

ANNUAL



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THE
NEW
52!

BATMAN

TYNION
ANTÔNIO
FILARDI

FEB 2015

RATED T TEEN

AN
ENDGAME
TIE-IN

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ARKHAM MANOR.

I can hear the whispers. It's starting all over again...

The whole city's laughing this time. They say it feels like the end. The end of everything.

I can feel it, too.

I used to be a lot of things...but I still remember where it began, and it began with writing.

It was all about seeing the things that nobody else could see. That's what I loved more than anything.

It was like finding a puzzle, already solved, but everyone around you thought you were the one to put it together.

And so I did, over and over again.

Now my hand shakes too much to hold a pen, and they don't let us near the computers.

But maybe it's best that way. I can't get myself into any more trouble.

And trouble can't find me.

THOMAS?
THOMAS
BLACKCROW,
ARE YOU IN
THERE?

Just don't listen, Tommy. Don't listen and maybe they'll go away.

I CAN SEE YOU HIDING BACK THERE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID.

YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

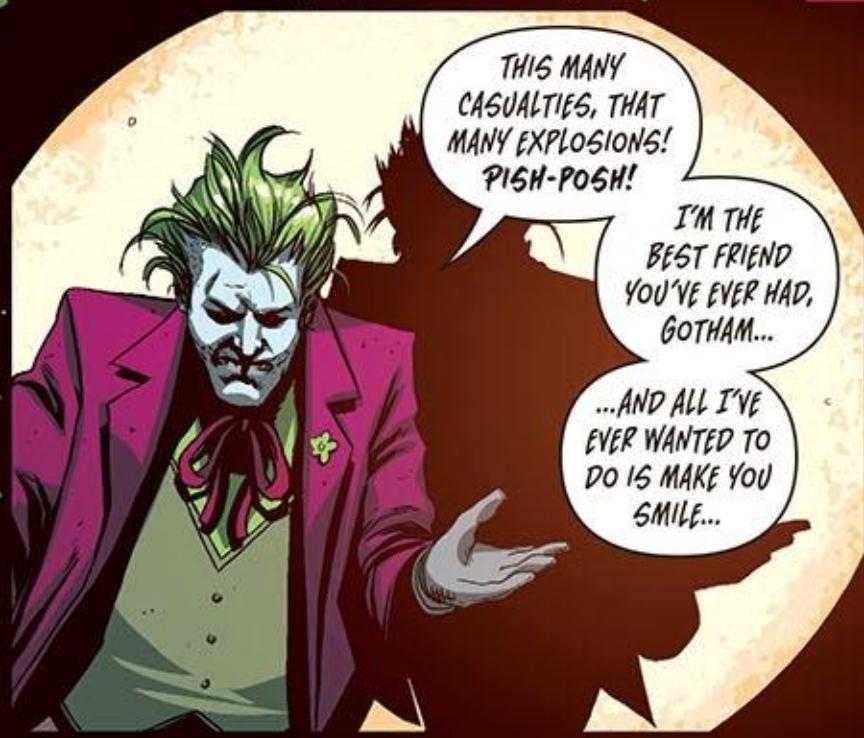
A FRIEND.

I DON'T...
I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS...

I'M SURE THAT'S NOT TRUE, TOMMY...

EVERYBODY HAS A FRIEND.

FIVE YEARS AGO.



AREN'T
YOU SCARED,
MR. J?

NO! WE'RE
ALL FRIENDS
HERE!

SEE, HE'S LAUGHING WITH
THE REST OF THEM!

WAIT...
NO...MY
FAMILY...YOU
DIDN'T SAY
YOU'D...

HEHEE
HEHE...

...HAHAHAHAHA!

NOW, I'D TELL YOU
WHERE TO FIND IT...BUT
HERE'S THE JOKER
GUARANTEE...

...IN
GOTHAM CITY,
MY CIRCUS WILL
FIND YOU.

FRIENDS

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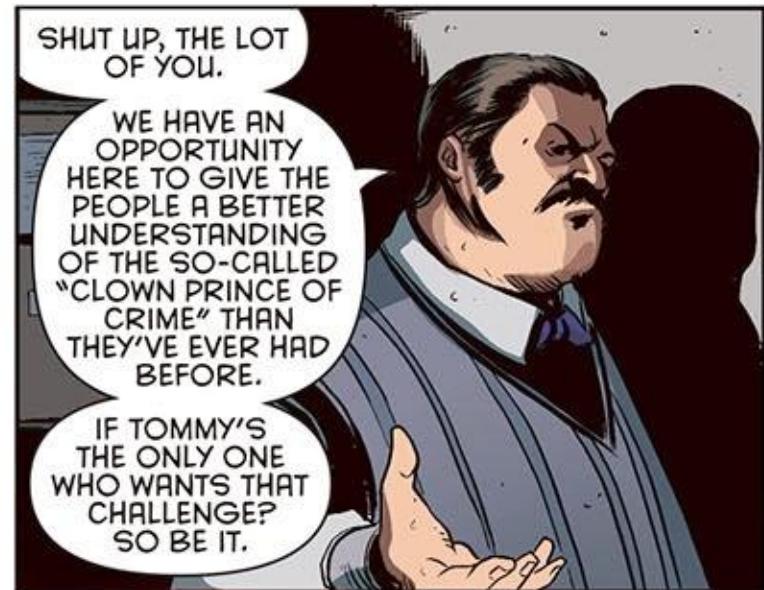
NO,
SERIOUSLY.
I AM ASKING
SOMEONE TO
EXPLAIN IT
TO ME.

