BATMAN 605

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SEP 2002

BRUCE WAYNE: FUGITIVE

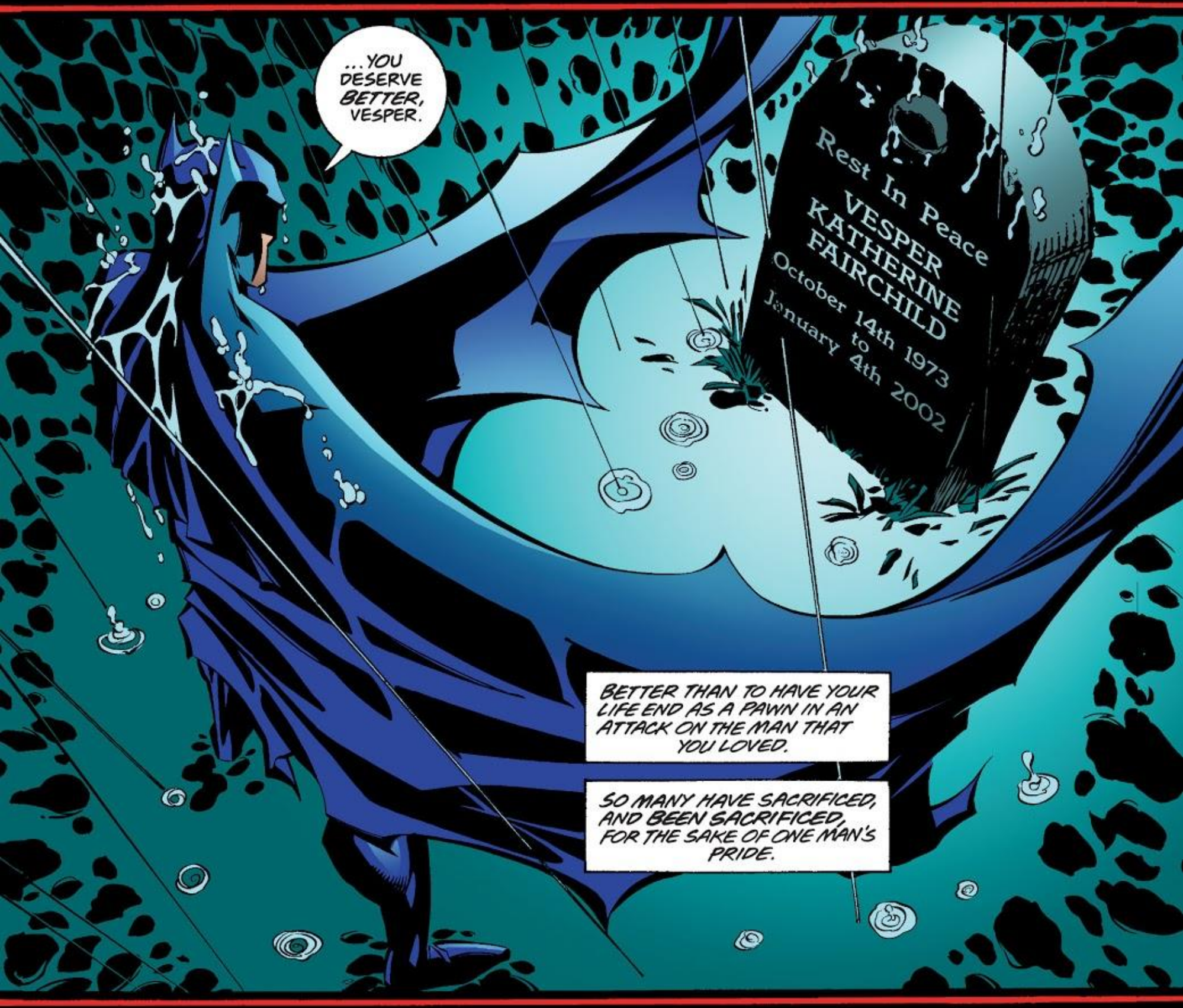
PART EIGHTEEN BY ED BRUBAKER, SCOTT McDANIEL & ANDY OWENS

NOT GUILTY!

dccomics.com

CONVERSION BY WILDSTORM

COURAGE



ED BRUBAKER writer • **SCOTT McDANIEL** penciller • **ANDY OWENS** inker
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MICHAEL WRIGHT assoc. editor • **BOB SCHRECK** editor
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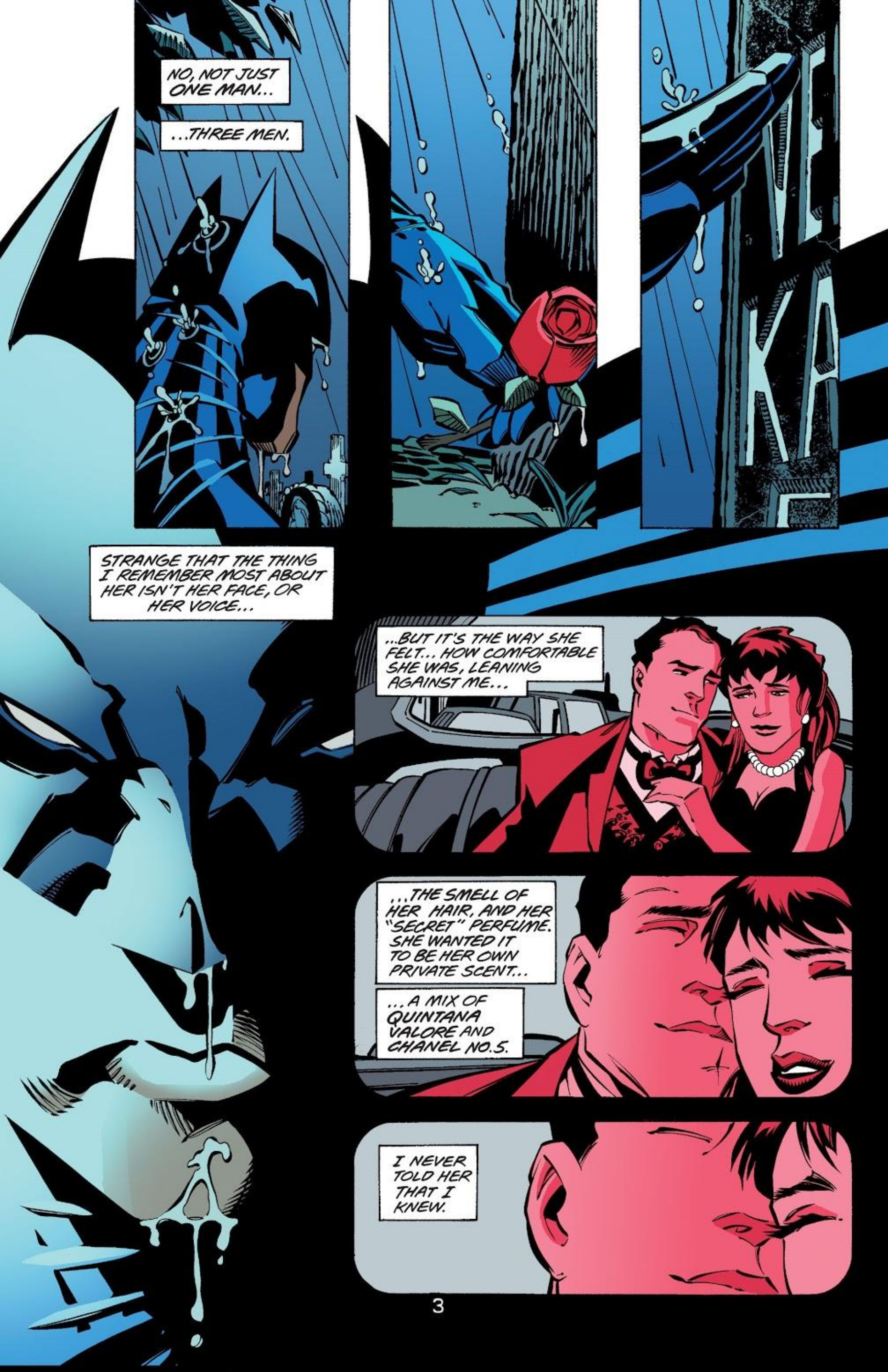
BATMAN created by **BOB KANE**



