



The Batman Who Laughs, Part 4



There's a saying here in Gotham...it was adopted from the *Miagani Tribe* who lived here long ago...

...before they were all murder~~ED~~.

It goes...
"Happiness is seeing the world through the eyes of children."

There's even a Latin version on our subway token.
"Through new eyes..."

There's truth in it, though.

I've never told anyone this, but whenever I have a ~~BAD NIGHT~~...whenever I doubt myself, or my mission as Batman (like now...~~HEW~~)...I try to see things through my children's eyes.

Dick was the first Robin. He had the happiest eyes. Circus eyes. Weightless~~***~~. Leaping, never falling.

But it's true of all of them.

So remind yourself, Bruce. Now. Quickly...

...feel it.
The joy,
the ~~PEACE~~
it brings...

THE BATCAVE NOW.



...to look into
your child's
eyes...

...see the
world as
they see it.

WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE?!

WHAT
I **HAD**
TO.



WHAT
ARE
YOU--

TAKE
THAT **DAMNED**
THING OFF RIGHT
NOW! LET ME
SEE YOUR
BLOODY...



...EYES--

--MY
GOD.



ALFRED.

DO NOT.
DO. **THAT.**
AGAIN.

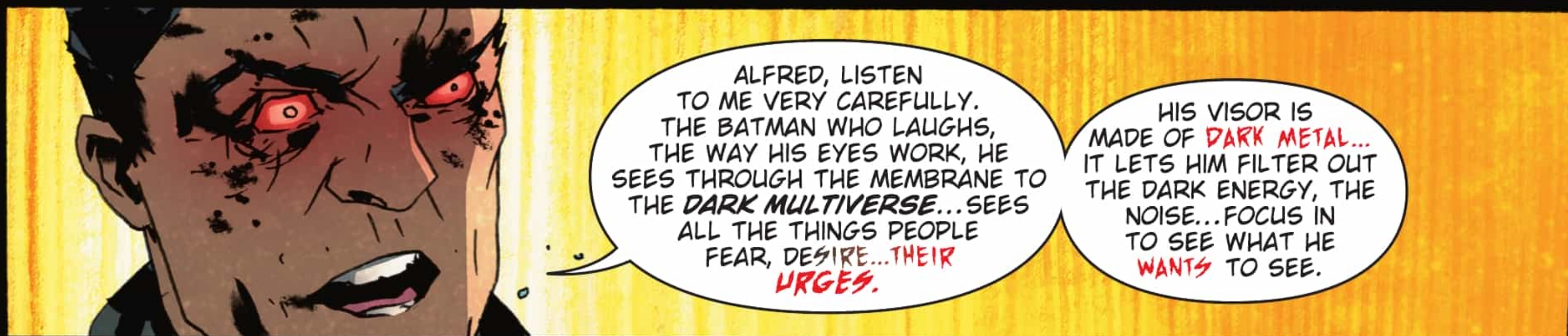
YOU'RE...YOU'RE
NOT **BRUCE**
ANYMORE.

GIVE
ME THE
VISOR.

NO! EVERY
MONSTER YOU'VE
FACED...YOU ALWAYS WON
BY REMAINING **TRUE** TO
WHO YOU ARE.

MY BOY. BRUCE
WAYNE. THIS...I
WON'T **LET** YOU!





ALFRED, LISTEN TO ME VERY CAREFULLY. THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS, THE WAY HIS EYES WORK, HE SEES THROUGH THE MEMBRANE TO THE **DARK MULTIVERSE**... SEES ALL THE THINGS PEOPLE FEAR, DESIRE... **THEIR URGES.**

HIS VISOR IS MADE OF **DARK METAL**... IT LETS HIM FILTER OUT THE DARK ENERGY, THE NOISE... FOCUS IN TO SEE WHAT HE **WANTS** TO SEE.



I FORGED THE VISOR IN YOUR HANDS FROM THE **DARK METAL** WE STRIPPED FROM GOTHAM.

IT'S ATTUNED TO THE SAME ENERGY AS HIS. IF I CAN LEARN TO USE IT, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO PREDICT WHERE THE NEXT BRUCE WAYNE IS COMING THROUGH. **BEAT HIM AT HIS OWN GAME.**

PLEASE. I'LL **TAKE** IT FROM YOU IF I HAVE TO.

... YOU'LL **TRY.**

DAMMIT, GIVE IT T--

WHAM

NO!

ARGH!



... YOU... **HIT ME. HEH.**

BRUCE... I... I'M SO **SORRY.** I--

RAHHH!



HIT--

I'M GOING TO CRIPPLE YOU...

NO! Don't you touch him, Bruce!

You've never fought Alfred before. Never!

JUST HIS JAW.

BUST HIM EYES. TO SHOW HIM WHO'S STOP IT--

--stop. He loves you! Look at him!

