

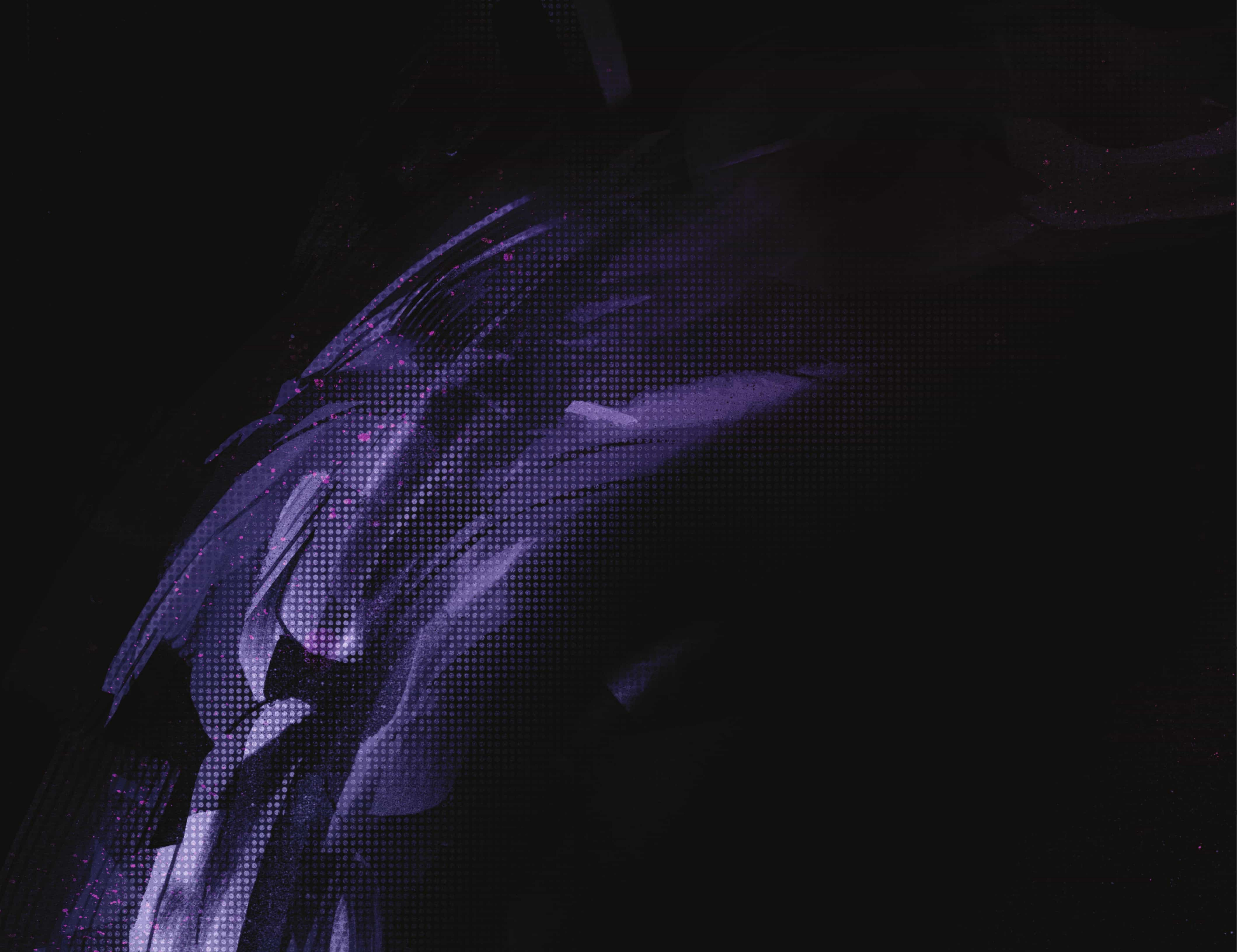
THE
BATMAN
WHO LAUGHS

THE DELUXE EDITION



SCOTT SNYDER
JOCK





THE
BEHIND
WHO LAUGHS

THE DELUXE EDITION





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THE

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WHO LAUGHS

THE DELUXE EDITION

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THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS: THE DELUXE EDITION

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The Batman Who Laughs, Part 1

What is your
happiest
memory?

Mine is
my first.

I am four years old and
running toward the manor.
It's a warm summer evening
and past my bedtime.

My parents and Alfred
stand between me and
the house with their
hands clasped. We're
playing a game.



The object is for
me to try to break
through their arms
and make it inside.

So I run and
I throw myself
against their
arms as hard
as I can...but
every time they
stop me.



They keep me
there with them,
so we can all play
a little longer.

So I won't
find myself
in a dark,
empty house,
all alone.



What I
remember most
is the strength
of their arms
holding me
back...

...and above all,
the laughter.
All of us laughing
like lunatics as
the sky darkened
behind the house.

GOTHAM. NOW.



ALFRED,
STATUS!



I SEE AT LEAST THREE SHOOTERS, SIR, NOT INCLUDING THE DRIVER!

AND THE TRUCKS?