WHAT
THE HELL IS
SO SCARY
ABOUT A
CLOWN?

TOMMY, YOU HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT YOU'RE
TALKING--

OH, CAN IT,
WARREN. I'M SO
SICK OF THIS WHOLE
CULT OF GOTHAM
THING YOU GUYS
HAVE IN HERE.

HE'S JUST A
BARGAIN-BIN LUNATIC
WITH A VIDEO CAMERA,
BUT YOU ALL SIT HERE
AND MYTHOLOGIZE HIM
INTO SOME KIND OF
DEMON. I'M TELLING
YOU, HE'S NOT.



The key to a good story is the angle. The one that's so obvious everyone wishes they'd thought of...But they didn't.

You did.

Pull that off on a big enough story, and they treat you like a damn hero.

People had heard about the monster... Warren made sure of that with his first round of articles. The whole business with the reservoir, that shook the city up like I'd never seen before.

Seriously?
We needed a tip for this?

I think they'd thought it was over after the Zero Year.

That they'd find some kind of normalcy. But when this laughing murderer popped up, they acted like the Devil himself had come to Gotham.

That was the real beginning... That's what dragged me back...

The story only had that angle. The angle of the monster hiding under the bed. I knew there was something more. Something deeper.

Something far more human.

ARE YOU MY LITTLE FARTY BABIES?

YES YOU ARE! YES YOU ARE!

It's not that he's crazy. That's boring, too. People don't really understand crazy.

People understand fear, though, and these guys seemed to be thick with it. They tried to play cool...

...but they didn't know how. Not with him there. They seem to have bought into the monster as much as anyone on the streets.

Most of them, anyways.

HEY, MISTAH J, I WAS JUST REMEMBERING THAT CUTE PLACE WE WENT LAST WEEK. REMEMBER HOW RUDE THEY WERE?

ALL WE WANTED WAS A LITTLE TOUCH OF ROMANCE, AND THEY COULDN'T STOP CRYING AT ALL THE EXPLOSIVES WE LEFT IN THE OVEN.

It's funny, the way all the sound left the room, then. I could feel his goons sweating from across the room.

*Is this how it went?
What happened in The
Joker's realm when a
joke fell flat?*

*What were
they all afraid
of, really?*



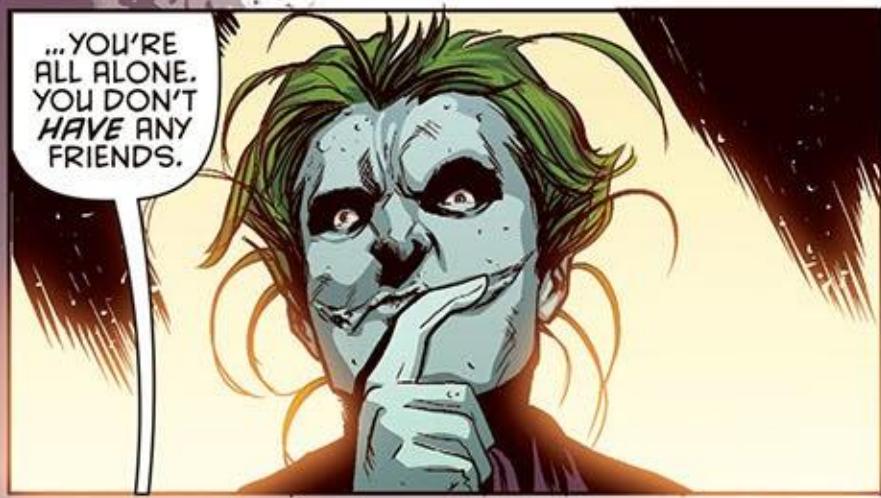
*It was the coldness in
his eyes that took me
by surprise. He seemed
so different on the
camera. So alive.
So engaged.*

*But that was an
act, wasn't it?
This was the
real thing.*









I THINK
I'M GOING TO
HAVE TO PASS ON
DESSERT
ALTOGETHER.

