE MANOR IS DARK, BUT NOT TONIGHT...



NOW, AFTER LONG, BITTER FIGHTING, HE AND HIS PEOPLE ARE *FREE*...

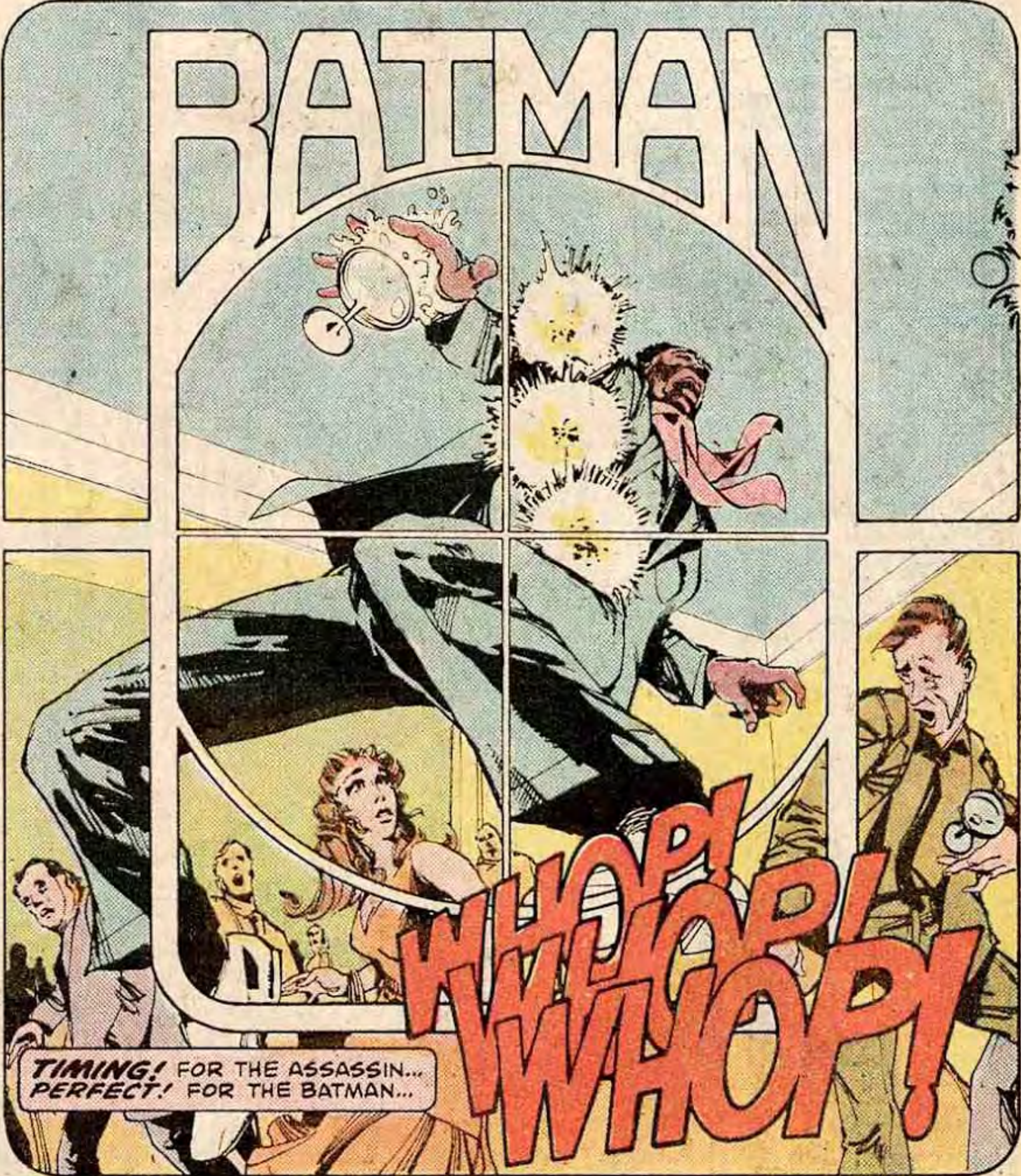


CLICK

RACHET RACHET

SNAP

KLACK



TIMING! FOR THE ASSASSIN... PERFECT! FOR THE BATMAN...

WHOOPI! WHOOPI! WHOOPI!



...REAPPEARING AS BRUCE WAYNE...



...AWFUL!



NOW HE RACES FOR HIS BARELY ABANDONED CAPE AND COWL! NOW HE MOVES TOWARD THE *BEGINNING* OF A BLOODY TRAIL TO...

GOTTERDÄMMERUNG

HE HAS MOVED WITH A SWIFTNES, A SURENESS FEW MORTALS COULD! BUT THE BATMAN TAKES NO SATISFACTION IN IT...

TOO LATE...AGAIN! DIDN'T REACH DAN KINGDOM IN TIME TO HELP...

AND NOW... KSHUMBO!

MURDERED IN MY OWN HOME!

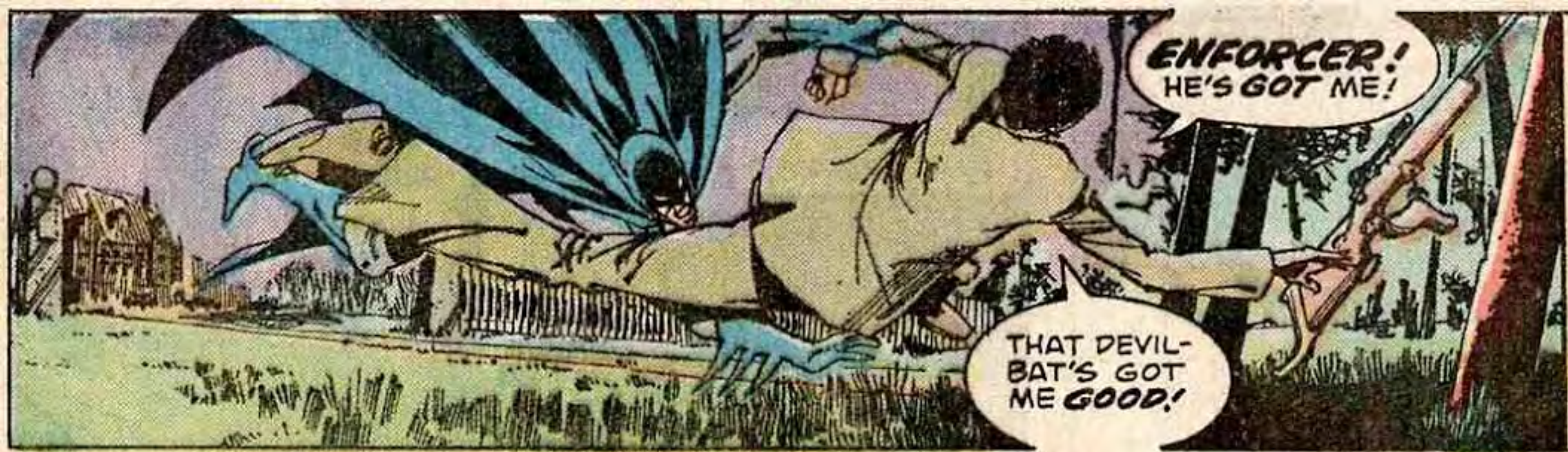
THEN, ALL THOUGHTS ARE GONE...

AND THERE...

...IS ONLY...

...A KILLER TO BRING LOW!