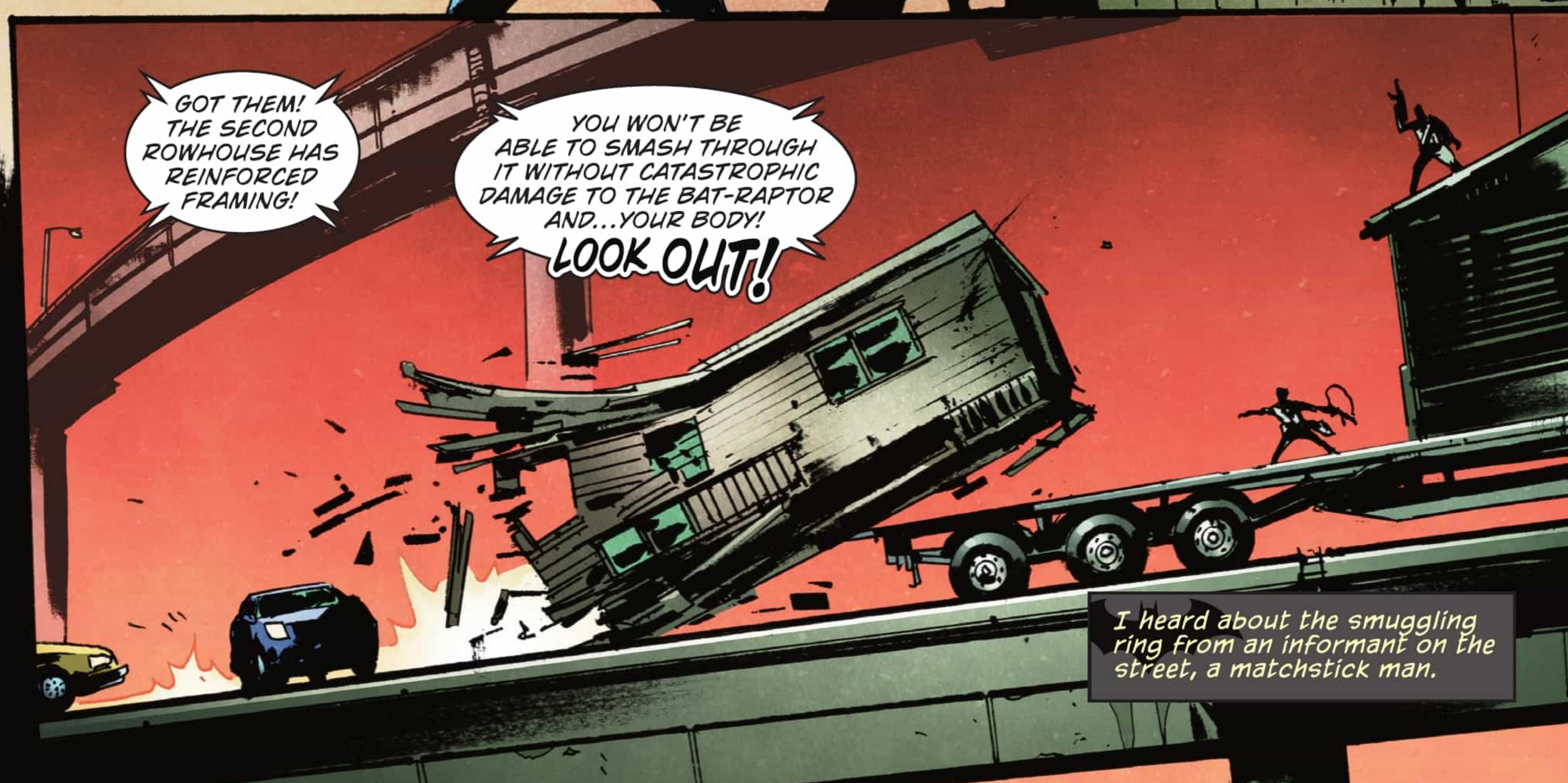
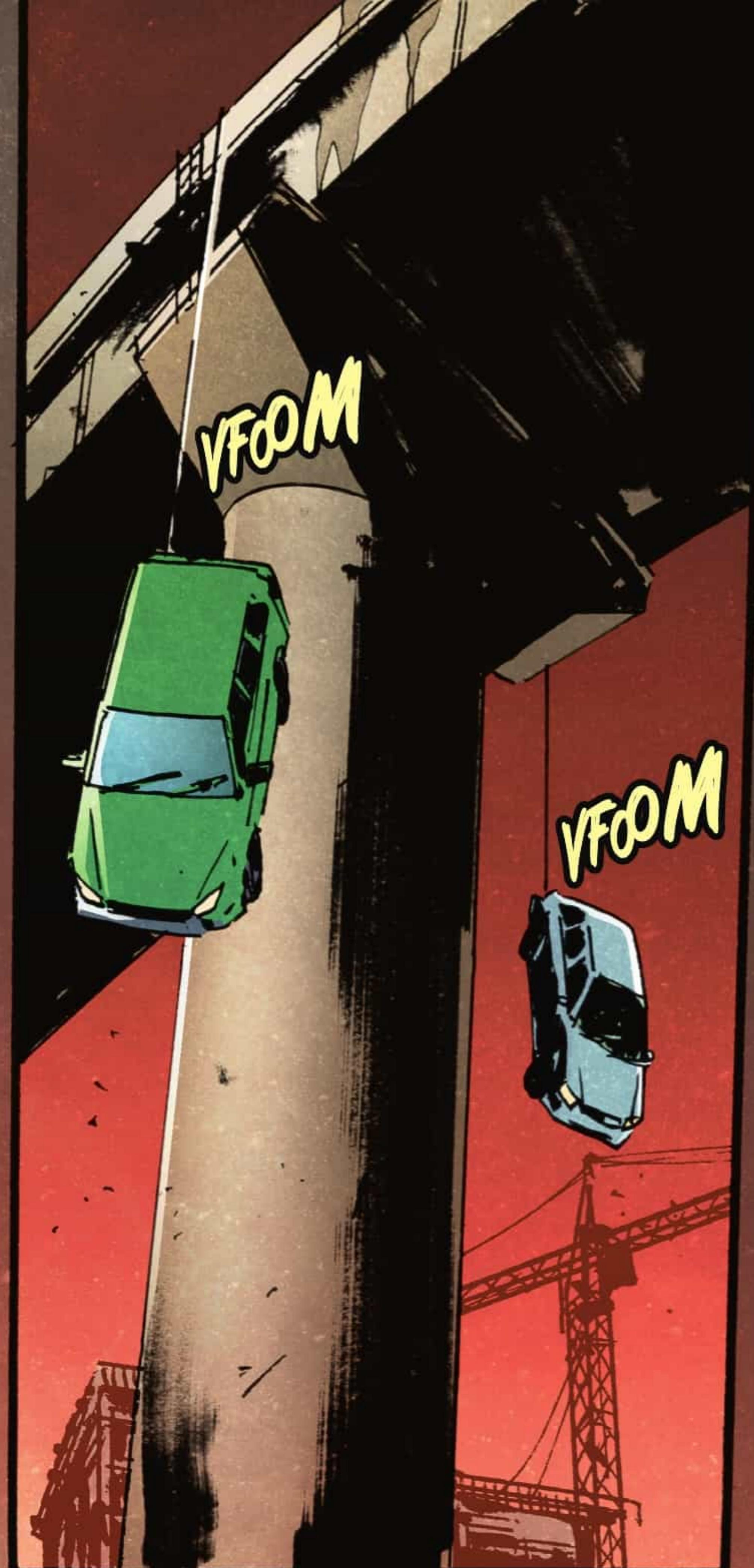
YOU WERE RIGHT. I'M DETECTING EXTRA COMPARTMENTS INSIDE THE FLATBED CUSHIONING.