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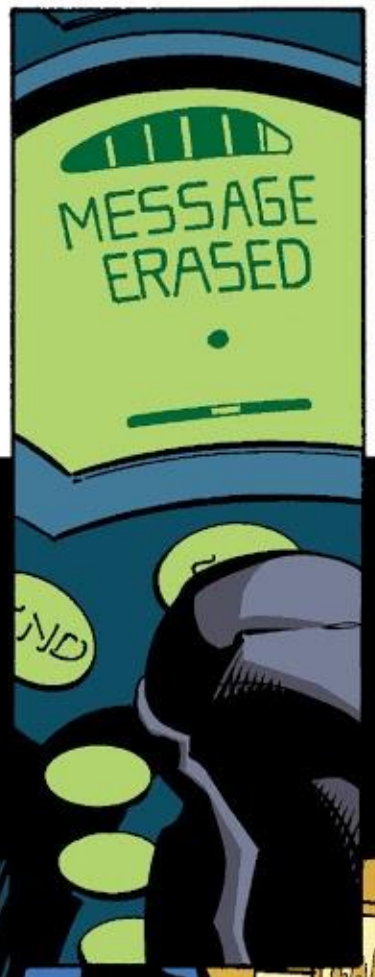
BUT, NO MORE...
YOU READY?
I JUST HEARD FROM BABS... EVERYONE'S WAITING.
YES...
...I THINK I FINALLY AM READY.
I'M SORRY... THAT I HIT YOU, DICK.
HEY, IT WAS MONTHS AGO... AND I DID HIT YOU FIRST...
IT'S NOT THE SAME THING...

...I DESERVED IT.
MAYBE. BUT IT WAS A STUPID THING TO DO.
IT JUST MADE EVERYTHING WORSE THAN IT ALREADY WAS.
SO, YOU WANT TO HEAR THE STORY FIRST, BEFORE I TELL THE OTHERS?
OKAY, WAIT... LET'S SEE HOW MUCH I FIGURED OUT ON MY OWN, FIRST...

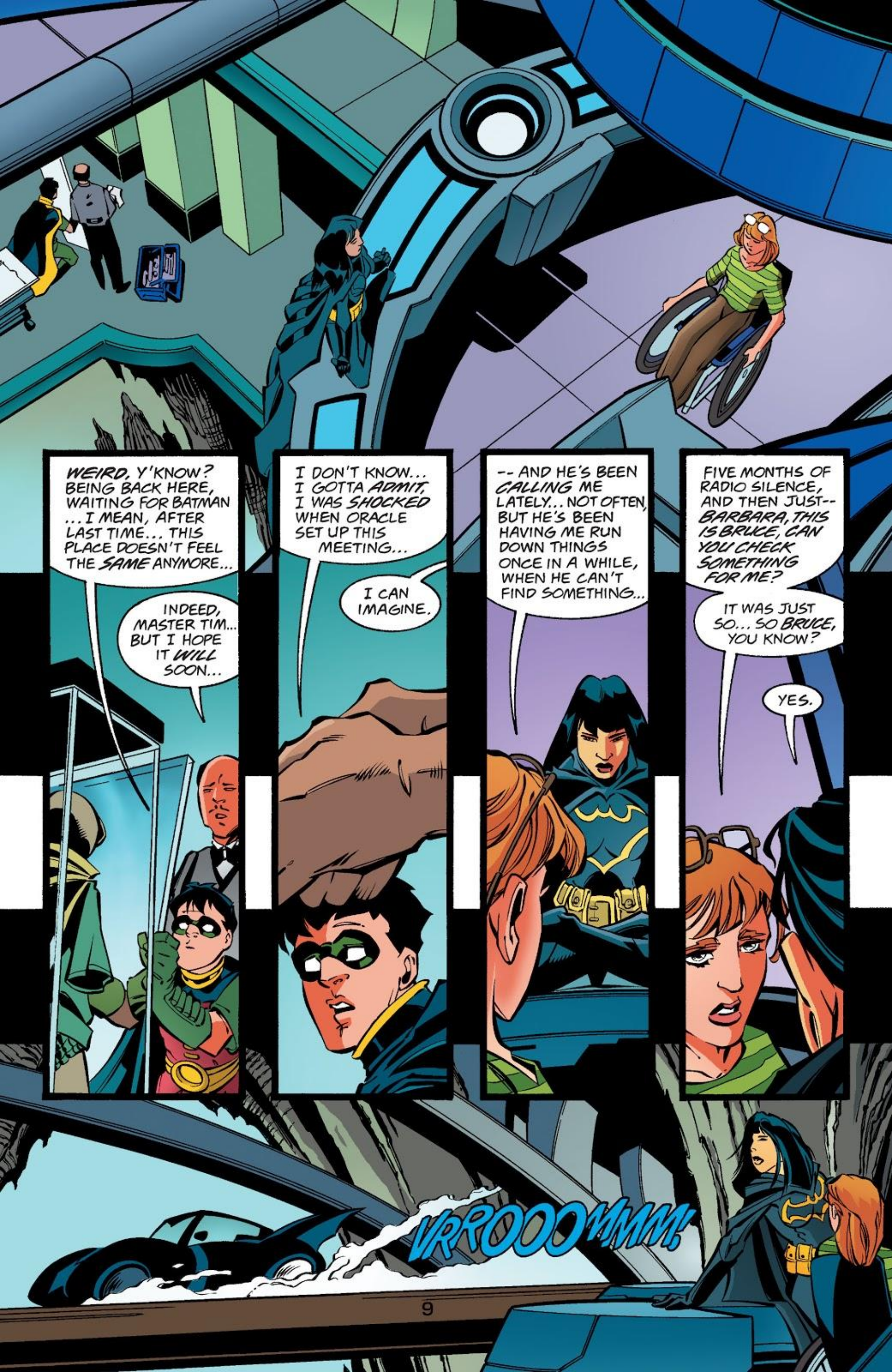
PASSENGERS DEPARTING FLIGHT 182 FROM SPAIN MAY PICK UP THEIR LUGGAGE AT BAGGAGE CLAIM NUMBER FORTY-FIVE...
...IS THAT ONE OF OURS, MARTHA?
NO, JONATHAN. WE DON'T HAVE ANY BLACK LEATHER BAGS...
I THINK THAT ONE IS MINE...
MEN
KLIK

YOU HAVE ONE VOICE MAIL
BEEP
SEL

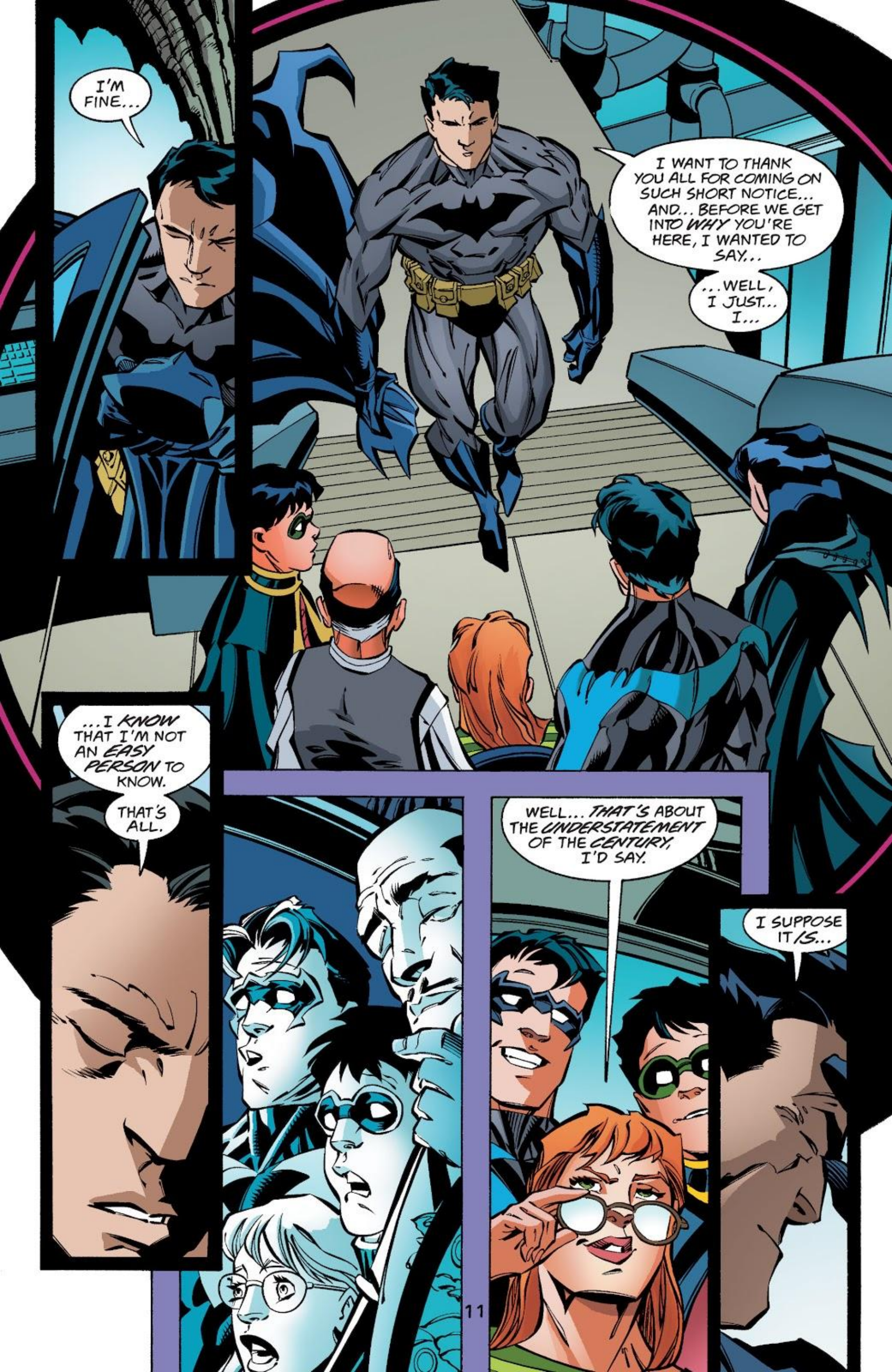
THERE IS A ROOM WAITING AT THE GOTHAM MERCADO ARMS, UNDER THE NAME PHILIP FORD. YOU'LL RECEIVE FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS THERE.


