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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AD
AUTHORITY

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BATMAN



STRETCH,
DICK! YOUR
ARMS HAVE
TOO MUCH
ARC!

I GOT IT,
MOM, I'M
DOING
FINE!

RIDDLE ME THIS

PART ONE

BLACK MAGIC TRICKS

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JASON?

YOU'RE TRYING TO BE HIM, HUH, KID? TRYING TO BE TOUGHER THAN YOU REALLY ARE. TRYING TO PROVE YOU'RE AS GOOD, OR MAYBE BETTER?

LOOK WHAT GOOD IT DID ME!
HAHAHA!

DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, DICK. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN JEALOUS OF YOU.

I THINK YOUR BATMAN IS PRETTY GOOD. IT'S THE DICK GRAYSON PART THAT'S IRKING ME THESE DAYS.

YOU'VE CHANGED. AND I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN BE FRIENDS ANYMORE.

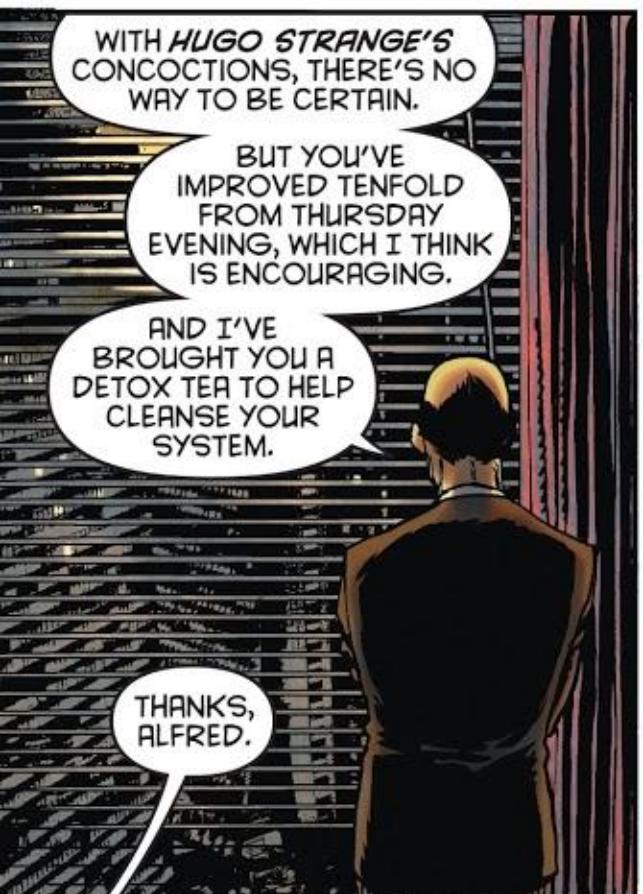
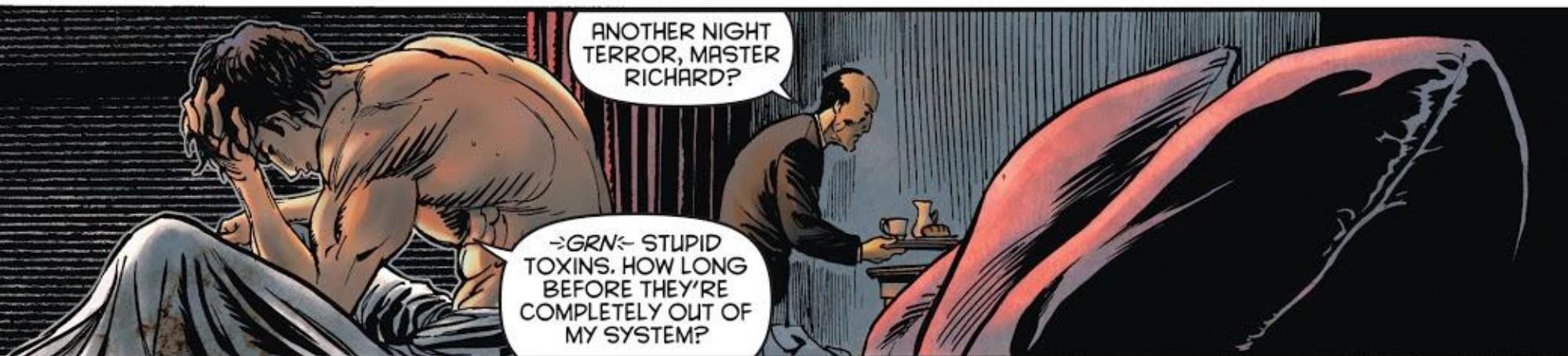
GET AWAY FROM ME!

