



2
OF 8
OCT '09

BLACKEST NIGHT



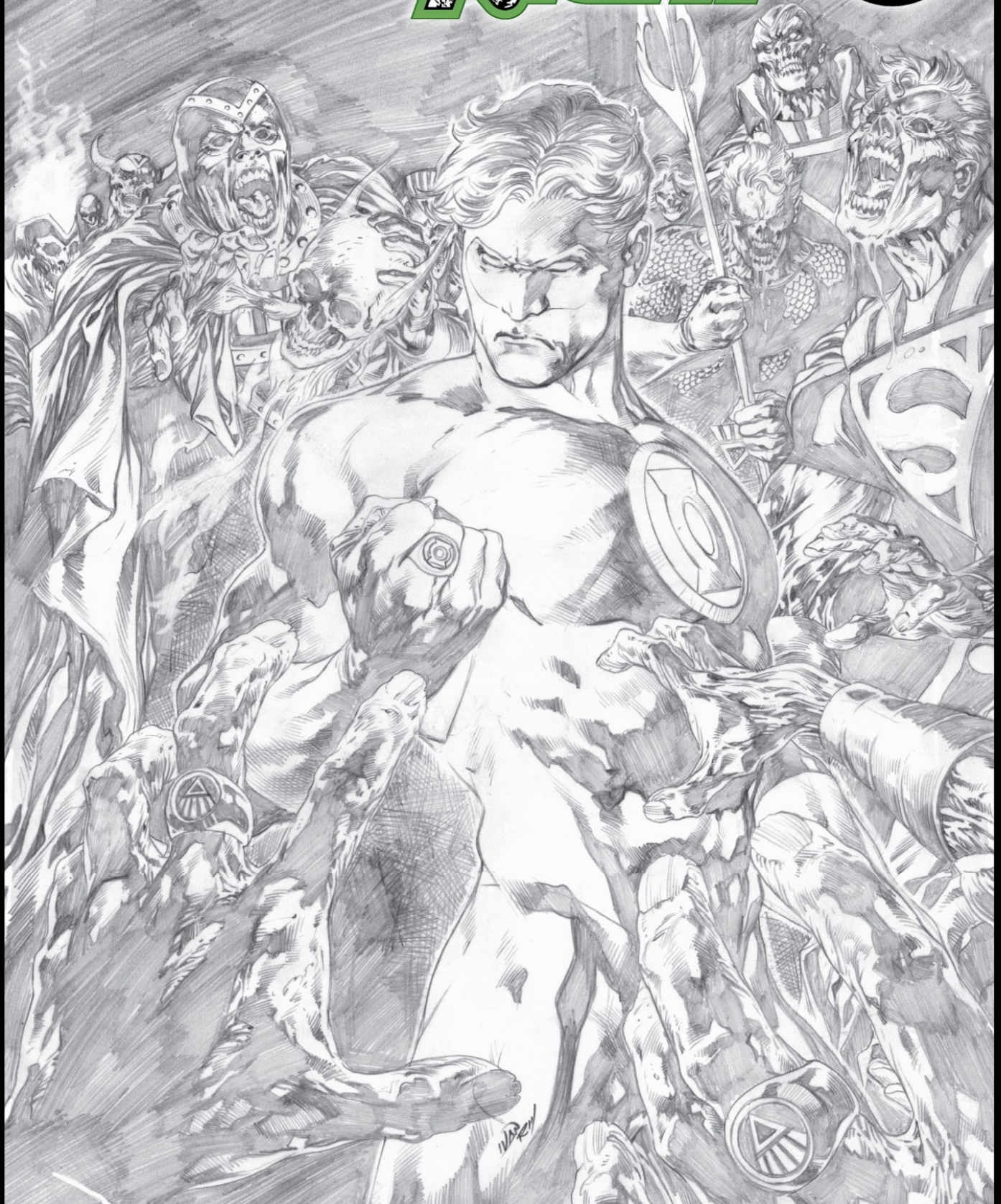
WARREN OCLAIR
SINCE

GEOFF JOHNS • IVAN REIS • OCLAIR ALBERT



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ST. ROCH.

THE STONECHAT MUSEUM.



IVY TOWN.

IVY UNIVERSITY.

C'MON, CARTER.

PICK UP.





KAKLIK

...HELLO?

HELLO.
RAY.



CARTER?

CARTER,
PLEASE HEAR
ME OUT
BEFORE YOU
HANG UP
AGAIN.

I KNOW IT DOESN'T MAKE
ANY SEMBLANCE OF LOGIC, BUT
EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING JEAN
DID I CAN'T STOP THINKING
ABOUT HER.



AND WHEN I THINK OF
HER, I THINK OF THIS
GIRL, THIS BEAUTIFUL,
SMART AND WITTY
GIRL, THAT WAS WAY
OUT OF MY LEAGUE
SAYING "YES" AS I
PROPOSED.

AFTER DEDICATING
MY LIFE TO FIGURING
OUT HOW THE UNIVERSE
WORKS, FOR THAT ONE
MOMENT, I THOUGHT
I HAD. I THOUGHT I
FOUND THE ANSWER
TO WHY I WAS REALLY
HERE.