MESSAGE ERASED

GIFTS

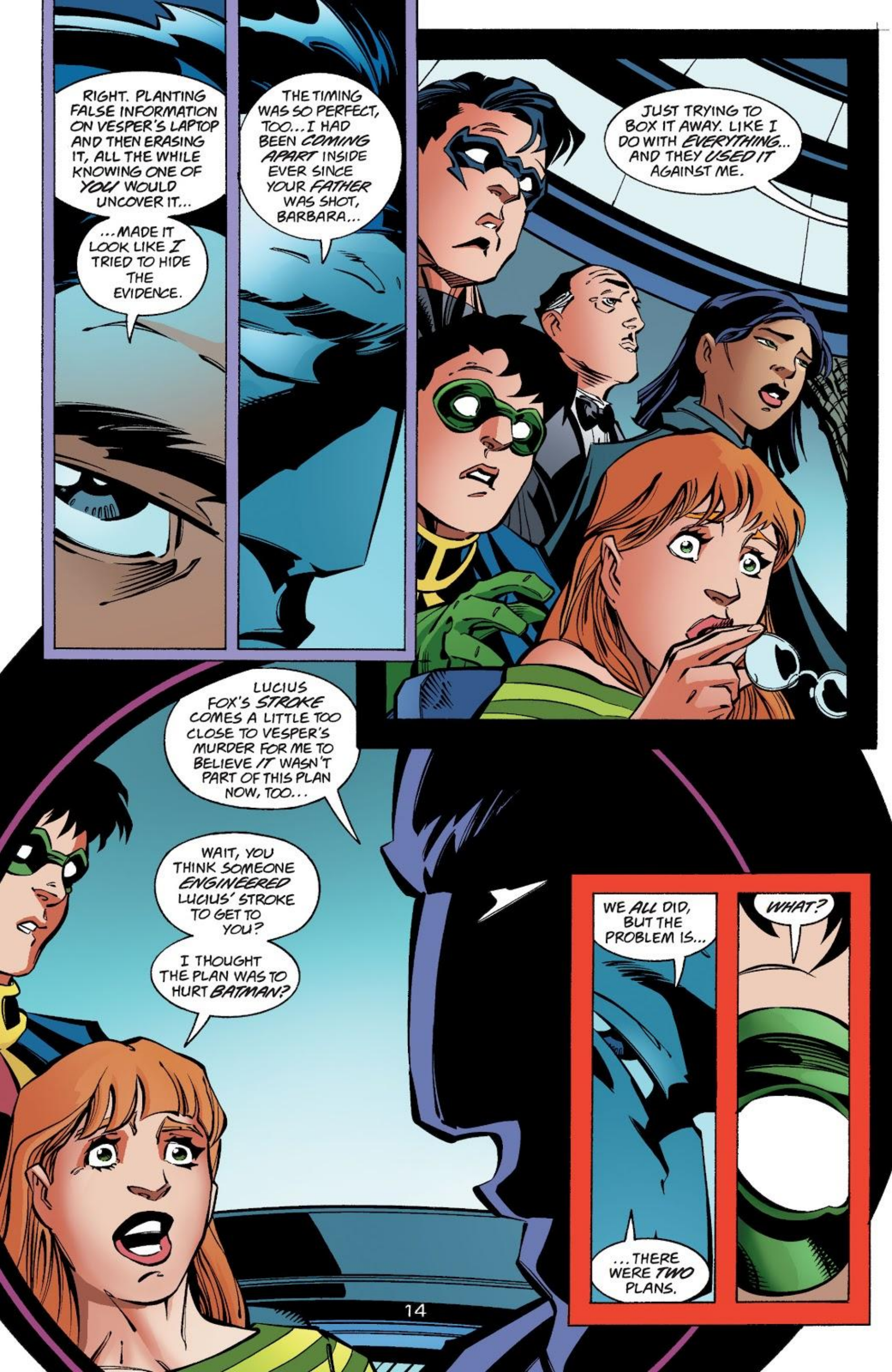

WEIRD, Y'KNOW? BEING BACK HERE, WAITING FOR BATMAN ...I MEAN, AFTER LAST TIME... THIS PLACE DOESN'T FEEL THE SAME ANYMORE...
INDEED, MASTER TIM... BUT I HOPE IT WILL SOON...
I DON'T KNOW... I GOTTA ADMIT, I WAS SHOCKED WHEN ORACLE SET UP THIS MEETING...
I CAN IMAGINE.
-- AND HE'S BEEN CALLING ME LATELY... NOT OFTEN, BUT HE'S BEEN HAVING ME RUN DOWN THINGS ONCE IN A WHILE, WHEN HE CAN'T FIND SOMETHING...
FIVE MONTHS OF RADIO SILENCE, AND THEN JUST-- BARBARA, THIS IS BRUCE, CAN YOU CHECK SOMETHING FOR ME?
IT WAS JUST SO... SO BRUCE, YOU KNOW?
YES.
VRROOOMMM!

SQQUEEEE
SHOULD WE GET STARTED?
UH... BRUCE?
BRUCE? YOU OKAY?