ORACLE... HELP ME GET DOWN!

WAIT! I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU! ORACLE!

BRUCE?!
CATCH ME!

BRUUUUUUCE!





NAME WAS
LAZLO RANKIN.
JUST RELEASED FROM
BLACKGATE PRISON
YESTERDAY AFTER-
NOON.

YOU PUT HIM AWAY
ABOUT THREE YEARS
AGO--FOR ATTEMPTED
MURDER.

I'LL REFER
TO MY CASE
BOOK.

HE SHOT MAYOR
HADY'S LIMO DRIVER.
TOOK AN EYE. LAZLO
HERE CLAIMED HE WAS
TRYING TO RUN
HIM DOWN...

WHERE'S
THE DRIVER
NOW?

FOUND FLOATING
FACEDOWN IN THE
RIVER A FEW DAYS
AFTER THE SHOOTING.
WIFE SAYS IT WAS
SUICIDE.

JUST LIKE
THIS BRAND OF
SUICIDE MOST
LIKELY.

SO?
DO YOU
FIND THIS
AS ODD AS
I DO?

I DO.
THE ETCHINGS
CERTAINLY
RESEMBLE ZSARZ'S
SELF-MUTILATED
TALLY.

BUT THESE
WOUNDS WERE
MADE POST-
MORTEM. NOT
MR. ZSARZ'S
M.O.



WALKS
LIKE A
DUCK--

--LOOKS LIKE
A DUCK. BUT
DOESN'T QUACK
QUACK QUACK
LIKE A DUCK.

RIDDLER.

I GO BY
EDWARD NIGMA
THESE DAYS,
OLD FRIEND. YOU
SHOULD KNOW
THAT.

THIS IS A CRIME SCENE.
STATE YOUR BUSINESS
OR LEAVE.

OWIE. NO
NEED TO BE SO
HARSH. I COME
TO OFFER YOU AND
YOUR OH-SO-
LOYAL POLICE
PALS SOME
MUCH-NEEDED
ASSISTANCE.

WE DON'T
NEED IT.

THEN THE GREAT
DETECTIVE HAS
ALREADY SURMISED
THAT THIS IS THE
WORK OF A COPY
CAT SERIAL
KILLER?

MR. NIGMA,
ONE MURDER
DOESN'T MAKE
FOR A COPYCAT.
OR A SERIAL
KILLER.

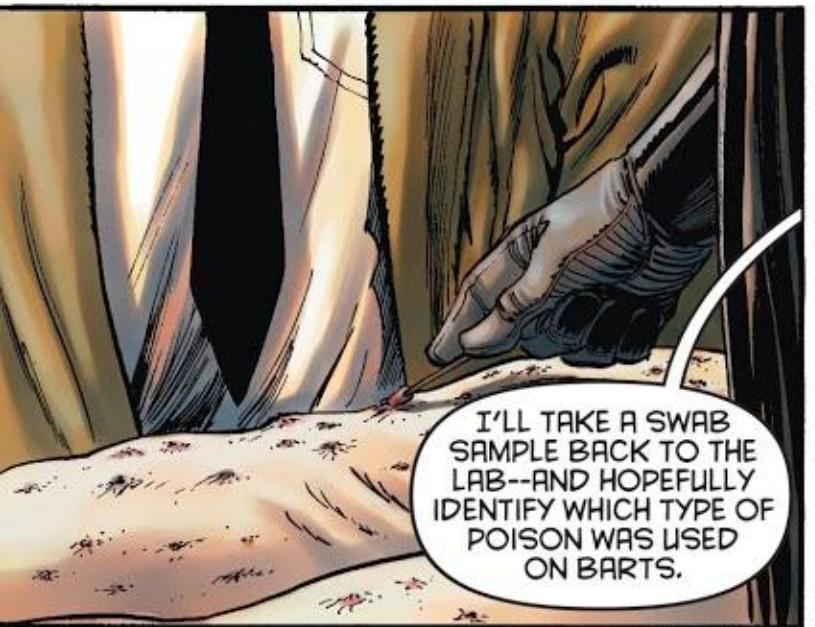
OF COURSE,
OF COOUURSE,
EX-ACT-LY MY
POINT!

