

“I was swallowed by metaphor and digested by self-loathing”: De-Toxifying Masculinity in Gail Simone’s *Secret Six*

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Abstract

This essay explores the intersections and divergences of Catman and Bane within Gail Simone’s *Secret Six* run. Simone is a pivotal figure in the development of modern comics, instrumental in spreading the term “Women in Refrigerators” and exploring disability and trauma in her *Birds of Prey* run. Simone’s oeuvre explores modern questions of gender and performance. Both Catman and Bane subvert expected behaviors of male superheroes, instead grappling with their respective masculinities. Each undergoes a transformation in comparison to their preexisting depictions, becoming better versions of themselves. Simone’s characterizations mitigate the toxic aspects of their personalities retaining their core identities. This offers an opportunity to recontextualize and perhaps redeem even highly problematic characters within comics and opens new avenues for discourse on gender and superheroes.

Keywords: masculinities, comics studies, adaptation studies, fan studies, Gail Simone

Superhero comics by their nature are almost inevitably the product of adaptation. Writers and artists come and go from titles naturally, with others taking their place. Characters are passed along, with personalities, backstories, even powers retconned for the needs of the current story. Well-established, popular characters might have tighter editorial restrictions, but comics are a collective, ongoing effort—the work of dozens, if not hundreds—poured into the characters on the page. This process creates opportunities for redemption and reclamation; long-forgotten heroes and villains can be brought back, turned to good or evil, and adapted for a present era. Gail Simone’s initial run of *Secret Six* (2006-2011) offers a useful illustration of this process and its larger potential: the characters of Bane and Catman become deconstructions of the superhero narrative and the larger problems of toxic masculinity, the characters taking on dimensions that did not previously exist. For the purposes of keeping the discussion contained, my focus will be on the two limited series (*Villains United* no. 1-6 and *Secret Six* vol. 2, no. 1-6) and the first arc of the ongoing *Secret Six* series (*Secret Six* vol. 3, no. 1-7). There is a great deal of depth in Gail Simone’s writing on the subject of gender, including Rag Doll’s queerness and Scandal Savage’s polyamory but the emphasis here is on toxic masculinity and the redemptive arcs of Catman and Bane.

The superhero body is one that is codified as inherently masculine; rippling muscles and impossible physiques are par for the course in the average superhero comic. The expected and acceptable behaviors of superheroes have changed over the years, but function in the same basic framework as 1938: stoic men of action, facing down incredible odds, superheroes have long embodied this particular blend of masculinity. The Dark Age of Comics saw the intersection of traditional superhero narratives and mainstream action films with Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989).¹ Barna William Donovan offers a reading of the body in action films: "the male version of the body image crisis...manifests itself as the ironic flip side of the female affliction. Whereas women cannot get thin enough, men cannot get big and bulky enough. The media image of men is usually muscular, 'ripped,' and chiseled, broad-shouldered with 'six pack abs' and bulgy biceps."² In describing the action heroes of the late twentieth century, Donovan offers a framework for reading the superhero body, particularly during this period. Moreover, this body is one that is at odds with the softer side of society; Donovan explains that "the heroes of action films are often at odds with women in their lives because such men lack adequate communication skills. They are not 'sensitive' enough, or 'in touch with their feelings.' Their penchant for violence and primal, physical masculinity has no place in a woman's world."³ This concept of sensitivity, and the lack thereof, is key to understanding Simone's approach with Catman and Bane in *Secret Six*, as she reconstructs the nature of the modern masculine superhero into a figure that works to de-toxify masculinity. Both Catman and Bane embody toxic masculinity in earlier appearances, but in the hands of Simone, come to embody more positive aspects of masculinity, while still recognizing their shortcomings.

The coding of the superhero body is explored further by Chris Gavaler, who argues, "superheroes emphasize physicality. Their bodies are definingly extraordinary, and that emphasis highlights their other physical attributes, most overtly gender...these fantasies are predicated on gender binaries that define masculinity's opposition to equally artificial definitions of femininity."⁴ The superhero body is one of perfection, but one that is gendered: while both male and female heroes possess Olympian physiques, the framing and poses of these bodies favour a male gaze. These characters are often called wish fulfillment, though they function as a higher form of fantasy; the superhero physique has become impossible to achieve for the average person. Failure to attain this physique—to not push one's body to its limit—is to be marked as a failure of a man.

