



# **The Batman Who Laughs, Part 5**

I'm not  
quite  
MYSELF  
lately.

(Shhhh.)

When I've felt off in the past... I always came back to the same thing: the city itself.

I think of my first **TIME** riding the subway. Waiting for the train **TO** come, standing on the plat**FORM** with my father, excited.

He smiles at me. Hands me a token. It's brass with a map of Gotham in its earliest days printed on the front. I stare at it.

"Right now, **KID** do," he says, "you're holding everything this city stands for in your hand."

When I ask what he means, he says that in most cities, public transit costs more the farther you travel from the city center. So people of means live at the edges... the poorest at the heart.

But Goth**AM** was founded on the idea that everyone is equal, **SO** all rides cost the same from **SLAUGHTER** Swamp to Wayne Tower.

"The one means a single fare for all," he says. "The ring means we protect each other. The light in the sky means we strive to be better. It's all right there, **BRUCE**."

I am mesmerized.

The train comes and I don't want to put the token in the slot. Ever.

I see the token now, in my mind, and I... I am myself again.

I am Gotham. Because Gotham is Batman. They are one idea.

The idea that together...



# BLACKGATE PRISON. NOW.

...we bring out the very best in each other.

KILL THAT @#\*\$%!

DON'T LISTEN TO HIM! HE'S TRYING TO TRICK YOU! KEEP FIRING!

STAND DOWN! I'M THE REAL BATMAN, DAMMIT! HE'S THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS! RIGHT THERE!

NO!

DOOM



EVERYONE!  
AFTER HIM! BRING  
UP THE ARMOR  
PIERCERS! WHERE  
ARE THE--

MR. WAYNE!  
BRUCE!

Dead. Head practically  
SEVEREd...he was  
WArden...though...

...wearing an  
armored vest.  
Get it OFF him  
before the  
A.P.S--

COMING NOW,  
MA'AM!

A.P.S ARE  
HERE!

BRING THEM  
UP FRONT!

AIM  
FOR THE  
MOUTH...

THE  
MOUTH...

MOUTH...

**BUDDA BUDDA**

No time! Just  
use him!

Between his  
vest and your  
armor you  
should  
be--AGHH!

Every bullet  
like a knife...

The pain...  
Move! Get  
to the hatch  
before more  
of them...

...oh no...

More in front...  
cutting you off!

THERE  
HE IS!

MOUTH.

MOUTH.

They'll never  
let you out!  
They'll call in  
the A.V.s,  
the boats...  
because they  
think you're  
him!

That you'd...

...so show them!  
SHOW them who  
YOU really are!

And before I know  
it, I'm yelling!

Yelling at them WHO  
I AM. Screaming...

...and they finally  
hear me! They  
HEAR ME and...

...suddenly  
they stop.

WHAT...  
WHAT  
DID YOU  
SAY?

I ~~SS~~ SAID HOW'S  
YOUR FATHER, OFFICER  
JIMENEZ? BUS ROUTE  
FIFTEEN... GETS A LITTLE  
DANGEROUS AT  
NIGHT, EH?

AND YOU, OFFICER  
LENNER... FIRE ESCAPE  
OUTSIDE YOUR BEDROOM  
WINDOW STILL MAKE YOU  
NERVOUSS...? I SEE  
YOU CHECKING IT IN THE  
MIDDLE OF THE  
NIGHT... HEH.

HE  
KNOWS...?

HE  
KNOWS  
MY...

BUT HE  
DOESN'T  
KNOW  
WHERE I  
LIV--

OFFICER PINE? FIVE  
ELMORE LANE. OFFICER  
GANTZ? ONE NARROWS  
HEIGHTS! I KNOW  
EVERYTHING ABOUT  
ALL OF YOU!

NOW I'M  
GOING TO WALK OUT  
OF THIS PLACE, AND IF  
YOU EVEN THINK OF  
CALLING THE BOATS,  
OR THE CHOPPERS...  
I WILL COME  
FOR YOU.

...MAYBE TONIGHT,  
MAYBE TOMORROW, MAYBE A  
YEAR FROM NOW, BUT I WILL  
COME... FOR YOU AND EVERYONE  
YOU LOVE AND I WILL MAKE WHAT  
HAPPENED TO THIS BRUCE WAYNE  
HERE LOOK LIKE A DAMNED  
MERCY.