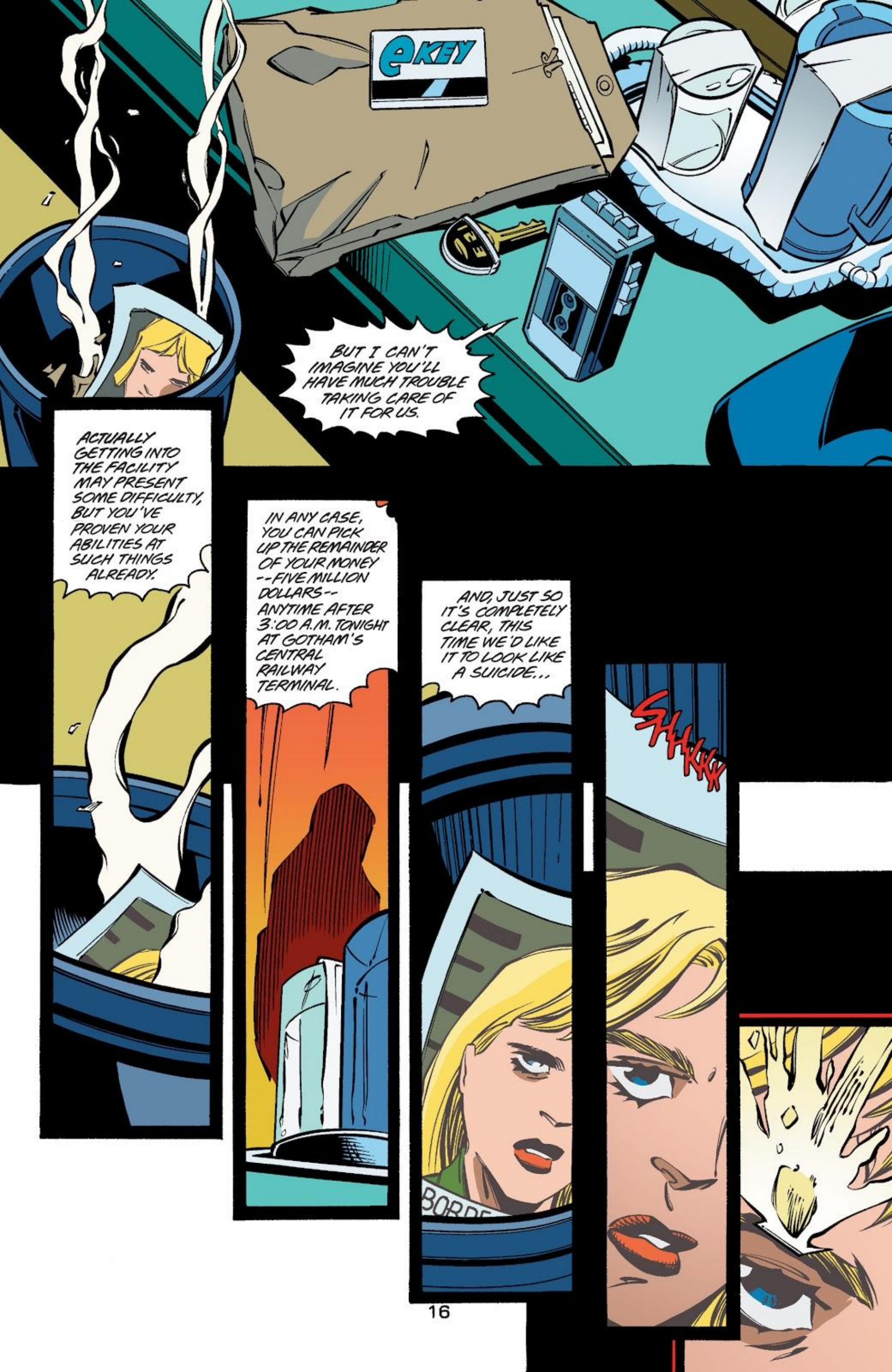

I'M FINE...
I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE... AND... BEFORE WE GET INTO WHY YOU'RE HERE, I WANTED TO SAY...
...WELL, I JUST... I...
...I KNOW THAT I'M NOT AN EASY PERSON TO KNOW.
THAT'S ALL.
WELL... THAT'S ABOUT THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY, I'D SAY.
I SUPPOSE IT IS...

SO, CAN WE GET DOWN TO WORK NOW?
ABSOLUTELY...
AS YOU ALL KNOW, SIX MONTHS AGO VESPER FAIRCHILD WAS MURDERED IN WAYNE MANOR...
FOR ANYONE WHO STILL NEEDS TO HEAR IT-- I DIDN'T COMMIT THIS CRIME.
BUT NOW I KNOW WHO DID...
...AND MORE IMPORTANT, I KNOW WHY.
IT WAS A COMPLICATED SCHEME, AND ONE THAT WAS VERY EFFECTIVE...
AS BARBARA SAID THE LAST TIME WE WERE ALL HERE, IT WAS A NEARLY PERFECT FRAME-UP.
BECAUSE NOT ONLY WAS BRUCE WAYNE SET UP FOR A FALL, BUT SEEDS OF DOUBT WERE PLANTED WITH ALL OF YOU, AS WELL...
AND FOR A WHILE, I ASSUMED THAT MEANT WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WAS SOMEONE WHO KNEW MY SECRET.
BUT AS IT TURNS OUT, IT'S A BIT MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT, EVEN.

BUT, LET'S DO THIS IN THE PROPER ORDER THIS TIME, TO MAKE SURE NOTHING GETS MISSED AGAIN... WHAT DO WE KNOW, FOR A FACT?
DICK?
WE KNOW THAT SOMEONE FOUND A WAY INTO THE CAVE, MORE THAN ONCE, AND BROKE INTO THE SECURITY SYSTEM...
... SO THEY COULD COME AND GO DOWN HERE AND IN THE MANOR UPSTAIRS AT WILL.
I DUPLICATED THE BREAK-IN, AND FOUND EVIDENCE OF THE DEVICES USED TO MANIPULATE THE SECURITY SYSTEM...
... SO WE KNOW IT'S NOT JUST A THEORY, IT HAPPENED.
THE FIRST BREAK-IN WAS APPROXIMATELY SIX WEEKS BEFORE VESPER WAS KILLED.
WHICH IMPLIES SOMEONE WHO WAS PLANNING CAREFULLY AND FAR AHEAD... A PROFESSIONAL...
ANOTHER THING WE KNOW --
YOUR PERSONAL JOURNALS, AND VESPER'S NOTES ON HER LAPTOP WERE BOTH ALTERED. IT WAS SUBTLE, AND OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO CONFUSE ANYONE WHO KNEW ABOUT YOUR DOUBLE LIFE...
WE WERE THE ONLY ONES WHO WOULD EVER SEE A MOTIVE TO THIS CRIME.
IF WE BELIEVED VESPER WAS ABOUT TO EXPOSE YOUR IDENTITY, THEN WE HAD REASON TO DOUBT YOU...
MEDIA TEST: SURFACE SCAN
BIT DEFORMITY POSSIBILITIES
BRUCE - PRIVATE
FAIRCHILD FIELD NOTES