Written by Archie Goodwin
Drawn by Walter Simonson

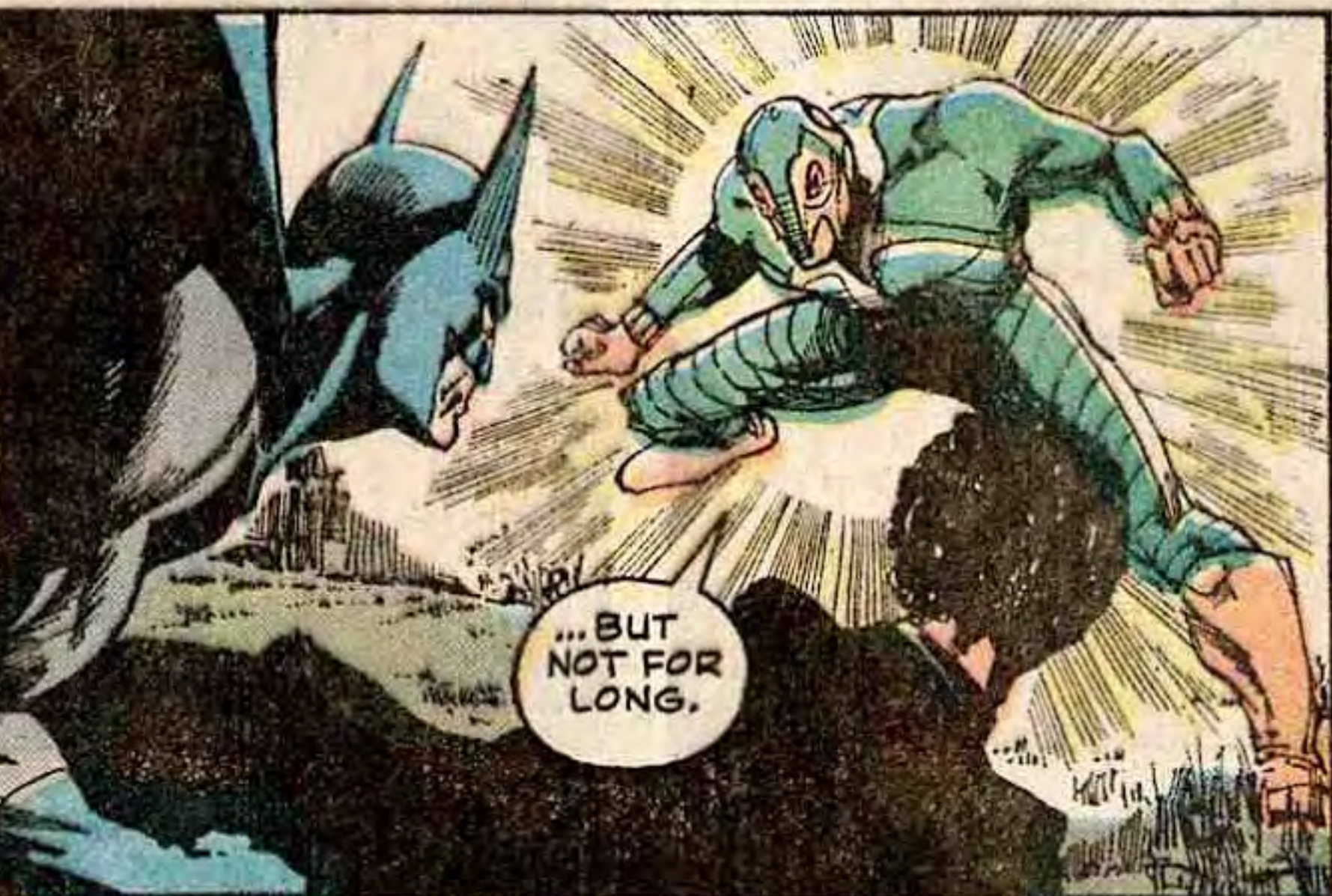


ENFORCER!
HE'S GOT ME!

THAT DEVIL-BAT'S GOT ME GOOD!



YES...



... BUT NOT FOR LONG.

THE VOICE, MUFFLED WITHIN THE MASK, IS RESTRAINED...



THE BLOWS THAT FOLLOW... ARE NOT!

ONE IS AN OFF-BEAT VARIATION ON THE LEOPARD'S PAW KNUCKLE STRIKE... AND MEANT TO KILL!

IT FAILS ONLY BECAUSE THE BATMAN HAS FACED IT BEFORE, CAN ROLL WITH IT SLIGHTLY...



STILL, FOR A MOMENT, ITS USE STUNS HIM...

AND AGAINST SKILLED,
WELL-ORGANIZED FOES,
EVEN A *MOMENT*...

...MAKES A
DIFFERENCE!

BUT...

FOR
SOMEONE
THAT
GOOD...

...THEY'VE
MADE A
VERY *BAD*
MISTAKE!

THE ASSASSIN'S *WEAPON* IS
NOT AN ORDINARY ONE... AND IT IS
UNTRACEABLE BY ORDINARY MEANS.

I'M *CLEAN*,
CRIMEFIGHTER.

SURE, MOLE... LIKE YOUR
BOOK SHOP. BUT I'M NOT
HERE TO *HASSLE* YOU...

I WANT
INFORMATION...

...ABOUT
THIS!

SAY! THAT'S
MERCHANDISE!
SPANKIN' *NEW*
AN' '*SPECIALLY*
CRAFTED!

A FEW CRATES
OF *THESE* AN' I'D
NEVER HAF'TA
SCHLEP ANOTHER
USED BOOK!

BUT THIS IS
THE *BATMAN*.
HE AND HIS
SOURCES ARE
NOT ORDINARY.

NO, BUT YOU'LL SCHLEP A LOT OF **ROCK** IN FEDERAL PRISON...LIKE THE **LAST** TIME YOU SOLD **ILLEGAL ARMS**.

I WANT **ADVICE**, MOLE...NOT TO BRING YOU OUT OF **RETIREMENT**.

YEAH, YEAH. NOBODY LOVES ME FOR **MYSELF** ...ONLY MY **EXPERTISE**.

WELL...I'D SAY THE STOCK ASSEMBLY DESIGN WAS **GIRAUD**...THE **BELGIAN**. ONLY HE'S **DEAD** THREE YEARS.

AND THIS AMMO FEED SYSTEM...SMACKS OF **CHULL KIM**, A **KOREAN!** ALSO **DECEASED**.

ONE GUY TRAINED UNDER **BOTH**. BASED IN **NAIROBI**, **OXFORD** GRAD, NO LESS...

...**KOLU MBEYA!**

OKAY, MOLE.

I'LL SEE THERE'S SOME **EXTRA CHEESE** FOR YOUR **RATS**.

AND THE TRAIL THAT **BEGAN** WITH TWO DEATHS DURING ONE RAIN-SWEPT **GOTHAM** NIGHT...

...**SHIFTS** TO ANOTHER CONTINENT, WHERE A BRILLIANT AFRICAN SUN DRENCHES **NAIROBI'S** BUILDINGS, MODERN AND ANCIENT...

...AMONG THEM, **THIS** ONE.

YOU MUST BE **JOKING**, MANHUNTER!

UNDER COVER OF THIS **SHOP**, I MANUFACTURE **ARMS** FOR THE **BLACK REBEL** GROUPS I SUPPORT...

BUT JOIN IN **RAIDING** SOME SUPER-ORGANIZATION'S **STRONGHOLD?**

HARDLY MY STYLE!

CHRISTINE, ASANO, AND I NEED A GOOD WEAPONS MAN TO **BACK** US, **KOLU**...YOU'RE THE **BEST**.

BUT MY SPECIALTY IS **DESIGNING** THESE... ANYONE CAN SHOOT THEM!

THIS "**COUNCIL**" IS **NOTHING** TO ME. I'LL HOLD TO MY **SPECIALTY!**

WEAPONS YOU CAN HAVE, BUT **NOT** MY **PERSONAL--**

W-WHAT...?

AND SINCE YOU'RE MY **FATHER'S** FRIEND, I ALSO DESIGN YOUR **EQUIP-MENT**...

FOR THE **BATMAN**,
THIS SEEMS THE
END OF THE LINE...

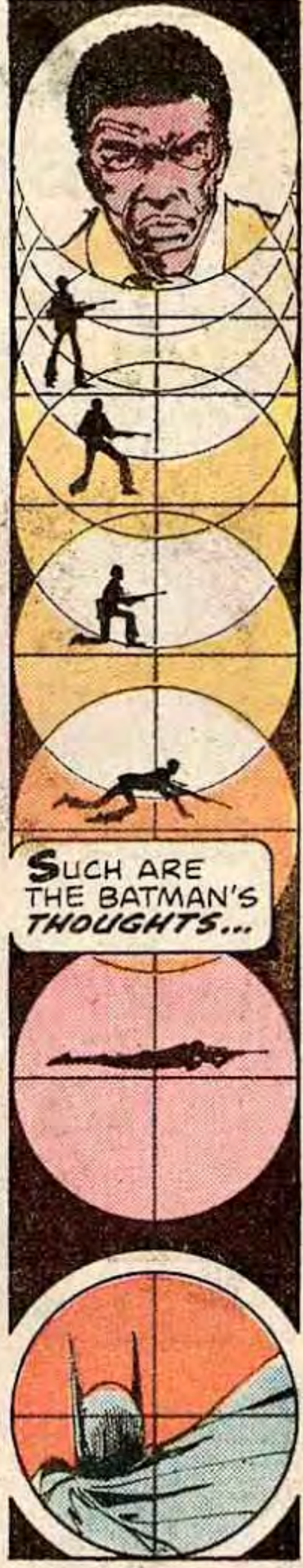
BELOW IS THE SHOP OF **KOLU MBEYA**... AND HE HAS
LEARNED **MUCH** ABOUT THIS MAN. UNLIKE **MOST**
TRAFFICKERS IN ARMS, **MBEYA BELIEVES** IN THE CAUSES
HE SUPPORTS. AND IF **ONE** SUCH CAUSE WAS A FACTION
OPPOSING CONGOLA'S NEW PRIME MINISTER, **NDELE**
KSHUMBO...