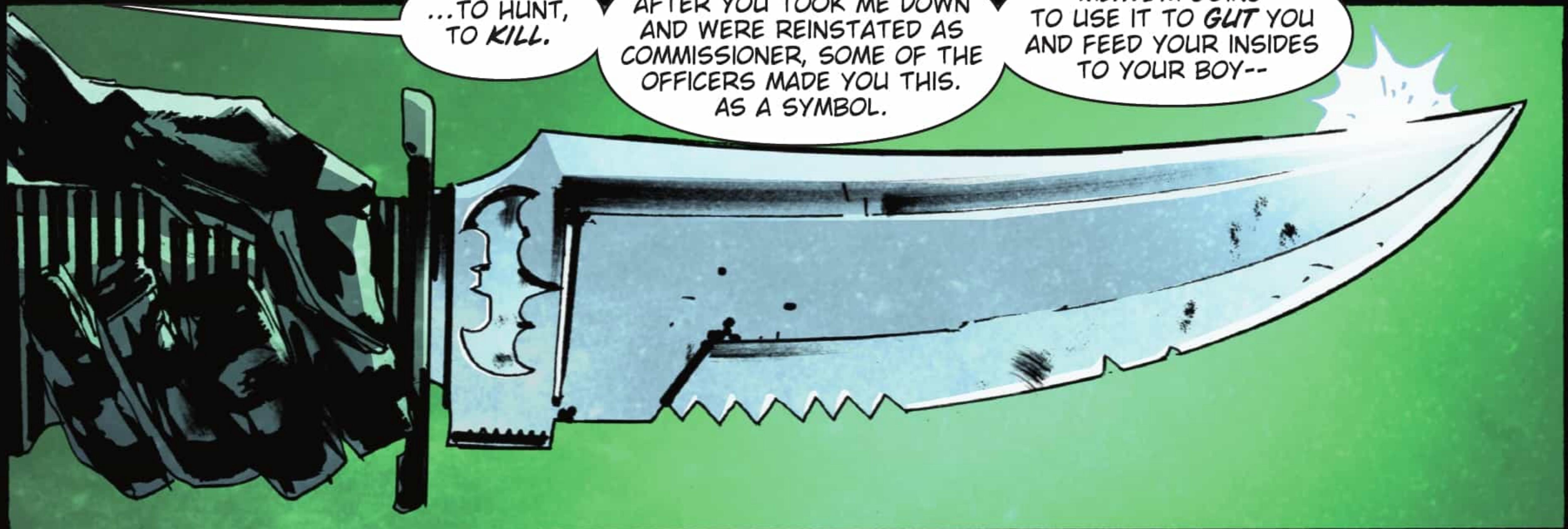


...WHY?

BECAUSE  
I'M THE  
#\$%&G\*'S  
BATMAN WHO  
LAUGHS!  
HAHAHA!

SO FOLLOW  
ME DOWN...





DAAADDD...

JAMES,  
PLEASE!  
JAMES!

SCREEEE--

BLAM

BLAM

JAMES...  
NO...I...

HEY.



“...THE PAST FEELS MORE REAL THAN IT HAS IN A WHILE.”

STEP INTO THE LIGHT.

GO ON, NOW. LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT YOU.

TA-DA.

WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE?

I'M HERE BECAUSE...WELL, THE TRUTH IS, I NEED SOMETHING FROM YOU. A SMALL FAVOR.

THEY CALL ME THE--

OH WE RECOGNIZE YOU, DEMON. AND WE WILL JUDGE YOUR REQUEST AGAINST ALL WE KNOW OF YOU.

HEH. THANK YOU, TRULY. I STAND A HUMBLE MAN BEFORE YOU, HONORED JUST TO BE HEARD...

...BY THE  
LEGENDARY  
**COURT OF OWLS.**



HA. THE FLATTERY  
FROM THIS GHUL. WHY  
HEAR HIM OUT AT ALL?  
LET'S TEST OUT THE NEW  
CHAMBERS ON HIM INSTEAD.  
THE HERETICS PERCH?  
THE HOODED  
HOLLOW?