MEET ME AT THE
COUNTY MORGUE
AND WE'LL BUTT--ER,
PUT OUR HEADS
TOGETHER.

CHOP-CHOP,
THE BODIES ARE
ONLY GETTING
COLDER!







THE BATBUNKER.

Numbers. An equation that's adding up to something...but what?

Lazlo Rankin worked for the Mayor in the finance department.

And Mr. Barts was the Falcons' legal consultant. Translation: expert money launderer. Both victims were numbers guys.

COULD IT BE JUST A STRANGE COINCIDENCE, MASTER RICHARD?



TWO'S A COINCIDENCE, ALFIE. BUT THREE'S A CONNECTION.

SIR?

I'VE SEARCHED THE CORONER'S DATABASES GOING BACK FOUR MONTHS-- I FOUND ANOTHER MONEY-MAN.

NAME WAS DARYL WHITMAN, USED BY VARIOUS KINGPINS TO TRANSFER STOLEN JEWELRY INTO CASH.



GARFIELD LYNN. FIREFLY.

ARKHAM ASYLUM.

Finding Firefly is easy.
Getting him to talk is
always the challenge.

THEY WEREN'T
FRIENDS OF MINE...
WHAT'CHA THINK,
THAT I BECOME BEST
BUDS WITH EVERY-
ONE I EVER MEET
IN PRISON?
OR HERE?

HELL IF I
KNOW. PEOPLE
MAKE ENEMIES IN
THIS TOWN. ANYWAY,
IT'S NONE OF MY
BUSINESS.

ESPECIALLY
SINCE I DON'T SEE
HOW IT HELPS ME OUT
ANY. SMELL WHAT
I'M SNIFFIN',
BATMAN?

SOMEONE'S
KILLED OFF
THREE OF YOUR OLD
FRIENDS. OR ROOM-
MATES, IF THAT'S MORE
ACCURATE. I JUST
WANT TO KNOW
WHY.

I WON'T CUT YOU ANY
DEALS, LYNN. BUT
TELLING ME WHO ELSE
WAS INVOLVED IN
WHATEVER BROUGHT
THIS ON MIGHT
SAVE A LIFE.

WHO KNOWS?
MAYBE EVEN
YOUR OWN.

ER,
BATMAN?
IT'S FOR
YOU.

B-DEEPEEP
B-DEEPEEP

GORDON
HERE.

WHO IS
THIS?

YOU HAVE
FIVE MINUTES TO
SAVE A LIFE. WILL YOU
COME OUT IN A BLAZE
OF GLORY OR WILL
YOU LOSE YOUR
COOL?

CLiCK

It takes thirty seconds
for Oracle to trace
the phone signal.

00:16

It takes me all of five
minutes to reach the
warehouse behind the
Colan Street Theater.

KROOOOM

REOW!

BATMAN!
PLEASE
HELP!

SCREEEEECH

OH, THANK
GOD YOU
CAME!

She knew I was coming before
she saw me. This isn't--

--right.

OH, BABY.
YOU'RE TOO
EASY!

00:11

CRASH

HE SAID
THERE'S
EXTRA IN IT
IF WE BREAK
SOME
BONES.

HOW MUCH
WE GET IF WE
KILL HIM?

VRREEEEDOM





EDDIE
BLACKSMITH RAN
A STRING OF CHOP-
SHOPS AROUND GOTHAM.
A HIGHLY ORGANIZED
CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE
WHICH TURNED STOLEN
CAR PARTS INTO
HARD CASH.

SMALL POTATOES,
GORDON. I'M
INTERESTED IN HIS
PAST. ANYONE
BIG?