Gail Simone's particular deconstruction functions as an adaptation, even as the medium remains the same. While adaptation studies are traditionally applied to transmedia texts (often in film adaptations of literature), Simone's work on *Secret Six* functions as an adaptation of the characters, rather than a specific work itself. Timothy Corrigan's framework, which defines adaptation as a process, a product, and an act of reception, offers a useful path toward understanding the forces at play.⁵ Superhero comics embody an unusual case, as the existence of an extended universe requires an awareness of history and audience on the part of creators. Each

new story must exist within the larger shared framework, and the fidelity to the previous work looms large.⁶ A creator's take on the characters exists in conversation with the previous versions, even as they evolve and change, with retcons serving to mitigate out of character behavior.

Fidelity to preexisting works and characterizations is an expected aspect of superhero storytelling, although it does allow for some creative freedom in recontextualizing history and personalities, aspects Simone seizes upon in her work to an unusual degree. Gail Simone reflects this process with her work on *Birds of Prey*, in which Barbara Gordon is paralyzed, and her work on *Secret Six* reflects this same process. Julie Sanders offers a potential for comprehending adaptation as a site of criticism, explaining that “adaptation is nevertheless frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text...offering a revised point of view from the ‘original,’ adding hypothetical motivation or voicing what the text silences or marginalizes.”⁷ Adapting the characters in the pages of *Secret Six* allows Simone to explore their respective masculinities, including aspects that were ignored or otherwise overlooked in previous iterations of the characters.

Catman was a Silver Age villain who battled members of the Bat family (including Catwoman) across a few minor appearances. His gimmick was mostly as a spear counterpart to Catwoman, filtered through the Silver Age silliness including assaulting the Batcave atop a giant cat robot. Catman represents the opposite end of the spectrum from Bane. Rather than possessing a hyper-masculine body, his body loses shape in his later appearances. He relies upon a magical cloth that allegedly gives him nine lives but lacks confidence without it. In one of the Silver Age stories, Batwoman defeats him by convincing him that his outfit has lost its life-sustaining power, resulting in his meekly surrendering to the authorities.⁸ It is notable that he tangles with female heroes (Catwoman and Batwoman) as often as Batman, reinforcing his lack of masculinity. Gavaler's reading of the superhero body is relevant here, with Catman's decline marking a decrease in effectiveness and attractiveness. Like many period villains, he was forgotten until the 1990s, being revived as a member of the Misfits, a mostly comedic group of low-tier villains that appeared in *Shadow of the Bat*.⁹ A subsequent appearance featured him as a secondary villain, more a nuisance for Catwoman than a serious threat in his own right.¹⁰ Brad Meltzer later used Catman as a joke villain for Green Arrow in 2002, casting him as an ineffectual, overweight foe who is easily dispatched in the space of a single issue; Oracle even comments, “I’m not sure who he’s ripping off—Catwoman or Bats...his background is just as cliché....he went whole hog: made a cat-a-rang, a cat-line, even a cat-mobile. How pathetic is that?”¹¹ Catman is rendered a joke, and his masculinity is called into question. He is a failure, because his gimmick mirrors others, he has become fat and lazy, and he is soundly defeated within a single page. Catman reappears a few issues later, during a chance encounter with Green Arrow at a rest stop. He is portrayed as a domestic abuser, threatening his female partner with violence, and proves unable to land a blow after the hero intervenes. Once again, Catman is cast as a paper tiger; he proclaims, “I fought Batman four times! To a standstill!”, only to be dragged

away to his (alleged) death a few panels later.¹² In contrast to Bane, who possessed a clear identity as hyper-masculine villain (“The Man Who Broke the Bat”), Catman lacked even that characterization, never posing a serious threat for Batman in any of his appearances, despite his insistent claims otherwise. If Bane is hyper-masculinity run amok, Catman is its opposite: soft and pathetic, rendered something less than a threat.