LOOK!

...HURT YOU. HURT YOU SO BAD... SO YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE ME...

...EVER AGAIN!



SLAM

YOU THINK YOU CAN HURT ME?!

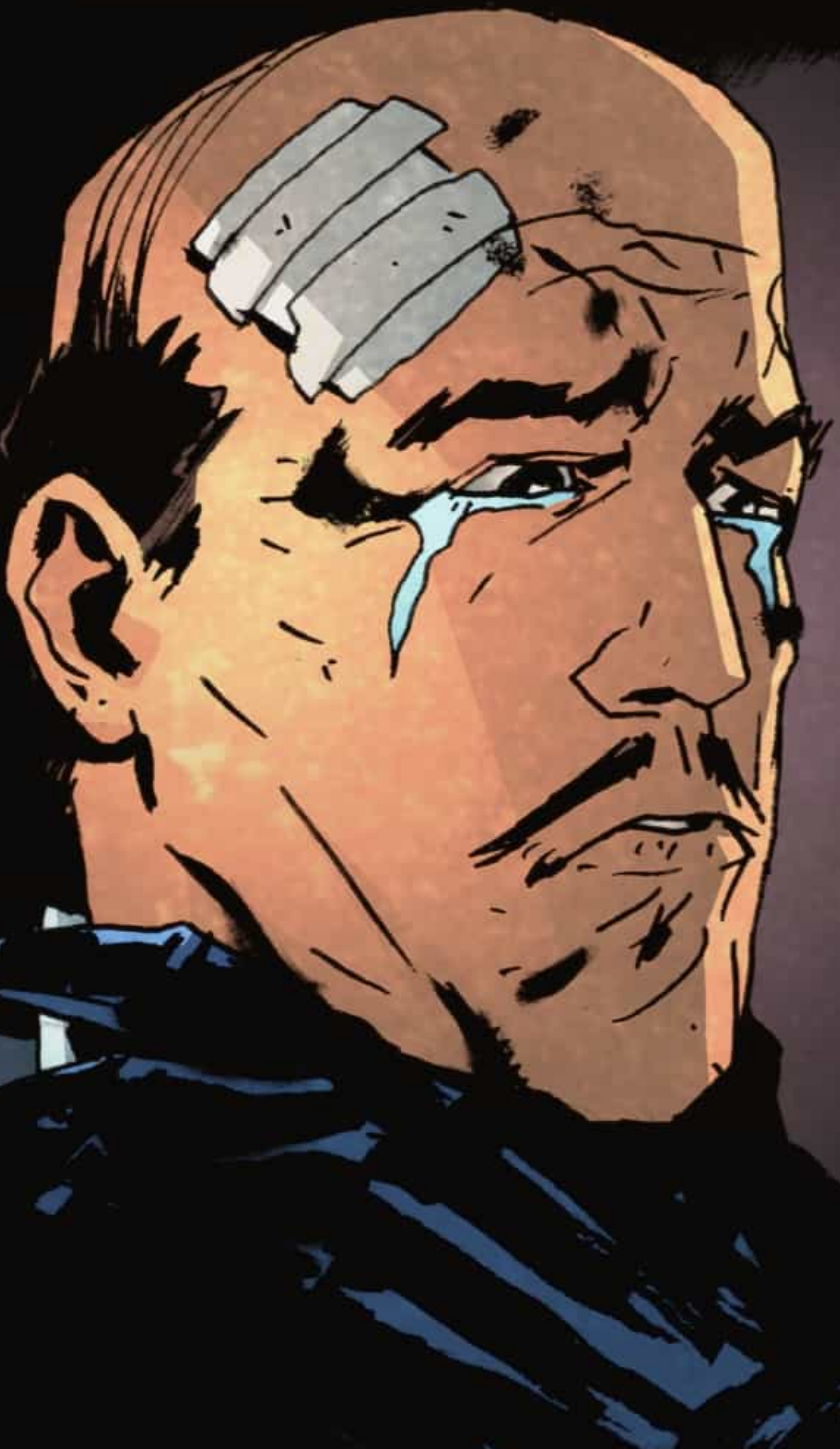


ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR YEARSSSS IS HOLD ME BACK! I'VE CARRIED YOU OUT OF PITY! BECAUSE YOU'RE #\$\$^!%& PATHETIC! YOU THINK YOU'RE SOME FATHER TO ME?! DO YOU?!

WELL IT'S LONG PAST TIME FOR ME TO...

PLEASE...
=KOFF= BRUCE...

...STOP?