CAN YOU SEE WHAT THEY'RE SMUGGLING INSIDE?

NO, IT'S REINFORCED. WHATEVER IS IN THERE, THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE IT UP EASILY.

WELL WE NEED TO GET THEM OFF THIS ROAD, NOW!





They use extreme-load trucks to carry contraband from Gotham to the outside world.

The company is called Happy Trails.

Word on the street is that they've been smuggling bodies out of Gotham that came into the morgue unidentified, headed for the potter's field.

Trucks like these have pockets within the flatbeds for compression, so they can carry things up to three, four tons--like historical rowhouses removed to make room for new condos.

These are the bodies of people who lived and died here, in this city, in Gotham. People we failed to protect in life...

...but these thieves think they can take them over that bridge? Out of Gotham to be hacked up?

The thought makes me angrier than I expect.

KA-CHING



SIR!
THE ROOF IS
REINFORCED,
TOO! FROM THAT
HEIGHT--

I'VE GOT
CUSHIONING.



FOR
WHAT IT'S WORTH,
BATMAN INSURANCE
POLICIES ARE CALLED
DARK KNIGHT
RETURNS.

I WILL
BE LOOKING
INTO ONE
SHORTLY.

SCANNING THE
FLATBED...

...THERE.

212-- 4.43

1111001
(ΔΔΔΔΔ)

I'VE
GOT IT.

SECURING
BAT-CHARGE.

Gotham's
potter's field
was established
in the city's
early days by its
most prominent
citizens--
members of the
Five Families.

The chosen site was
one of the prettiest at
that time, a field that
slopes down to the bay.

CLIK
CLIK

POOM



There was confusion over why the city should put a gravesite for anonymous citizens on such a prime piece of land, but the thinking was...