NO, THE  
**RED CLUTCH!** IT'LL  
TAKE YEARS FOR HIM  
TO EXPIRE IF WE  
CAUTERIZE HIS  
STUMPS...



IT IS  
TRADITION  
THAT WE LET  
THE LITTLEST  
ONE DECIDE.

YES!

YES,  
THE LITTLE  
ONE SHOULD  
CHOOSE! HEAR  
HIM OUT OR  
NOT?

I WILL  
DECIDE  
THEN.

HELLO.

**HELLO,  
LITTLE ONE.**

WHY  
SHOULD WE  
HEAR YOU OUT,  
CREATURE?

WELL, BECAUSE I  
WANT THE SAME THING  
THAT YOU DO. TO SEE  
THIS CITY BECOME  
WHAT IT WAS MEANT  
TO BECOME. TO SEE  
ITS MOST ANCIENT  
PLANS REALIZED.

I ASK JUST A  
SMALL FAVOR OF  
YOU TO HELP MY  
PLAN ALONG. SO  
WHAT DO YOU SAY?  
IT'LL BE A HOOT.  
PROMISE.









...I TOOK  
YOU OVER AND  
BECAME YOUR  
LEADER.

**BLIP**

YOUR BIRDIES,  
BRUCE? YOUR  
WHOLE WORLD!  
ALL GONE.  
YOU'RE HERE  
WITH ME  
NOW.

WHAT IN...WHO  
ARE YOU?!  
WHAT  
HAPPENED TO  
MY--

RAH!

THAT'S THE  
SPIRIT!

HAHAHA!

WHO ARE  
YOU?!

I SAID  
WHO ARE  
YOU?!

I don't  
recognize  
myself  
anymore...

So again I go back to the beginning. To the city.

Look at it.

See it for what it is, what it always has been, always will be. It's Batman. Batman is Gotham.

And Gotham is about people being better, together...

...BEING BETTER... Together...?

No. STOP it!

Focus. See deeper, dammit! To the bedrock. The #%^ mica schist it's all built on. The idea. The blueprin--

BATMAN!  
BATMAN COME IN! I HAVE HIM, I HAVE DAD!  
BUT WE'RE TRAPPED IN THE SEWER... WE NEED--

GOOD WORK,  
JAMES! STAY WHERE YOU ARE!  
I'M SENDING A VEHICLE NOW!

SIMPLE...

THE GRIM KNIGHT, HE'S BOOBY-TRAPPING THE ROUTES! TO GET US OUT AT THIS POINT YOU'D NEED A BOAT, A PLANE, MAYBE A DAMN TANK... WHAT KIND OF VEHICLE COULD YOU POSSIBLY SEND THAT WOULD--

"...A BAT ONE."

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WE'RE FINE, BUT DAD SAW WHAT HE'S PLANNING. WE HAVE TO ACT FAST.

I WAS IN HIS LAIR, BATMAN, AND THE STUFF HE'S MAKING...THIS SERUM...YOU WERE RIGHT. IT CHANGES PEOPLE INTO THEIR WORST SELVES, CELL BY CELL...

HE HAS FOUR OF THE SIX CONTAINERS HE NEEDS OF THE STUFF.

WITH YOU HERE WE CAN STOP HIM. WE CAN SET IT OFF AND PROTECT THE CITY.

OUR ONLY ADVANTAGE IS THAT WE CAME AFTER HIM BEFORE HE WAS READY, BEFORE HE HACKED LAST LAUGH.

HERE, THOUGH... WE NEED TO DO IT TOGETHER. WITHIN TWO MINUTES OF EACH OTHER OR IT'LL SHUT DOWN FOR SEVEN DAYS FOR SAFETY AND BE INOPERABLE.

WHAT WILL IT DO, EXACTLY?

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, IT WILL DISMANTLE GOTHAM'S ENTRY POINTS, DISCONNECT IT FROM THE NATIONAL GRID, OUTSIDE WATER, RESOURCES.

BOTTOM LINE, LAST LAUGH WILL TURN GOTHAM INTO A QUARANTINE ZONE AND ELIMINATE ANY CHANCE OF THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS INFECTING THE WATER SUPPLY.