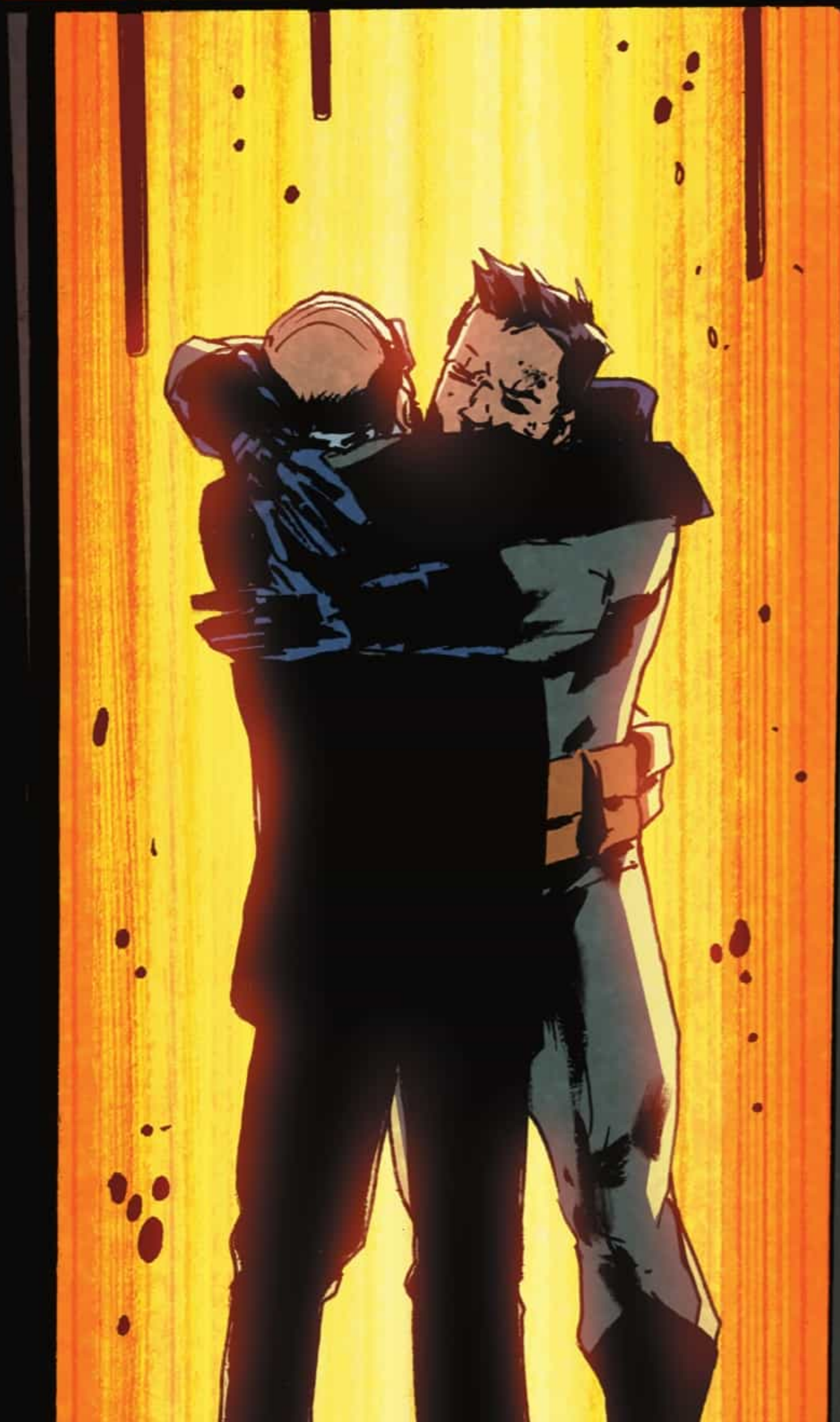


=GASP=

...



ALFRED,
I...



I'M SO
SORRY.

I KNOW, BRUCE,
AND I'M SORRY,
TOO. MY JOB IS TO
PROTECT YOU,
THOUGH. AND I
JUST...



...I FEAR
THERE IS NO
PROTECTING
YOU THIS
TIME.

MAYBE NOT.
BUT...BATMAN ISN'T
ABOUT ME. HE NEVER
WAS. HE'S ABOUT
EVERYONE ELSE. YOU
TAUGHT ME THAT,
ALFRED. **YOU.**



BATMAN
IS ABOUT
GOTHAM...

...I NEED
TO SEE IT AS THAT
MONSTER DOES.

"LOOK AT
YOU GO..."



...STRUGGLING
AND FIGHTING EVEN
THOUGH THERE'S
NOWHERE
TO RUN.

THERE.
YOU CAN
SEE!

HELLO.

SO GOOD
TO FINALLY
MEET YOU,
JIM.

MMNN!

I NEVER
TOLD YOU THIS, BUT
WHEN I WAS BATMAN,
YOU WERE MY **BEST**
FRIEND.

AFTER ALL, YOU WERE THE
ONE WHO TAUGHT THEM
HOW TO SEE BATMAN FOR
WHO HE WAS. THE LIGHT
IN THE SKY...