HOW
DID YOU LET
KENDRA
GO?

...CARTER?



COME
ON OVER,
RAY.

LET'S
TALK.



I'LL
BE RIGHT
THERE.



THE SKY SEEMS SO MUCH DARKER TONIGHT.

I'M AFRAID TO TURN IT OFF.

THEN DON'T, DAD. LEAVE IT ON.

I'VE GOT THAT SAME AWFUL FEELING...

WHAT FEELING?

THE SAME FEELING I HAD WHEN BATGIRL DISAPPEARED. NO ONE KNEW EXACTLY WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER, BUT EVERYONE KNEW IT WAS BAD.

AND THERE WASN'T A DAMN THING I COULD DO ABOUT IT THEN EITHER.

WHEN I WAS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY, THERE WAS A SIGN ON THE GYM WALL. IT READ, "NO MATTER HOW DARK THE NIGHT GETS, THE SUN STILL RISES IN THE MORNING."

EVERY DAY, I'D WAKE UP TWO HOURS BEFORE DAWN. BACK THEN IT'D TAKE ME THAT LONG TO GET INTO MY CHAIR, CLEAN UP AND GO OUTSIDE TO WATCH THE SUN RISE. BUT I DID IT. AND I STILL DO.

I LOVE LIFE, DAD. I LOVE EVERY SINGLE DAY.

I BROUGHT ENOUGH COFFEE TO LAST UNTIL SUNRISE.

YOU'RE AN AMAZING PERSON, YOU KNOW THAT?

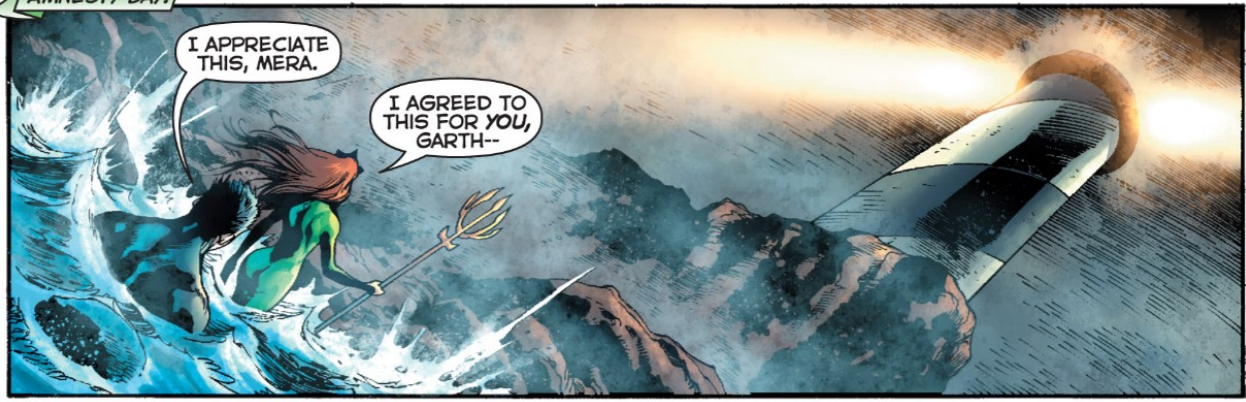
LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER.



BLACKEST NIGHT

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Eddie Berganza: editor • cover: Reis • Albert • Sinclair alt. cover: Mauro Cascioli



I APPRECIATE THIS, MERA.

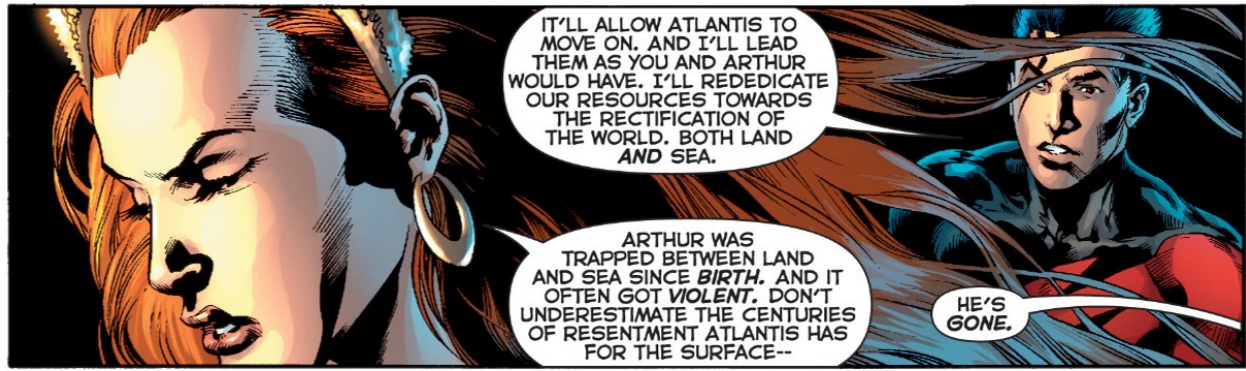
I AGREED TO THIS FOR YOU, GARTH--



--NOT THEM.