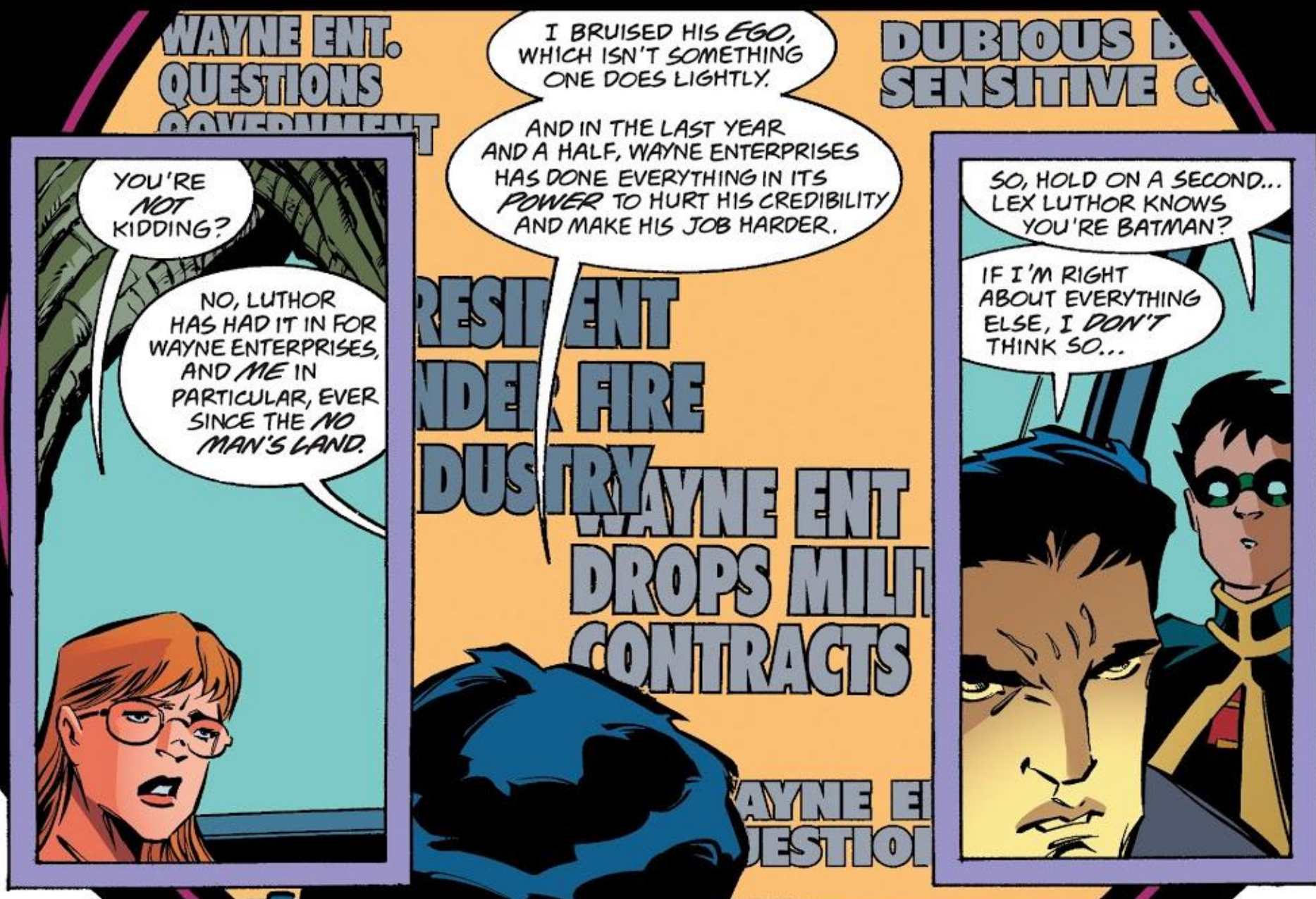

RIGHT. PLANTING FALSE INFORMATION ON VESPER'S LAPTOP AND THEN ERASING IT, ALL THE WHILE KNOWING ONE OF YOU WOULD UNCOVER IT...
...MADE IT LOOK LIKE I TRIED TO HIDE THE EVIDENCE.
THE TIMING WAS SO PERFECT, TOO... I HAD BEEN COMING APART INSIDE EVER SINCE YOUR FATHER WAS SHOT, BARBARA...
JUST TRYING TO BOX IT AWAY. LIKE I DO WITH EVERYTHING... AND THEY USED IT AGAINST ME.
LUCIUS FOX'S STROKE COMES A LITTLE TOO CLOSE TO VESPER'S MURDER FOR ME TO BELIEVE IT WASN'T PART OF THIS PLAN NOW, TOO...
WAIT, YOU THINK SOMEONE ENGINEERED LUCIUS' STROKE TO GET TO YOU?
I THOUGHT THE PLAN WAS TO HURT BATMAN?
WE ALL DID, BUT THE PROBLEM IS...
...THERE WERE TWO PLANS.
WHAT?

Gotham Mercado Arms
HERE YOU ARE, MISTER FORD, AND THIS PACKAGE WAS DELIVERED FOR YOU EARLIER...
THANKS.
KEY
--PREVIOUS JOB WAS ACCOMPLISHED COMPLETELY TO OUR SATISFACTION.
UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS STILL ONE LOOSE END THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT HOW WE HAD PLANNED...


eKEY
BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE YOU'LL HAVE MUCH TROUBLE TAKING CARE OF IT FOR US.
ACTUALLY GETTING INTO THE FACILITY MAY PRESENT SOME DIFFICULTY, BUT YOU'VE PROVEN YOUR ABILITIES AT SUCH THINGS ALREADY.
IN ANY CASE, YOU CAN PICK UP THE REMAINDER OF YOUR MONEY --FIVE MILLION DOLLARS-- ANYTIME AFTER 3:00 A.M. TONIGHT AT GOTHAM'S CENTRAL RAILWAY TERMINAL.
AND, JUST SO IT'S COMPLETELY CLEAR, THIS TIME WE'D LIKE IT TO LOOK LIKE A SUICIDE...
SHHKK

AMHERST
SECURE
THREE NIGHTS AGO I GOT MY HANDS ON A GOVERNMENT AGENT, OFFICIALLY FROM THE N.S.A., WHO PUT THE FINAL PIECES OF THE PUZZLE IN PLACE FOR ME...

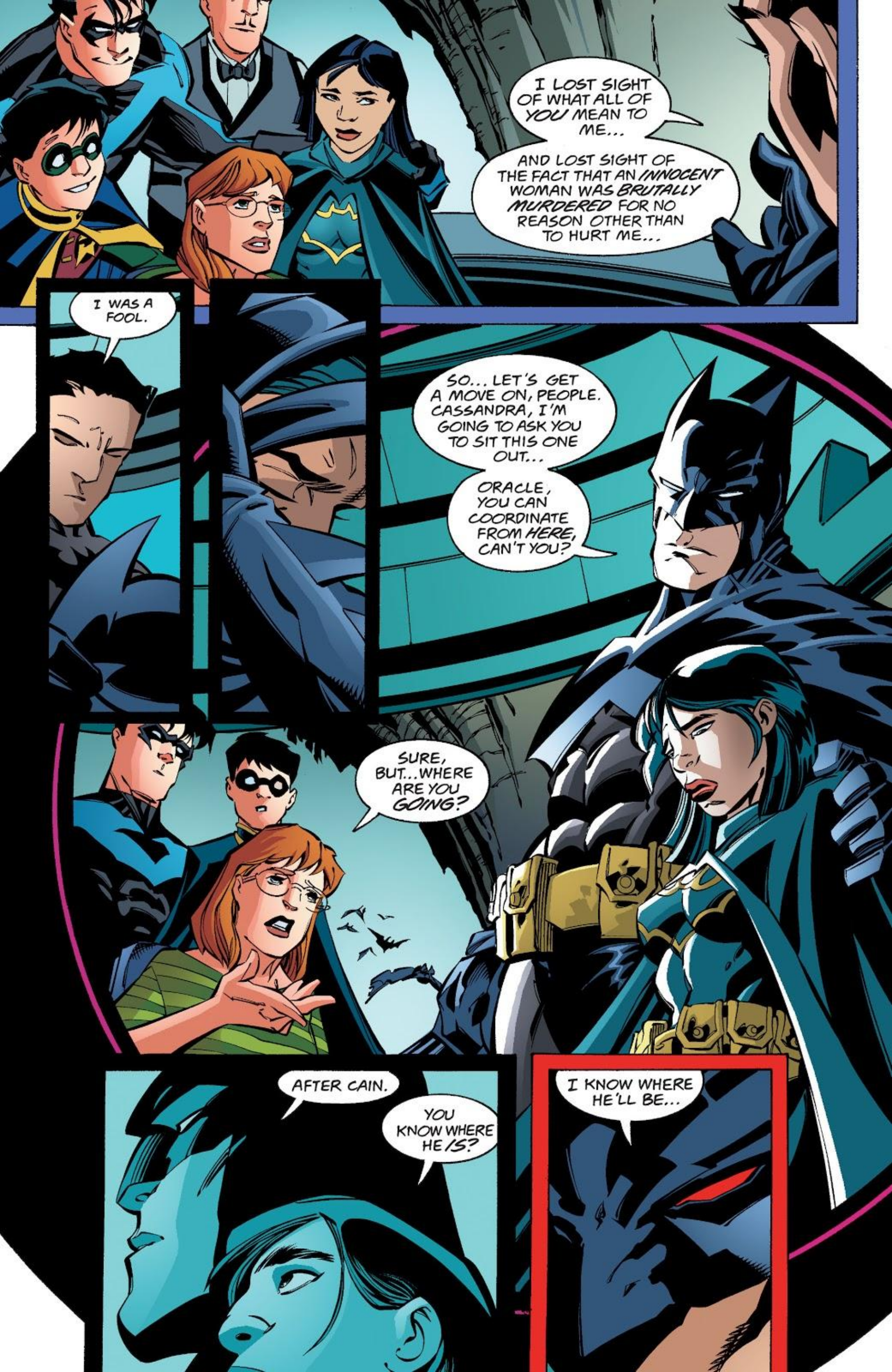
LUTHOR
THIS AGENT, WHO IS KNOWN AS AMHERST, USED MONEY FROM A DISCRETIONARY FUND TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL TO DESTROY BRUCE WAYNE, BUT NOT TO KILL HIM...
THESE ORDERS CAME FROM THE PRESIDENT, THOUGH I'M SURE THERE'S NO EVIDENCE TO PROVE IT.