...BUT ME, AS I
AM NOW, I NEVER GOT
TO MEET YOU. SEE, ON MY
WORLD, I WAS BORN JUST
AFTER JOKER FINALLY
CROSSED THE LINE, KILLED
CROC, FREEZE, ALL THE
VILLAINS, HUNDREDS OF
PEOPLE, DEAD.

YOU, THOUGH, EVEN
THEN YOU WERE DETERMINED
TO BRING HIM IN **BY**
THE BOOK.

SO TO BE FUNNY,
JOKER BOOBY-TRAPPED YOUR
NOTEBOOK WITH THIS SPRING-
LOADED ACID...

GGGKKK.

YES, YOU
MADE A SOUND
JUST LIKE
THAT.

THE THING I
REMEMBER MOST WAS
CATCHING YOUR GLASSES.
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT
WAS HAPPENING YET, THEN I
LOOKED UP AND SAW IT WAS
**BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T
HAVE A NOSE
ANYMORE.**

BUT HERE
YOU ARE, NOSE
AND ALL! HAA! FUNNY,
BECAUSE IF IT WASN'T
FOR YOUR DEATH...BAT-
MAN WOULDN'T HAVE
KILLED THE JOKER
AND THERE'D BE
NO ME.

SEE, IN A
WAY, YOU'RE
MY **BEST**
FRIEND, TOO.
HAHA!



SO WELCOME, BEST FRIEND, TO MY HOME BENEATH GOTHAM CITY!

I THINK YOU'LL FIND IT PLEASANT ENOUGH, IF YOU BEHAVE BY MY BOOK.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF YOU MISBEHAVE...



WELL, YOU AND THE GRIM KNIGHT, YOU'RE DECIDEDLY NOT FRIENDS. ON HIS WORLD...

PLEASE MISBEHAVE, JIM.



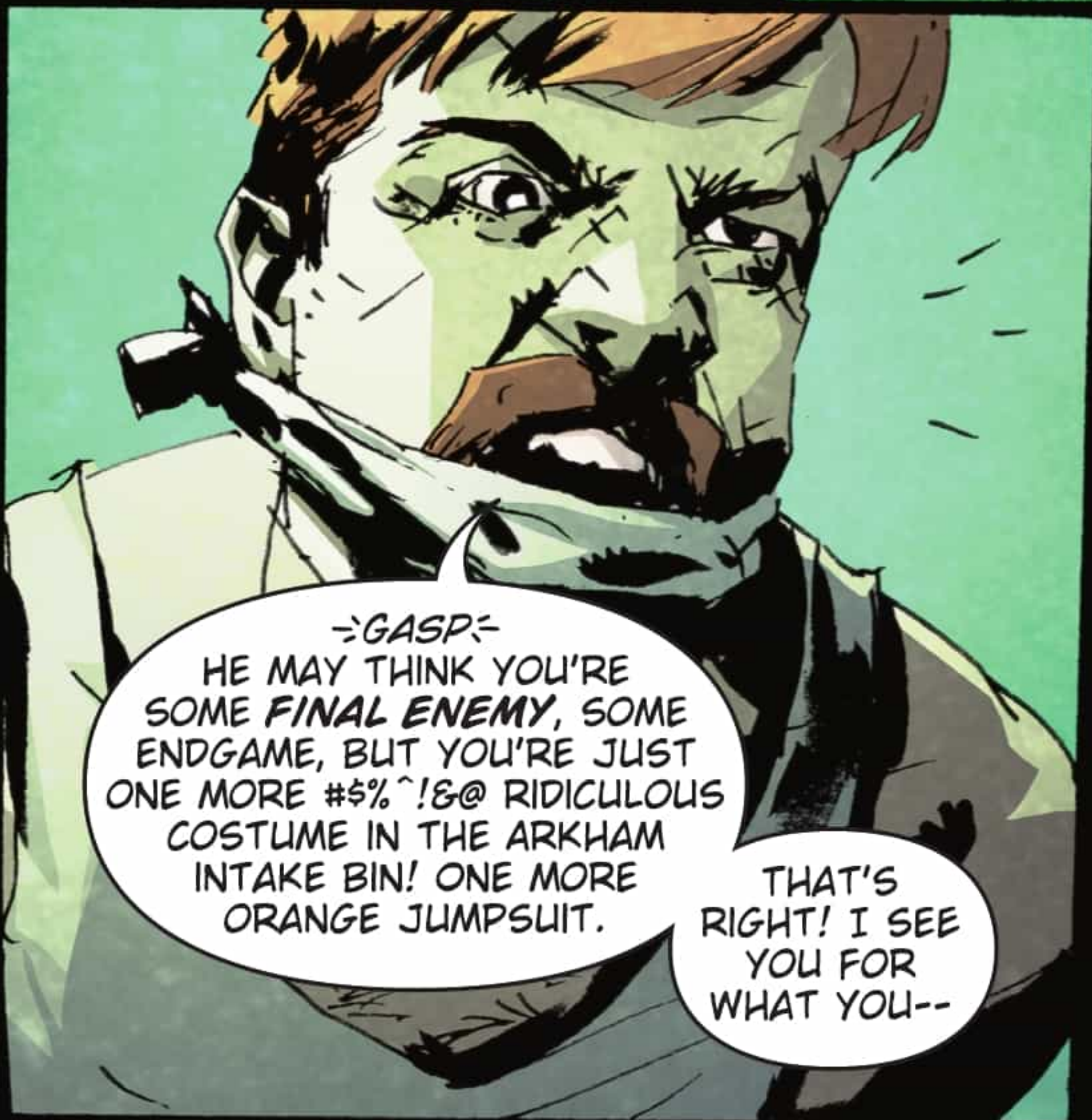
MMFFF!