STILL. I KNOW THIS ISN'T EASY.

IF BRINGING ARTHUR'S REMAINS TO THE TOMBS OF ATLANTIS WILL EARN YOU THEIR ACCEPTANCE, IF THAT IS WHAT YOU TRULY WANT, I WILL SUPPORT IT.



IT'LL ALLOW ATLANTIS TO MOVE ON. AND I'LL LEAD THEM AS YOU AND ARTHUR WOULD HAVE. I'LL REDEDICATE OUR RESOURCES TOWARDS THE RECTIFICATION OF THE WORLD. BOTH LAND AND SEA.

ARTHUR WAS TRAPPED BETWEEN LAND AND SEA SINCE BIRTH. AND IT OFTEN GOT VIOLENT. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE CENTURIES OF RESENTMENT ATLANTIS HAS FOR THE SURFACE--

HE'S GONE.



ARTHUR?!

WHO WOULD DARE DESECRATE THE KING'S GRAVE?

OCEAN MASTER? OR BLACK MANTA?

ARTHUR CURRY SON HUSBAND and FATHER



MY ENEMIES CAN'T HURT ME ANYMORE, GARTH.

AQUAMAN?

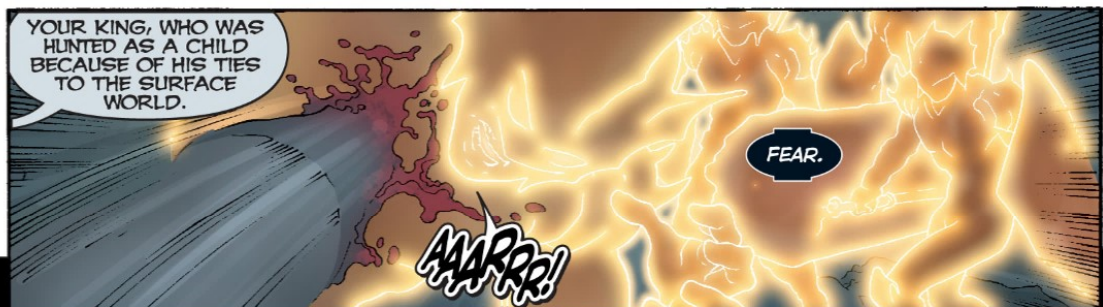
MY KING?



YES.

YOUR KING.

YOUR KING WHO WOULD RATHER BE BURIED IN THE MUD NEXT TO HIS HUMAN FATHER THAN HIS OWN PEOPLE.



YOUR KING, WHO WAS HUNTED AS A CHILD BECAUSE OF HIS TIES TO THE SURFACE WORLD.

FEAR.

AAARRR!



YOUR KING, WHO RETURNED WHEN YOU BEGGED HIM TO HELP REBUILD ATLANTIS. AND WHO, AFTER GIVING HIS BLOOD TO DO IT--

POWER LEVELS 2.63%

--WAS HUNTED AGAIN.

NOW IT'S YOUR KING'S TURN TO HUNT.

**THE BLACKEST NIGHT
FALLS FROM
THE SKIES**

N-
NO.

**THE DARKNESS
GROWS AS
ALL LIGHT DIES**

**BOSTON
BRAND
Forever With Us**

**WE CRAVE YOUR
HEARTS**

S-STAY
DEAD.

STAY
DEAD!

**AND YOUR
DEMISE**

**BY MY
BLACK HAND--**

BOSTON
BRAND OF
EARTH.

I DON'T
WANT TO COME
BACK.

**...THE
DEAD SHALL
RISE!**



WASHINGTON, D.C.

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY.

FLESH.

FLESH.

HANK HALL OF EARTH.

RISE.

DON HALL OF EARTH.

RI--

DON HALL OF EARTH AT PEACE.

DON HALL OF EARTH.

RI--

DON HALL OF EARTH AT PEACE.

DON HALL OF EARTH.

RI--

DON HALL OF EARTH AT PEACE.

SO IT'S SAME OLD, SAME OLD, HUH, BRO?

HAWK'S GOTTA DO ALL THE DIRTY WORK HIMSELF.





YOU'RE NOT AQUAMAN.



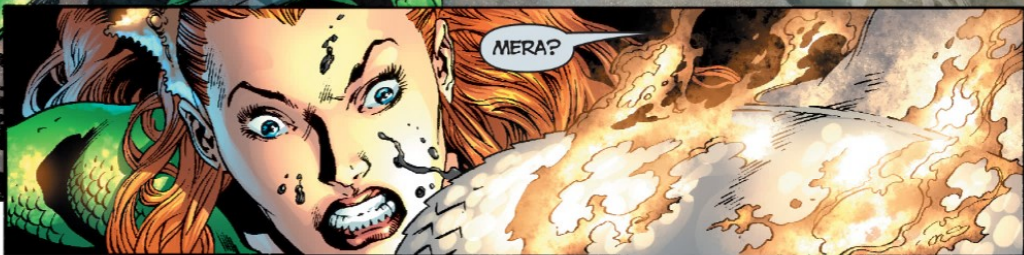
BECAUSE YOU SIT ON THE THRONE NOW, "AQUALAD"?