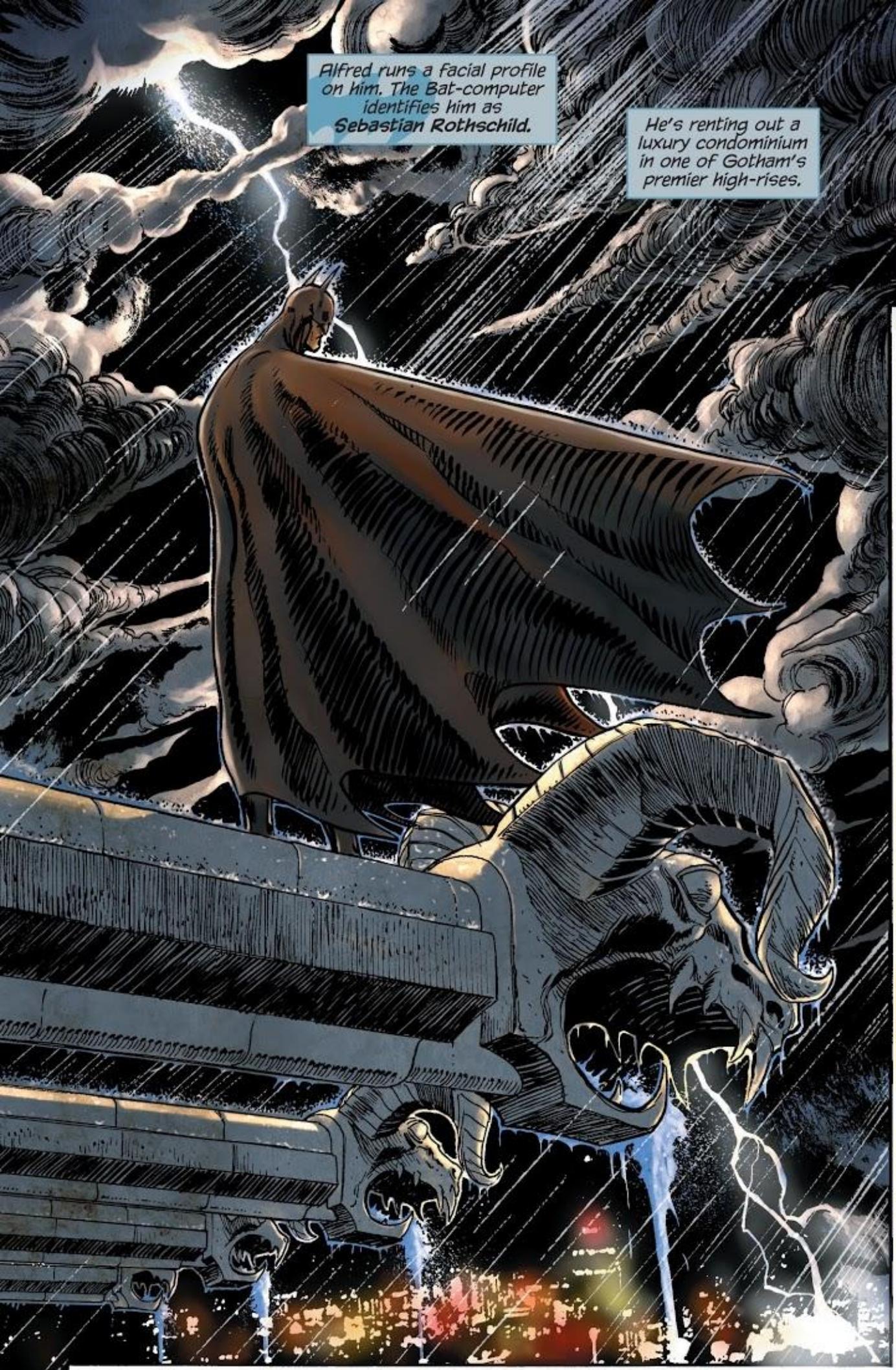
I'M LOOKING
INTO MR. FREEZE
RIGHT NOW. THESE
MURDERS HAVE TO
BE MORE THAN
SYMBOLIC
GESTURES...

MAYBE THEY
ARE. BUT SO FAR,
THERE'VE BEEN NO
DIRECT CONNECTIONS
WITH THE VICTIMS AND
THEIR STYLE OF
MURDER.

THE PHONE CALL
PROVES YOU'RE
BEING WATCHED.
COULD BE ONE OF
MY OWN FOR
ALL I KNOW.

PARDON ME--
STEP ASIDE,
PLEASE.





Alfred runs a facial profile on him. The Bat-computer identifies him as Sebastian Rothschild.

He's renting out a luxury condominium in one of Gotham's premier high-rises.

His only arrest was fifteen years ago in New York for breaking and entering. Served just three months of a three-year sentence.

Alfred has him moving to Paris, where he became a celebrity of sorts as a master illusionist. A magician.



The bodies, the elaborate crime scenes... Illusions. Sleight of hand.

Tricks, designed to rope me in.

But why?





The struggle tells me this wasn't planned.

LIVE BY
THE SWORD
DIE
BY THE SWORD

Maybe the victim came here to confront Blackspell.

