BATMAN®

582

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HAMA • McDANIEL • STORY

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PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY THAT YOU DON'T HEAR A BULLET UNTIL IT HITS YOU...
...BUT THE TRUTH ISN'T QUITE THAT SIMPLE. I SHOULD KNOW, I'VE BEEN SHOT OFTEN ENOUGH.
WHAT REALLY HAPPENS IS THAT THE GUNFIRE, THE BULLETS, SUCK THE SOUND OUT OF THE AIR.
AND IF YOU'RE EXPOSED TO IT OFTEN ENOUGH, IT IS LIKE YOU ARE DEAF, AND EVERYTHING IS MOVING IN SLOW MOTION.
I ALMOST FEEL I COULD PICK THESE BULLETS RIGHT OUT OF THE AIR, BUT THAT IS JUST ANOTHER PART OF THIS SLOW SENSATION.
LIKE THE LABORED BREATHING OF THIS MAN, THE BLOOD BUBBLING SLOWLY FROM HIS LIPS, AS HE BLEEDS OUT.
THIS MAN WHO WAS ONCE MY FRIEND.

FEARLESS PART 1

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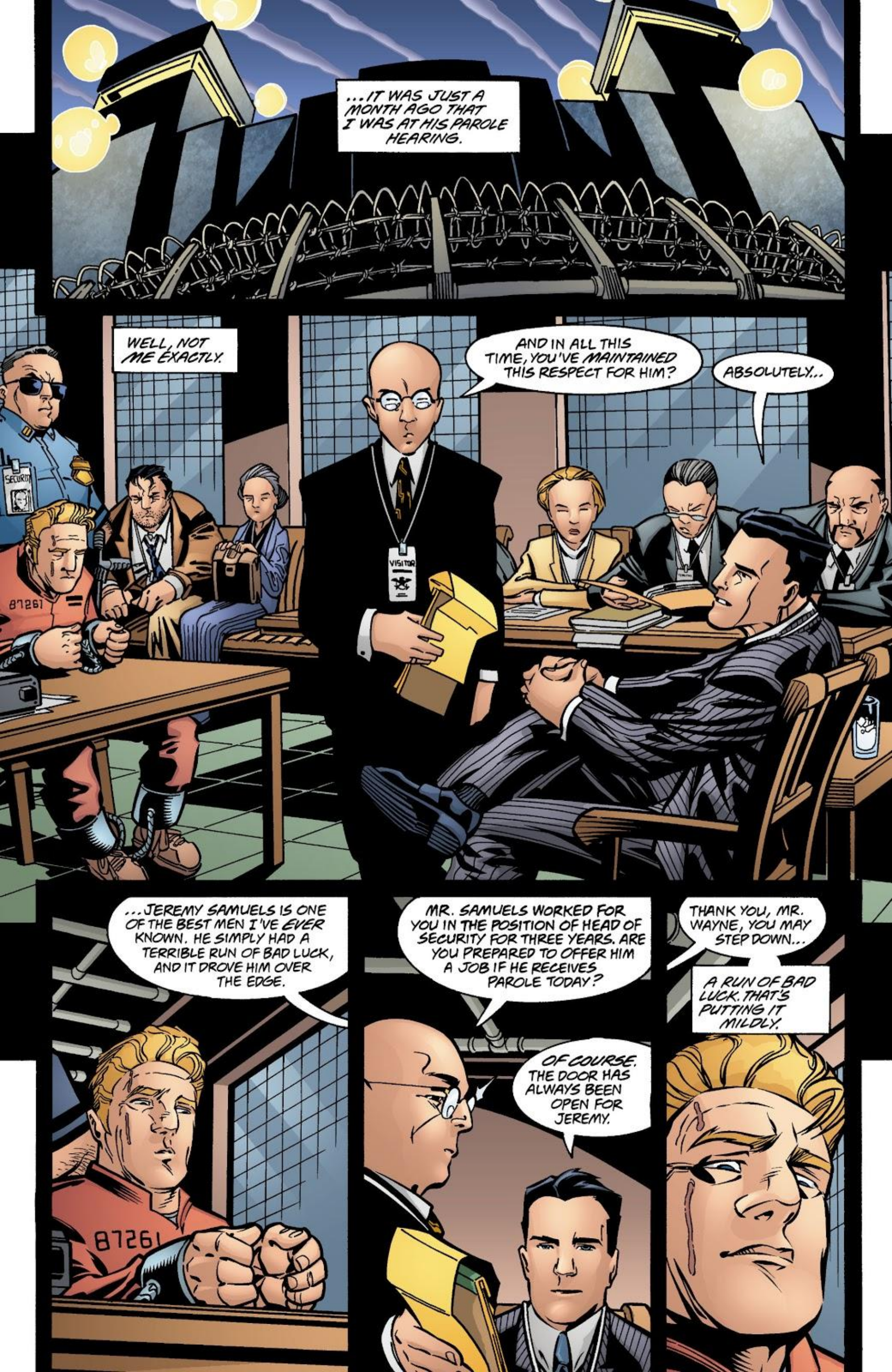