WAYNE ENT. QUESTIONS
DUBIOUS
SENSITIVE
I BRUISED HIS EGO, WHICH ISN'T SOMETHING ONE DOES LIGHTLY.
AND IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF, WAYNE ENTERPRISES HAS DONE EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO HURT HIS CREDIBILITY AND MAKE HIS JOB HARDER.
YOU'RE NOT KIDDING?
NO, LUTHOR HAS HAD IT IN FOR WAYNE ENTERPRISES, AND ME IN PARTICULAR, EVER SINCE THE NO MAN'S LAND.
SO, HOLD ON A SECOND... LEX LUTHOR KNOWS YOU'RE BATMAN?
IF I'M RIGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE, I DON'T THINK SO...
RESIDENT
UNDER FIRE
INDUSTRY
WAYNE ENT
DROPS MILIT
CONTRACTS
WAYNE E
QUESTIO

GOD, I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT THEN...

ONE THING YOU DIDN'T TELL ME BEFORE... WHERE IS THIS AGENT AMHERST?
SOMEWHERE SAFE... FOR WHEN I NEED HIM.
I'M SORRY, I'M STILL A LITTLE IN THE DARK ON THIS WHOLE THING... IF HE HIRED SOMEONE TO FRAME BRUCE WAYNE, BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW YOU'RE BATMAN...
...THEN HOW DID HE MANAGE TO TURN THE TABLES ON ALL OF US, TOO?
LUCK...
SEE, BATGIRL DISCOVERED SOMETHING A LITTLE ODD ABOUT VESPER'S MURDER, I BELIEVE...
THE KILLER USED A NERVE STRIKE...
...WHICH IS A MOVE I TAUGHT YOU, ISN'T IT? TO IMMOBILIZE YOUR OPPONENT...
YES...
DO YOU KNOW WHERE I LEARNED THAT MOVE, CASSANDRA?
YES.
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN BY LUCK.

LUTHOR'S AGENT PICKED THE BEST ASSASSIN MONEY COULD BUY...
...DAVID CAIN.
HE'S -- HE'S NOT DEAD?
NO, I SUSPECTED ALL ALONG THAT IT WAS A RUSE... NOW I KNOW FOR SURE.
CAIN WAS HIRED TO DESTROY BRUCE WAYNE... BUT HE DECIDED TO GO LUTHOR ONE BETTER...
HE THOUGHT HE COULD USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BRING DOWN THE BATMAN, AS WELL.
SO HE FRAMED ME FOR A CRIME WHOSE ONLY MOTIVE COULD BE THAT I WAS PROTECTING MY SECRET.
IT WAS A BRILLIANT PLAN, REALLY... IT DROVE ME SO FAR AWAY FROM BRUCE WAYNE THAT I LOST MYSELF.


I LOST SIGHT OF WHAT ALL OF YOU MEAN TO ME...
AND LOST SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT AN INNOCENT WOMAN WAS BRUTALLY MURDERED FOR NO REASON OTHER THAN TO HURT ME...
I WAS A FOOL.
SO... LET'S GET A MOVE ON, PEOPLE. CASSANDRA, I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO SIT THIS ONE OUT...
ORACLE, YOU CAN COORDINATE FROM HERE, CAN'T YOU?
SURE, BUT...WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
AFTER CAIN.
YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?
I KNOW WHERE HE'LL BE...

OKAY, ROBIN, SECURITY CAMERAS HAVE HIM AT THE LOCKER...
COPY, ORACLE... JUST TELL ME WHICH EXIT HE'S HEADED FOR.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S HEADED FOR THE BACK ALLEY OFF DOVER...
GOT HIM.
REMEMBER, DON'T BREAK FROM THE PLAN. THIS GUY IS DANGEROUS.
YES, MOTHER...
I MEAN IT.
I HAVE VISUAL...
OKAY, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
EMPLOYEES ONLY

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THINK I SEE HIM...
YEP... GOT HIM.
PLEASE, BE CAREFUL, NIGHTWING... I MEAN IT.
CAIN IS A KILLER.
YEAH... SO AM I.

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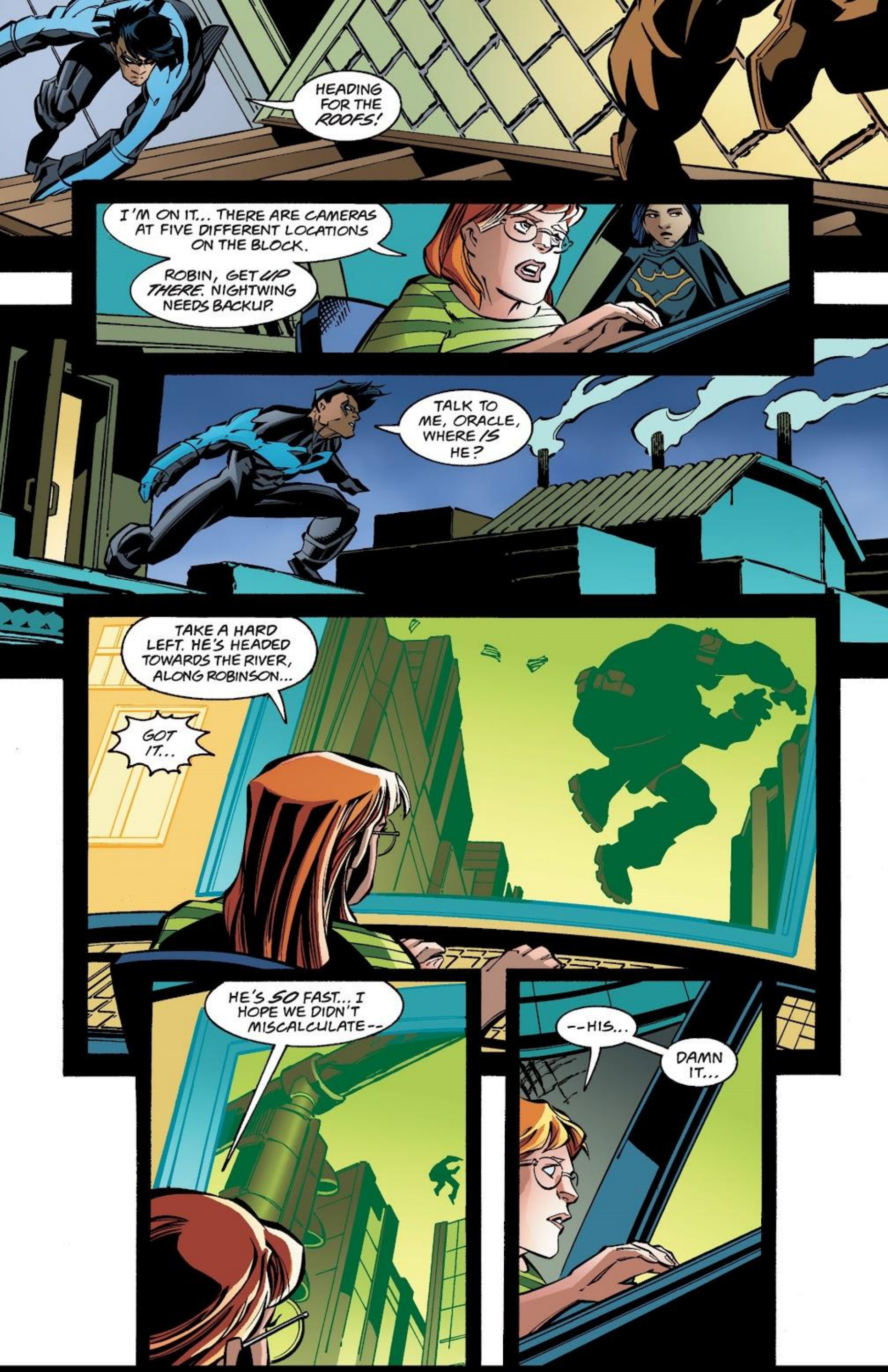