DON'T WORRY, YOU WON'T BE HERE LONG! WE'RE ALMOST DONE, JIM. SEE THERE? ON THAT TABLE?

I ALREADY HAVE FOUR CANISTERS...AND SIX WILL BE JUST ENOUGH TO CHANGE THE WHOLE CITY.

YOU GET TO SEE IT THIS TIME, JIM.

HEY, WITH A LITTLE SERUM, MAYBE YOU AND I CAN EVEN BE PARTNERS HERE, TOO.



=GASP= HE MAY THINK YOU'RE SOME FINAL ENEMY, SOME ENDGAME, BUT YOU'RE JUST ONE MORE #\$\$^!&@ RIDICULOUS COSTUME IN THE ARKHAM INTAKE BIN! ONE MORE ORANGE JUMPSUIT.

THAT'S RIGHT! I SEE YOU FOR WHAT YOU--



--ARE.

I'M SURE YOU DO, JIM.

HERE. DON'T FORGET THESE.

ELSEWHERE...



Dick always liked the rooftops...all of them did. Swinging, flying...seeing the city from above.

I prefer the streets, with the Batmobile in **DISGUISE** as a station wagon, a sedan, a taxi...

...I like to see the **people**. Remind myself **WHY** I do this.



Use the visor, Bruce... focuss **サグ**...



...see what **HE** sees...the energy patterns. Figure it out. His **PLAN**, where he's headed...

...but more than this, see **them**...



...for who they are.

Good people.

See their **DREAMS**, their hopes.

They're the Children of Gotham... of...



...OF...



...NO.

NO!

IT'S
not REAL,
Bruce... IT'S
not...

...WHO
THEY
ARE.



B-BATMAN,
ARE YOU
THERE?

I... I AM.

IT
APPEARS
YOU WERE
RIGHT.

THE GRIM
KNIGHT SEEMS TO
BE USING THE CITY'S
ELECTRICAL GRID TO
DIRECT MORE ENERGY TO
CERTAIN REPOSITORIES
OF DARK METAL.



YOU
STRIPPED
MOST OF IT OUT,
BUT THERE IS ENOUGH
LEFT IN SOME PLACES
TO CREATE
PORTALS.

THAT'S HOW
THEY'RE DOING IT.
CHOOSING WHICH BRUCE
WAYNES TO BRING
THROUGH. IF YOU CAN
FIGURE OUT
WHERE--

I WILL,
ALFRED.
PATCH ME
THROUGH TO
JAMES.



BATMAN?

HAVE YOU FOUND THE WATERWAY HE'S PLANNING TO USE?

I'VE NARROWED IT DOWN TO THREE.



I'M JUST ABOUT TO CHECK THE BIGGEST ONE RIGHT NOW. BUT...

WHAT IS IT, JAMES?



HOW... HOW ARE YOU?



I'M FINE.

CALL ME WHEN--

WAIT! BEFORE YOU GO, WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, MY FATHER, HE ALWAYS RESPECTED YOUR CODE. THE **NO-KILLING RULE**. ONE DEATH, EVEN JOKER'S, WOULD BE A **SLIPPERY SLOPE**.

TO ME, THOUGH, THAT WAS NONSENSE. SEE, BEFORE MY TREATMENT, I SAW PEOPLE AS **SELFISH. SMALL. CRUEL.**

SO WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM, BY MY HAND, OR BY THE HAND OF **GOTHAM**...IT WAS JUSTICE. BAD PEOPLE, BAD CITY, BAD FATE. IT ALL MAKES PERFECT SENSE. ONE **FLAT VOICE**.





NOW, THOUGH,
BEING THIS WAY...
IT DOESN'T MATCH
UP ANYMORE. NOT
AT ALL.

BAD THINGS
HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE.
THERE'S A DISCONNECT,
AND THAT'S WHERE EMOTION
COMES IN, VOICES GO
UP AND DOWN.