THEN, **MBEYA**
COULD WELL
HAVE PROVIDED
MORE THAN
THE **WEAPON**
OF ASSASSI-
NATION...



...HE COULD
WELL HAVE
PROVIDED THE
ASSASSIN
HIMSELF!



SUCH ARE
THE **BATMAN'S**
THOUGHTS...



AS A DEADLY
GAME UNFOLDS...

...INVOLVING
MANY PLAYERS!



N-NO!

KLUUNK!



BATMAN!
DON'T LET
HIM GET
ME!



LISTEN!



I'LL TELL YOU
EVERYTHING!



BUT YOU
GOT TO
PROTECT
ME!



THE
COUNCIL
ORDERED ME
TO KILL
KSHUMBO
AND--



--SEE
THAT IT
LED TO
MBEYA!

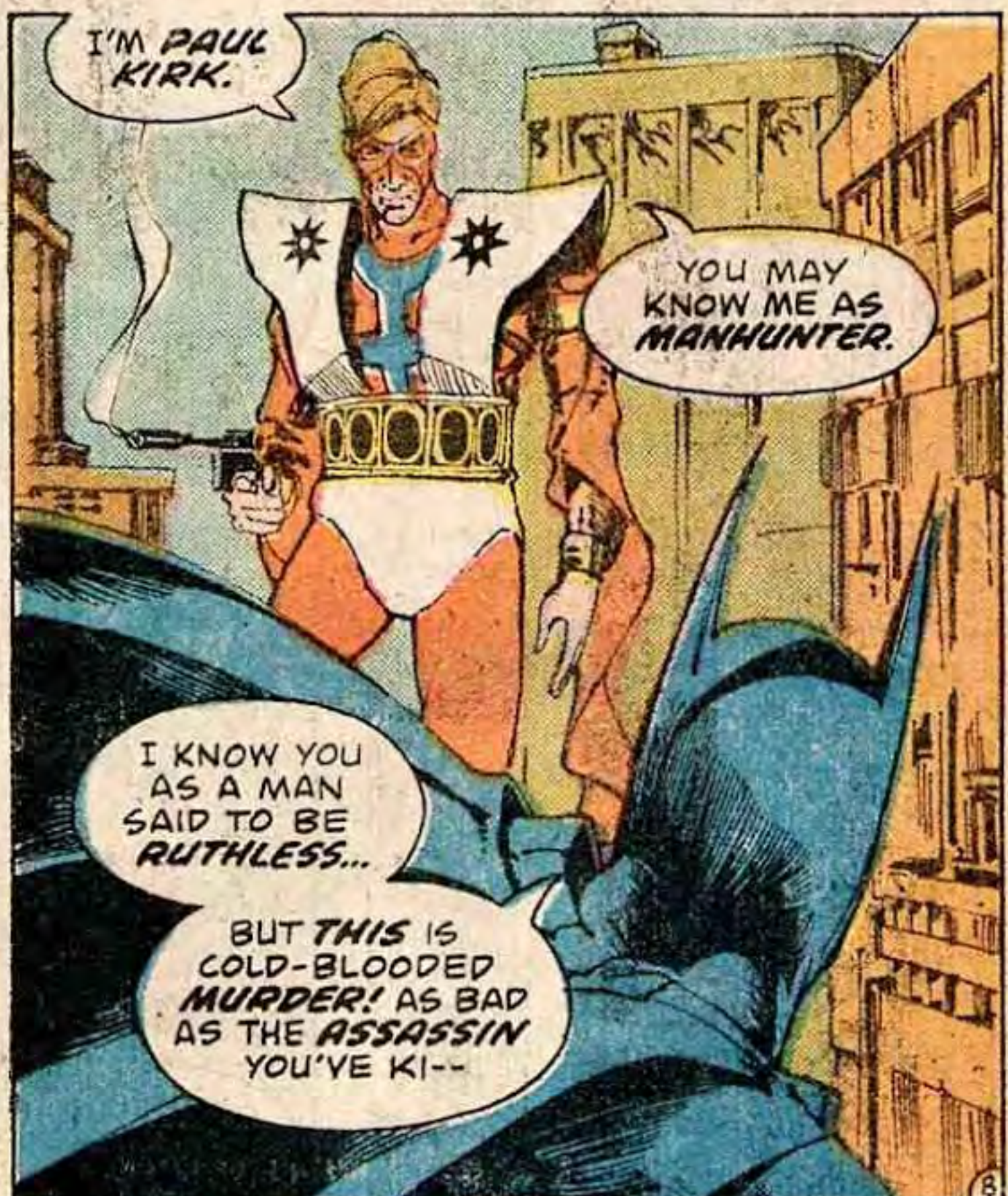
I
HAD TO
DO IT!

THEIR NEW
ENFORCER WAS
WATCHING EVERY
STEP OF THE
WAY!



IT WAS HIS IDEA
THAT ATTACKING
YOU HERE ON KOLU'S
DOORSTEP WOULD
CINCH--

AAGH!



I'M PAUL
KIRK.

YOU MAY
KNOW ME AS
MANHUNTER.

I KNOW YOU
AS A MAN
SAID TO BE
RUTHLESS...

BUT THIS IS
COLD-BLOODED
MURDER! AS BAD
AS THE ASSASSIN
YOU'VE KI--

HE WAS GAMBLING--

--THAT SHOUTING THE TRUTH WOULD MAKE US LISTEN, HESITATE--

--UNTIL HE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO USE THIS!

HE LOST.

BUT HE WOULD HAVE STABBED YOU...AND USED YOUR CORPSE AS A SHIELD TO ESCAPE FROM ME!

I'VE BEEN THREATENED BY KNIVES BEFORE, AND CAME OUT OF IT WITHOUT KILLING ANYONE...

...OR BEING KILLED!

THEY TELL ME ONCE IS ALL IT TAKES! WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT INSIDE.

I'D RATHER TALK ABOUT THAT GROUP KSHUMBO'S KILLER MENTIONED...

MEET CHRISTINE ST. CLAIR AND ASANO NITOBE, BATMAN.

BUT KOLU HERE HAS A BIT TO LEARN.

AS THEY DESCEND SECRET STAIRS, MANHUNTER TELLS A STORY...

...THE COUNCIL.

WE'VE BECOME EXPERTS ON THE COUNCIL.

WE'D BEST MOVE TO MY WORKSHOP..THE STORE'S HARDLY IDEAL FOR A CONVENTION.

...ABOUT NINE SCIENTIFIC GENIUSES...

...WHO SET OUT TO SAVE THE WORLD...

...AND ENDED TRYING TO CONTROL IT!

NOW...

...THEY SEEM OUT TO GET YOU, MBEYA...

MANHUNTER, YOUR RAID ON COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS...

AND THEIR ORGANIZATION IS BIG ENOUGH TO SUCCEED! ASANO AND I ARE REBELS FROM THEIR CAUSE.

CHRISTINE'S FATHER DIED FOR FAILURE IN SERVING IT!

...THROUGH THEIR CHOICE IN ASSASSINATION WEAPONS!

...HAS JUST GAINED A NEW RECRUIT!

click



WITH THE COMING OF ANOTHER DAWN, THEY ARE READY...



ASANO NITOBE, MASTER NINJA, INSTRUCTOR TO MANHUNTER.



TWO 1,200 HORSE-POWER ENGINES COUGH INTO LIFE... AND THE MISSION BEGINS!



MY COMPANY'S PRIVATE AIRCRAFT HAS ALL THE CLEARANCES WE REQUIRE...

BUT ASANO BEST JOIN ME... SINCE HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS THE EXACT LOCATION...



...OF THE COUNCIL'S HIDDEN SANCTUARY!

YOU GET VERY QUIET WHEN WE TRAVEL, PAUL ... AND GRIM.

IT'S WHEN I'M MOST REMINDED...

...HOW MUCH THE WORLD HAS CHANGED SINCE MY "DEATH" BACK IN 1946.

EXCEPT FOR MEETING PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ASANO, CHRISTINE...

THERE'S NOT MUCH THAT MAKES ME GLAD OF BEING RESTORED TO LIFE BY THE COUNCIL.

IT'S PART OF THE REASON I FIGHT THEM SO RUTHLESSLY.