YOU'RE NO KING.

YOU TOOK DOLPHIN FROM ME, BUT YOU WON'T TAKE MY KINGDOM.



STAY BACK, MONSTER!



MERA?



I SHOULDN'T HAVE MENTIONED DOLPHIN.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE YOU JEALOUS.

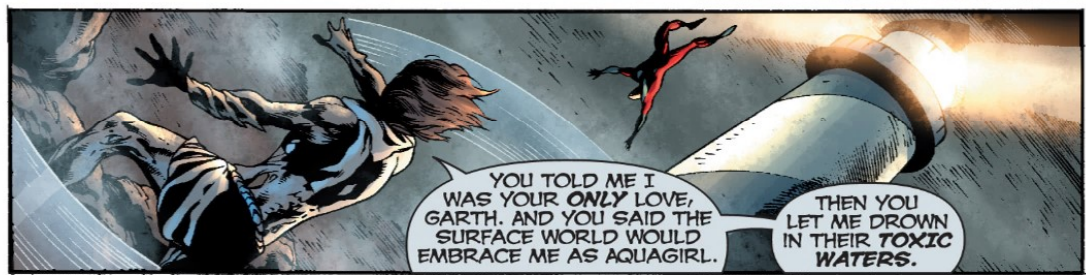
THE SEA-SWITCH SHOULDN'T BE, ARTHUR. AFTER OUR BRIEF AFFAIR--



--I FOUND A NEW AQUAMAN.

NO, DOLPHIN. GARTH WAS MINE FIRST.

TULA?



YOU TOLD ME I WAS YOUR ONLY LOVE, GARTH. AND YOU SAID THE SURFACE WORLD WOULD EMBRACE ME AS AQUAGIRL.

THEN YOU LET ME DROWN IN THEIR TOXIC WATERS.



YOU WEREN'T A VERY GOOD BOYFRIEND!



DO YOU STILL MISS HIM? DO YOU MISS OUR SON?

NNGG.

I DEMAND YOU ANSWER ME!

ARTHUR... NEVER DEMANDED ANYTHING FROM ME.

DRAW YOUR WEAPONS!

FOR ATLANTIS!



I AM STILL YOUR KING.



AND YOU WILL BE MY QUEEN.



THE EMPTY GRAVE OF BOSTON BRAND.

I SENSE DEADMAN'S BODY IS NOW AS WANDERING AS HIS SPIRIT, YET THEY REMAIN UNDETECTABLE TO ME.

THIS IS ANOMALOUS.

YOU MEAN "BAD," RIGHT, STRANGER?

VERY.

I SAW MORE OPEN GRAVES BACK THERE. WHAT'S GOING ON?

EVEN IF I WAS FULLY AWARE, ZATANNA, IT IS NOT MY PLACE TO SAY. I CANNOT DIRECTLY INTERFERE. I CAN ONLY GUIDE YOU.

SO GUIDE US TO SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

YOU WERE THE ONES WHO ASKED US TO HIT THE TROUBLE ALERT FOR THE OTHER MAGIC FOLK SO WE CAN HOLD HANDS AND SING KUMBAYA YET AGAIN.

FOR ONCE, I'D LIKE TO UNDERSTAND WHY.



WORLDS HAVE DIED. WORLDS WILL RISE.



WHO THE HELL--?

YOU KNOW ME, BLUE DEVIL. ALL OF YOU DO.

FOR MY PAST SINS, I HAVE BEEN CURSED A PARIAH, DRAWN TO WORLDS TO WITNESS SUFFERING AND SLAUGHTER OF UNFATHOMABLE LEVELS.



EVEN IN DEATH, I CANNOT ESCAPE MY PENANCE.

AND THIS TIME, NEITHER WILL YOU.



FLESH.



I CAN TASTE IT IN THE AIR SURROUNDING THE SPECTRE. DEATH.

SURROUNDING ZATANNA AND BLUE DEVIL. LIFE.



BUT YOU, PHANTOM STRANGER? YOU'RE NEITHER DEAD OR ALIVE, ARE YOU? YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

SOMETHING... STRANGE.



CRISPUS ALLEN OF EARTH.

RISE.



YOUR MAGIC IS INEFFECTUAL AGAINST MY LORD'S POWER.

BUT THE ONES THAT HAVE LIVED BEYOND DEATH LIKE HAWKMAN AND HAWKGIRL... LIKE YOU, SPECTRE...

YOU MUST BE MOVED OUT OF OUR WAY IF THE UNIVERSE IS GOING TO FINALLY FIND SILENCE, DARKNESS AND PEACE.



NO!

NO, I WILL NOT BE USED! I AM THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE! I AM THE SPECTRE!



WE STILL HAVE TIME TO HOLD HANDS, STRANGER?