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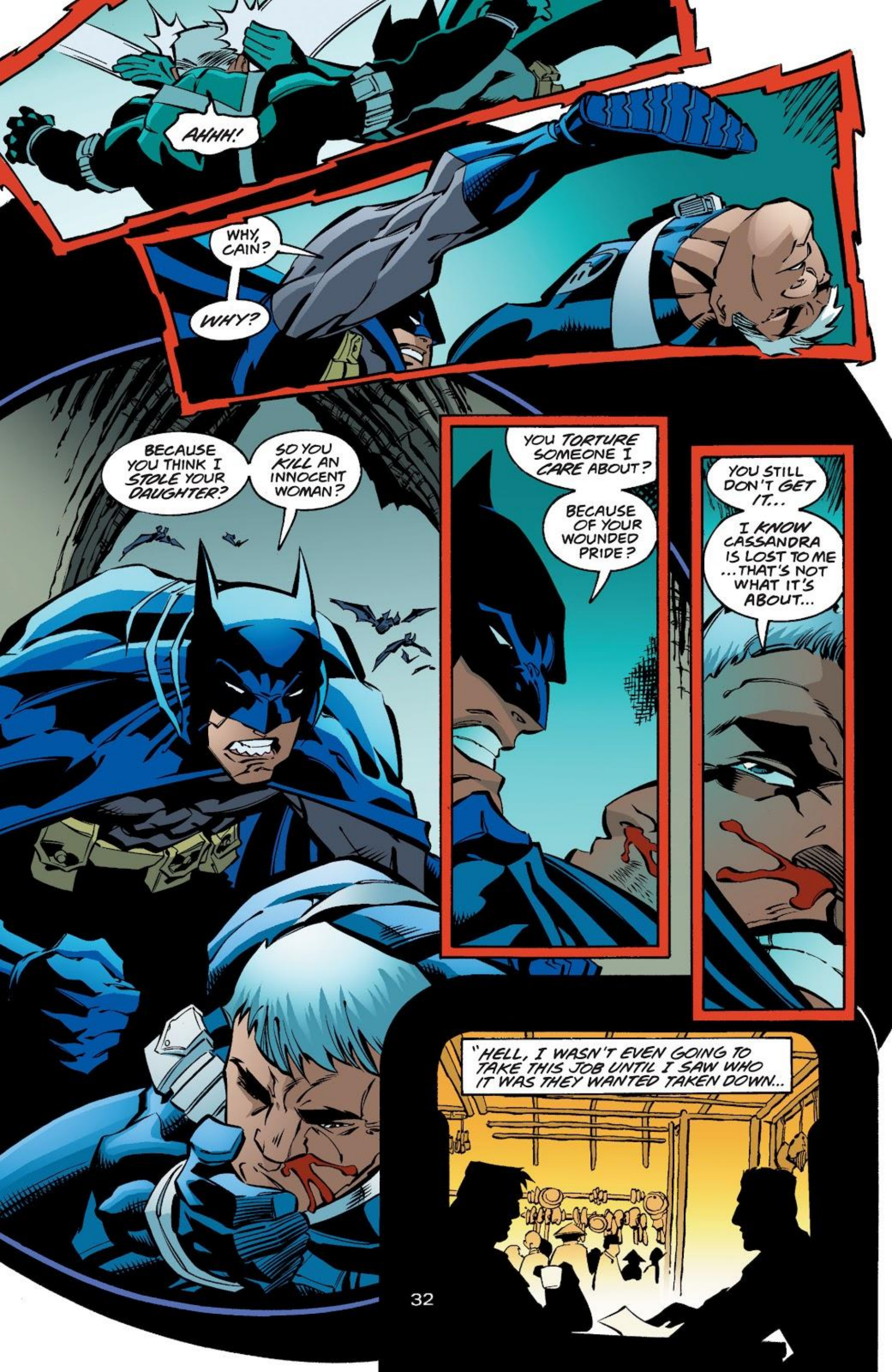
GUYS, KEEP AN EYE OUT... BATGIRL JUST FLEW THE COOP.
RIGHT. HOPEFULLY THIS'LL BE OVER BEFORE SHE CAN GET HERE...
GO LEFT.
NO...

ORACLE, WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM...
AW, NO... NO...
NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT THE BATMAN.
...THIS ISN'T HIM, EITHER...
WHAT?

THEN WHERE IS HE...?
WHERE ELSE?
KK-YAAAA!
Y'KNOW... I AUTOMATICALLY ASSUMED THIS WHOLE FOLLOW-UP MISSION WAS A TRAP...
WHAP!

BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THOSE GOVERNMENT CLODS, TRYING TO COVER THEIR TRACKS...
KLANG!
NO... STAY AWAY...
IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN I HEARD YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS COORDINATING MY CAPTURE.
I MEAN, DON'T YOU THINK IF I COULD BREAK INTO THIS FORTRESS, THAT I'D BE SMART ENOUGH TO TAP INTO YOUR FREQUENCY, AS WELL?
DIDN'T THAT EVEN OCCUR TO YOU?

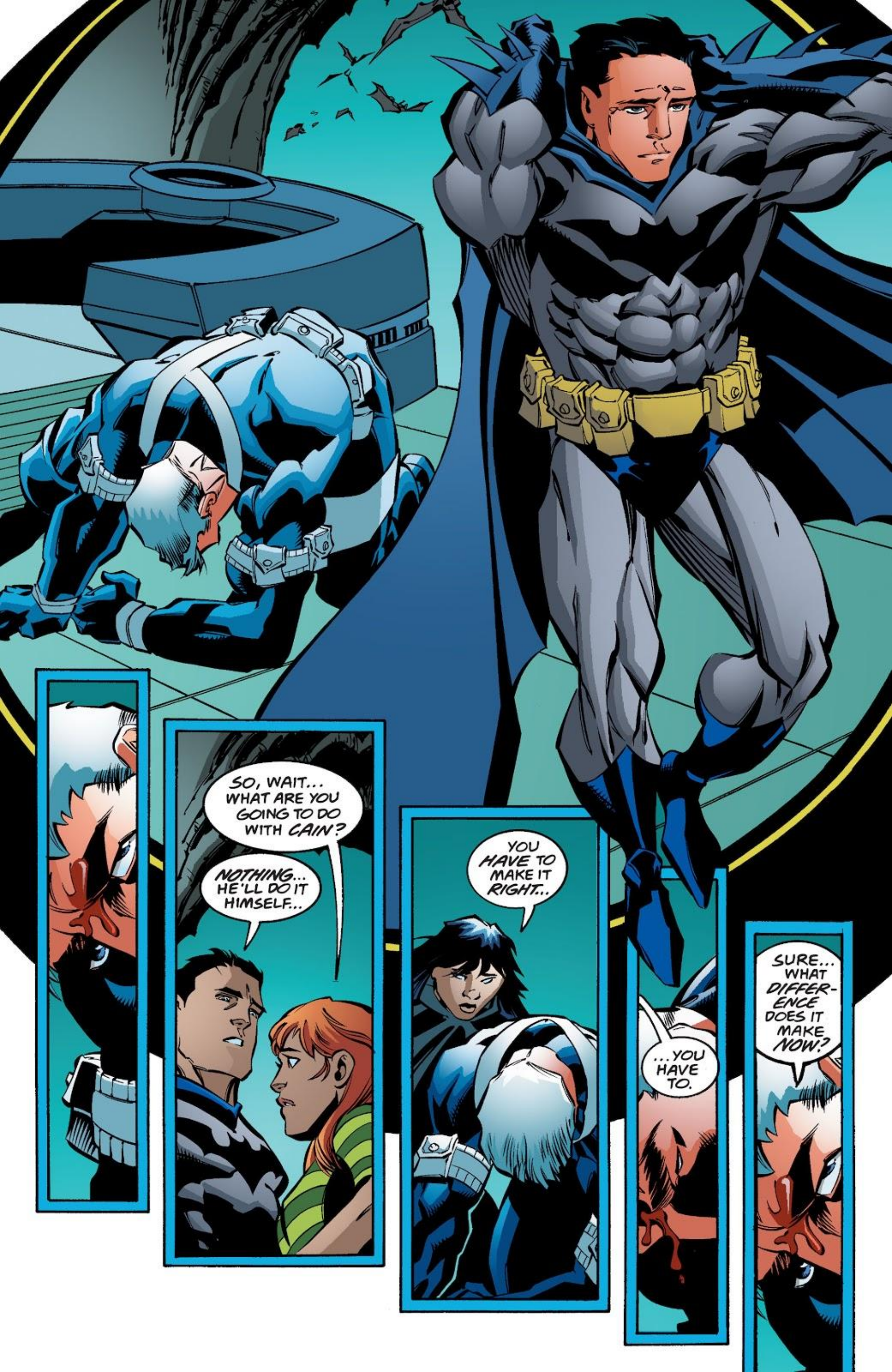
ACTUALLY...
...IT DID.
SMAK!
IT'S OKAY, EVERYONE... HE'S HERE...
HOW DID I DO, MASTER DICK?
YOU WERE GREAT, ALFRED... I ALMOST BELIEVED YOU MYSELF...