...IT WAS JUST A MONTH AGO THAT I WAS AT HIS PAROLE HEARING.
WELL, NOT ME EXACTLY.
AND IN ALL THIS TIME, YOU'VE MAINTAINED THIS RESPECT FOR HIM?
ABSOLUTELY...
SECURITY
87261
VISITOR
...JEREMY SAMUELS IS ONE OF THE BEST MEN I'VE EVER KNOWN. HE SIMPLY HAD A TERRIBLE RUN OF BAD LUCK, AND IT DROVE HIM OVER THE EDGE.
MR. SAMUELS WORKED FOR YOU IN THE POSITION OF HEAD OF SECURITY FOR THREE YEARS. ARE YOU PREPARED TO OFFER HIM A JOB IF HE RECEIVES PAROLE TODAY?
OF COURSE. THE DOOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN OPEN FOR JEREMY.
THANK YOU, MR. WAYNE, YOU MAY STEP DOWN...
A RUN OF BAD LUCK. THAT'S PUTTING IT MILDLY.
87261

WILL LIEUTENANT HARVEY BULLOCK TAKE THE STAND, PLEASE?
BUT I CAN JUST SEE FROM THE LOOK ON HARVEY'S FACE THAT HE STILL DOESN'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST BIT OF SYMPATHY FOR WHAT THIS MAN HAS BEEN THROUGH.

TO HIM IT IS JUST A LITANY OF CRIMES. HE LEAVES OUT THE REASON BEHIND THEM...
--ARMED ROBBERY, BREAKING AND ENTERING, ASSAULTING AN OFFICER... DO I EVEN HAVE 'TA GO ON?