IT'S THE
BRAT!

Aww, I
THOUGHT YOU
WERE STARTING
TO WARM UP
TO ME.

AND NOT JUST
HIM... THERE'S NOT JUST ONE
WITHOUT THE OTHER...

COME ON...
COME ON...

SHOW
YOURSELF!

IT'S
OVER,
JOKER.



OH, NO,
DARLING. IT'S JUST
BEGINNING.



CAN'T YOU SEE
THAT YET?



I THINK THIS IS THE PART
WHERE YOU RUN. I GUARANTEE
THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE
BOMBS BEFORE WE WRAP
THIS UP FOR THE NIGHT.



TENDS
TO RUIN
THE BIG GUY'S
NIGHT WHEN
THE DAMSEL IN
DISTRESS GETS
BLOWN TO
SMITHEREENS.



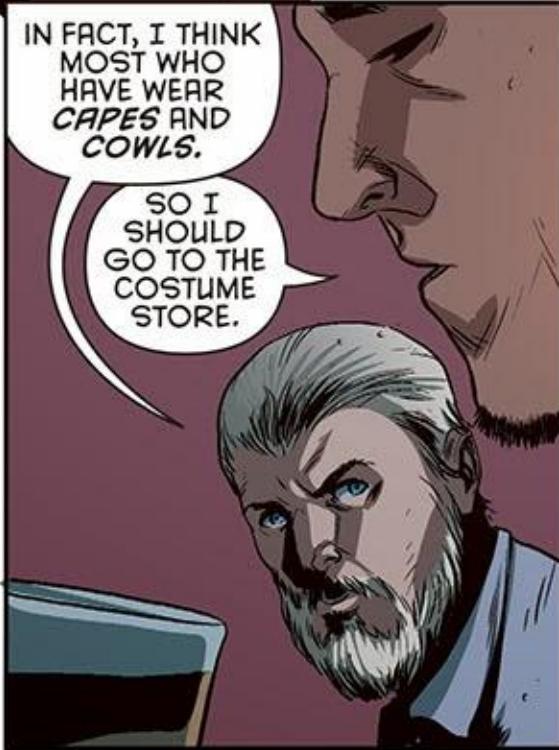
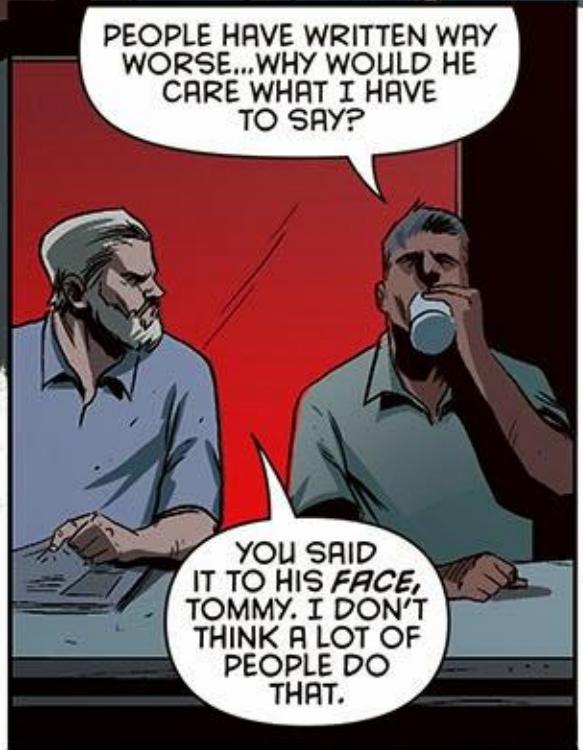
I'M...
I'M NOT A
DAMSEL.

YEAH, WELL.
NOBODY'S
PERFECT.



THE
HELL IS
WRONG
WITH THIS
CITY...?

ONE YEAR LATER.





OH, GOD...
WHAT IS THAT
SMELL...?

DANNY, WHAT
THE HELL DID YOU
DO...YOU'VE ONLY
BEEN STAYING HERE
THREE NIGHTS FOR
PETE'S SAKE.



DANNY?

OH, I WOULDN'T
GET TOO CLOSE...
WOULDN'T WANT TO
RUIN THE WIRING NOW,
WOULD WE?

IT TOOK ME
AAAAGES.
HEHEHEHEHE...

HEH...



NO...

WAS HE YOUR FRIEND?
YOUR BEST DUDE IN ALL THE WORLD?
YOUR PAL O' PALS...

WE...
WE WORKED
TOGETHER...IN
BIALYA.

OH, HOW NICE.
I TRIED TO ASK HIM, YOU
KNOW. BUT HE JUST WOULDN'T
STOP TRYING TO STRANGLE ME!

THAT'S JUST RUDE, TOMMY.
RUDE RUDE RUDE.