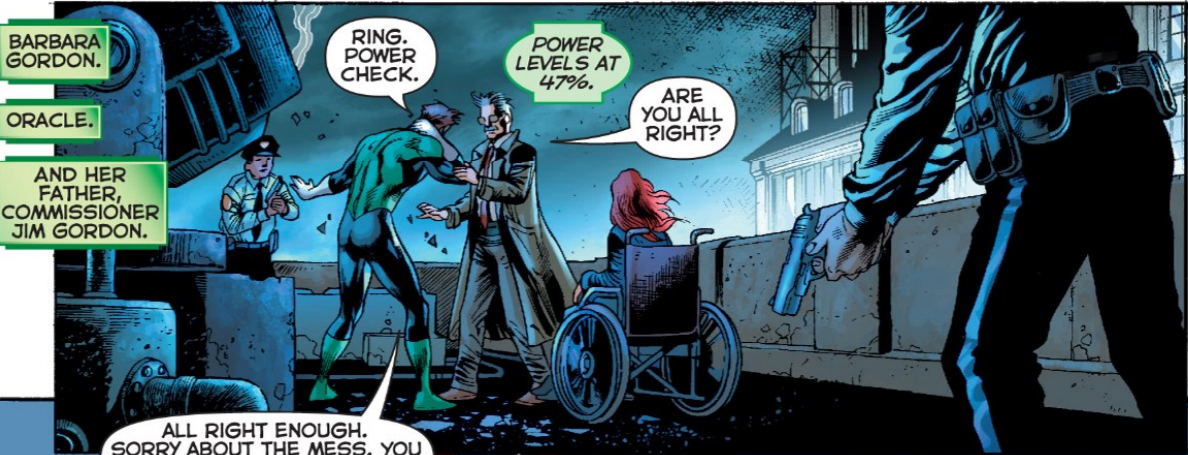
NO.



I...

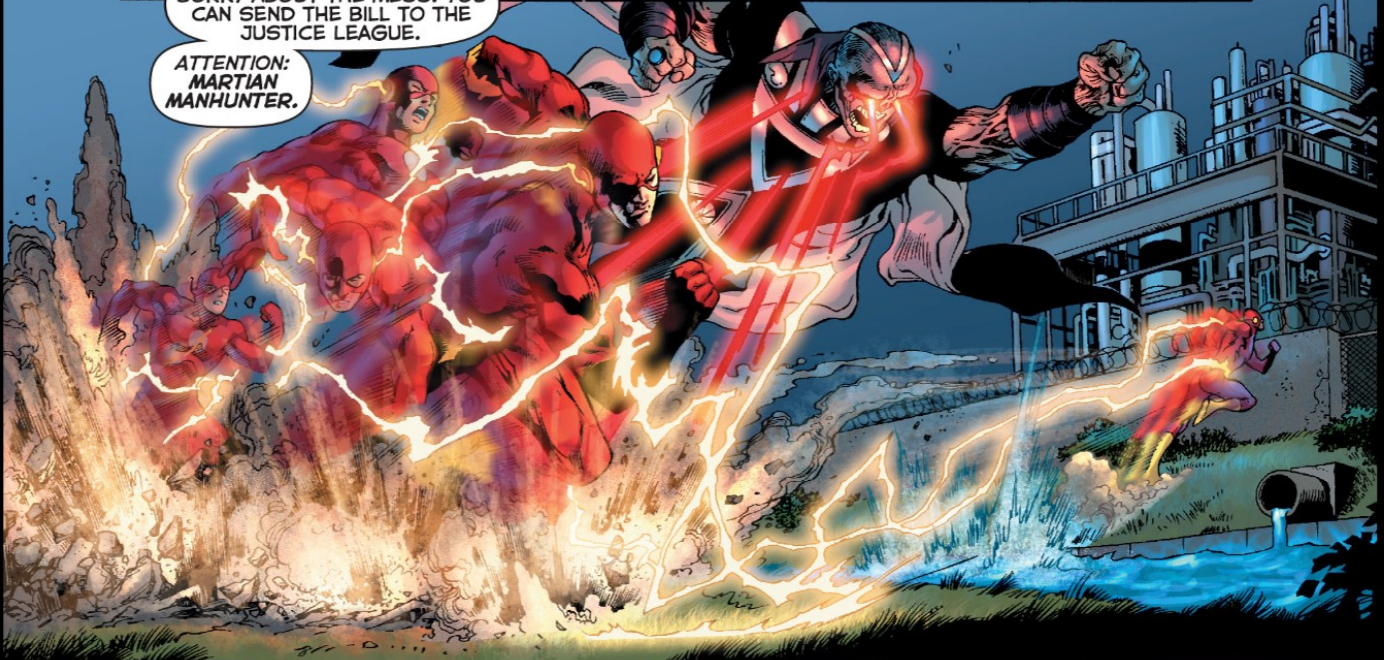
I WANT HAL JORDAN BACK!

DIDN'T THINK SO.