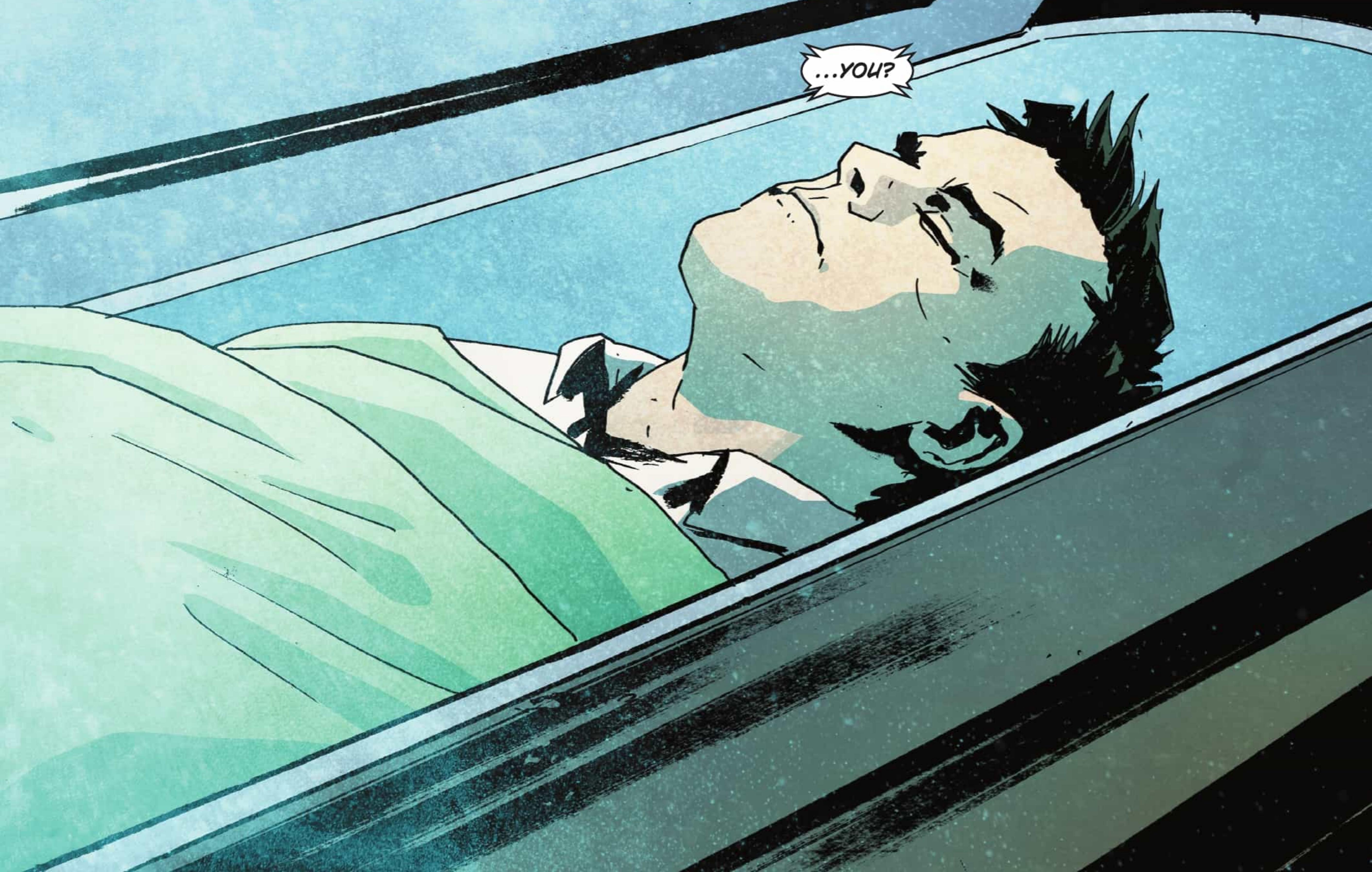


...whatever troubles someone faced in life here in this city...



...let them at least rest in peace on our shores.

For all its faults, this city was founded on that kind of thinking. It matters.



GOTHAM MORGUE.

DECEASED IS
BRUCE WAYNE.

AGE,
ROUGHLY 42,
MAYBE 43.
CAUSE OF
DEATH,
UNKNOWN.

SUBJECT
APPEARS TO HAVE
BEEN IN GOOD PHYSICAL
HEALTH. NO WOUNDS, NO
INTERNAL INJURIES
APPARENT.

ARE YOU
HEARING
ME?
HEY.
ALFRED?

THE DNA
MATCHES MINE, BUT
IT COULD BE SOME
TRICK, SOME--

I'M SORRY,
SIR. BUT IF I
MAY, IT'S HARD TO
BE AS CLINICAL
AS YOU THIS
TIME.

