



# **The Batman Who Laughs, Part 2**

When I was training to be Batman, traveling the globe, it struck me how many different cultures cite the heart as the location in the body where happiness lives.

There's science to it, though. Happiness, joy, they require more blood from the heart than other emotions.

That night in the alley, as the gun rose, I remember my father's hand covering my chest...his fingers like an extra set of ribs, filling in the spaces.

Then his hand was falling away...and everything was different.

It's what you reach to protect when you're scared. Not your throat or other real vulnerabilities like exposed arteries or nerves--the things I target when I fight.


When the explosion came, I thought I'd been hit. I was sure.

But my heart had only skipped a beat.

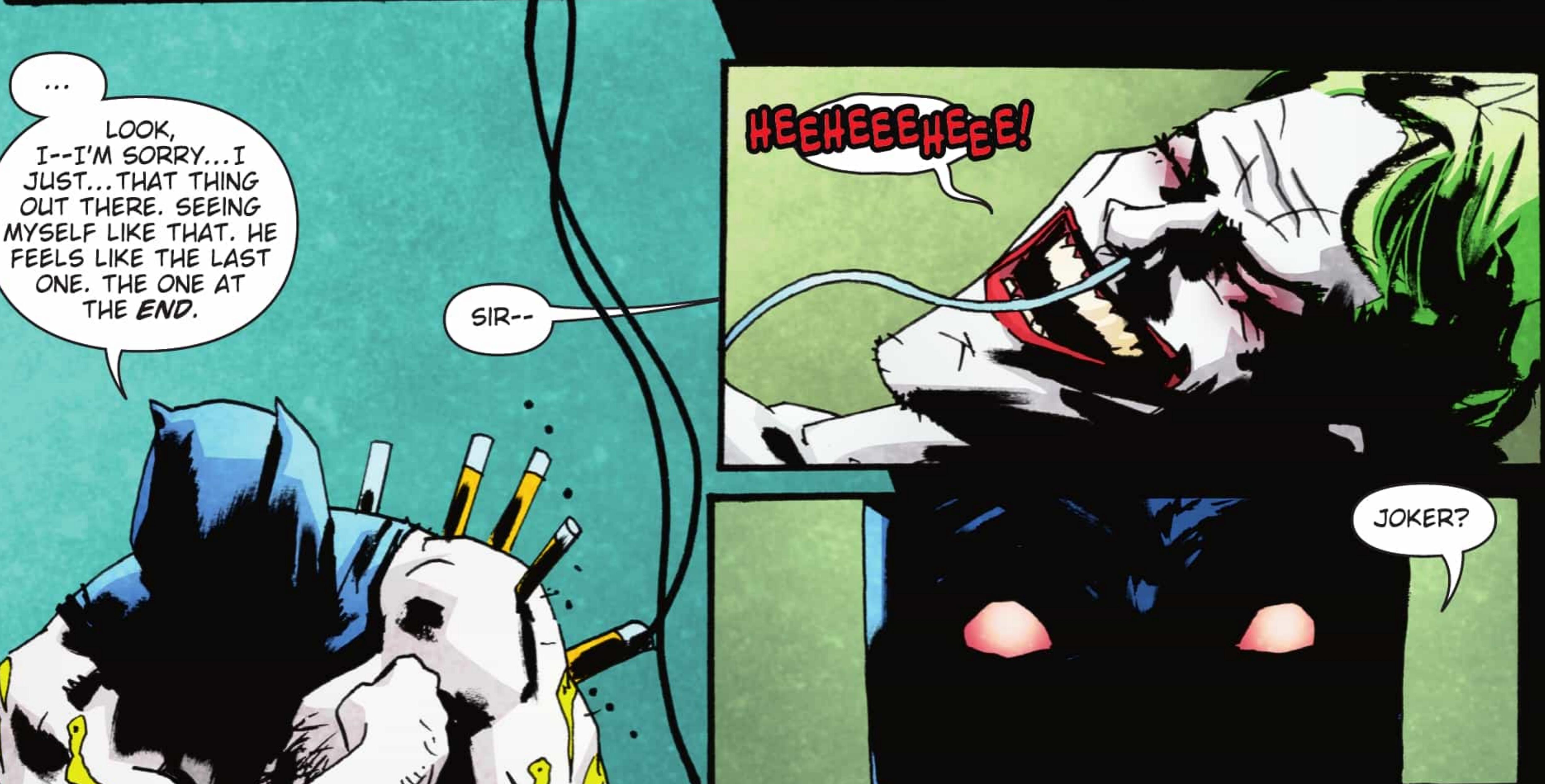
That missing beat though... sometimes I think I live my whole life inside that missing beat.