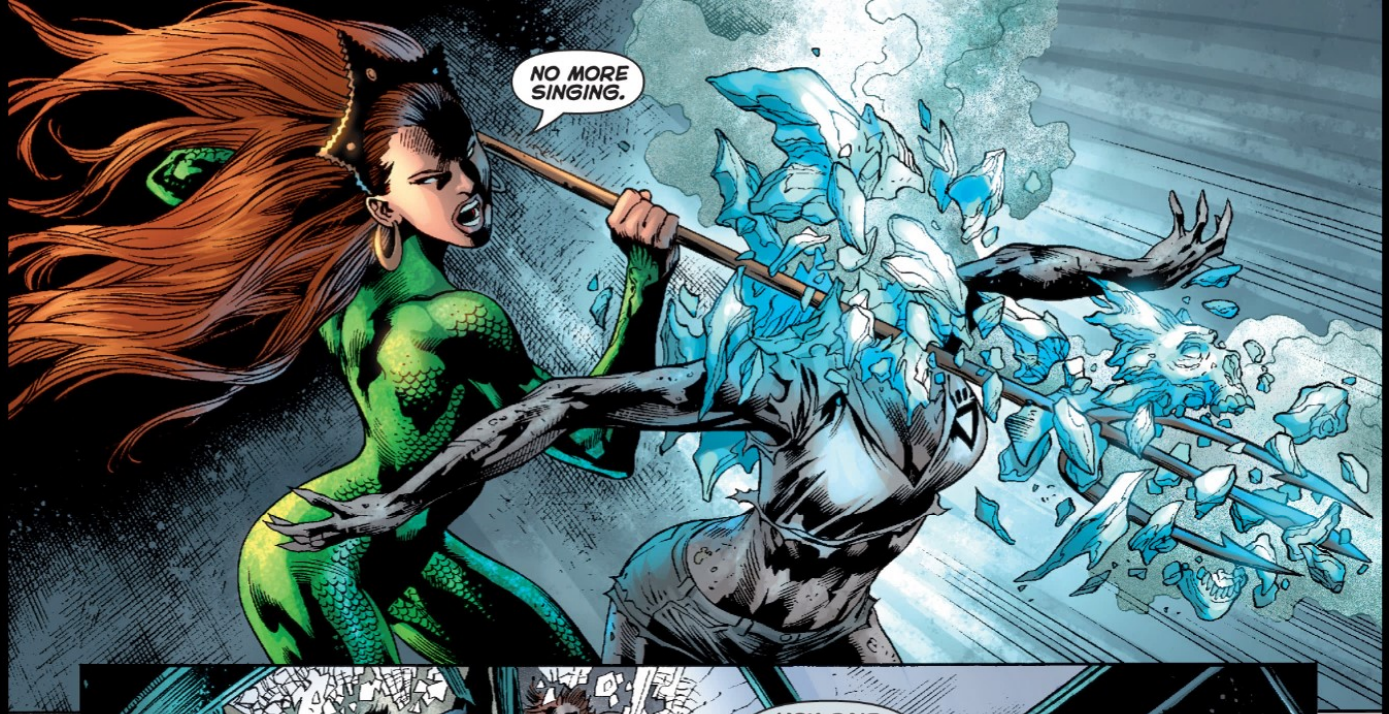


ALL RIGHT ENOUGH. SORRY ABOUT THE MESS. YOU CAN SEND THE BILL TO THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.

ATTENTION: MARTIAN MANHUNTER.







NO MORE SINGING.



YOU SAID AQUAGIRL AND AQUALAD WOULD BE TOGETHER FOREVER!



NKKK!

Fwip

Fwip



ARE YOU ANGRY WITH ME, MERA---

--OR YOURSELF?

Fwip



TULA, IF IT IS YOU, AND I HOPE IT IS, FIGHT THIS DARK MYSTICISM --

HOPE.

YES, GARTH.



HOPE FOR ME. HOPE FOR ATLANTIS. THAT'S JUST WHAT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR.

ARRGH!!



GARTH!

POWER LEVELS 3.43%



WELCOME, ALL OF YOU.

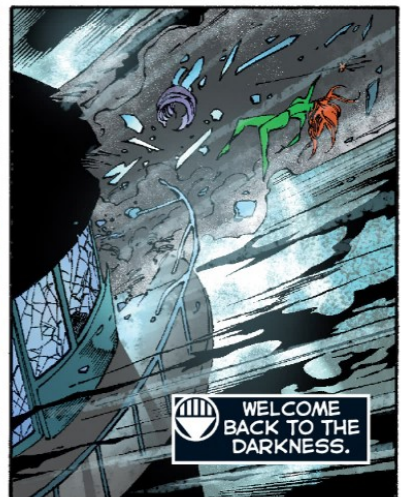


GARTH OF EARTH.



RISE.

NO--!



WELCOME BACK TO THE DARKNESS.



WELCOME TO THE BLACK LANTERN CORPS.