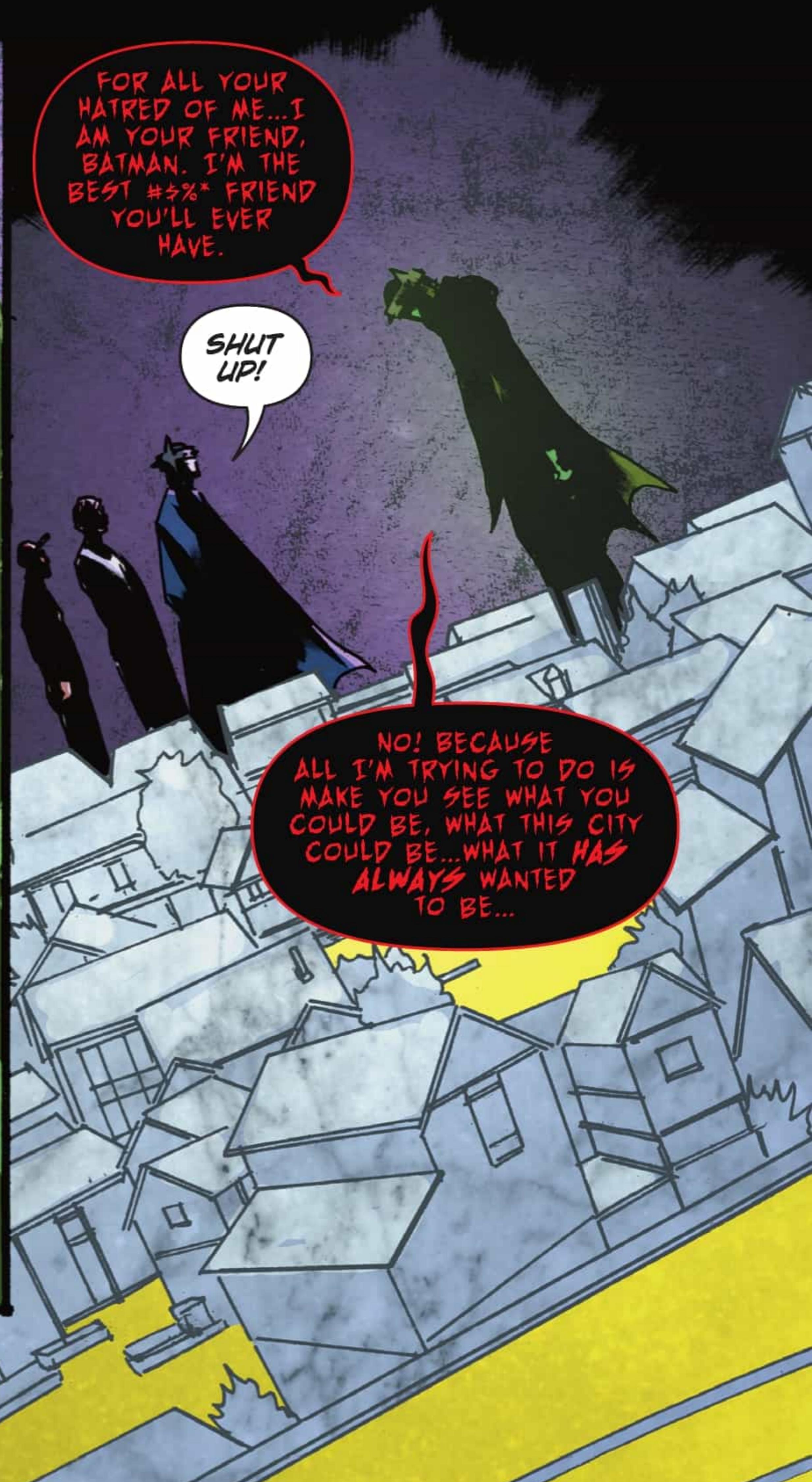
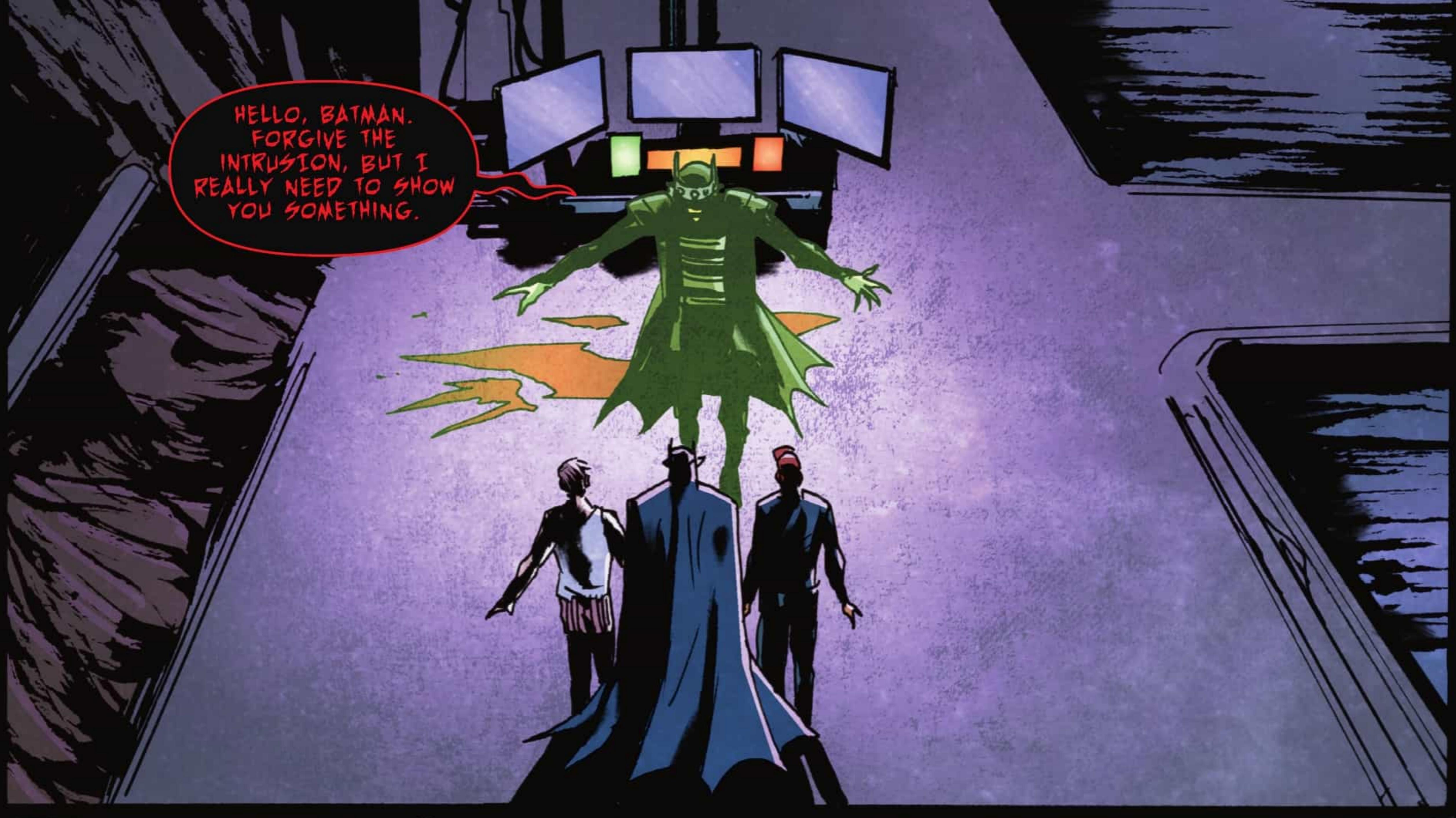
IT'LL ALSO GIVE US A THOUSAND WAYS OF CATCHING HIM. HERE, JUST PUT YOUR HAND--