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

AND YOU
KNOW WHAT?
YOU WERE
RIGHT!

I DON'T HAVE A
FRIEND IN THE WORLD!
I DON'T HAVE A PAL TO
GRAB A BEER WITH, OR
GO SEE A BALL GAME,
OR CHAT ABOUT THE
LADIES...

...IT'S A WHOLE
BIG CORNER OF LIFE
AND IT'S A MYSTERY TO
ME! I'LL BE HONEST, I NEVER
REALLY SAW THE POINT.

OH, I'VE BEEN
GIVING IT A LOT OF THOUGHT.
WHAT YOU SAID TO ME THAT
NIGHT. THE WAY YOU LAID IT
AAAAALL OUT ON THE TABLE.

(HERE, HOLD
THIS.)

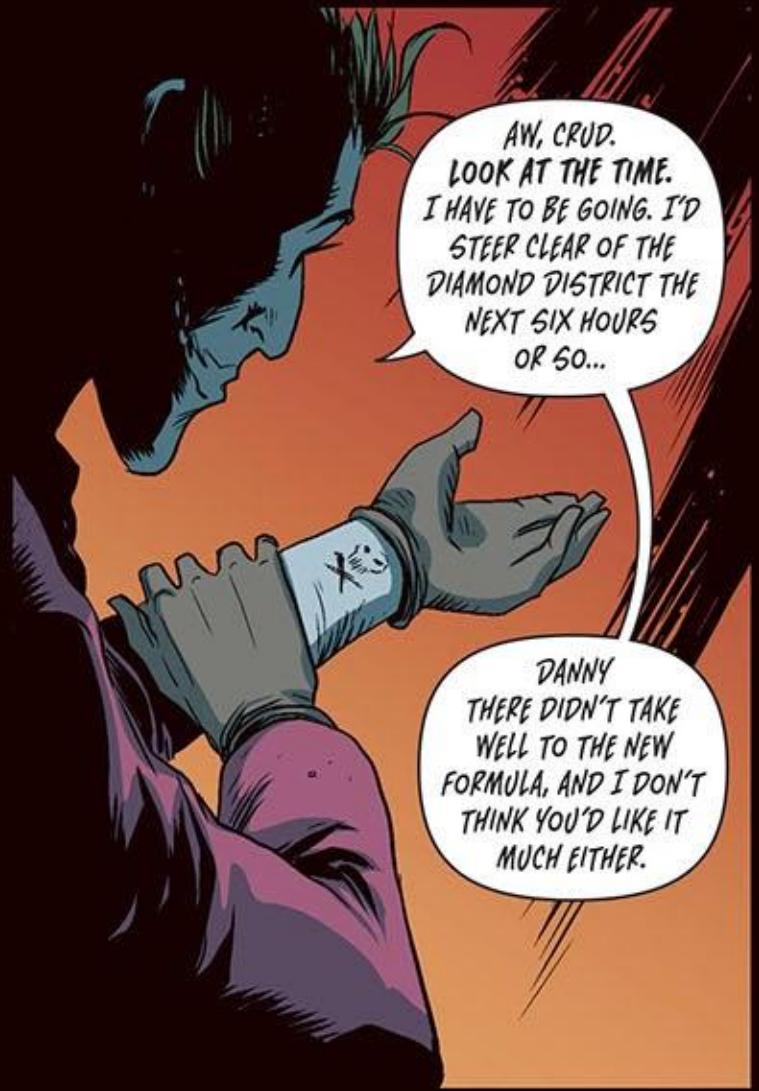
BUT THAT WAS
ME JUST THINKING SMALL.
I WAS THINKING SMALL
ABOUT SO MANY THINGS...ALL
MY PLANS...PLAYING THE
GRINNING CRIME
LORD...

THAT'S ALL
OVER NOW. IT'S TIME TO
BE SOMETHING NEW.

WHY...
WHY DID
YOU HAVE
TO DO THIS
TO HIM?

WELL,
I COULDN'T HAVE
COMPETITION NOW,
COULD I?

HEHEHE
HEHE...





SIX MONTHS LATER.



THE JOKER ESCAPES CUSTODY...2 DEAD IN ARKHAM

I'M READY FOR THIS. THERE'S NOTHING TRACING THE APARTMENT TO MY OLD LIFE. EVEN MY GIRLFRIEND... SHE DOESN'T KNOW MY REAL NAME. SHE'S SAFE, TOO.

IT'S OKAY NOT TO BE OKAY, TOMMY.

AND IT'S BEEN MONTHS... MONTHS AND MONTHS. HE HAD HIS FUN WITH ME. HE'LL HAVE FORGOTTEN.

I...I HAD THE DREAM LAST NIGHT...

I'M COMING OVER.