Catman’s redemption begins on the pages of the limited series *Villains United*, the precursor to *Secret Six*. As the titular organization comes together, Catman is the first to refuse membership, perhaps in part because he is referred to as “a perpetual bile-stained amateur.”¹³ He has undergone a physical transformation, now a Tarzanesque figure living among the great cats of Africa, but there is more to it. Talia al Ghul, who was dispatched to make the offer, remarks, “he is not the man our intelligence suggests. He’s remade himself. Admirable. His presence for a moment reminded me of a very great man.”¹⁴ It is not simply that Catman has re-trained his body, but that he now embodies something greater; Talia marks him as akin to Batman, at least in the moment, and thus recognizes his worth and value, even if others do not. Catman’s entry into the *Secret Six*, prompted by the murder of his pride of lions, allows him to further reassert his masculinity, both in terms of combat and more social settings. The events that transpired between his appearance in *Green Arrow* and *Villains United* are off-handedly mentioned a few times before Catman explains in detail how he was humiliated and nearly died in the previous series.¹⁵ What makes this notable is that Simone does not ignore his trauma. As she did with Batgirl and Black Canary in *Birds of Prey*, she made a deliberate choice to not erase this backstory; the events of *Green Arrow* were not retconned, including his domestic abuse. Instead, that moment—a dark joke at his expense—became emblematic of his rock bottom. Simone explained, “I didn’t put a new guy in the Catman suit, I added to his story elements that were scattered about already.”¹⁶ For the purposes of the story, it had to be the original Catman, Thomas Blake, not a legacy character, of which the team featured two others.¹⁷ *Villains United* effectively revolved around Catman’s redemption, from its opening to the final moment, which sees Catman warn Green Arrow of the upcoming massive crossover event before socking him in the jaw, a violent rejoinder to being shot in the shoulder years earlier. The very inclusion of Catman was a point of contention; Simone explained of the team that “I picked a bunch of losers...a random, nameless parademon, a crappy golden age legacy who didn’t even have his father’s powers. One of Vandal Savage’s thousands of bastards. A war criminal poison specialist. And Deadshot. All approved...but they balked at Catman.”¹⁸ The original pitch had involved a number of A-list villains, but many of those had been claimed by other titles, as part of a massive, ongoing crossover. It is not clear why Catman was a sticking point on the editorial side; he did become a sort of minor crusade for Simone, however.

The situation provides a useful illustration of the intersection of gender and adaptation, with Catman offering a similarly distorted vision of masculinity to Bane, albeit on the opposite end of the spectrum. Simone explains that “Catman was a loser his entire career. No one cared

about him, and to make it worse, Kevin Smith solidified his cowardice and uselessness. But then I thought, hey, the DCU needs a Tarzan. It was the one thing they said no to. He could not be redeemed, it was felt...I explained that if it didn't work, I would kill him off.”¹⁹ This offers an example of adaptation in practice; not all changes are universally received, and even obscure characters can inspire entrenched opinions. This is more complex in a large-scale universe, where a change to character can impact not only contemporary stories, but also the larger scope of the universe. While some choices are undertaken lightly (the crippling of Barbara Gordon during *The Killing Joke*), there is an effort to maintain continuity and the status quo, and have characters retain their place within the larger universe. Catman, before Simone began writing him, played the role of a loser, not just in-universe but in the minds of comics writers and the comics-going public at large. Moreover, he was a figure bereft of masculinity: weak-bodied and ineffective, a jittery coward.²⁰ The most heinous villain is redeemable, but a failure of masculinity cannot, as far as superheroes are concerned. Simone takes this as a challenge, to redeem this character, while still maintaining his sense of history.²¹

Simone’s selection of Catman reflects a desire to grant him a degree of redemption. He was almost certainly the least popular member of the team, even more than the obscure additions, and this was likely at least part of the reason for the opposition to the inclusion. Moreover, Catman served a crucial function within the larger narrative; he was at the lowest point, and thus had the most potential for redemption, not on a traditional villain-to-hero axis, but in terms of reclaiming his masculinity. Catman makes the choice to reclaim his masculinity, getting back to basics as a method of overcoming his personal demons (and negative characterization). This theme continued throughout Simone’s run; Catman later laments, “when I let myself go so badly, I dyed my hair black. I guess I thought I looked tougher.”²² His history becomes something to overcome, not be ignored, creating a powerful argument in the process. Catman’s redemption does not come from any one specific moment (though his initial refusal at the start of *Villains United* begins the journey), but by virtue of how he operates. He proves himself simply capable in what he does and counters the perception of himself as a joke; even as he hearkens back to it periodically. Catman chooses to be a better man, even as the community at large tends to discount him, and the fact that he is still alive, despite Simone’s aforementioned offer to kill him off, speaks to the success of the endeavor.