WHAT
ARE YOU
SAYING?



I'M SAYING I
WAS ALREADY WHO I WAS
LONG BEFORE I KILLED ANYONE.
THE **SLOPE** ISN'T THE ACTION,
IT'S THE **BELIEF**.

IT'S HOW YOU
SEE THINGS. I KNOW HOW
SEDUCTIVE IT CAN BE. I MISS
IT EVEN NOW, THE WAY IT
ALL MAKES SENSE...

JAMES,
I HAVE
TO GO.

I KNOW
WHERE HE'S
HEADED
NEXT.



ONE LAST
THING, THOUGH. YOU
ASKED ME BACK IN THE
SEWERS IF YOU WERE
GOING TO **LOSE**
TO HIM. AND YOU
WON'T.

BUT EVEN
WHEN YOU WIN, IN
CASE YOU CAN'T STOP
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO
YOU...DO YOU HAVE
A **FAIL-SAFE**?

...BATMAN?

**THREE HOURS PRIOR. BENEATH GOTHAM.
LAST LAUGH RESOURCE COMPOUND.**



COMPUTER,
TEST WATER FOR
CONTAMINANTS.



FULL CLEAN.



TEST
AGAIN.



Good
for you,
Batssss...

...You
never can
be too
careful.



YOU?!



WHY ARE
YOU HERE?!

CLANG



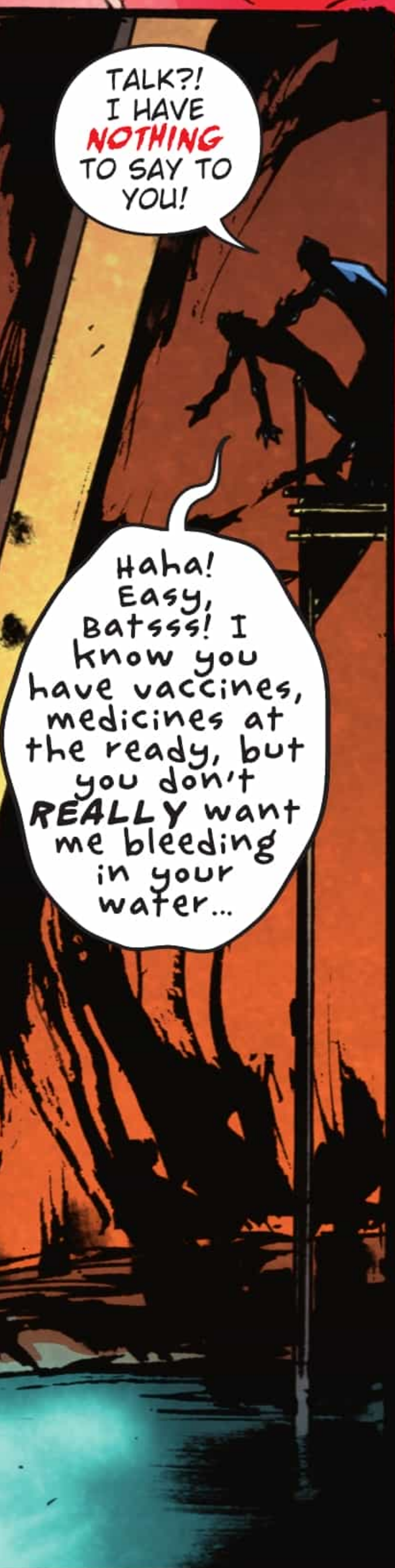
to hurt
you...beat
you...

...I'm
here...

...to
torture you.
Kill you...



...to
talk.



TALK?!
I HAVE
NOTHING
TO SAY TO
YOU!

Haha!
Easy,
Batsss! I
know you
have vaccines,
medicines at
the ready, but
you don't
REALLY want
me bleeding
in your
water...



WHY,
**JOKER?!
WHY?!**

WHAM



Because!
I came to
say--

SAY WHAT?
"HAHA"? TO
LAUGH?!

To say...

SAY WHAT?!
YOU GOT WHAT
YOU WANTED!

No I
didn't!



WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

YOU PUT
THAT DAMN TOXIN
IN YOUR HEART
YOURSELF.

IT WAS
ALWAYS YOUR
FINAL TRAP.

You and
I...we'll always
be at war. You think
we matter, I think
life is a bad
@%#!& joke.

I believe
that one day
I'll win. That I'll
watch you scream
at my feet as this
city dies, and on
that day
I will laugh
at you.



But just
once, and
never again,
here and
now...I...I
want you
to know...



...that's
not what
I want.



SO WHAT,
THEN? YOU
WANT ME TO
WIN?



No.

WHAT
THEN?

I want
neither of
us to win.
Ever.

Heh.





SO YOU'RE
HERE TO SAY
GOOD-BYE?