WE'RE LOSING HIM!

## THE BATCAVE.



...WHATEVER  
THE HELL IT  
TAKES.



...THEY'RE WHAT  
MAKE YOU STRONG.

"THE BRUCE WAYNE  
I KNOW AND LOVE."

WE'LL BE  
BACK AFTER  
THIS SHORT  
BREAK.

"ARE YOU  
COVERED? REALLY  
COVERED? AT  
GOTHAM PRIORITY,  
WE LIVE HERE,  
TOO.

"SO WE OFFER  
ALL SORTS OF  
POLICIES FOR OUR  
FELLOW  
GOTHAMITES,  
EVEN--"

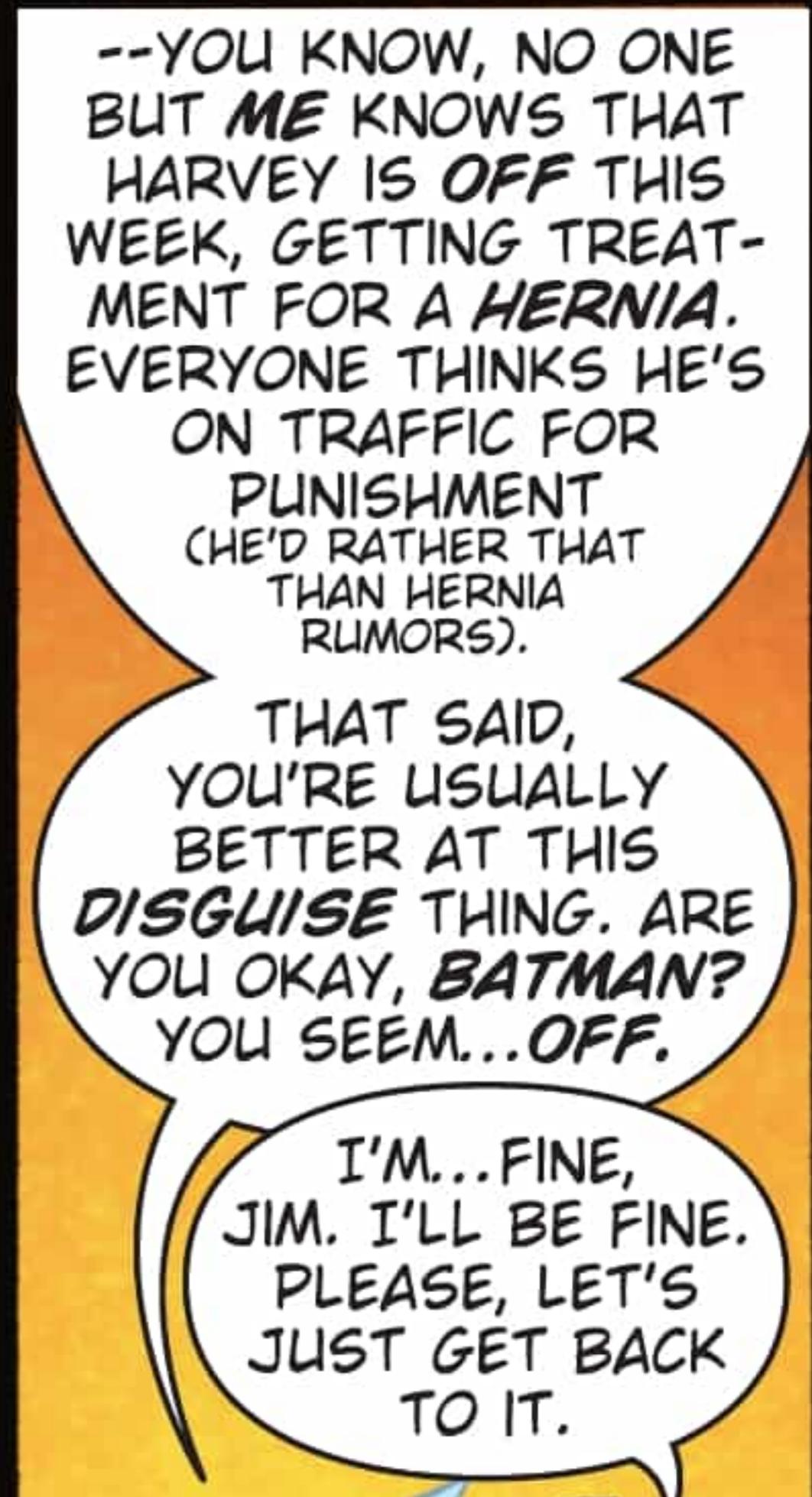
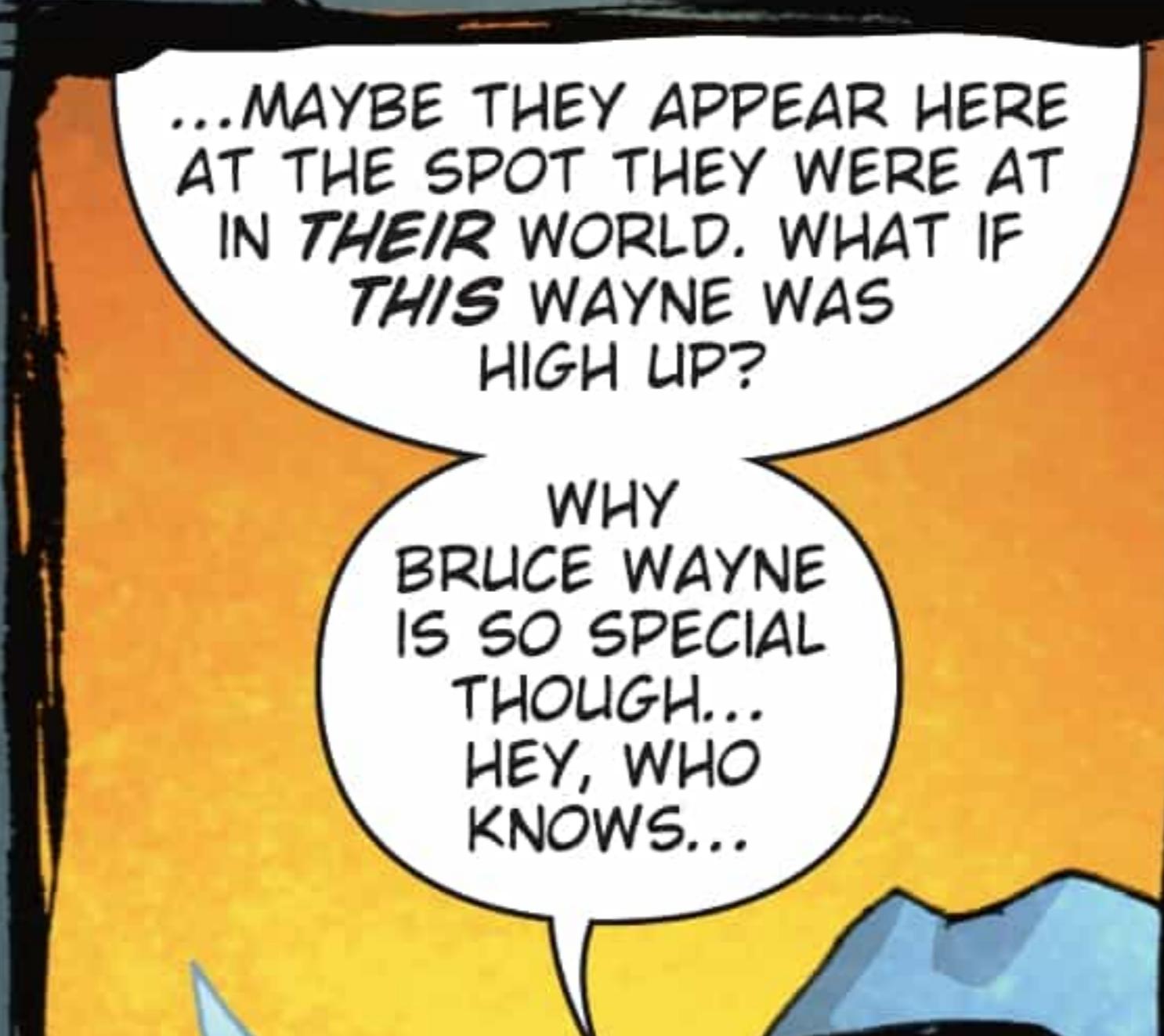
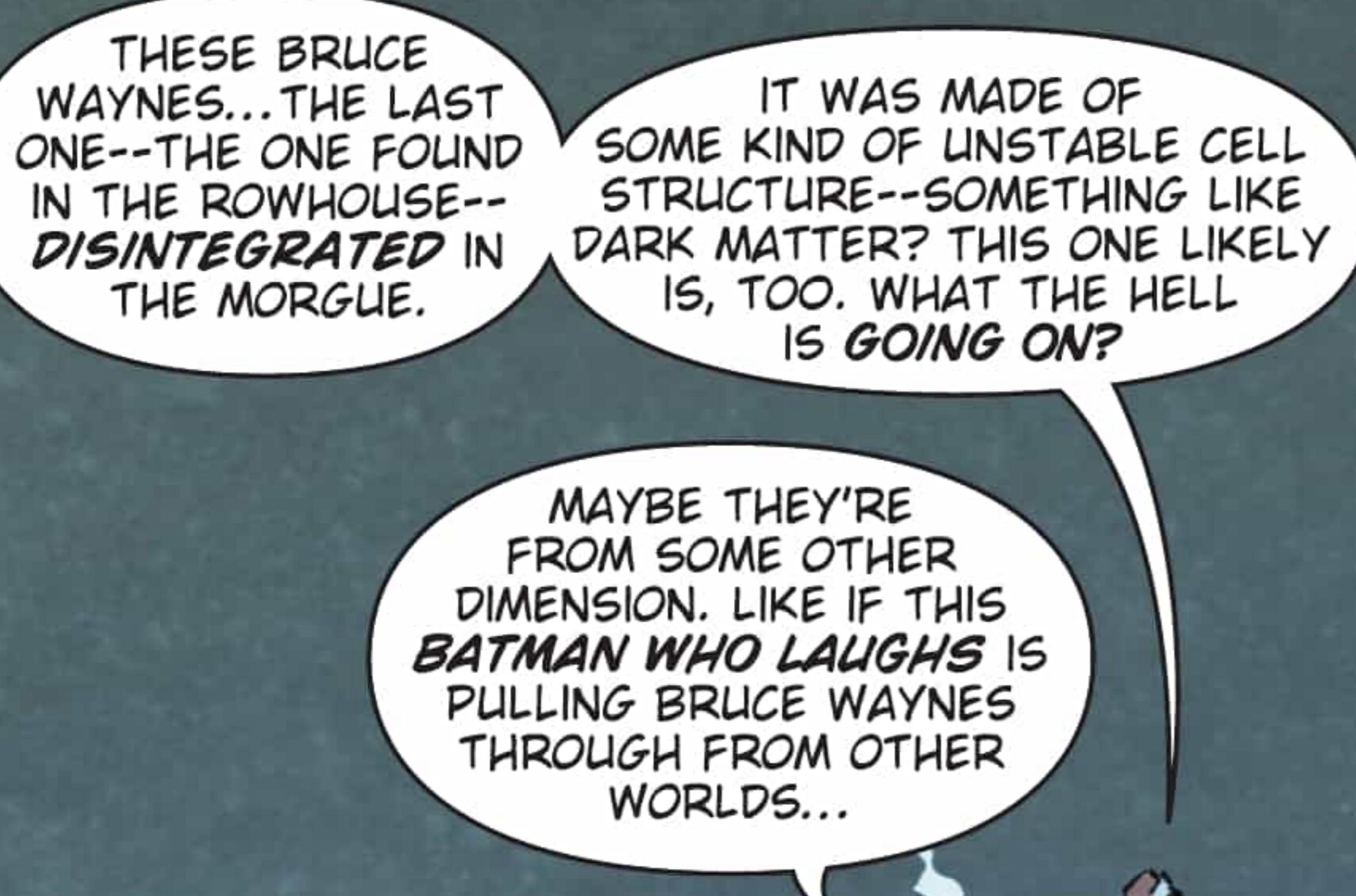