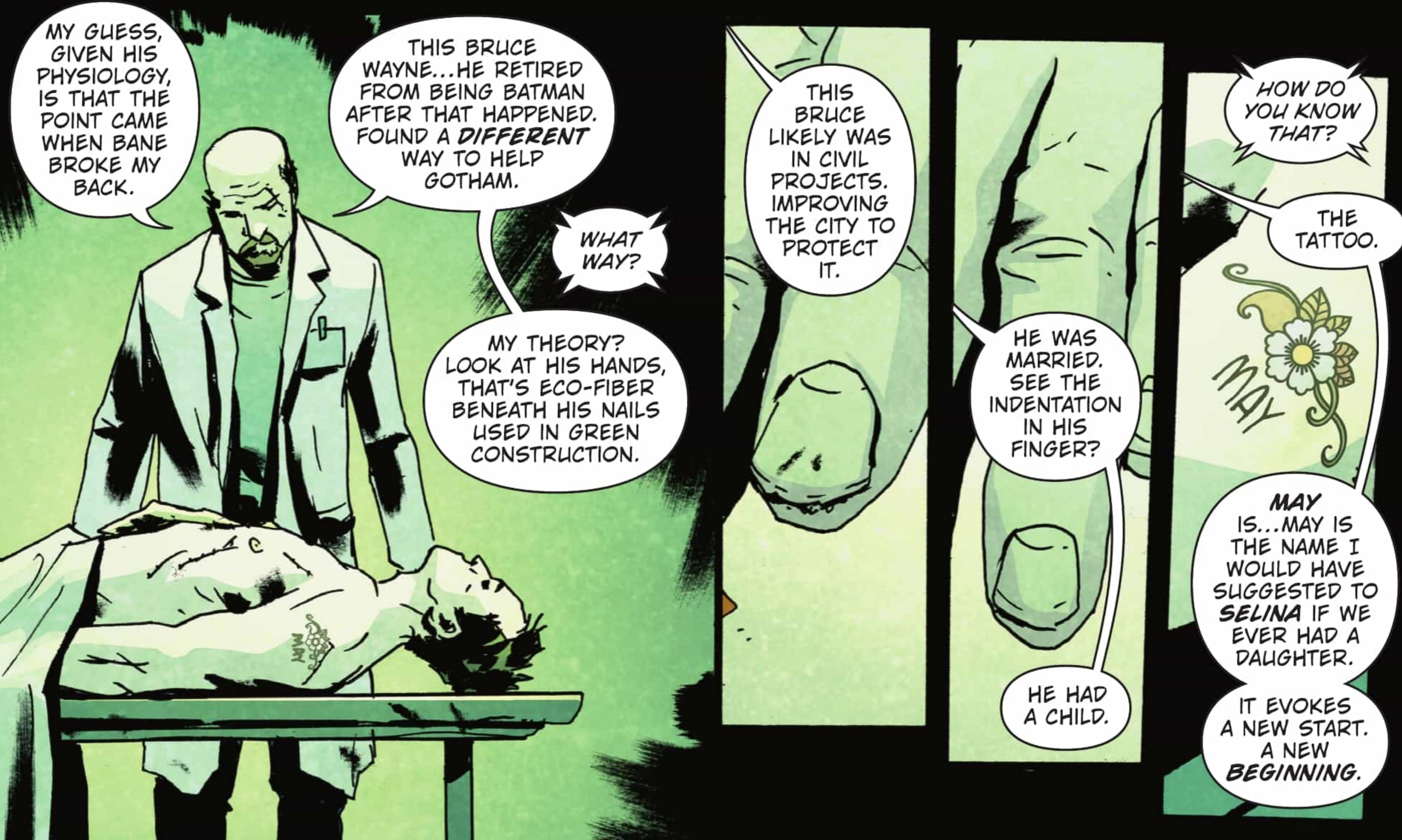
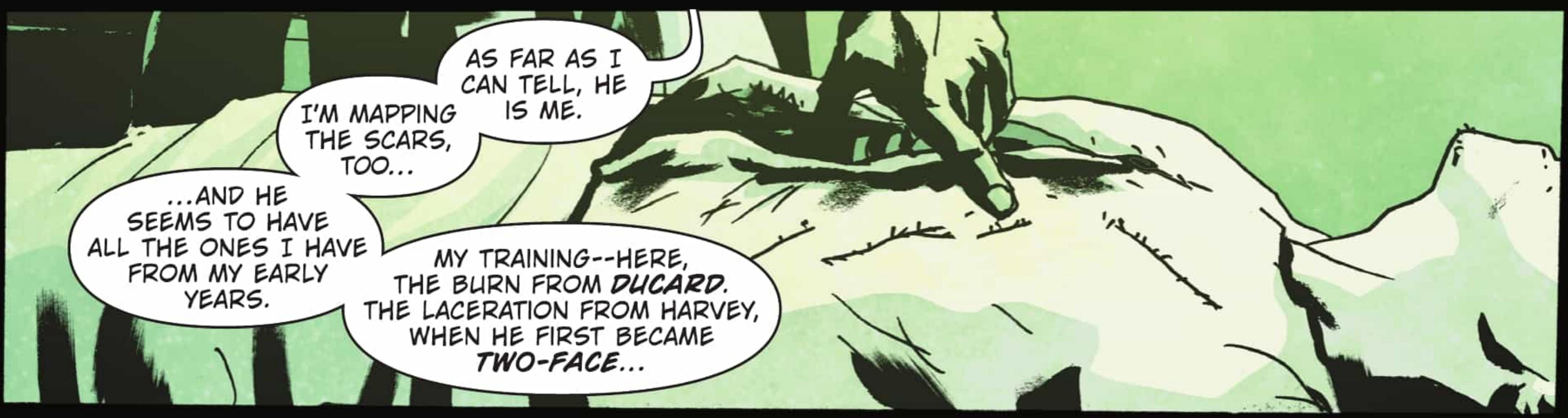
I KNOW YOU. I
RAISED YOU, AND
THAT IS YOU ON THE
TABLE. SOME OLDER
VERSION OF YOU.
IT'S JUST
TOO--

LOOK, IT'S
UNNERVING FOR
ME, TOO. BUT IT'S
STILL A CASE. NOW I HAVE
EYES ON ME, AND THE
REAL DOCTOR VETH IS
GOING TO WAKE UP
ANY MINUTE.

ARE YOU
HEARING
ME?

I'M...I'M
SORRY. I'M
HERE. I'LL
HELP.

NO
INTERNAL
INJURIES.
YOU WERE
SAYING?





SMILE LINES.



HAPPY.



ARKHAM ASYLUM!