No, Bats.
I'm here to
say *good*
luck.



...

JOKER, LISTEN
TO ME. MY FRIEND, MY
AIDE...IF I TURN INTO THAT
MONSTER, HE WON'T DO
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.
I KNOW IT. HE WON'T BE
ABLE TO. BUT YOU...IF
I TURN INTO HIM--



Oh, I'll blow
your *%&#%#
head off. Heh.



HEH...
CROSS YOUR
HEART?



And hope
you die.



It was the
scariest sound,
the laughter...

BLACKGATE PRISON. NOW.

...I'd hear it as soon as I entered this **CELL**block.

This section of Blackgate used to be a **transitional wing** for inmates from Arkham. **CRIMINALS** who'd been treated at the asylum, found **rational**.

You'd think **Arkham** would be the **LAUGHING HOUSE**, but this wing...the joy the inmates felt having escaped Arkham...it was haunting.

Now it's barely used, which is why I am in no rush to strip the dark metal from the pilings in the **BASE**...

SIR,
THE ENERGY
READING IS
RISING.

IT'S OFF THE
CHARTS. THIS IS
THE PLACE.

MY GUESS IS
WHATEVER PORTAL
HE'S CREATING
WILL OPEN ANY
SECOND.

BE CAREFUL,
SIR. IF THE PORTAL
CAN BRING ANOTHER
BRUCE WAYNE HERE,
COULDN'T IT ALSO BRING
YOU TO WHATEVER
DIMENSION IS ON
THE OTHER S---

FREEZE!



I SAID,
FREEZE!

LISTEN TO
ME, SON--

SHUT UP!
YOU'RE... YOU'RE
HIM! YOU'RE THE ONE
WHO **LAUGHS!**



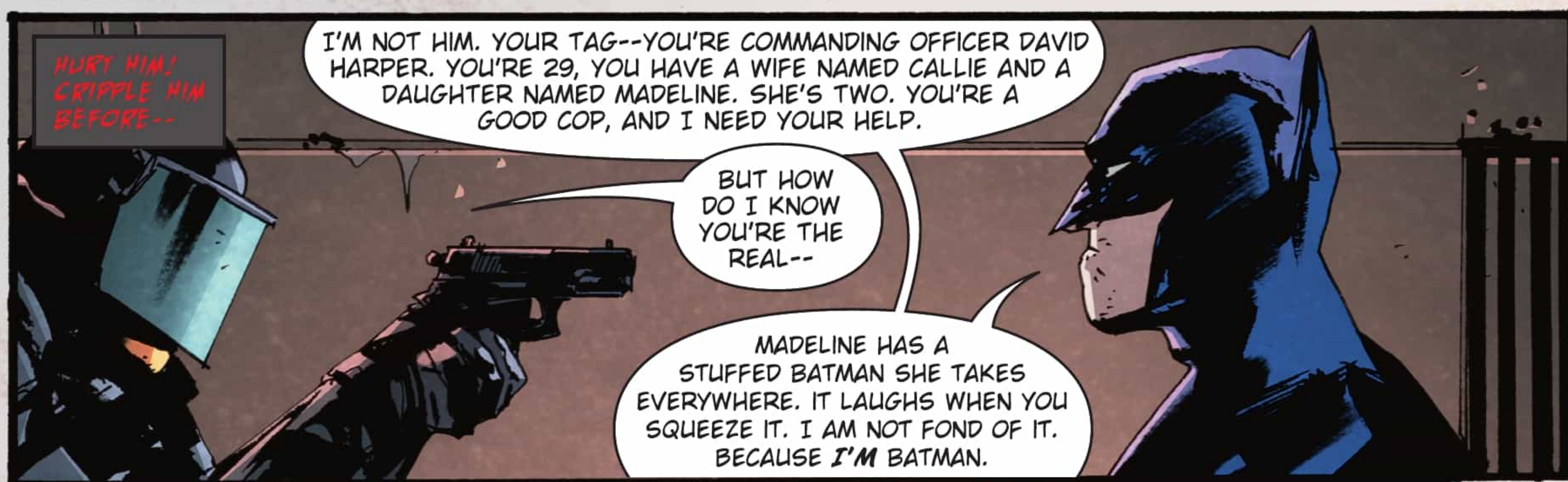
**TAKE HIM
OUT! TAKE
HIS UNIFORM.**

SHOOT!

I'LL
DO IT!

SHOOT!

**DO IT!
HE'S YOUR
SIZE!**



**HURT HIM!
CRIPPLE HIM
BEFORE--**

I'M NOT HIM. YOUR TAG--YOU'RE COMMANDING OFFICER DAVID HARPER. YOU'RE 29, YOU HAVE A WIFE NAMED CALLIE AND A DAUGHTER NAMED MADELINE. SHE'S TWO. YOU'RE A GOOD COP, AND I NEED YOUR HELP.