WE CAN GET DRUNK AND WATCH COOKING SHOWS. JUST LIKE IN COLLEGE.

NO. I'M FINE.

I'VE JUST CHECKED EACH LOCK AND WINDOW IN THIS PLACE. I'M SAFE. HE CAN'T FIND ME HERE.

I'LL CALL IN THE MORNING, ALL RIGHT?

SURE.

WALKING IN...SEEING DANNY STRUNG UP LIKE THAT... THAT SMELL...THAT AWFUL SMELL.









JUST
IN YOUR HEAD,
TOMMY...



THERE'S NO
WAY HE COULD
HAVE CLIMBED UP.
NO WAY HE COULD
BE IN THE
APARTMENT.

JUST
KEEP TELLING
YOURSELF.
YOU'RE ALL
ALONE.

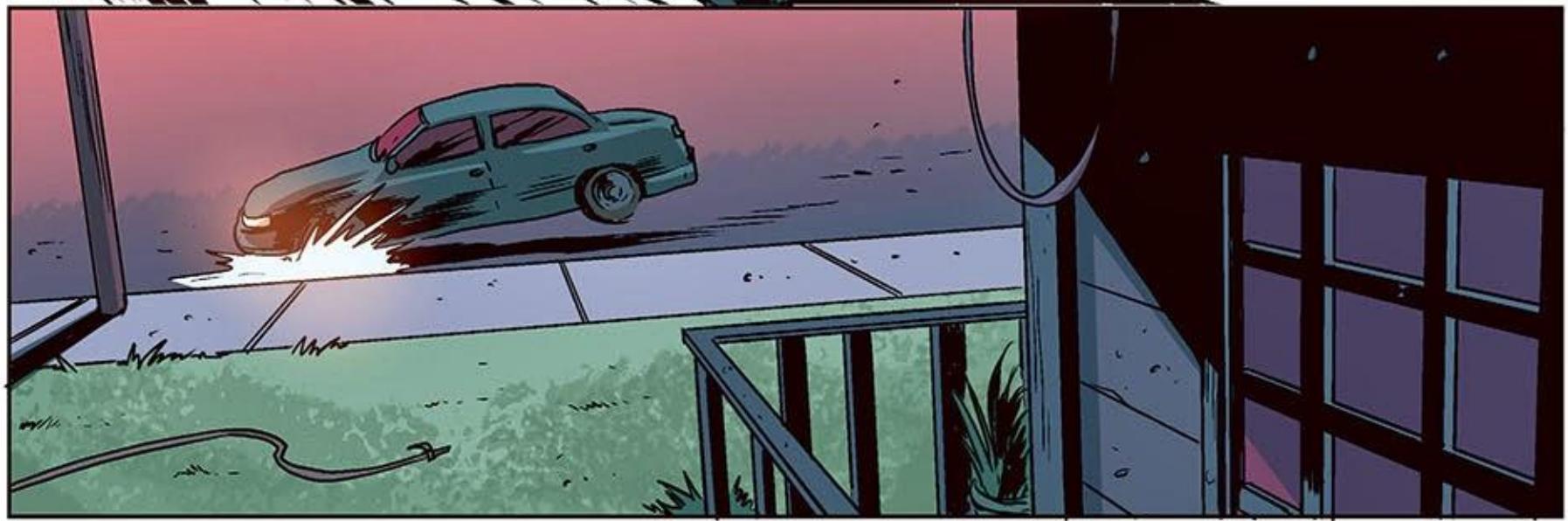


ALL
ALONE...



ONE YEAR LATER.







I MEAN, I WAS A LITTLE UPSET
I DIDN'T GET THE INVITE TO THE WEDDING.
BUT I GET IT, SMALL AFFAIR. WE'VE BEEN
WATCHING THE VIDEO OVER
AND OVER.

BUT, AS
YOUR BEST MAN, I
WOULD HAVE LIKED TO
THROW YOU A BACHELOR
PARTY. WE COULD HAVE
HAD IT ALL!

I KNOW THIS
CONTORTIONIST, SHE
BENDS IN ALL SORTS OF
CRAZY WAYS... WELL, SHE USED
TO, ANYWAYS... NOW THAT I
THINK OF IT, I'M NOT SURE
SHE WANTED TO BE A
CONTORTIONIST.

JUST... JUST KILL ME,
ALL RIGHT? YOU'VE MADE
YOUR POINT. JUST KILL
ME AND LET HER GO.

KILL
YOU?

NO! NO NO NO NO... I COULD
NEVER KILL YOU, TOMMY. YOU'RE
TOO IMPORTANT TO ME.

SURE, IT SEEMED LIKE A
GAME AT FIRST... BUT TALKING
TO YOU, IT MAKES ME FEEL SO
MUCH BETTER.