...HE DOESN'T REMEMBER THE JEREMY FROM BEFORE. THE SECURITY EXPERT WHO LET NOTHING SLIP BY HIM.
FOUNDATION

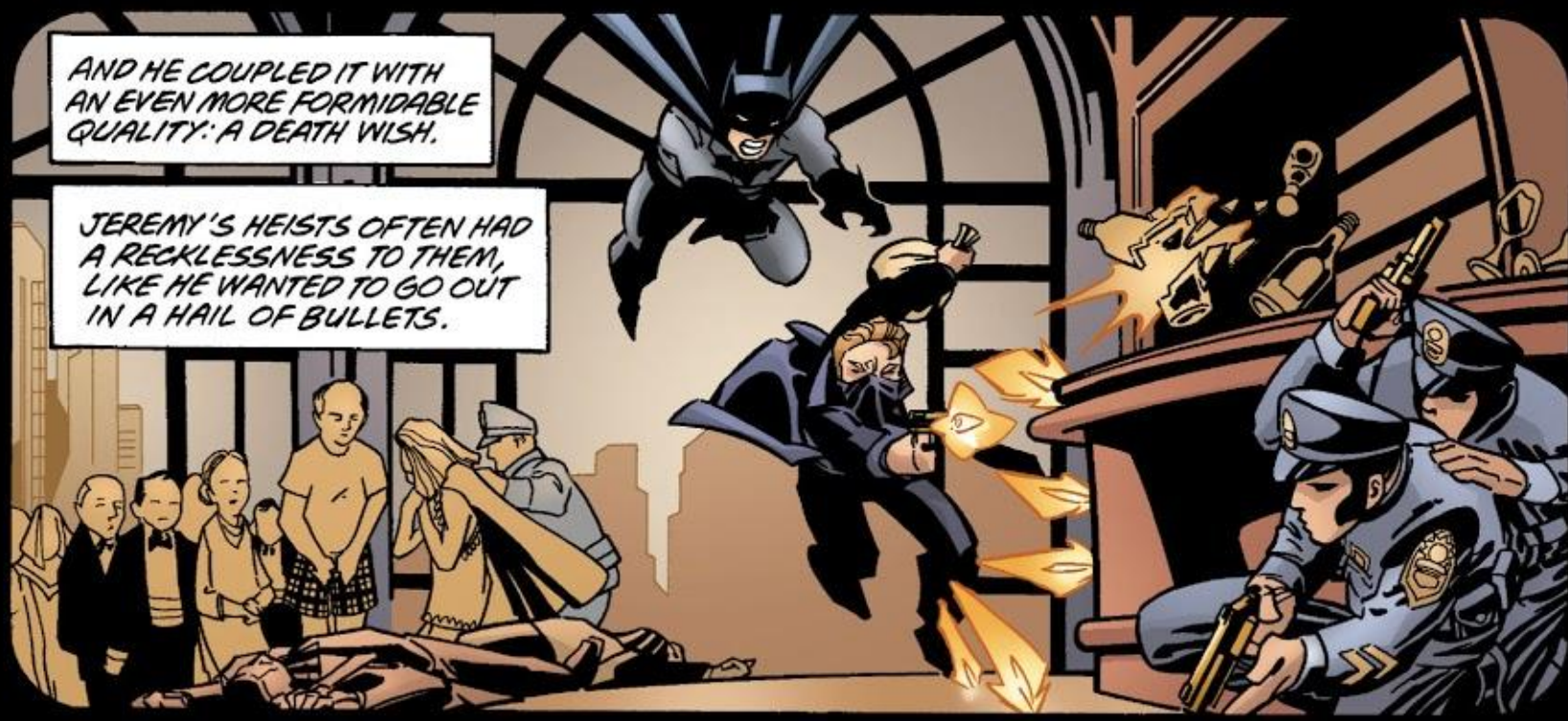
AND WHO HELPED ME IN BOTH MY LIVES, WITHOUT REALIZING THEIR CONNECTION. AS AN OCCASIONAL ASSISTANT IN ONE..

...AN EMPLOYEE AND FRIEND IN THE OTHER.

HE CERTAINLY CAN'T REMEMBER THE LOOK I USED TO SEE IN HIS EYES WHEN HIS WIFE AND SON WERE AROUND. HIS FAMILY WAS LIKE A BEACON OF HOPE...

...UNTIL THEY WERE RIPPED AWAY FROM HIM, ALONG WITH THE REST OF LIFE, BECAUSE OF SOME FAULTY WIRING AND A GAS LEAK.
THAT WAS WHEN HE BECAME THE MAN THAT HARVEY BULLOCK REMEMBERS.
I UNDERSTOOD IT WELL. JEREMY HAD THOUGHT THAT IF HE LIVED RIGHT, LIFE WOULD REWARD HIM. BUT INSTEAD HE LOST EVERYTHING THAT MATTERED TO HIM.
HE HADN'T COUNTED ON THE RANDOM CRUELTY OF FATE, A CONCEPT I WAS ALREADY VERY FAMILIAR WITH.

BUT WHEN JEREMY COLLIDED WITH FATE, IT BROKE HIM. HE TURNED ON THE WORLD, USING ALL HIS EXPERTISE TO BECOME ONE OF THE SHARPEST CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS I'D EVER ENCOUNTERED.