BUT HOW
DO I KNOW
YOU'RE THE
REAL--

MADELINE HAS A
STUFFED BATMAN SHE TAKES
EVERYWHERE. IT LAUGHS WHEN YOU
SQUEEZE IT. I AM NOT FOND OF IT.
BECAUSE **I'M BATMAN.**



O...OKAY.

I'M HERE
LOOKING FOR
SOMEONE, DAVID. AS A
COMMANDING OFFICER,
YOU CAN OPEN AND
CLOSE DOORS.

WHERE'S THE
PERSON YOU'RE
LOOKING FOR?

HE SHOULD
BE AROUND
HERE...

Blip

...SOMEWHERE?

WHAT IN...?
PENNY-ONE.
COME IN.

PENNY-ONE!
THIS PLACE JUST
CHANGED.

I MUST HAVE
CROSSED **THROUGH**
WHATEVER PORTAL IS
OPEN...THIS BLACKGATE
IS **MASSIVE**...IT MUST
BE FOUR TIMES THE
SIZE OF--

SIX
TIMES THE SIZE,
ACTUALLY...

...IF YOU'RE
COMPARING IT TO
THE OLD BLACKGATE.
WE HAVE ANOTHER
ISLAND WHERE ARKHAM
USED TO BE,
TOO.

I'M **BRUCE**
WAYNE. I RUN
THIS PLACE.
WELCOME...

"...TO THE
END OF THE
LINE."

GET
UP.
NOW.

WHY?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING?



I HAD MADE
GOTHAM NEAR
PERFECT. COMPLETELY
UNDER MY CONTROL.

BUT YOU
BROUGHT IT ALL
DOWN AROUND
MY HEAD.

SEE, I
DON'T CARE
WHAT HE
SAYS.

YOU
HUNTED ME
ON MY WORLD.
I'M GOING TO
HUNT YOU ON
YOURS.

NOW,
OUR ABILITY
TO GET PEOPLE
TO THIS WORLD IS
LIMITED, BUT I **DID**
BRING ALONG
SOME SPECIAL
HOUNDS
FOR THE
OCCASION.



NOW GO.
RUN, JIM.

RUN.

MR. WAYNE,
LISTEN TO ME.
YOU'RE IN
DANGER.

HA! I'M IN
DANGER. YOU COME
IN HERE, WITH THE
NERVE TO DRESS IN
THAT COSTUME, AND
I'M IN **DANGER?**

THIS
ISN'T
THE **OLD**
GOTHAM.
THERE ARE
NO MORE WAYS
IN AND OUT,
NO SWINGING
DOORS... I
LEARNED THE
ERROR IN THAT
THE HARD WAY,
LONG AGO.
AS DID MY
FAMILY. NO,
YOU--





OFFICER HARPER?
DAVID!
STOP!

BEEP



DAMMIT, I
TOLD YOU, I'M
BATMAN!

I'M NOT
THE **BATMAN WHO
LAUGHS!**

CLANG



OH, I
KNOW YOU'RE
NOT.

CHING

OFFICER,
WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?



STOP!
WAIT! PLEASE,
DON'T--

SLASH

NO!

AAACK!



COME ON!
CLIMB OVER
IT!

ALMOST
THROUGH...
GET HIM!



BECAUSE
I KNOW ALL
YOUR TRICKS,
BATMAN.

LET ME
GUESS...RIGHT
NOW YOU'RE
TRYING TO SEE
PAST IT...



WHY?!
WHY DID
YOU KILL HIM?!
WHY DID YOU
KILL **BRUCE
WAYNE?!!**

"...PAST THE DANGER.
THE TERROR..."



"...YOU'RE TRYING TO
SEE THINGS THROUGH
THE EYES OF YOUR
ROBINS, AREN'T YOU?"



"THROUGH THE EYES
OF YOUR SO-CALLED
CHILDREN..."

"...BUT THEY KNEW,
BATMAN. THE HOPE
YOU SAW IN PEOPLE, IT
WAS A LIE. THAT'S
WHY DICK, WHY ALL OF
THEM, STAYED HIGH
ABOVE."



"BUT I'M HERE
TO TELL YOU THE
TRUTH. I'LL EVEN
TAKE THE DIGITAL
MASK OFF SO
YOU CAN SEE."

"NONONO..."

"YES. THE HARD TRUTH IS,
YOU'RE FINALLY SEEING
THINGS CLEARLY..."

"...BECAUSE FOR THE
FIRST TIME EVER, YOU'RE
LOOKING AT GOTHAM
THROUGH THE EYES OF
YOUR REAL CHILD..."



"...YOUR
TRUEST
CHILD..."

"...THE
BATMAN
WHO
LAUGHS."

"IN OTHER
WORDS..."



...IS
RED.

OPEN
FIRE!