THIS WORK
IS SO LONELY... NOBODY
UNDERSTANDS. NOBODY
ELSE EVER SAW ME HURTING
AND THOUGHT ENOUGH TO
TELL ME HOW TO
GET BETTER!

YOU'RE
MY ONLY FRIEND IN
THE WORLD, TOMMY.
AND I'LL NEVER LET
YOU GO.

BUT IT'S
BEEN SO LONG...
THERE ARE SO MANY
THINGS I NEED TO
TELL YOU.

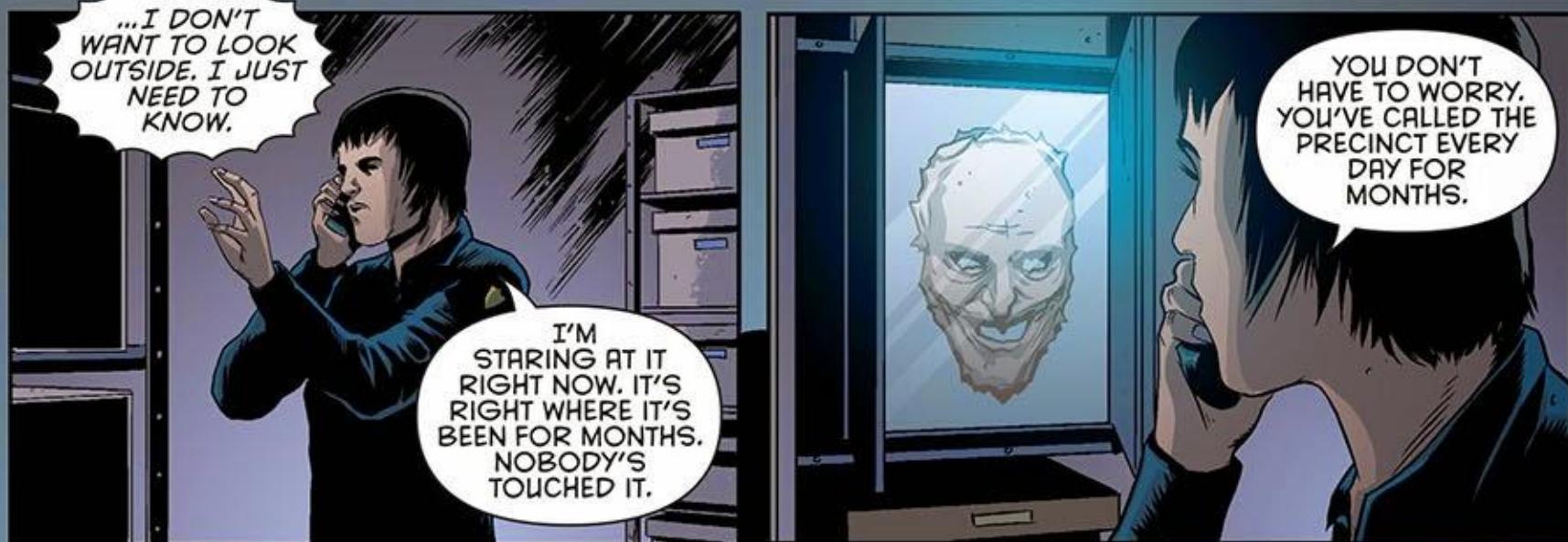




MONTHS AGO.

GOTHAM CITY POLICE

OFFICER
STRODE... IT'S...
IT'S ME...



"HE'S BEEN OUT THERE...HE'S BEEN FREE FOR SO LONG..."

"...BUT HE NEVER VISITED...HE NEVER CAME TO SAY HELLO."



CF YOU HAVE THREE NEW VOICE MESSAGES.

TOMMY, IT'S WARREN... PLEASE, IT'S BEEN MONTHS...YOU NEED TO COME BACK. I JUST WENT TO SEE MOLLY AND--

NO...

BEEP

TOM, IT'S MOLLY...YOU NEED TO SIGN THOSE PAPERS. YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT I'M NOT COMING BACK. JERRY AND I ARE VERY HAPP--

OH, HELL NO.

BEEP

HEH.

NO...