BATMAN, WAIT. BEFORE WE DO THIS...I... I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING...

WHAT IS IT?







DAMMIT,  
DON'T LISTEN TO  
HIM. BATMAN! SHUT  
THE MESSAGE  
OFF NOW!

LOOK AT IT!  
YOU THINK THE CITY WAS  
DESIGNED TO BE SOME  
BEACON? A HAVEN. BUT  
WHAT THIS FIRST MAP  
SHOWS...

...IS THAT GOTHAM  
CITY--AND LAST  
LAUGH--WAS BUILT  
FOR THE EXACT  
OPPOSITE.

SEE, LAST LAUGH WAS  
CREATED SO THAT GOTHAM  
COULD BECOME A SEAT OF  
POWER, A FORTRESS CITY  
WHERE A NEW, STRONGER  
MAN WOULD BE  
INCUBATED.

...A CITY THAT  
COULD CUT ITSELF OFF  
FROM THE WORLD WHEN THE  
TIME WAS RIGHT... WITH ITS  
OWN FOOD SUPPLY AND  
RESERVOIR.

THE RING MARKED  
HIDDEN MOORINGS FOR SHIPS  
TO DEFEND FROM. THE STAR WAS  
FOR THE ARMORY, WHERE THEY'D  
KEEP SUPPLEMENTS TO MAKE  
PEOPLE STRONGER, BETTER...AND  
WEAPONS, THINGS NO ONE  
HAD SEEN BEFORE.

NOT JUST ARMS, BUT  
DISEASES TO SPREAD. POTTER'S  
FIELD WASN'T SOME KINDNESS. HA!  
LOOK AT THE PLANNED TUNNELS! IT  
WAS A SECRET LABORATORY FOR  
PESTILENCE, AWAY FROM  
PRYING EYES...

01:00

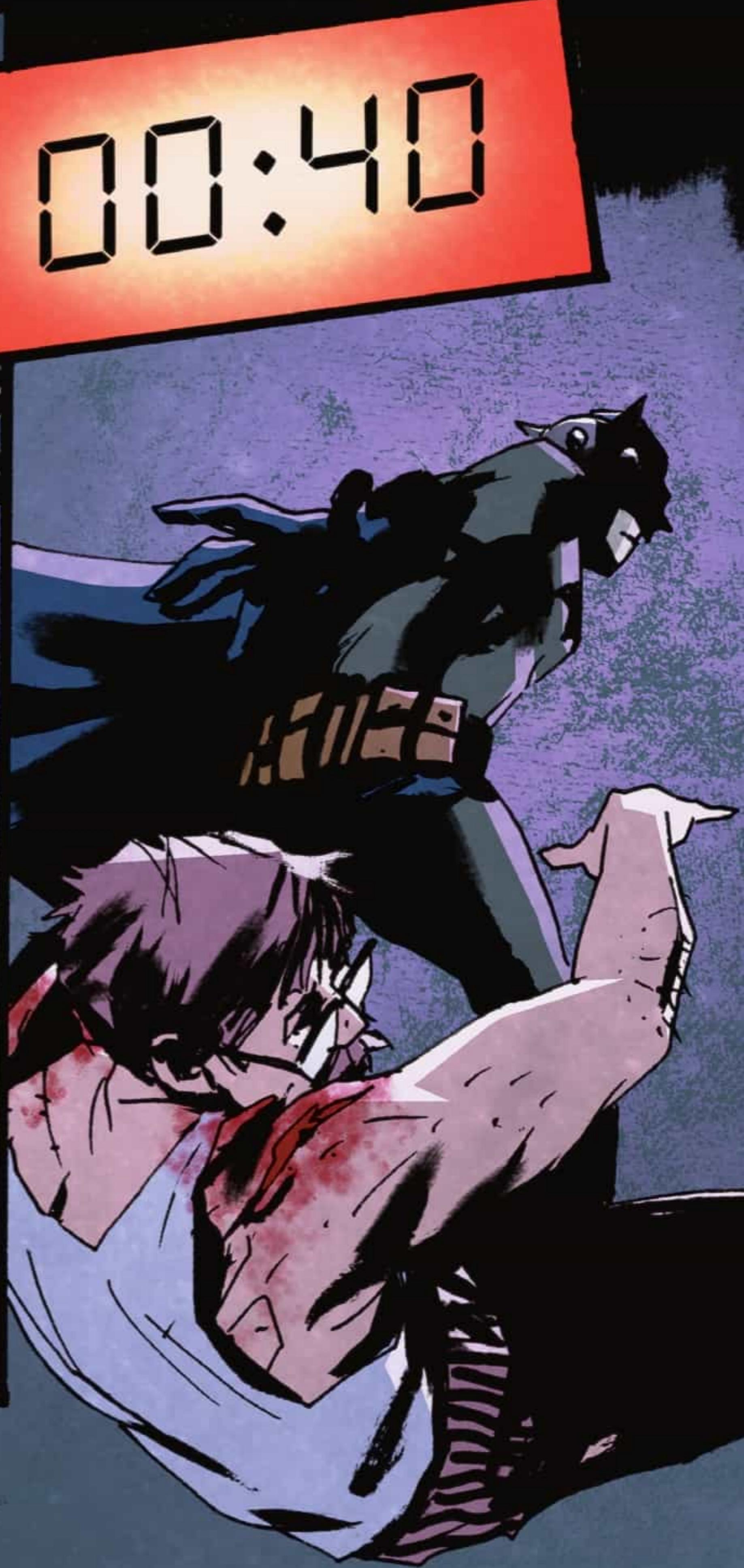
YOUR FRIENDS  
WILL LIE TO YOU, TELL  
YOU I'M WRONG, BUT  
YOU KNOW...