LATER.

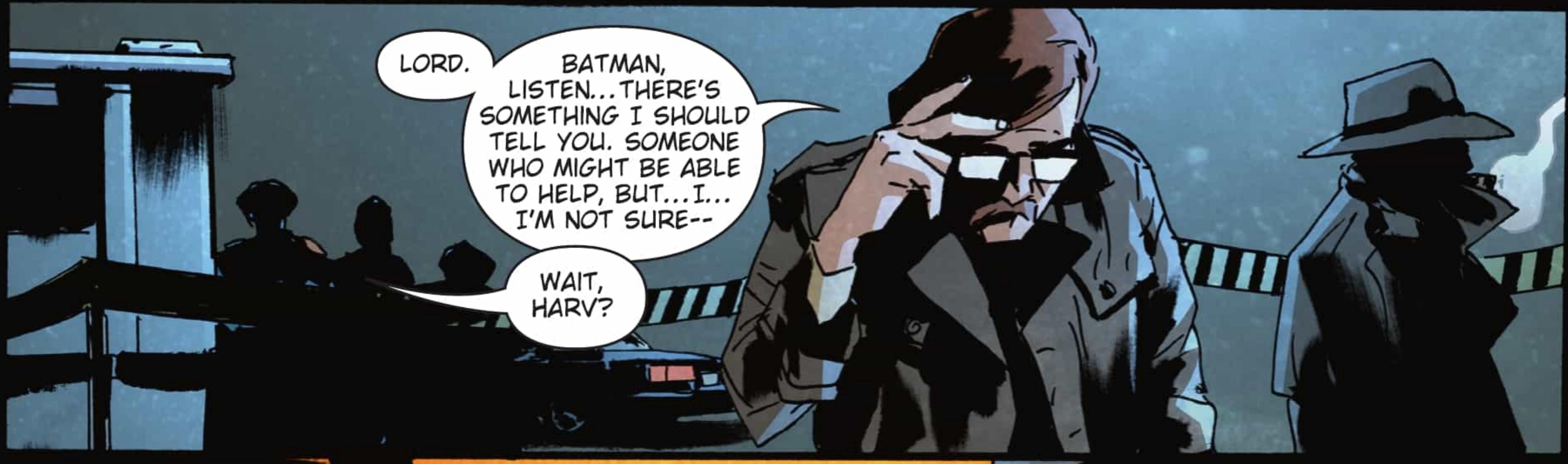
VICTIM  
IS NONE OTHER  
THAN BRUCE  
WAYNE.

AGAIN.









I'M...I'M SORRY, COMMISSIONER...JUST YESTERDAY, THOUGH, HE WAS SAYING HOW WE SHOULD HAVE A POOL, HOW THE BAT COULD REALLY GO DOWN THIS TIME...

IT'S FINE. GO BACK TO YOUR POST, CADET.

LOOK, I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT. HARVEY BELITTLES YOU TO MAKE THE MEN FEEL MORE IMPORTANT SOMETIMES.

BUT HE'S IN YOUR CORNER, MAYBE MORE THAN ANYONE BUT ME. HAS BEEN SINCE DAY ONE. HE'S JUST...HIM.

BUT YOU... WHAT *WAS* THAT BACK THERE? IF SOMETHING IS GOING ON WITH YOU, I'M HERE, BATMAN. I KNOW THIS THING...HE'S A TOUGH ONE, BUT IF WE DO IT TOGETHER, HELL, IT'S LIKE YOU SAID BEFORE--HE'S JUST TUESDAY IN GOTHAM.

NO ONE THINKS--

IT DOESN'T MATTER. COME HERE. I NEED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

SURE, AS LONG IT'S NOT ANOTHER DEAD GUY NAMED WAYNE.

IT'S AN OLD MAP OF GOTHAM.

## WAYNE TOWER.

"THERE'S ONE HANGING IN WAYNE TOWER, TOO."

"WHEN GOTHAM WAS BUILT, THE FOUNDING FAMILIES SAW IT AS THE ENGINE OF THE COUNTRY. THE CULTURAL, INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL CENTER OF THE NATION."

"IN 1780, THOUGH, PLAGUE WIPE OUT A THIRD OF THE CITY. AND THE FAMILIES, THEY FEARED THAT WHAT THEY SAW AS THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY COULD BECOME THE MEANS OF ITS INFECTION."

"THEY VOWED NEVER TO LET GOTHAM BECOME THE SOURCE OF DARKNESS."

THEY SET UP A SYSTEM CALLED *LAST LAUGH*. BASED ON THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION.

A DEFENSE SYSTEM BY WHICH GOTHAM WOULD BE PROTECTED IF ANYTHING TERRIBLE SPREAD INSIDE.

WHAT KIND OF SYSTEM?