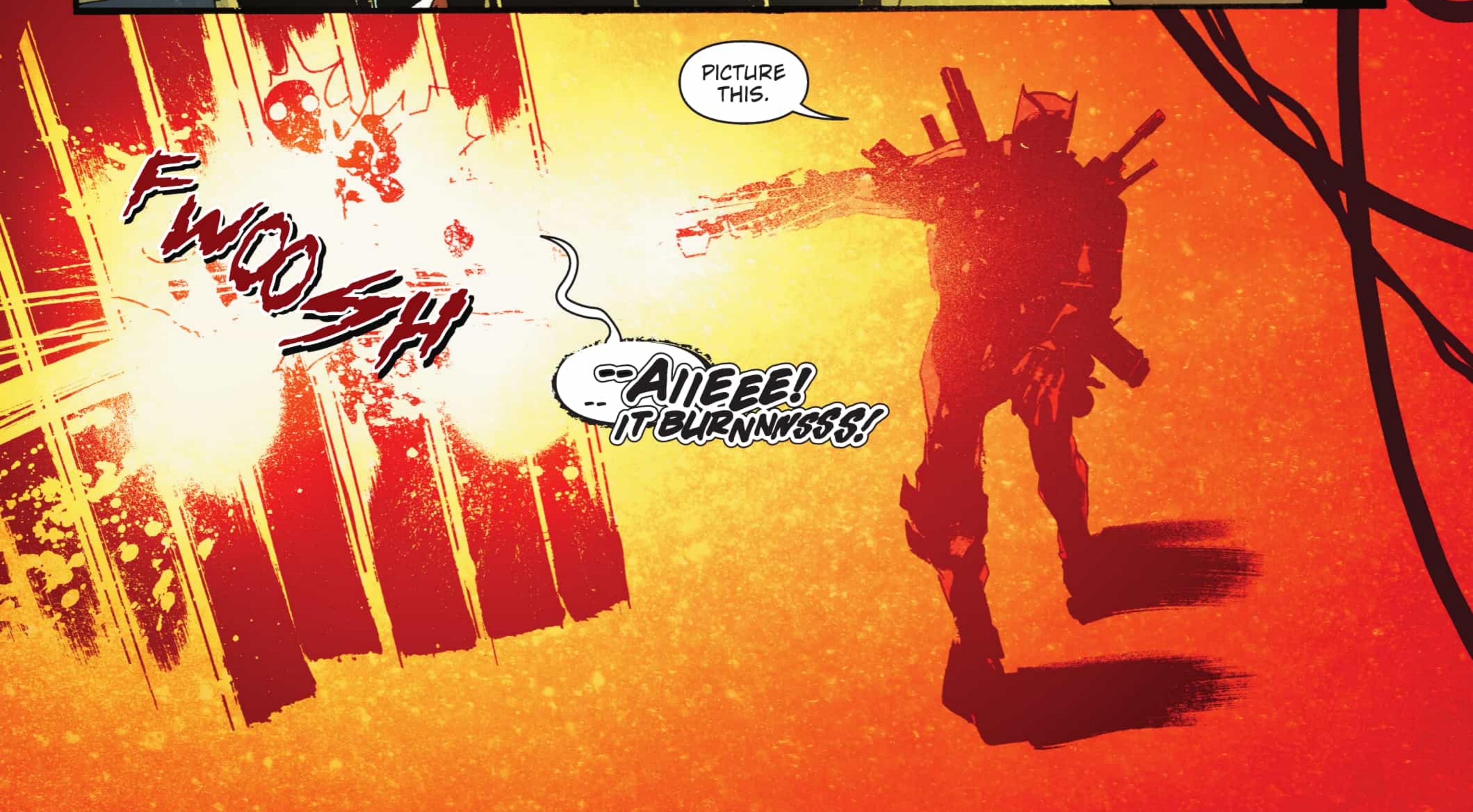


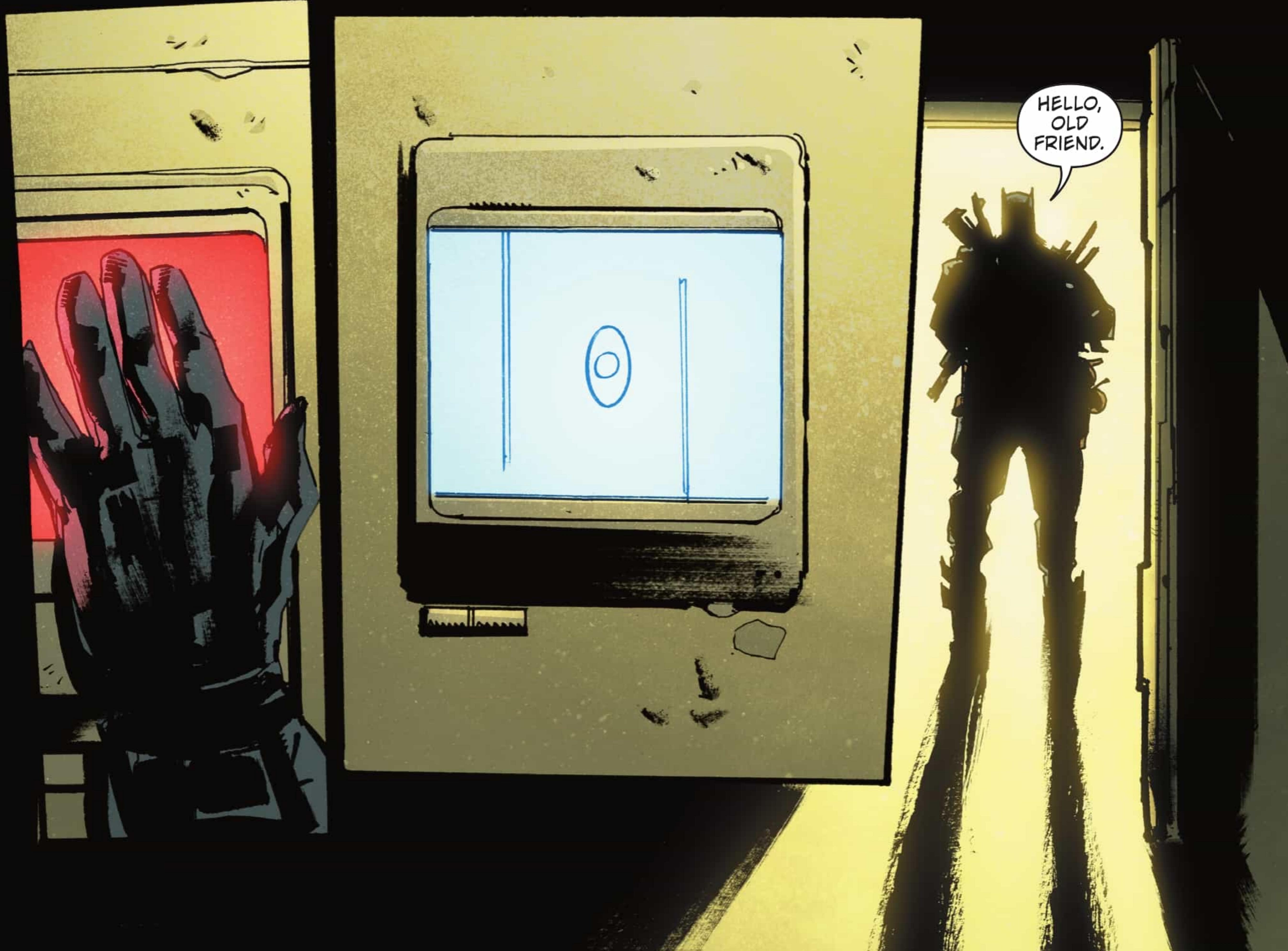
MAN, I HAVE TO SAY, IT'S AN HONOR TO--



ZZZZ!

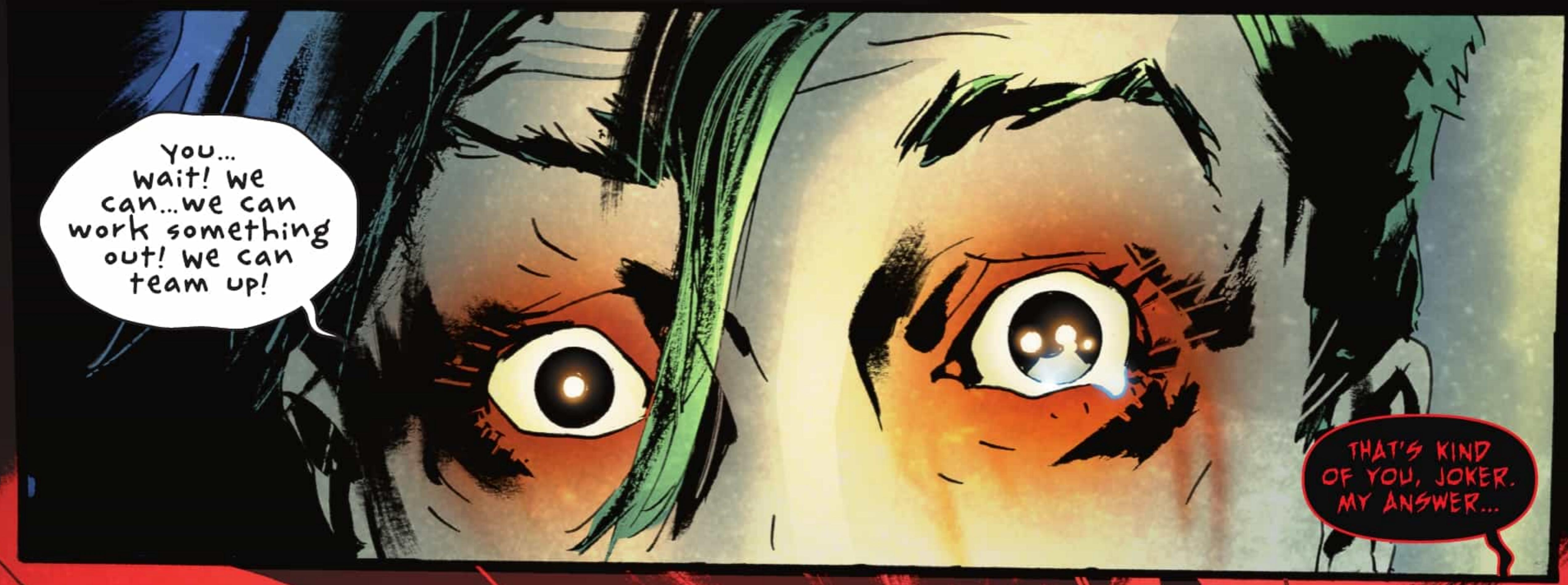












GCPD HQ.

DEEP DOWN, THEY KNOW IT WASN'T YOU...BUT STILL, THEY'RE SCARED. SO I'M KEEPING THE SIGNAL LIGHT OFF.

I UNDERSTAND.

SO THIS...THING. WHAT IS IT?

HE COMES FROM A REALM WHERE ALL OUR HOPES AND FEARS EXIST IN MATERIAL FORM.

I'VE HAD MOMENTS WHEN I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING THE JOKER, JIM.

BUT IT'S MY BELIEF THAT THE JOKER'S HEART CONTAINS A SINGULAR SUPER-TOXIN THAT'LL BE RELEASED WHEN HE DIES. A TOXIN THAT WILL MAKE WHOEVER KILLS HIM THE NEXT JOKER. SO THIS CREATURE, HE'S ME, BUT A ME WHO'S--

ALSO HIM. LORD...