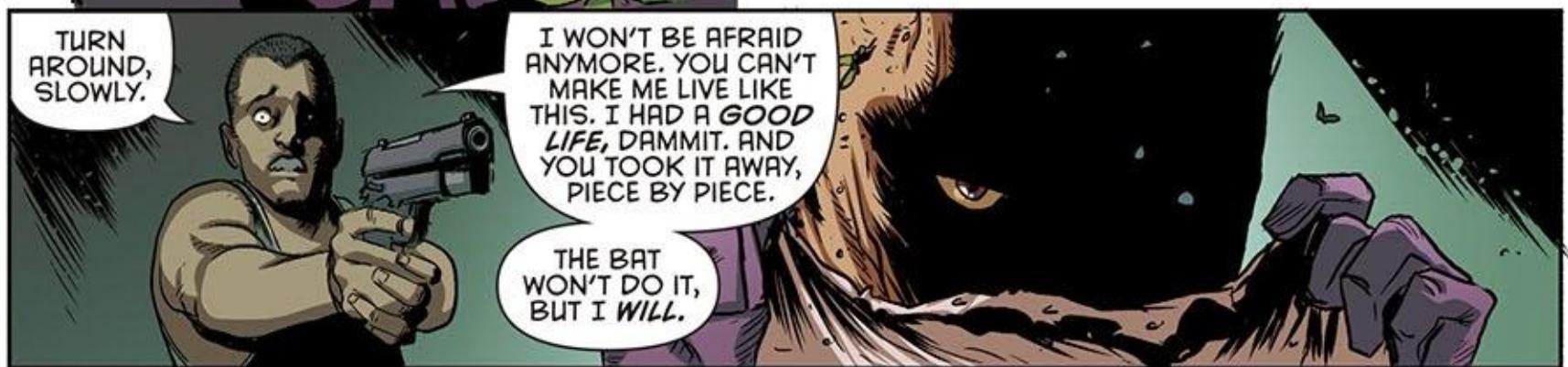
HEE
HEEEHEEE
HEHE...

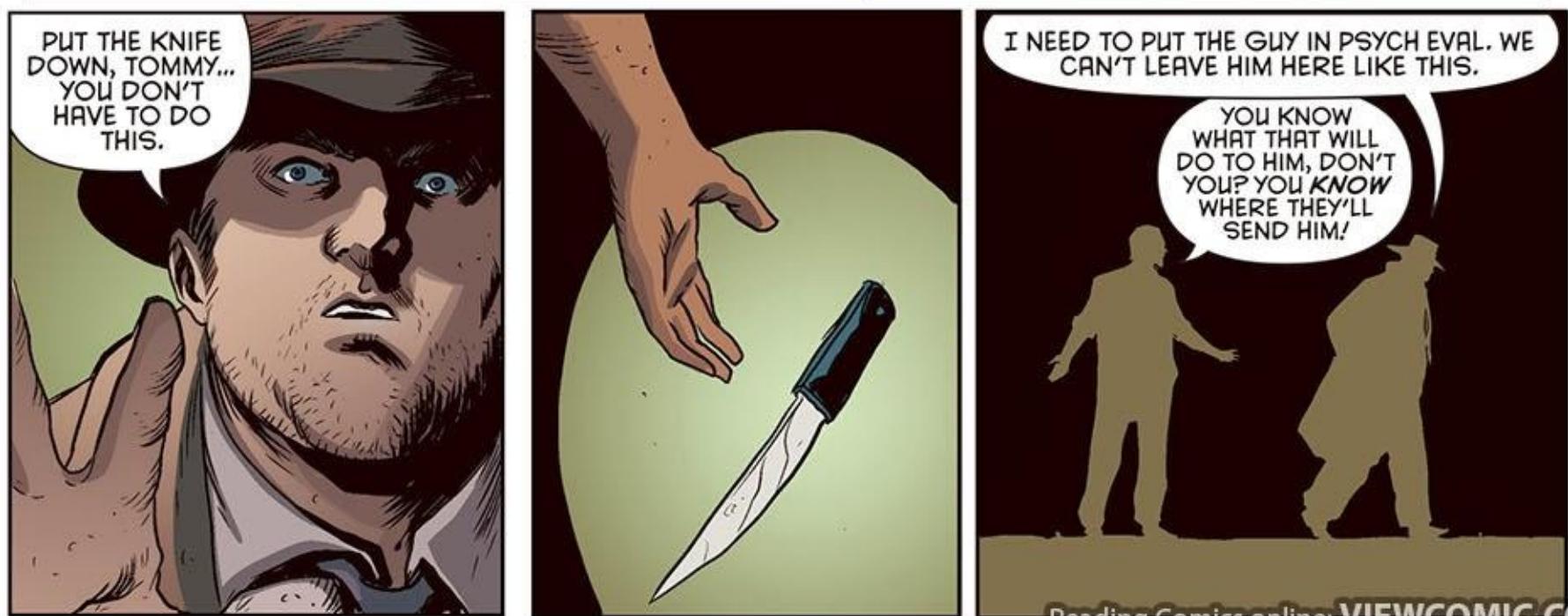
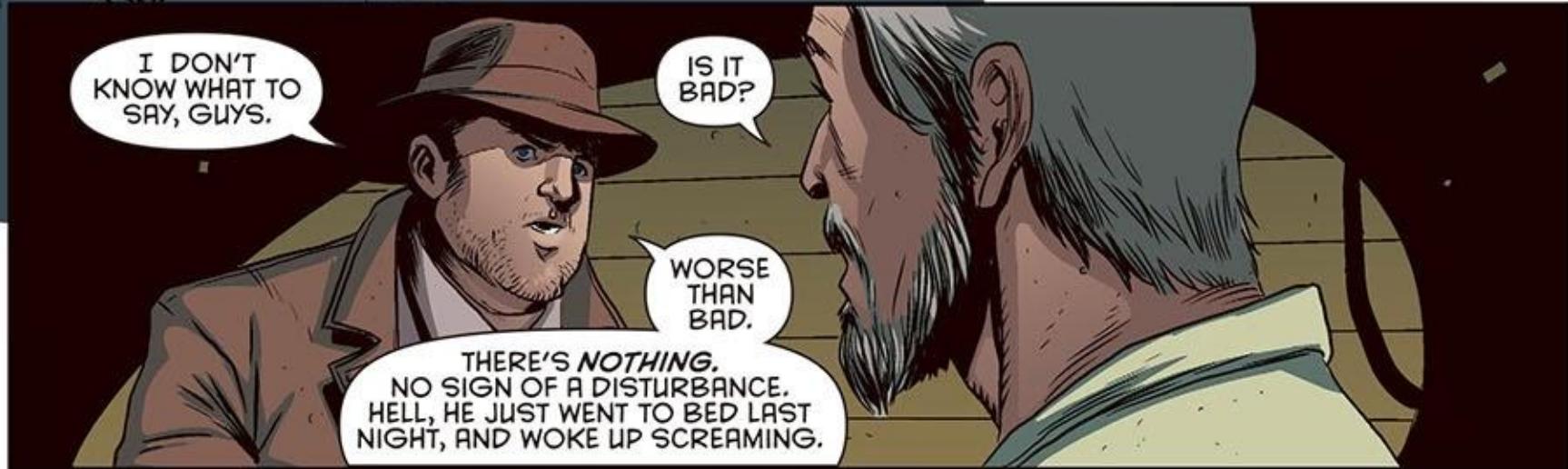
SKRRRTTCH
SKRRRTTCH
BEEP