Bane’s toxic masculinity is bound up in his origins and is a key component of his identity. Introduced by Chuck Dixon and Graham Nolan in 1993, Bane represented a highwater mark for the Dark Age of Comics, a villain designed entirely to bring down Batman, much as Doomsday would do to Superman the following year. He was more a plot device than a fully-fleshed out character, though his striking design—a heavily muscled figure in a luchador mask—and relative success in breaking the Bat²³ marked him as a fan favorite during the decade. Crucially, Bane is defeated not by Bruce Wayne, but his temporary successor Jean-Paul Valley, then operating under the Batman identity, who utilizes lethal weaponry to bring down the villain.

Bane thereafter received a few limited series, and appeared occasionally within the Batman comics, first as muscle for Ra's al Ghul and later as an anti-hero in his own right. In Bane's last appearances before *Secret Six*, he takes on the role of the typical 1980s villain, down to being portrayed as a Caribbean drug lord before being soundly defeated by a powered-up Batman.

Bane embodies a specific brand of toxic masculinity, reflecting the conservative character of period comics. He is a dark mirror to Batman, reflecting many of the aspects the hero possesses, albeit to an extreme degree.²⁴ Bane possesses a genius-level intellect, but he is often described as animalistic and cunning, contrasting Batman's more intellectual villains. Bane's body verges on parody; his muscles and sheer size are larger than Batman's often-exaggerated physique, even before being boosted further. His enhanced strength comes from a steroid-like drug called Venom, a common theme in period comics, a thinly-veiled commentary on the War on Drugs. Bane utilizes narcotics to increase his threat level, and hails from a corrupt, fictional Caribbean narco-state Santa Prisca, having been raised in prison. What is intended as a deconstruction of the superhero mythos instead reinforces it. Jeffords outlines the villains of Reagan-era film as "outsiders—foreigners, terrorists, criminals...[who] criticize Reagan values as reactionary, harking back to an earlier era in which the United States could effectively play the world's cowboy hero, wielding guns to stop criminals and evildoers, always on the side of justice, always winning in the end."²⁵ Bane, an interloper acting to bring down key symbols of American justice and power, embodies these ideas, although Batman (or, at least, a Batman) ultimately triumphs.

Bane embodies this to a parodic level, essentially becoming hyper-masculine to an inhuman degree. Jeffords' reading of Reagan-era action heroes fits this relationship as well; the relationship between Batman and Bane echoes similar dichotomies, "one portraying the hard body at its best—reviving strength and individualism in foreign policy—and the other starkly portraying the body's dark underside of hardened brutality as a destructive force directed against humanity itself."²⁶ Bane's physique is ultimately marked as artificial, destructive and dangerous. His victory in combat grants him a degree of superiority in terms of masculinity, but it is ultimately empty. Bane's subsequent appearance sees him defeated by Batman (now Bruce Wayne once again), losing the respect of Ra's al Ghul and the affection of Talia al Ghul. This echoes Gavalier's statement that "a male superhero's 'hyper-physical' body may be termed perfect in the sense that it expresses both hyper-effectiveness and hyper-attractiveness, embodying the belief that optimal effectiveness and attractiveness should be combined and that a male body is attractive to the extent that it is effective."²⁷ Bane's defeat, and loss of favor, reflects this system, although he was not portrayed as traditionally handsome in the manner of Bruce Wayne or other heroes.

Bane's appearance in *Secret Six* finds him a changed man, foreswearing the use of Venom. He is a man struggling with addiction, but it is more an addiction to toxic masculinity than to the drug itself.²⁸ The drug is emblematic of his addiction to defeating Batman, and his