A MEANS OF BLOWING THE ENTRYWAYS AND VACCINATING THE CITY WITH AIRSHIPS, RESERVOIRS OF FOOD AND WATER HIDDEN DEEP BELOW THE STREETS. I LEARNED ABOUT IT FIGHTING THE OWLS.

IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A BAD IDEA TO ME.

WELL, AFTER THE *LAST JOKER* ATTACK, I STARTED BUILDING MY OWN *LAST LAUGH*.

"IT'S A FINAL DEFENSE AGAINST ANY CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL ATTACK. A WAY OF *SEALING OFF* THE CITY, PURIFYING AIR AND WATER, RESTORING GOTHAM'S HEALTH INDEPENDENTLY."

"THE CENTRAL HUB IS IN WAYNE TOWER, ON THE HIGHEST SECURITY FLOOR. MULTI-POINT DNA ACCESS REQUIRED..."

"LET ME GUESS, THE ONLY PEOPLE WITH ACCESS ARE YOU...AND BRUCE WAYNE."

HELLO? HELLO, WHO'S THERE? THE OTHER GUARDS SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, NO ONE IS ALLOWED HERE EXCEPT--

I ALREADY SAID HELLO TO THE OTHER GUARDS, BILL. GOOD TO SEE YOU!

AND GOOD TO HEAR YOU, MR. WAYNE.







**STOP  
IT!**

SO YOU'RE  
LOOKING WELL.

My god, he's  
quick. He's leaner  
than me, faster.

But I'm  
stronger.

I attack with a combination of  
styles that favors power...five  
methods just in my lunge...

...and yet, in his dodge,  
he uses aspects of six...

...he sees it  
all coming...

...but I saw this  
coming, too.

Since my last fight  
with him, I've been  
training again.

Training in a  
technique he  
won't know.

Because  
I made  
it up.

ENOUGH!

Alfred calls the style "Bam Pow." It stands for something clever, but mostly, I think he just likes saying "Bam Pow."

Especially when he  
thinks of this monster.



"THE GRIM KNIGHT. EVEN HIS BULLETS SHOOT BULLETS."

"THE DEADLIEST MAN ALIVE. HE'S US IF JOE CHILL DROPPED THE GUN IN THE ALLEY AND WE PICKED IT UP."

"IT'S NOT JUST THE GUNS, THOUGH. NO, ON HIS WORLD HE HAS WAYNE ENTERPRISES WEAPONIZED. CHIPS IN YOUR GPS. VALVES IN YOUR WATER FILTRATION."

"YOUR MINIVAN DRIVES OFF A BRIDGE, YOU NEVER KNOW WHO KILLED YOU."

YOU WON'T WIN. I'LL KILL YOU IF I HAVE TO.

HE'S US AT TOTAL WAR. I'VE BEEN SAVING HIM.

KILL ME... BECAUSE I'M YOU IT DOESN'T COUNT, EH? FREE PASS? HEH.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YOU ALREADY KNOW. I'M DISMANTLING "LAST LAUGH" BY MEANS OF A SPECIAL PROTOCOL, BRUCE. ONE I HAD ON MY WORLD, TOO. A FAIL-SAFE TO TAKE DOWN ANY RECORDS KEPT HERE IF BATMAN FINALLY ENDED.

NO...NO, DON'T DO THIS!

A WAY OF DEMOLISHING THE BUILDING SAFELY, A CONTROLLED IMPLOSION. OF COURSE, IT'S DESIGNED TO WORK ONLY WHEN NO ONE IS INSIDE THE BUILDING. THERE ARE DOZENS OF PROTOCOLS...

...ALL OF WHICH THE GRIM KNIGHT DISMANTLED A FEW DAYS AGO.

PLEASE... PLEASE DON'T.









GET HIM UP NOW!



YOU THINK  
THIS IS FUNNY?!  
I'LL SHOW YOU  
FUNNY!

IT'S HOW HE  
BREATHES, SIR! HE'S  
NOT LAUGHING! HE'S  
NOT HERE, HE'S--

I'm  
here.

YOU  
KNOW HIS  
PLAN. WHAT IS  
HIS PLAN?! I  
NEED TO  
KNOW...

heee...heee...  
I don't know  
it. Only one  
person does...





...YOU'RE  
MY SON,  
JAMES.

AND YOU  
MAY BE THE  
ONLY ONE WHO  
CAN HELP US  
STOP HIM.