NOW.



I CAN
RELATE.

LOOK, TOMMY. I'M GOING TO DRIVE TO BOSTON TONIGHT. MAYBE EVEN FURTHER. I WANT YOU TO COME WITH ME.

DON'T
YOU THINK
I BELONG
HERE?

YOU WERE
DEEMED NO FLIGHT RISK
BEFORE THE OLD ASYLUM
WAS DESTROYED. YOU ARE AN
OPT-IN PATIENT HERE. YOU
COULD CHECK YOURSELF
OUT ANY TIME.

COME
WITH ME.
WE CAN BE
SAFE.

WHY
WOULD I?

BECAUSE
YOU'RE MY
FRIEND,
DAMMIT.



HE WORKS HERE, ACTUALLY.
HE SITS IN MY ROOM AND
TALKS TO ME EVERY NIGHT. HE
ACTUALLY SNUCK ME SOME
PAPER SO I COULD START
WRITING AGAIN.

HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT MY PAST
OR THAT I WAS A JERK, HE SAYS HE
SEES SOMETHING SPECIAL IN ME. HE
JUST LIKES TALKING TO ME.

THERE'S
ONLY ONE
PERSON WHO'S
EVER BEEN MY
FRIEND.

IT'S BEEN
THE FIRST TIME I'VE
BEEN ABLE TO CALL
SOMEONE FRIEND AND
NOT WANT TO *THROW
UP* SINCE THIS ALL
STARTED.

BUT,
TOMMY...

JUST GO,
WARREN. I'M
FINE HERE. THIS
IS WHAT I
WANT.

THERE ARE
WHOLE DAYS
NOW WHERE I
DON'T EVEN SEE
HIS FACE IN MY
MIND.

HE HASN'T BEEN
BY IN A FEW DAYS...
BUT I KNOW HE'LL
BE BACK.

I'M GLAD
YOU FOUND
SOMEONE YOU
CAN RELY
ON.

YOU DON'T
HAVE TO
WORRY ABOUT
ME, ANYMORE.
OKAY?

GOODBYE,
TOMMY.

JUST PROMISE ME YOU WON'T
LEAVE...YOU WON'T GET HURT.
I'VE LOST TOO MUCH IN THE LAST
FIVE YEARS. I CAN'T LOSE
ANOTHER BEST FRIEND.

HELLO,
TOMMY.

OH, THANK
GOD, ERIC. I
THOUGHT MAYBE
HE'D GOTTEN
YOU.

PROMISE
ME YOU'LL BE
THERE, ERIC...
PLEASE...
PROMISE
ME.



ALWAYS.

THE
END