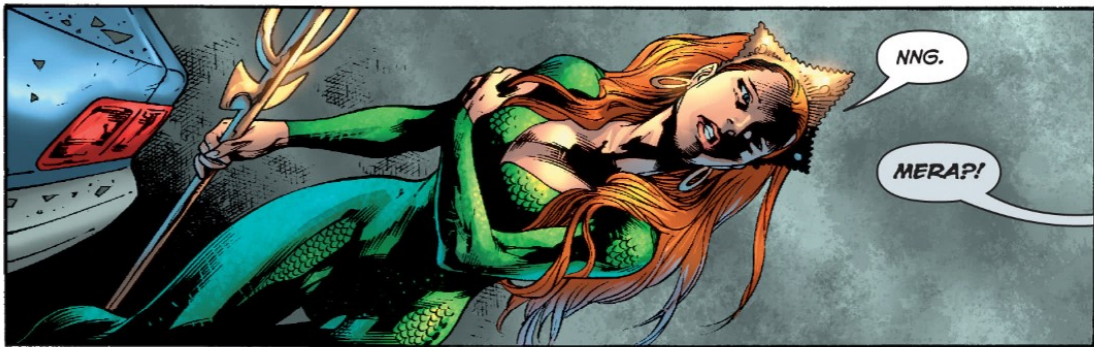


MERA, WE NEED YOU.

WE'LL SHARE.

OUR FAMILY IS HERE.

OUR SON CAN BE, TOO. YOU JUST HAVE TO COME BACK.



NNG.

MERA?!



MERA, DO YOU HEAR YOUR KING?!



MERAAAAAAA!



YOUR THOUGHTS ARE MOVING FASTER, BARRY.

YOU'RE TRYING TO PREVENT ME FROM MANIPULATING THEM AGAIN.

THAT'S

THE

IDEA.

YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM ME.



I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY.

HHFF!

AND I HAVEN'T BEEN MIXING AND MATCHING ALL THESE CHEMICALS FOR FUN.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT CARBON DISULFIDE, HEXANE AND METHANOL ALL HAVE IN COMMON?

I DO.



THEY'RE ALL FLAMMABLE.



FLASH FACT.



THE FLASH KEEPS
THE FLAMES FROM
SPREADING.



AND HE CREATES
ONE HELL OF A
FURNACE.

SORRY,
J'ONN.



FIRE.



IT WAS
J'ONN'S
KRYPTONITE.



I PROVIDE THE FUEL, YOU PROVIDE THE SPARK. I KNOW IT'S TOUGH FOR YOU, BUT THANKS FOR FOLLOWING "THE PLAN."

"THE PLAN" DIDN'T INCLUDE ME GETTING THROWN INTO THE BAT SIGNAL--

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT IMPROVISATION.

IT'S IN MY UTILITY BELT.

WELL, IT DOESN'T TAKE A DETECTIVE TO SEE THESE TWO GRAVE ROBBINGS AREN'T A COINCIDENCE.

THINK YOUR FELLOW OFFICERS CAN SHED ANY LIGHT ON A BLACK POWER RING?



"I STILL CAN'T GET THROUGH TO O.A."



WHOEVER'S BEHIND THIS KNOWS FACING SOMEONE LIKE J'ONN IS GOING TO THROW US OFF OUR GAME.

TEMPORARILY.

YOU THINK THIS IS AN ISOLATED CASE...



"...OR DO YOU REALLY THINK THERE ARE MORE EMPTY GRAVES AND BLACK RINGS OUT THERE?"

ABIN SUR OF UNGARA.

RISE.



I'M GUESSING, "YES."

WHEN THE FIRE DIES DOWN, I WANT TO RECOVER J'ONN'S REMAINS AND TAKE THEM BACK TO MARS. HE DESERVES BETTER THAN BEING DESECRATED LIKE THIS.

THE MARTIAN MANHUNTER WAS THE HEART OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.



HEART, BARRY?

I HAVE NO HEART.



I GAVE MY HEART TO THE LEAGUE.

WE ALL DID, J'ONN. AND I'D SAY IT'S YOUR TURN TO RETURN THE FAVOR, FELLAS.

WE'LL HELP THEM, WON'T WE, RALPH?

RADICAL!

I CALL DIBS ON THE FLASH!

MY NAME IS HAL JORDAN.

I'M AN OFFICER OF THE GREEN LANTERN CORPS. SPACE SECTOR 2814.

I WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE OVERCOMING FEAR ISN'T A PROBLEM.

BUT THE RULEBOOK NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT DEATH.

Next: **THE BLACK LANTERN**
Justice League



THE BOOK OF THE BLACK

THE BURNED IN THOUGHTS OF WILLIAM HAND:
CHAPTER 1, VERSE 1

"WHY DO THEY BURY BODIES SIX FEET UNDER?"
I ASKED MY FATHER AS HE OVERSAW THE DIGGING OF MY
GRANDMOTHER'S GRAVE. HE TOLD ME OF A PLAGUE. A
BLACK DEATH THAT TURNED THE STREETS INTO A
MORGUE AND THE WORLD INTO A GRAVEYARD. THERE WAS
PANIC AND FEAR. THE CORPSES WERE ORDERED TO BE
BURIED SIX FEET UNDER TO SLOW DOWN THE OUTBREAK.