WELL FIRST, WHO HASN'T THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING JOKER? THE CITY'LL BE HEARTBROKEN TO KNOW IT WAS A DECOY IN THAT CELL. HOWEVER THE HELL JOKER MANAGED IT, I DON'T KNOW. BUT IF THIS "BATMAN WHO LAUGHS" GUY IS THE JOKER IN YOUR BODY, WE CAN STILL--

HE'S NOT THE JOKER, JIM. HE'S BATMAN. HE'S ME. JOKER HAS POINTS TO PROVE--TO ME, TO THE WORLD.

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS...HE'S NOT HERE TO PROVE ANYTHING. HE'S HERE TO WIN, TO KILL ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT'S A THREAT.

BUT WHEN YOU SAY HE'S YOU, HOW MUCH OF YOUR LIFE--

ALL OF IT. HE'S LED MY LIFE, HAS MY TRAINING, HAS MY MEMORIES, MY MIND...BUT HE'S ME FREE FROM CODES, MORALS, HEART BLACK AS THE JOKER'S.

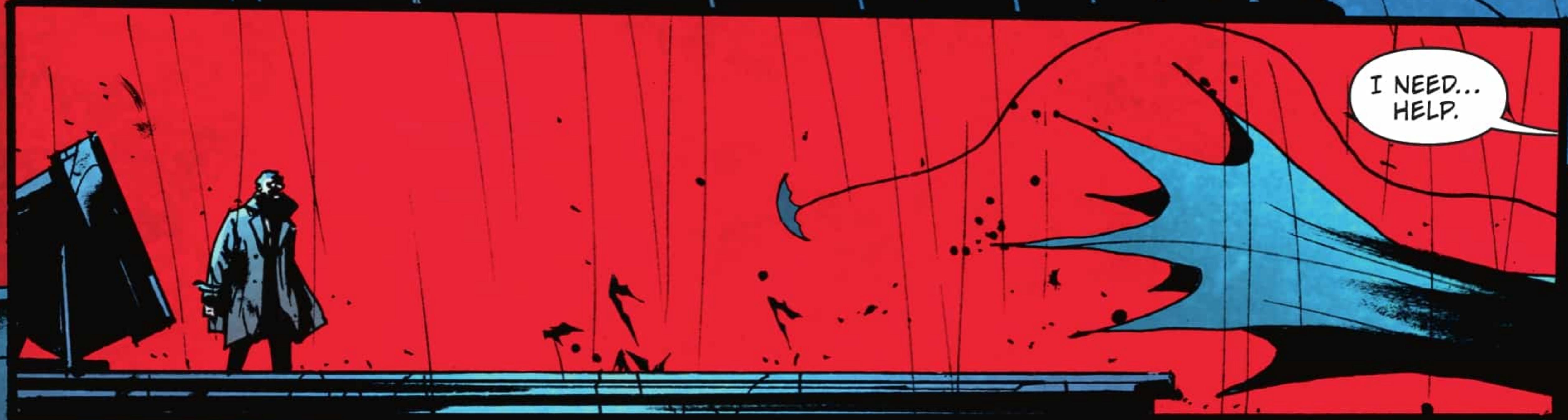
HE'S THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF THE IDEA THAT--

"BATMAN ALWAYS WINS." MY GOD.

HE'S AN
APEX PREDATOR, JIM.
HE CONQUERED AND KILLED
WORLD AFTER WORLD IN HIS DIMENSION.
AND HE'S HERE FOR SOMETHING. THIS
OTHER BATMAN HE BROUGHT WHO
KILLED THE GUARDS AT ARKHAM AND
NEARLY KILLED FREEZE...THE
ONE THEY'RE CALLING
"THE GRIM KNIGHT"...

...THE BATMAN
WHO LAUGHS MUST HAVE
BROUGHT HIM OVER BEFORE
OUR LAST BATTLE. KEPT HIM HIDDEN,
WAITING UNTIL NOW. BUT WHY? AND
BRUCE WAYNE IN THE MORGUE? HIS
CELLS WERE UNSTABLE, VOLATILE.
HE HAS TO BE THE KEY SOMEHOW.
THE LEAD THAT MONSTER
DOESN'T KNOW WE
HAVE YET.

...IT'S ALL
PART OF SOME
DAMN PLAN. I
KNOW IT. I...I
JUST CAN'T SEE
IT YET.



...I already know. I've known all along.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SIR. WHY WOULD WE UNDO THE WATERWAY SECURITY SYSTEMS? THE ROCKS WILL SHIFT, THE TUNNELS WILL OPEN.

ALFRED, DO IT.

ANYONE TRAVELING THOSE WATERWAYS WILL BE ABLE TO COME RIGHT INTO--

I SAID DO IT!

IT'S ALREADY DONE, I JUST...

...MY GOD...

...WAS SOMEONE ALREADY LURKING DOWN THERE WITH OXYGEN...JUST... WAITING? WHO WOULD...

NO, NO, NO. TELL ME IT'S NOT HIM, SIR. WHO IS IT?!

WHO'S THERE?!

NOW, NOW, JEEVESSSS...



...I'm
supposed to
say "knock,
knock"
first.



YOU'LL BE
SAFE HERE,
JOKER.



Heeeee
But
I don't
want to
be safe,
old
friend...





In a second
Alfred rushes
to me.

And just like in that
first memory, I feel
the warmth of his
hands, the strength as
they hold me back...

...he's calling
to me. But all
I can hear...

 ...is laughter.

HAHAHAHAHAHA!