I DIDN'T WELCOME DEATH, BUT COMING OUT OF WORLD WAR II, WEARY, DISILLUSIONED ... I FOUND A KIND OF PEACE IN IT.

A PEACE THE COUNCIL SHATTERED...

LONG MILES OF OCEAN SLIP BENEATH THE PLANE'S GLEAMING WINGS... AS TIME SLIPS SLOWLY AWAY FOR MANHUNTER AND CHRISTINE.

I OWE DR. MYKROS AND HIS EIGHT FELLOW COUNCIL MEMBERS A GOOD DEAL, CHRISTINE.

BESIDES MY PEACE, THEY STOLE THE ONE THING THAT'S ANY HUMAN'S RIGHT... HIS INDIVIDUALITY!

THEY CLONED ME... DUPLICATED ME OVER AND OVER! TOOK MY UNIQUENESS AND TURNED IT INTO AN ARMY OF CIPHERS!

EACH TIME I KILL ONE OF THOSE DAMN CLONES, I FEEL I'M RECLAIMING PART OF MYSELF! I--

KIRK! MS. ST. CLAIR! AUSTRALIA'S GREAT OUTBACK BELOW... PREPARE FOR LANDING.

THE PLANE SETS DOWN. ON A MAP, THIS AREA IS THE GIBSON DESERT, BUT FOR THESE NEW ARRIVALS...



...IT IS ENEMY TERRITORY!

LET'S MOVE, KOLU! ASANO SAYS THIS SECTOR ISN'T NORMALLY WELL-PATROLLED, BUT...

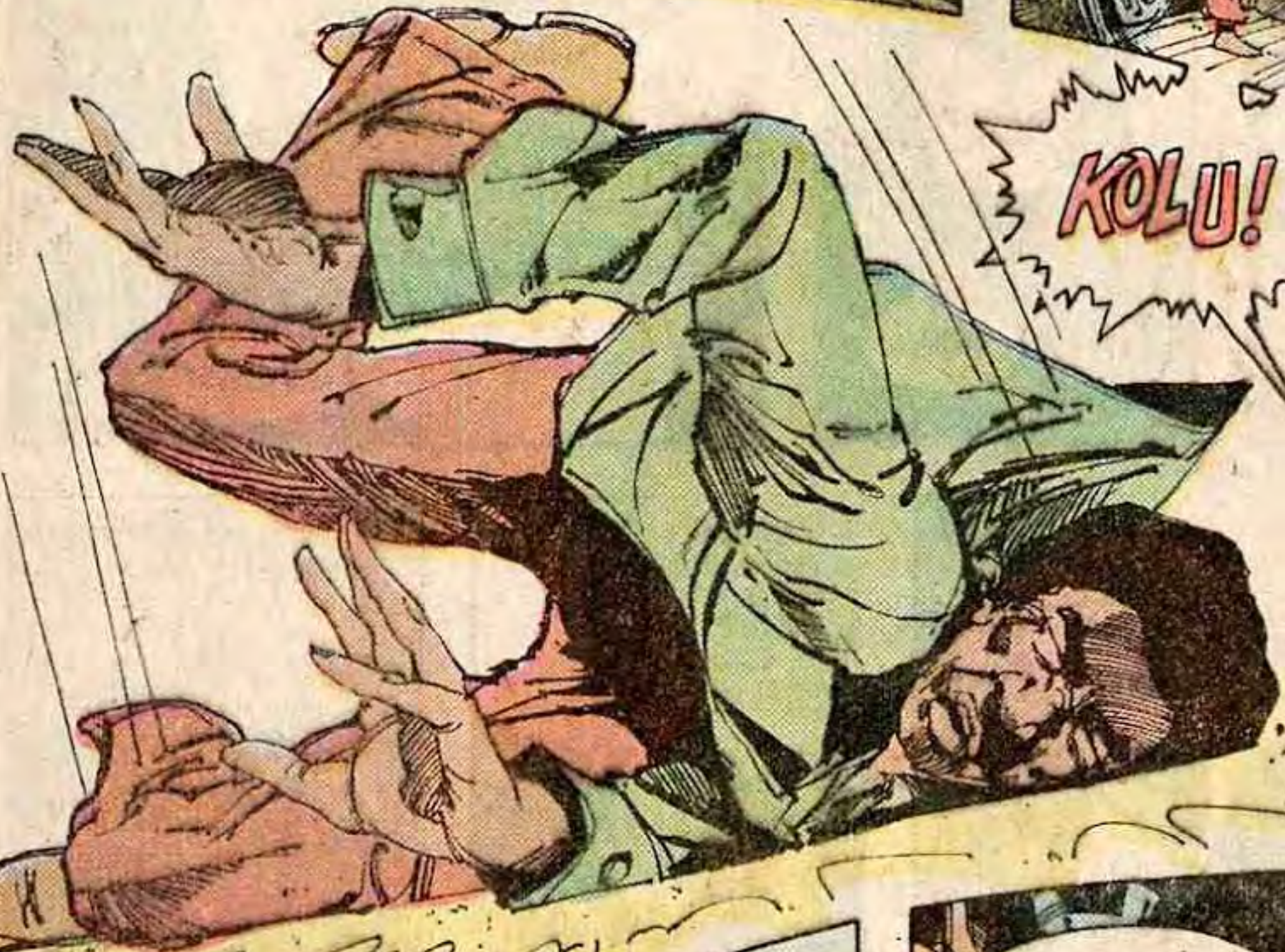


MERELY SETTING A FEW BOOBY TRAPS.

IT NEVER HURTS TO BE--



BLAM



KOLU!

EVERYONE DOWN!

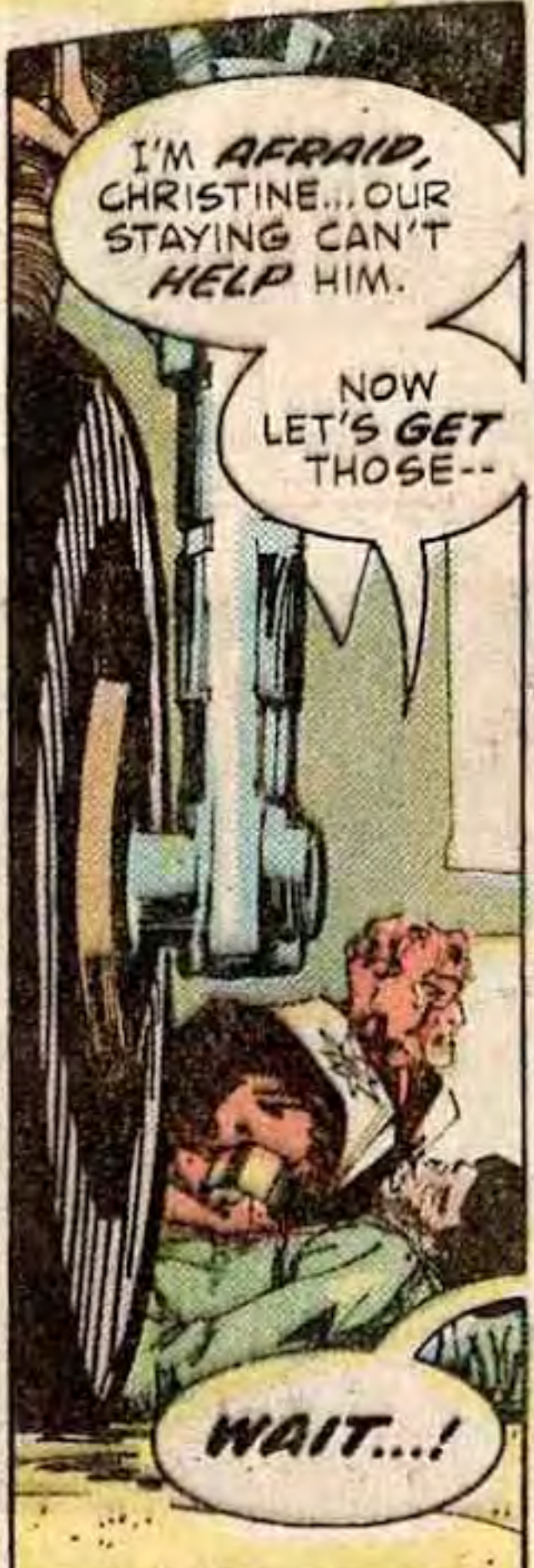


THEY ARE BEHIND THE NEAR RIDGE!



I'LL DRAW THEIR FIRE, ASANO! YOU AND CHRISTINE FLANK THEM!

B-BUT, MANHUNTER... WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE KOLU!