efforts to go cold turkey also keep him far away from his nemesis; when the moment comes to face off with Batman early in the run, it is Catman who takes the challenge. Bane's coping mechanism is to latch onto Scandal Savage, despondent after the death of her girlfriend Knockout, resolving that "she is in pain. I believe love is the answer...it is not the caress of a lover that she requires. It is the firm but loving hand of a father."²⁹ The relationship is at first one-sided and comical, and Bane's efforts are met with confusion, but he is persistent. This relationship offers Bane a sense of tenuous stability, even as his attempts at stern fatherhood are initially ignored.³⁰ He is attempting to be a better person, in a halting and ham-fisted manner, though stays the course.³¹ Events culminate when the Six, fleeing across the country, steal an ice cream truck. The team is exhausted, and Bane invites Scandal to lay her head on his lap. Scandal responds, "Should've known. Very funny. I thought you were unlike other men. Never mind."³² She assumes it is a carnal invitation, a gross joke that implies how familiar Scandal is with such invitations. But Bane is insistent: "You need to rest, Scandal Savage. Lay your head, here, on my lap...Sleep. I will watch over you. No demons in your dreams, Scandal Savage."³³ The moment subverts the expectations of the superhero genre, particularly where villains are concerned, as well as toxic masculinity at large. There is nothing sexual about Bane's intent, and it serves as a reaffirmation of the earlier decision to treat Scandal as a daughter, leading to this moment of tenderness.

Bane's relationship with Scandal provides a sense of sobriety, helping him avoid avoiding the bad habits that lead him to abuse the drug in the first instance, and granting a sense of stability. It is his desire to protect Scandal, even more than his own life, that leads to his falling off the wagon. When he finally uses Venom, he does it for her, explaining, "Scandal. Only...only for you would I do this. Off the wagon, my adopted daughter. I fall."³⁴ The immediate aftermath, in which we can see Bane's Venom-warped vision of the world, illustrates the depth of his addiction, when he sees everyone, including his allies, as various Batmen. This also marks a moment when Bane embraces the most toxic aspects of his personality: his penchant for violence, brutality, and pure rage. This is not a triumphant moment but a tragic one; Scandal comments that "[Bane] broke the Bat. But somehow, the Bat broke him back."³⁵ This moment serves as a larger comment on the cycle of hurting; Bane's victory was fleeting and destructive for both men, and those wounds will never really heal. Bane's choice to use Venom again, to relapse, does not function as a grand heroic moment, doing little to change the flow of the battle. It requires the sacrifice of another hero, and some quick thinking on the part of the team, to effectively end the fight. This is not a hero finding their hidden power at the last moment to save the day but a decision to protect a loved one that ultimately has dire consequences.

Gail Simone utilizes two masculine figures to critique toxic masculinity in comics. Catman's major theme is regaining a sense of self: throughout much of the run, he lacks confidence, but slowly rebuilds his self-esteem, overcoming his past failings without erasing

them. Bane's journey comes from better understanding how to utilize his strength more wisely, to avoid giving into the toxic aspects of his personality, and his arc runs perpendicular to that of Catman. Each embodies aspects common to the male characters in superhero comics: powerful physiques, a propensity for violence, questionable morals, but each arrives at a different place than where they started from. Simone's work was ultimately cut short by a universe-wide retcon, and though she would continue to write the team in a revamped continuation, the original versions of Catman and Bane serve to represent the possibilities of the detoxifying the masculinity of superhero comics.

Notes

¹ The Dark Age of Comics broadly refers to the period of the 1980s and 1990s that saw grittier portrayals of superheroes, including the incorporation of sex and violence. Alan Moore's *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* are often cited as key moments, and it saw the arrival of Tim Burton's *Batman* films that reinforced the darker storytelling of the period.

² Barna William Donovan, *Blood, Guns, and Testosterone: Action Films, Audiences, and a Thirst for Violence* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 9.

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ Chris Gavaler, *Superhero Comics* (London, Bloomsbury: 2017), 179

⁵ Timothy Corrigan, "Defining Adaptation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Leitch (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2017), 23.

⁶ David T. Johnson's "Adaptation and Fidelity" offers a much deeper exploration of the concept and how it functions within the larger adaptation studies scholarship. David T. Johnson, "Adaptation and Fidelity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Leitch, (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2017), 87-100.

⁷ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 23.

⁸ Bill Finger and Jim Mooney, "The Cat-Man Strikes Back," *Detective Comics* 1, no. 318, DC Comics (August 1963).

⁹ Killer Moth, the nominal leader of the group, at one point complains that "I started this group because we're losers—because we never get to win!" Alan Grant and Tim Sale, "The Misfits: Part Three," *Shadow of the Bat*, no. 9, DC Comics (February 1993): 21.

¹⁰ Alan Grant and Barry Kitson, "Secrets of the Universe," *Batman: Shadow of the Bat*. no. 43-44, DC Comics (October-September 1995).