I DREAMT OF THE PLAGUE THAT NIGHT. OF BLISTERING
AND HEMORRHAGING THAT TURNED MY SKIN BLACK.
BURIED IN THE DARKNESS LIKE THE OTHERS.
UNDISTURBED. AT PEACE.

BUT MY FATHER SAID THERE WAS NO PEACE FOR
THE DEAD BACK THEN. WHEN THE PLAGUE PASSED,
THE CORRUPT WOULD REMOVE THE TOMBSTONES AND
REUSE THE GRAVES. WITH THE DEAD SIX FEET BENEATH
THE GROUND, THEY WOULD BURY A NEW COFFIN ABOVE
THE OTHER. BODIES STACKED ON TOP OF BODIES.
BURIED EVERY TWO FEET.

MY FATHER WAS AN HONEST MAN. HE NEVER WOULD HAVE
DISRUPTED THOSE AT REST. HE BURIED EVERYONE
PROPERLY. SIX FEET UNDER.

IN ST. ROCH, THEY BURIED THEIR DEAD ABOVE GROUND.







I HAD NEVER BEEN TO THE CITY HAWKMAN AND HAWKGIRL CALLED HOME. IN FACT, I HAD NEVER BEEN TO THE SOUTH, NOR DID I CARE TO BE. THEIR HUMIDITY, MOSQUITOES AND DEEP-FRIED MEATS WERE NOT FOR ME. BUT THE VOICE OF DEATH BROUGHT ME TO THIS CITY. I WALKED THROUGH UPSIDE-DOWN GRAVEYARDS, CRACKED CASKETS AND NEGLECTED TOMBS PROTRUDED ABOVE THE GROUND. THE WATER LEVELS WERE TOO HIGH AND FLOODING WOULD PUSH THE COFFINS OUT OF THE GROUND. THEY WOULD FLOAT DOWN THE STREETS. IT WAS A COMMON PROBLEM HERE IN ST. ROCH. THE DEAD LEAVING THEIR GRAVES.

THERE WAS NO SIX FEET UNDER IN ST. ROCH.


DEATH TOOK ME THROUGH THE ALLEYS, TO A PLACE GLOWING WITH THE MOST BRILLIANT LUMINANCE OF VIOLET LIGHT. A LOVE EMANATING FROM WITHIN A MUSEUM FILLED WITH POSSESSIONS AND ARTISTIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE DEAD. WAS THAT NOT ALL A MUSEUM WAS? A GRAVEYARD OF PEOPLE'S LIVES? OF THINGS THEY THOUGHT THEY WOULD FOREVER NEED? I WISH I HAD TIME FOR A TOUR.



I HEARD THE SHOUTING. THE ARGUMENTS ECHOING INTO THE NIGHT. I WATCHED THE SILHOUETTES OF WINGED FIGURES CLASH ACROSS THE WINDOWS. I WONDERED WHY THESE TWO PEOPLE WERE OF IMPORTANCE ABOVE SO MANY OTHERS. AND SUDDENLY, I KNEW. I KNEW EVERYTHING AS DARKNESS ENVELOPED MY SIGHT FOR THE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS. DEATH TOLD ME THEIR LOVE HAD ALLUDED HIM.




THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, THESE TWO HAD RULED OVER A DESERT KINGDOM. THEY FELL IN LOVE. A LOVE THAT MIRRORED THE FOSSILIZED DEVOTION WITHIN THE HEART OF THE STAR SAPPHIRE'S POWER BATTERY.




YET THE LOVE BETWEEN HAWKMAN AND HAWKGIRL, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, BECAME A CURSE. THEY WERE BETRAYED AND MURDERED BY

A MAN SEEKING TO CLAIM THEIR KINGDOM. THEIR ESSENCE DID NOT RETURN TO THE DARKNESS. INSTEAD, THEY WERE REBORN INTO WARM FLESH. THEY FOUND ONE ANOTHER AGAIN. AND WHEN THEIR LOVE WAS AT ITS HEIGHT, DIED TOGETHER AGAIN. THEN LIVED AGAIN. THEN DIED AGAIN. THERE WAS NO PEACE FOR CARTER HALL AND KENDRA SAUNDERS.

TODAY, THERE ARE NO BODIES TO BE BURIED IN ST. ROCH. THERE ARE NO CASKETS TO FILL ABOVE OR BELOW GROUND.



THERE IS A NEW BLACK DEATH MIGRATING ACROSS THE WORLD. AND IT WILL RESTORE THE UNIVERSE TO ITS PRIMORDIAL STATE OF BLISS WHERE LOVE AND THEIR CURSES WILL NO LONGER EXIST. WHERE PEACE WILL WASH OVER IT ALL. WHERE DARKNESS ALLOWS US ALL TO REST.



THERE WILL BE NO SIX FEET UNDER ANYWHERE. THERE WON'T HAVE TO BE. LOVE WILL SOON BE DEAD.



RAGE IS NEXT.