YOU SEE THEM  
FOR WHO THEY  
ARE. WEAK. PETTY.  
JUST AS GOTHAM  
HAS BECOME.

BATMAN!  
BATMAN!

THAT'S  
THE SECRET I'VE  
BEEN WAITING TO  
TELL YOU ALL THIS  
TIME...

...THE POINT OF  
GOTHAM WAS TO  
CONQUER! THE  
LAST LAUGH WAS A  
STRATEGY. A  
DESTINY...



"YES,  
BROTHER!  
YES!"

"REMEMBER  
IT..."

KLIK

"REMEMBER THAT  
SUBWAY TOKEN IN  
OUR HAND. THAT  
MORNING BACK  
WHEN WE WERE  
YOUNG."

BEEP

"REMEMBER FATHER SMILING. 'RIGHT  
NOW, KIDDO,' HE SAID, 'YOU'RE  
HOLDING EVERYTHING THIS CITY  
STANDS FOR IN YOUR HAND!'

"AND HE WAS RIGHT.  
IT WAS ALL THERE.  
THE TRUE MEANING.

"YOU JUST DIDN'T  
SEE IT THEN."

"BUT NOW  
YOU DO!"

RMMMBLE



YOU SEE IT FOR  
WHAT IT ALWAYS WAS, AND  
WHAT IT CAN BE NOW. NOT A  
BEACON, NOT A LIGHT. A  
DARKNESS. AN OPEN MOUTH  
WITH SHARP TEETH. A NEW  
KIND OF CITY...

00:20

...A CITY OF  
PEOPLE WHO  
LAUGH LAST.  
LIKE ME. LIKE  
YOU...

SIR, STOP! PLEASE!  
HEAR ME! YOU MUSTN'T LISTEN!  
THE LEVELS IN YOUR BLOOD...  
IT'S NEARLY SATURATED WITH  
HIS TOXIN! YOU'RE NOT  
SEEING CLEARLY!

THE CITY MIGHT NOT BE  
WHAT YOU THOUGHT BUT YOUR  
FAMILY--THE WAYNES, AND OTHERS,  
THEY STOOD ALONE FOR WHAT'S  
RIGHT. FOR SOMETHING BETTER!  
THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE!  
WHO YOU ARE!

AND...  
IT HASN'T  
WORKED.

00: 10

DO IT!  
FOR ONCE IN YOUR  
LIFE BE GOTHAM'S REAL  
BATMAN! BE THE SYMBOL OF  
WHAT THIS CITY TRULY IS!  
LEAD IT FORWARD!  
FINALLY, LEAD IT  
RIGHT!

NO! SIR,  
PLEA-- **MUTE.**

00:05

HAHA! YES!  
GO ON, BROTHER. SEE  
IT AS IT CAN BE! AS IT  
SHOULD BE! I KNOW  
YOU CAN! SEE IT AS  
I SEE IT...

00:03

"THROUGH  
NEW EYES."

00:02

00:01

LAST  
LAUGH...  
ACTIVATED.