I'M AFRAID, CHRISTINE... OUR STAYING CAN'T HELP HIM.

NOW LET'S GET THOSE--

WAIT...!



THE FIRING HAS CEASED.

AND MUCH TOO ABRUPTLY TO BE NATURAL!

CORRECT...



I ONLY WISH...

...I'D ARRIVED SOONER...

...FOR KOLU'S SAKE!

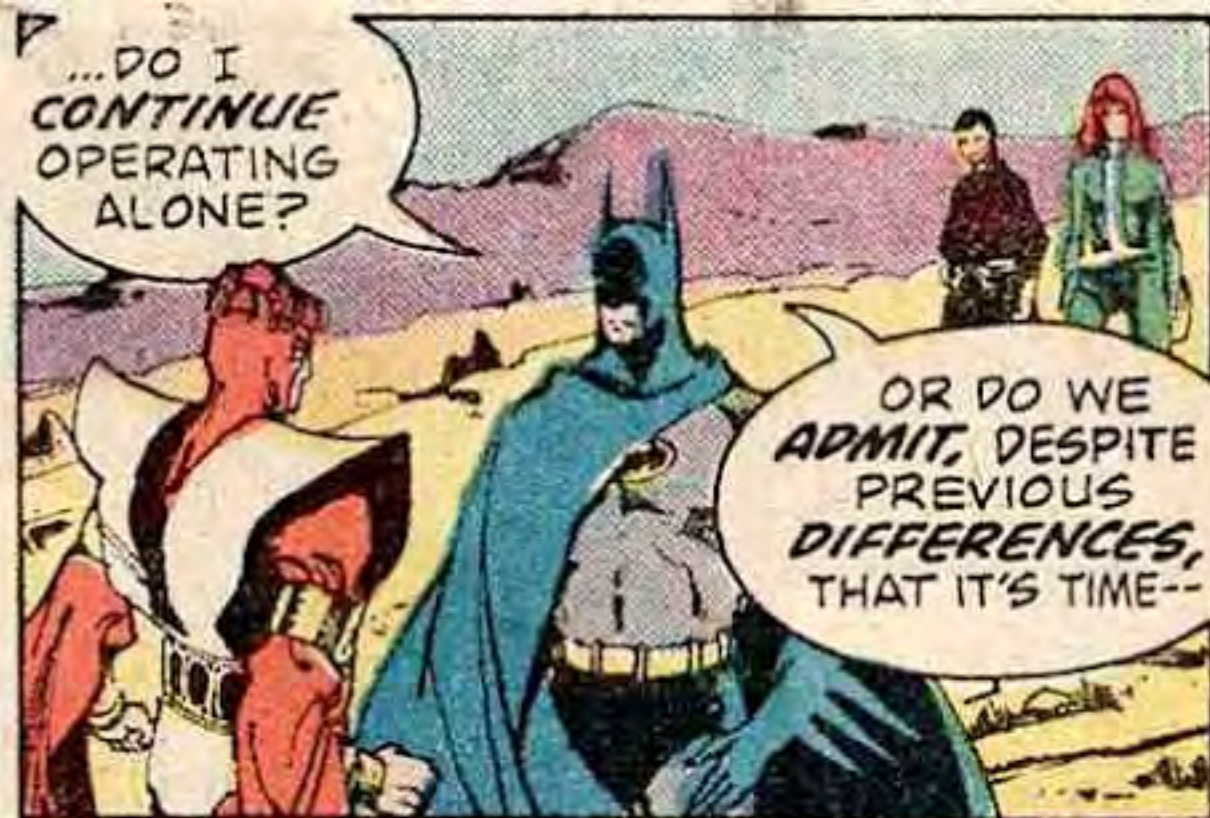
BATMAN!

BUT... ONLY ASANO KNEW THE WAY HERE! HOW--



I'M SOMETHING OF A MANHUNTER MYSELF, KIRK.

NOW...



...DO I CONTINUE OPERATING ALONE?

OR DO WE ADMIT, DESPITE PREVIOUS DIFFERENCES, THAT IT'S TIME--



--WE JOIN FORCES!

GOOD...!



A BAUXITE MINING OPERATION NORTH OF HERE SEEMS TO HIDE THE SANCTUARY'S ENTRANCE, BUT--

IT IS TOO HEAVILY GUARDED FOR DIRECT ASSAULT!



COME! YOU HAVE SCOUTED WELL, BATMAN, BUT SOME APPROACHES...



...ONLY A MAN LIVING OVER HALF HIS LIFE WITH THE COUNCIL COULD KNOW.

A VENTILATION SHAFT!



A PLAN OF BATTLE IS SWIFTLY DRAWN...

AND...

THE...



DESCENT...

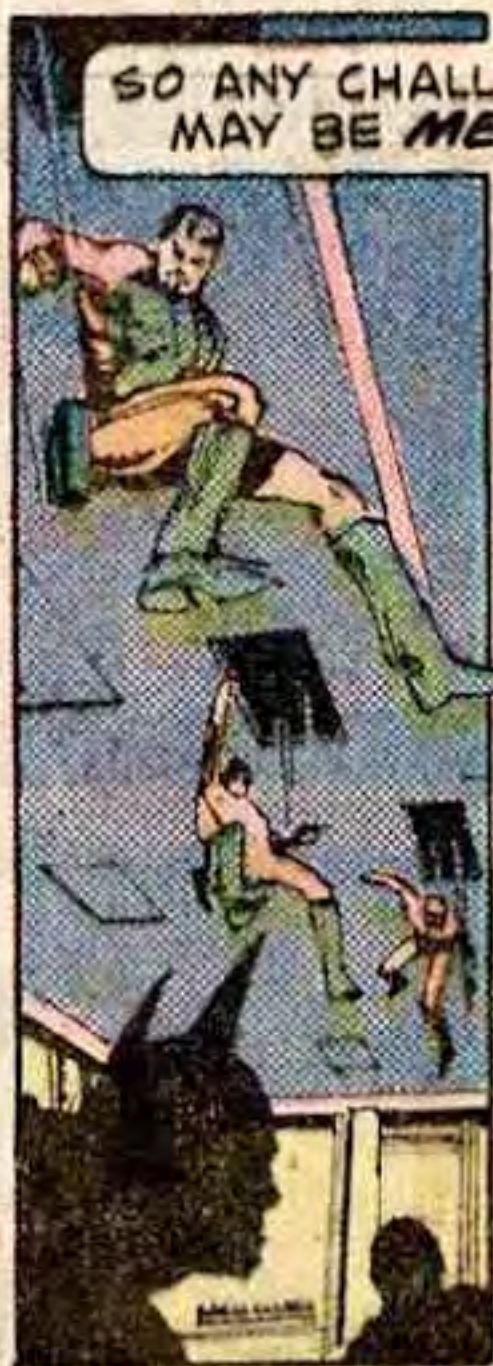
BEGINS...

...INTO THE HEART OF THE SANCTUARY!

AT SOME POINT, THEY WILL BE DISCOVERED. THEY KNOW THIS. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS SENSING WHEN...

...BEFORE THE ENEMY!

Chik



SO ANY CHALLENGE MAY BE MET...



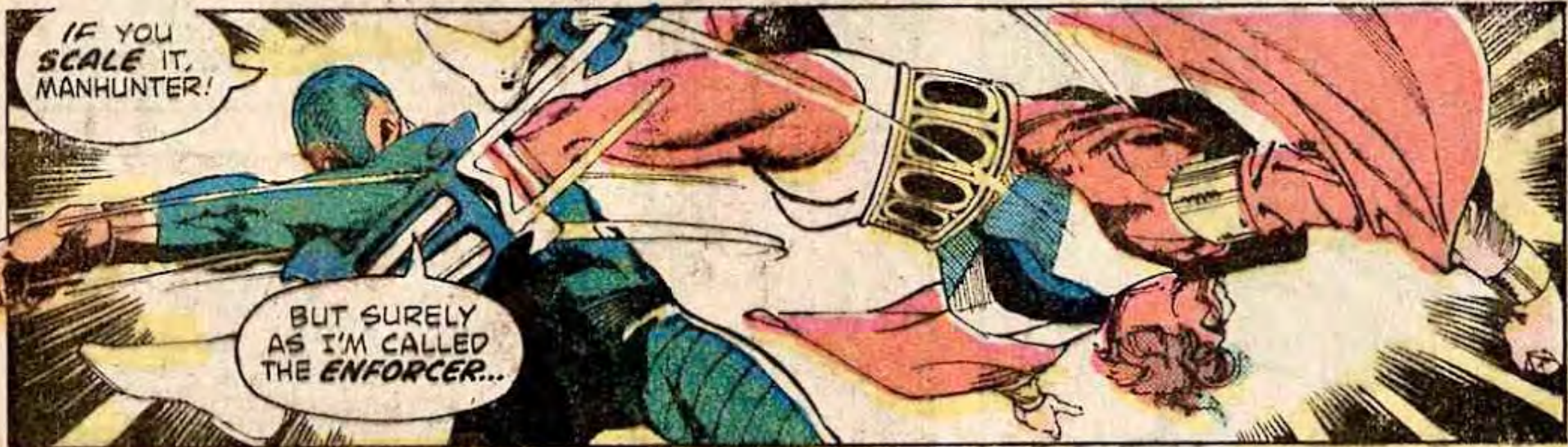
...AND COUNTERED!