¹¹ Brad Meltzer, Phil Hester, and Ande Park, "Photograph," *Green Arrow* 3, no. 16, DC Comics (November 2002).

¹² Brad Meltzer, Phil Hester, and Ande Park, "Kryptonite," *Green Arrow* 3, no. 20, DC Comics (March 2003).

¹³ Gail Simone, Dale Eaglesham, and Wade von Grawbadger, "And Empires in Their Purpose," *Villains United*, no. 1, DC Comics (July 2005): 7.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵ "You might say I was swallowed by metaphor and digested by self-loathing...I didn't begin as a joke. I had many advantages. And somehow, I'd allowed myself to become the lowest rung on an already short ladder. I'd let terror and stupidity dominate every part of my life. I once fought Batman to a standstill, and yet, years later, I was reduced to a weeping mass in my home by Green Arrow. I abused women. Anything weaker than myself, I despised." Gail Simone, Dale Eaglesham, and Wade von Grawbadger, "A Weapon to Unify," *Villains United*, no. 1, DC Comics (October 2005): 22.

¹⁶ Gail Simone, Twitter Post, September 14, 2015, 9:58am,
<https://twitter.com/GailSimone/status/643468903486590976>.

¹⁷ A legacy character refers to a hero that takes up a preexisting mantle; the various Robins, for instance, are all based on the original Dick Grayson version, even though they are distinct figures within the DC universe.

¹⁸ Gail Simone, Twitter Post. April 4, 2018, 5:53pm, <https://twitter.com/GailSimone/status/981696629181788161>.

¹⁹ Gail Simone, Twitter Post. April 4, 2018, 5:54pm, <https://twitter.com/GailSimone/status/981696629181788161>.

²⁰ He is described later in the series, long after he had proven himself a threat in combat, as “Catman was Thomas Blake, whose early promise had been lost in rolls of fat and indolence. So far had he sunk that he’d become something of an uncivil jest among the ‘heroic’ community.” Gail Simone, Nicola Scott, and Doug Hazlewood, “The Last Mile,” *Secret Six* 3, no. 6, DC Comics (April 2009): 21.

²¹ It is notable as well that she compared him to Tarzan, a significant figure in the development of modern masculinity and perhaps even superheroes, as outlined by John Kasson. John Kasson, *Tarzan, Houdini, and the Perfect Man The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

²² Gail Simone, Nicola Scott, and Doug Hazlewood, “A Run of Misfortune,” *Secret Six* 3, no. 6, DC Comics (April 2009): 7.

²³ Although, Batman would return to crime fighting within a year.

²⁴ Susan Jeffords, in locating the masculine aspects of the Reagan style in John Orman’s work on the subject, offers a list that would be recognizable within superhero comics: “competitive...athletic...decisive, never wavering or uncertain...unemotional...strong and aggressive, not weak or passive...powerful...a “real man,” never feminine.” Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 35. This list serves a useful compass for exploring superheroes, particularly the more subversive efforts that will follow this age of comics.

²⁵ Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, 61.

²⁶Ibid., 105.

²⁷ Gavalier, *Superhero Comics*, 181.

²⁸ During a fight in which the team is clearly outmatched, Deadshot demands “Use the Venom. ‘Roid up, man. That thing is gonna kill us all.” Bane responds that “I do not use it anymore. It is immoral...the righteous path is always the correct one. No matter what the cost.” Gail Simone, Nicola Scott, and Doug Hazlewood, “The Way of the Traitor,” *Secret Six* 3, no. 2, DC Comics, (December 2008): 16.

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ Simone casts these attempts as comedic, with statements like, “You look tired. You need rest. It is your bedtime, Scandal Savage.” Simone, “The Way of the Traitor,” 7. And, “Scandal, you are allowed one ice cream of your choice.” Gail Simone, Nicola Scott, and Doug Hazlewood, “Money for Murder,” *Secret Six* 3, no. 4, DC Comics (February 2009): 6.

³¹ It helps that Scandal Savage’s father is noted supervillain Vandal Savage, who retains eternal life by cannibalizing his children.

³² Simone, Scott, and Hazelwood, “Money for Murder,” 9.

³³ Ibid., 9.

³⁴ Gail Simone, Nicola Scott, and Doug Hazlewood, “Revelations,” *Secret Six* 3, no. 7, DC Comics (May 2009): 13.

³⁵ Ibid., 15.