But why the elaborate death scene? Whose M.O. does this represent? It's like a carnival. Could it be his own?

click
click WHRL

A steel, locked suitcase is either left by accident, or intended to be found. Whatever... I'm in.

Basically a signed confession here, Mr. Blackspell. These are photographs of the deceased. Some I recognize, and others...

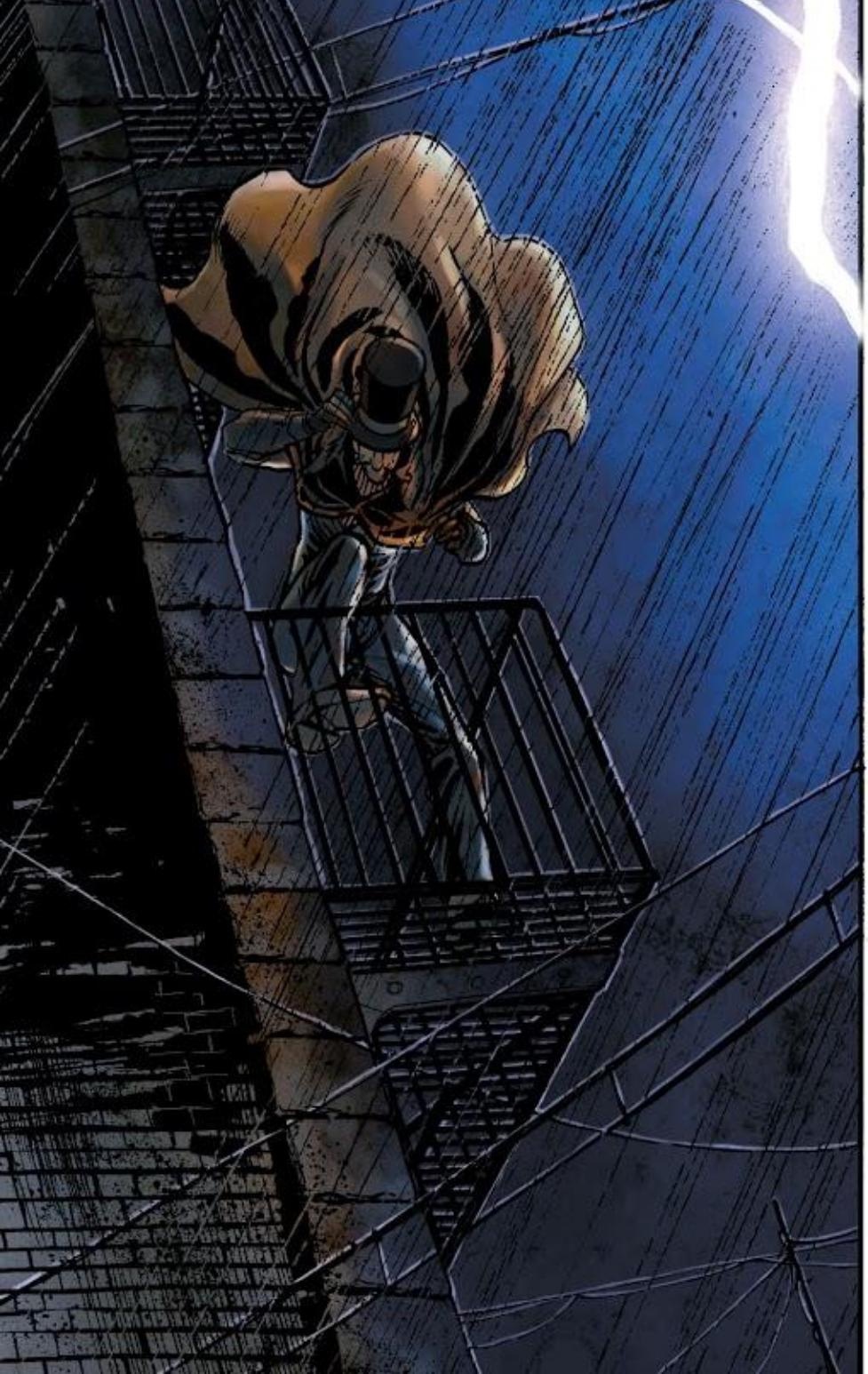
I know well.
LYNN S. G.
Garfield Lynns...?
LYN

Riddler? Dead?
LYN

How can that be? How...

Watching me...









to be continued!



novus
Distributions