--IT CAN TAKE US ABOVE THE MAIN CHAMBERS!

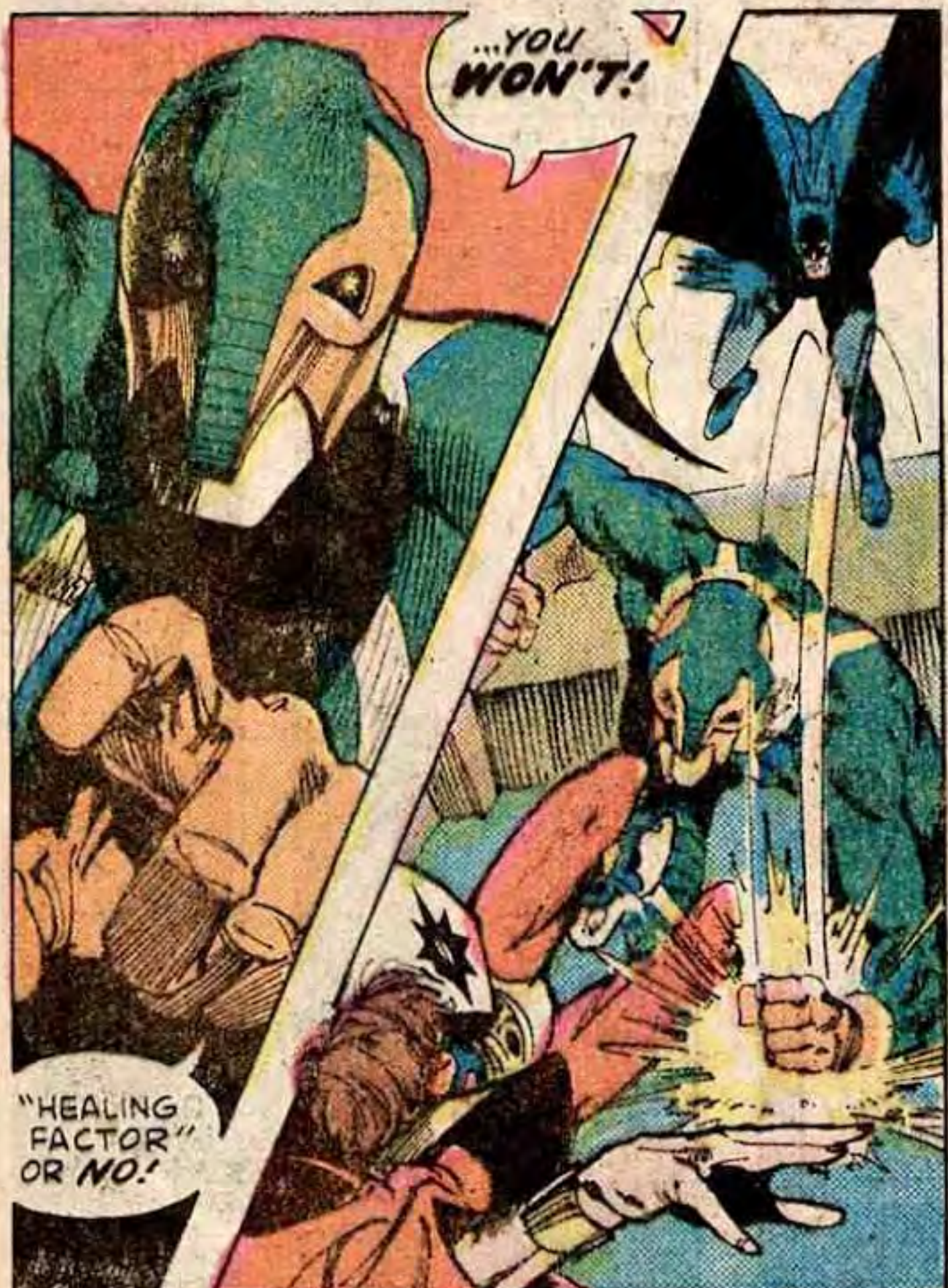


WE'LL BE HOME FR--



IF YOU SCALE IT, MANHUNTER!

BUT SURELY AS I'M CALLED THE ENFORCER...



...YOU WON'T!

"HEALING FACTOR" OR NO!



ON YOUR WAY, MANHUNTER!

KRAK



THE ENFORCER AND I ARE OVERDUE SETTLING...

...DAN KINGDOM'S DEATH!

YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU, BATMAN? YOU KNOW WHO I AM!

BECAUSE YOU OVERUSE THAT **KNUCKLE STRIKE** VARIATION!

IT GAVE YOU **AWAY** IN GOTHAM...

AND TRYING TO USE IT **NOW** JUST SETS YOU UP...

...FOR A **COUNTER-PUNCH!**

EXCEPT **ONE** BLOW WON'T DO IT, BATMAN... NOT EVEN ONE FROM **YOU!**

BUT BATMAN AND THE ENFORCER ARE MERELY **TWO** COMBATANTS IN A MUCH **LARGER** BATTLE...

...ELSEWHERE, **ASANO NITOBE**...

...AND A **FLAILING NUNCHAKU**...

...**FIGURE VITALLY!**

HE'S BOUGHT US A **CLEAR ASCENT**, CHRISTINE...

NOW **WE'VE** GOT...

...TO SEE THAT IT **PAYS OFF!**



BEHIND MANHUNTER AND CHRISTINE... ANOTHER PAYOFF LOOMS,

IT'S BEEN FAIRLY EVEN, BATMAN, BUT YOU'RE STARTING TO HESITATE...

...BECAUSE YOU CAN'T FORGET WHO I AM! IN THE END ...THAT'S GOING TO WIN FOR ME!

YES...



...ONLY I NOW REALIZE THAT THE MAN I REMEMBER... NO LONGER EXISTS!



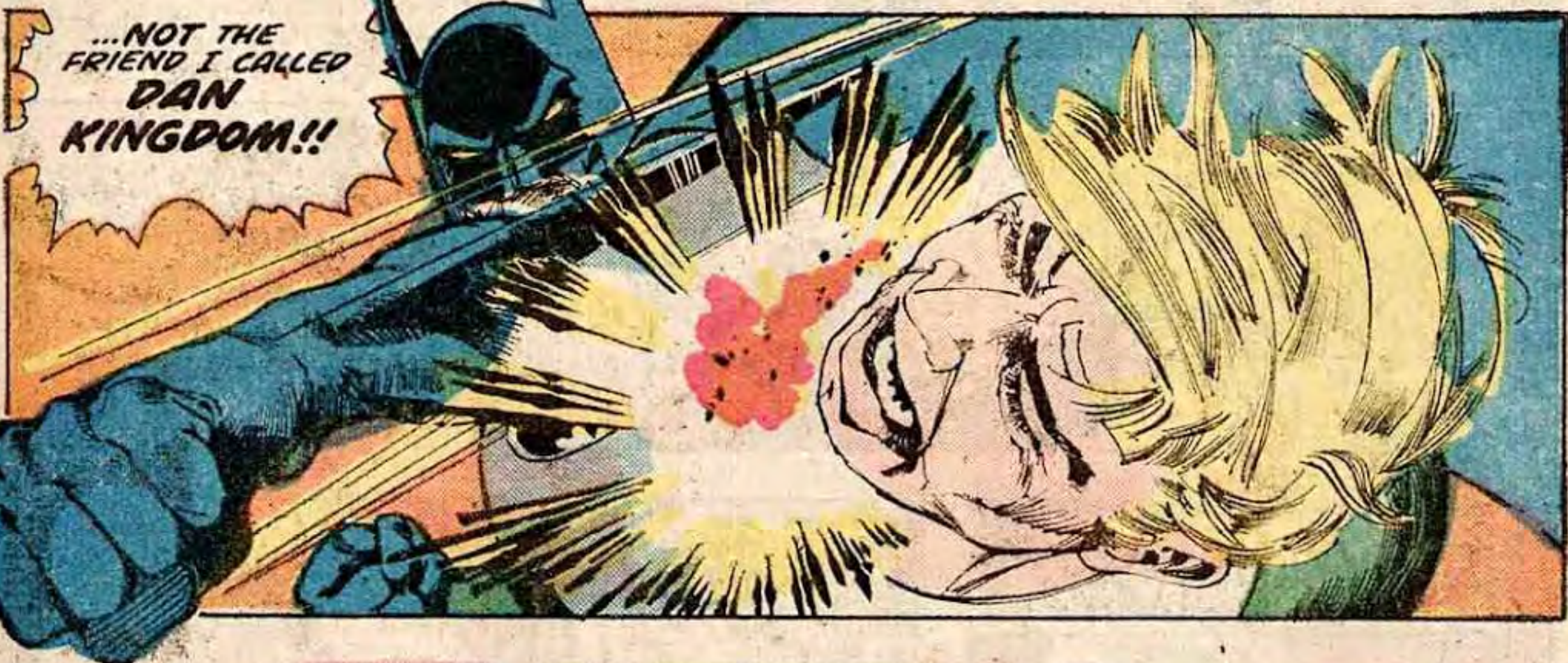
I DON'T KNOW HOW THE COUNCIL CORRUPTED YOU...