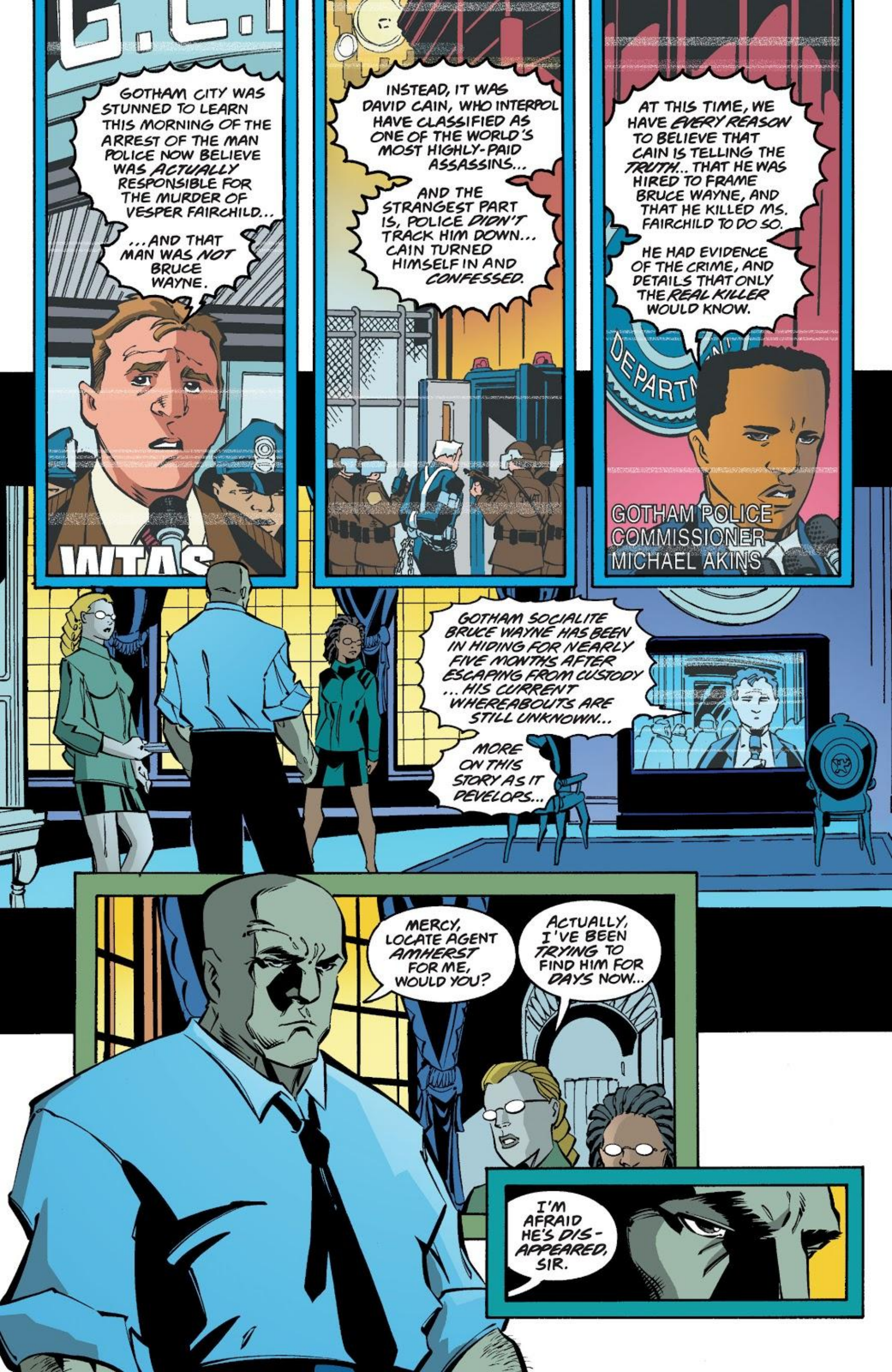

AHHH!
WHY, CAIN?
WHY?
BECAUSE YOU THINK I STOLE YOUR DAUGHTER?
SO YOU KILL AN INNOCENT WOMAN?
YOU TORTURE SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT?
BECAUSE OF YOUR WOUNDED PRIDE?
YOU STILL DON'T GET IT...
I KNOW CASSANDRA IS LOST TO ME ...THAT'S NOT WHAT IT'S ABOUT...
"HELL, I WASN'T EVEN GOING TO TAKE THIS JOB UNTIL I SAW WHO IT WAS THEY WANTED TAKEN DOWN...

"THEN IT ALL CAME TOGETHER... THAT KID I TRAINED, THAT EMOTIONAL CRIPPLE...
"... THAT WAS BATMAN."
BRUCE WAY
AND YOU AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO BE HER FATHER, EITHER...
HOW COULD I LET YOU GUIDE HER?
SO, I TOOK THE JOB... I DIDN'T DO IT TO HURT YOU, THOUGH...
I DID IT TO TEST YOU.
GIVE ME A BREAK.
IT'S TRUE... I STRIPPED YOUR ENTIRE LIFE AWAY, KID, TO SHOW WHAT YOU REALLY ARE... A MONSTER, JUST LIKE ME...
AND IT WORKED, TOO. A NORMAL MAN WOULD'VE TURNED TO HIS FAMILY FOR HELP... ESPECIALLY WITH THE KIND OF FAMILY YOU HAVE...
BUT YOU JUST PUSHED THEM AWAY... YOU CAVED IN ON YOURSELF ...
BECAUSE YOU'RE WEAK.
SMAK!

YOU SMUG SON OF A--
KRAK!
--PLAYING WITH PEOPLE'S LIVES!
...SEE...?
...JUST LIKE ME...

AW, GOD, BRUCE... ...NO...
NO, I'M NOT LIKE YOU...
NOT ANYMORE.


SO, WAIT... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH CAIN?
NOTHING... HE'LL DO IT HIMSELF...
YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT RIGHT...
...YOU HAVE TO.
SURE... WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE NOW?


GOTHAM CITY WAS STUNNED TO LEARN THIS MORNING OF THE ARREST OF THE MAN POLICE NOW BELIEVE WAS ACTUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF VESPER FAIRCHILD...
...AND THAT MAN WAS NOT BRUCE WAYNE.
INSTEAD, IT WAS DAVID CAIN, WHO INTERPOL HAVE CLASSIFIED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST HIGHLY-PAID ASSASSINS...
AND THE STRANGEST PART IS, POLICE DIDN'T TRACK HIM DOWN... CAIN TURNED HIMSELF IN AND CONFESSED.
AT THIS TIME, WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT CAIN IS TELLING THE TRUTH... THAT HE WAS HIRED TO FRAME BRUCE WAYNE, AND THAT HE KILLED MS. FAIRCHILD TO DO SO.
HE HAD EVIDENCE OF THE CRIME, AND DETAILS THAT ONLY THE REAL KILLER WOULD KNOW.
GOTHAM POLICE COMMISSIONER MICHAEL AKINS
GOTHAM SOCIALITE BRUCE WAYNE HAS BEEN IN HIDING FOR NEARLY FIVE MONTHS AFTER ESCAPING FROM CUSTODY ... HIS CURRENT WHEREABOUTS ARE STILL UNKNOWN...
MORE ON THIS STORY AS IT DEVELOPS...
MERCY, LOCATE AGENT AMHERST FOR ME, WOULD YOU?
ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND HIM FOR DAYS NOW...
I'M AFRAID HE'S DIS-APPEARED, SIR.

MISTER JONES, CAN YOU HEAR ME...?
...Y-YES... WHERE AM I?
YOU'VE BEEN UNCONSCIOUS FOR A FEW DAYS... BUT YOU'RE SAFE NOW...
YOU CAN'T HURT YOURSELF OR ANYONE ELSE IN HERE...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT... HEY?
GET THESE THINGS OFF OF ME! I'M A GOVERNMENT AGENT!
OF COURSE YOU ARE, MR. JONES...
WAIT! I MEAN IT!
I DON'T BELONG HERE!
PATIENT NUM
89132
JONES, D.
ME NEITHER, DOC... LEMME OUT!
YEAH, ME TOO-- I AIN'T CRAZY!
LET ME OUT OF THIS CELL OR I SWEAR I'LL CUT YOU! YOU--
YES, NO ONE BELONGS HERE...
THE END