...MANHUNTER! CLAIMS THEY CAN DANGLE WEALTH... POWER...EVEN EXTENDED LIFE...



...WHATEVER, IT MADE YOU COMPLETELY THE ENFORCER...



...NOT THE FRIEND I CALLED DAN KINGDOM!!



THE COUNCIL MAY HAVE PLANTED A CLONE'S BODY IN GOTHAM'S EAST RIVER TO COVER YOUR JOINING THEM, DAN...

...BUT IT WAS STILL YOU WHO DIED!



MEANTIME...

THIS IS THE ACCESS HATCH WE WANT, CHRISTINE...

...LEADS RIGHT TO THE RAID'S SUCCESS... OR FAILURE! ONCE I'M THROUGH IT, I'LL SIGNAL YOU TO BRING THE OTHERS! IF I DON'T--

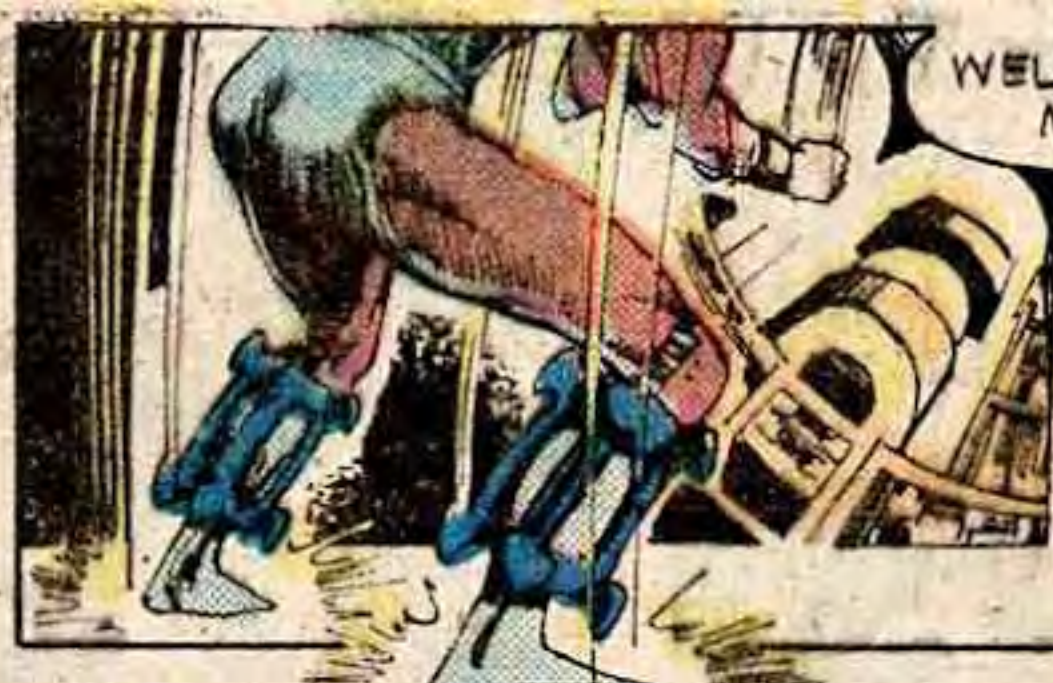


WE GET OUT FAST AS WE CAN! I UNDERSTAND, PAUL, BUT I DON'T LIKE--

YET YOU'RE PRO ENOUGH TO DO IT ANYWAY! MAKES IT MUCH EASIER FOR ME...



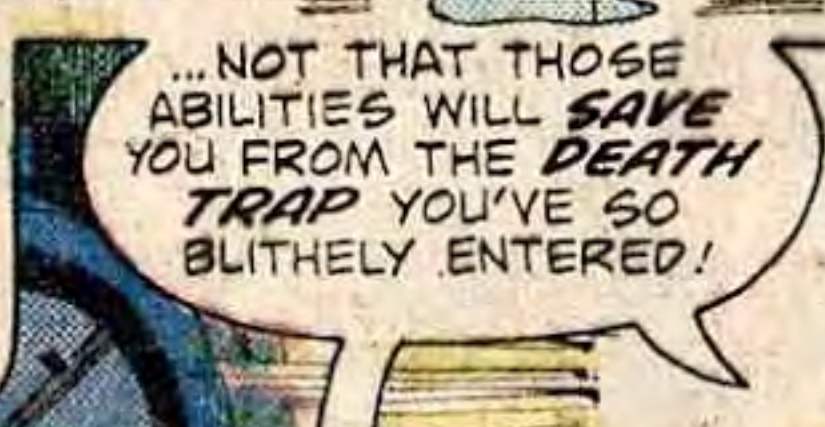
...NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS ONCE I FACE DR. MYKROS!



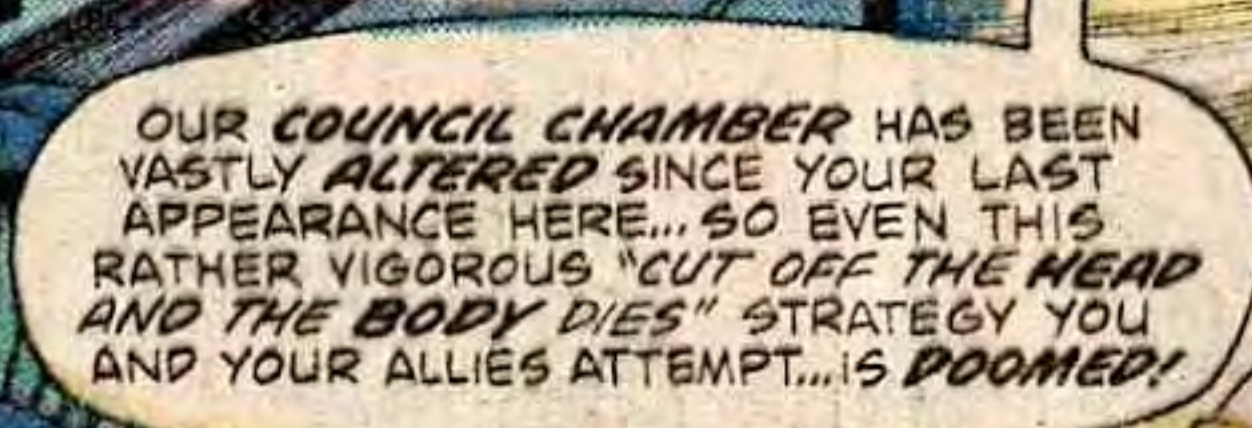
WELCOME HOME, MY BOY.



THAT YOU'VE GOTTEN THIS FAR CONFIRMS THOSE ABILITIES WE ADMIRERD IN YOU FROM THE START.



...NOT THAT THOSE ABILITIES WILL SAVE YOU FROM THE DEATH TRAP YOU'VE SO BLITHELY ENTERED!



OUR COUNCIL CHAMBER HAS BEEN VASTLY ALTERED SINCE YOUR LAST APPEARANCE HERE... SO EVEN THIS RATHER VIGOROUS "CUT OFF THE HEAD AND THE BODY DIES" STRATEGY YOU AND YOUR ALLIES ATTEMPT... IS DOOMED!



THIS PSIONIC HELMET--WHICH ONCE MERELY MAINTAINED THOUGHT CONTACT BETWEEN ME AND MY EIGHT FELLOW COUNCILMEN IN THEIR SUSPENDED ANIMATION CAPSULES--

--NOW CYBERNETICALLY LINKS OUR COMBINED MENTAL FORCE WITH THE SANCTUARY'S ENTIRE POWER AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS!



"DO YOU KNOW WHAT MIGHT THAT GIVES US?"



MYKROS ...YOU TALK TOO MUCH!

BAMBAMBAM

"ONE BRIEF THOUGHT CAN SEAL YOU HERE! A STRONGER ONE CAN--"



THREE SHOTS. THREE CAPSULES PRESERVING THREE OLD MEN FOR SOME FUTURE GLORY... EXPLODE!

DAMN YOU, PAUL KIRK!

I'M DONE TALKING! NOW I DEMONSTRATE--



--WHAT OUR STRONGEST THOUGHT CAN DO!

CONVERT RADIATION FROM THE SANCTUARY'S REACTOR...

KRACKLE!

...INTO ONE SEARING BOLT!! TO CONTAMINATE...

...AND DESTROY YOU!



MYKROS WOULD LIKE TO GLOAT, EXULT. BUT THERE IS NO TIME...



BATMAN! IT'S GONE WRONG!

TIME TO GET OUT!



THEY MUSTN'T ESCAPE! THEY KNOW THE SANCTUARY'S LOCATION NOW!

ALL RESERVE FORCES! CUT OFF THEIR RETREAT!



BLAM

LORD! ASANO!



I STILL... LIVE...! B-BUT...

...THEY WILL BE UPON US BEFORE I CAN LEAD YOU ...TO THE COUNCIL'S AIRCRAFT!

THEN...



BRAKA-BRAKA-BRA

W-WHAT?!

HOW CAN IT B--

AK!



KOLU!



WHEN HE SAW I WASN'T FATALLY HIT, MANHUNTER PINCHED A NERVE... TO KNOCK ME OUT!

I THINK HE KNEW THE REST OF YOU WOULDN'T LEAVE ME... BUT THAT, WOUNDED, I'D JEOPARDIZE YOUR CHANCES...



LIKE SO MUCH ELSE ▽ HE DID, I QUESTION IT, BUT CAN'T ARGUE WITH HOW...

...IT WORKED OUT! LET'S FIND THOSE PLANES!



YES! GO TO THE HANGAR...



YOU'VE FINISHED OUR RESERVES, BUT...



...THE HELMET CAN STILL SELF-DESTRUCT ANY AREA HERE!

WITNESS NOW...

...THE **SECOND** RESURRECTION OF **PAUL KIRK!**

MYKROS...!

Thud

MEANWHILE...

THE **HANGAR!** THANK GOD...

AND **ONE** PLANE IS A MODEL I CAN **HANDLE!**

LET'S GO!

AND...

ALL SET! THOUGH I'D HAVE **SWORN** THERE'D BE SOME **LAST** DIRTY TRICK...

IF THERE IS, IT IS PERHAPS ON THE **COUNCIL!** FOR THE "**HEALING FACTOR**" THEIR GENETIC SURGERY PROVIDED MANHUNTER HAS **SLOWED** THE RADIATION EATING HIM ALIVE. HE MOVES WITH **PAIN**, WITH THE CERTAINTY OF APPROACHING **DEATH**, BUT HE STILL **MOVES**, AND THEREFORE... IS STILL **DANGEROUS!**

NICE **TOY,** MYKROS...

...YOU'D PROBABLY HAVE **BURNED** ME TO A **CRISP!**

...HATE TO THINK... YOU MIGHT **REBUILD...** FROM ALL THIS, DOCTOR...

NO!

WATCH ME...!

YOU'VE **HURT** US...

...BUT YOU SHALL **NOT** DESTROY US!

IF I HADN'T KNOCKED OUT **THREE** OF THE MINDS LOCKED INTO THIS...

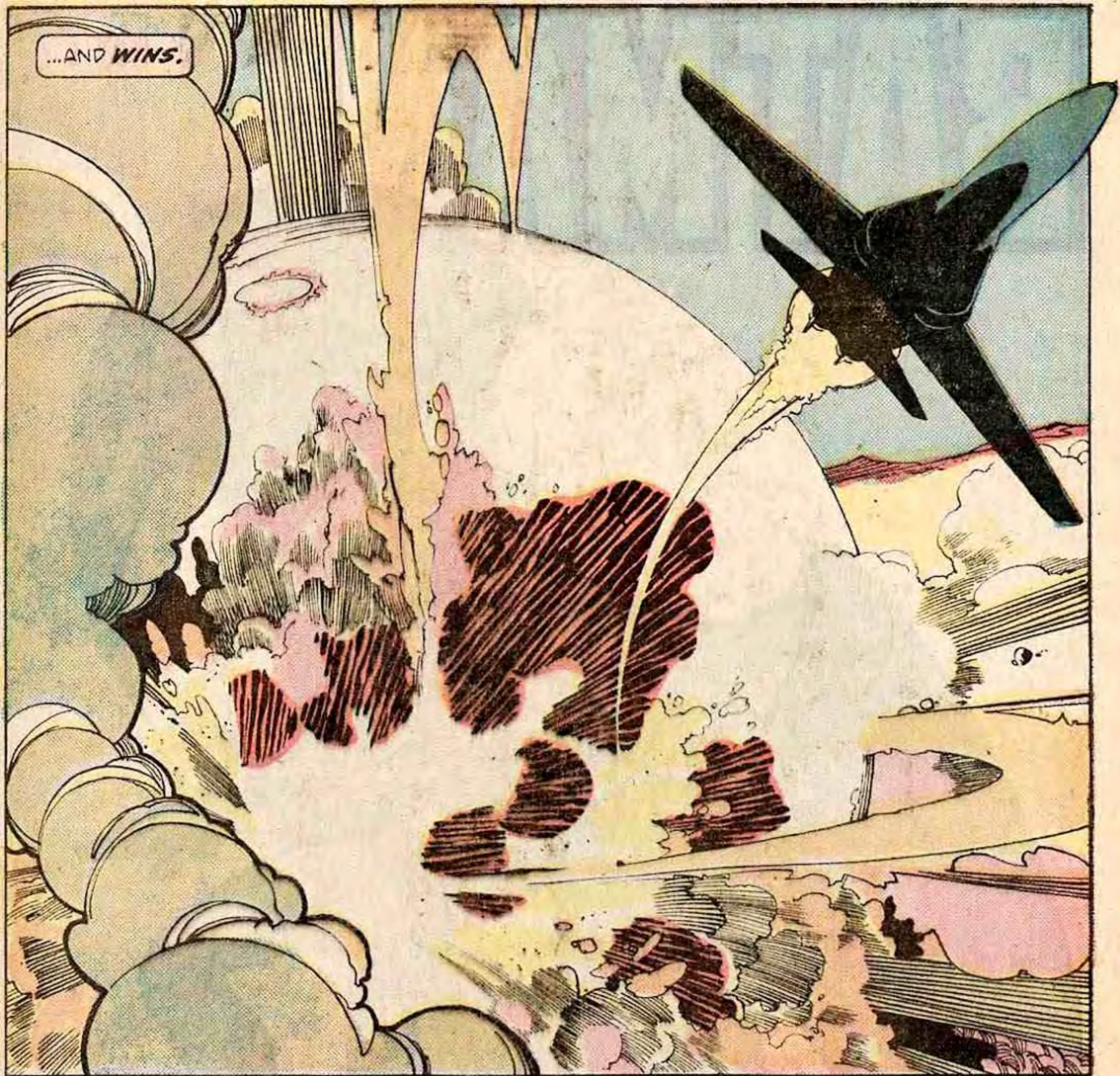
WONDER WHAT... I CAN DO WITH IT...?

AND SOMEWHERE BENEATH THE EARTH, AGAINST THE RESISTING **MINDS** OF FIVE FROZEN MEN STRUGGLING TO PRESERVE A CORRUPTED **VISION...**



PAUL KIRK FIGHTS HIS **LAST** BATTLE...

...AND WINS.



SELF-DESTRUCTION DOESN'T STRIKE ME AS THE COUNCIL'S STYLE... PARTICULARLY IF IT DIDN'T INCLUDE US!

THEN...



IT WAS MANHUNTER.

HE SAID THEY'D ROBBED HIM OF THE ONLY PEACE HE'D EVER FOUND. I SUPPOSE, IN HIS OWN WAY...



...HE'S TAKEN IT BACK.



The End

MANHUNTER