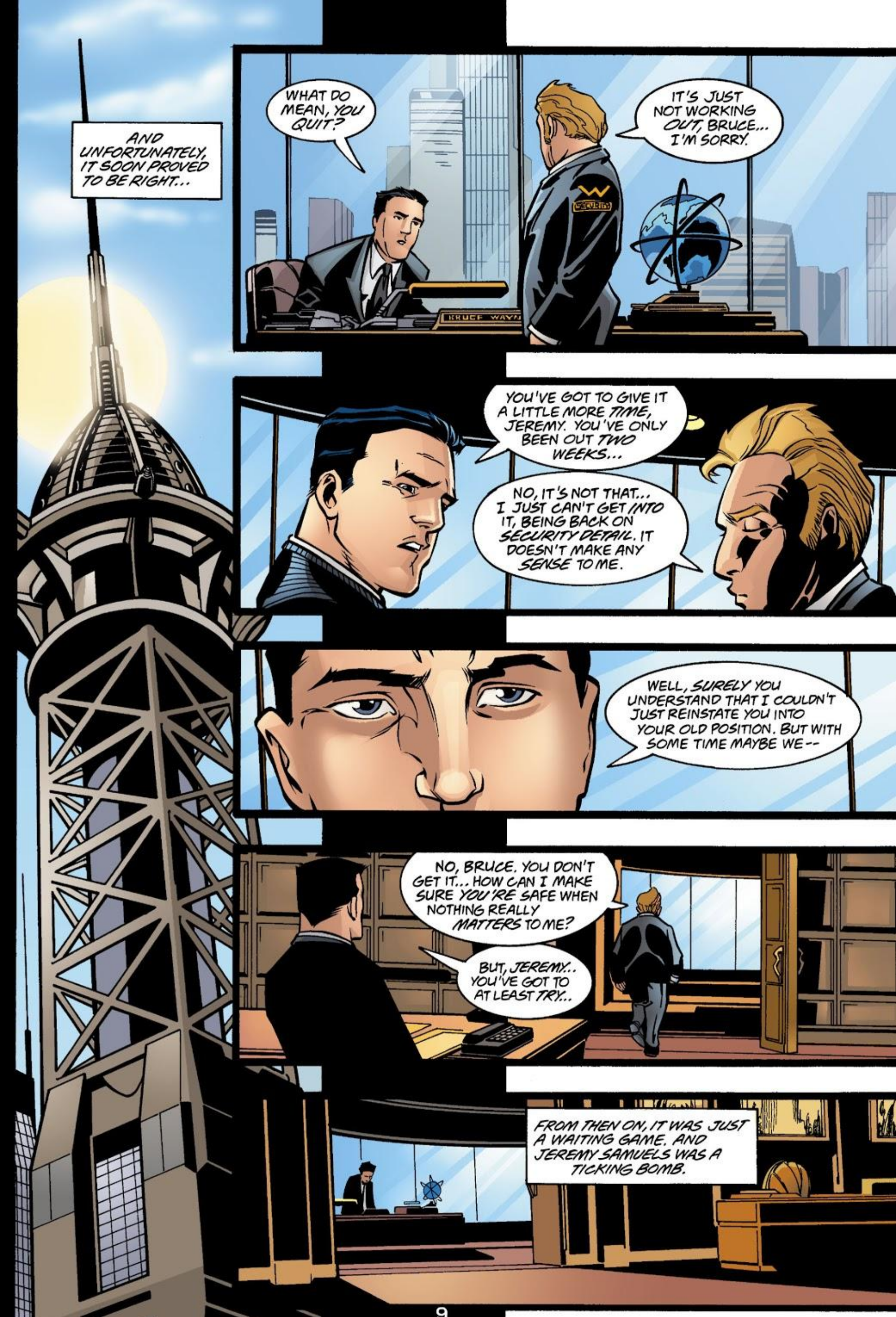

AND HE COUPLED IT WITH AN EVEN MORE FORMIDABLE QUALITY: A DEATH WISH.
JEREMY'S HEISTS OFTEN HAD A RECKLESSNESS TO THEM, LIKE HE WANTED TO GO OUT IN A HAIL OF BULLETS.

FIVE YEARS AGO, HE NEARLY GOT HIS WISH. AIMING AN EMPTY GUN AT THE POLICE DURING HIS CAPTURE, HE WAS SHOT TWELVE TIMES.

I'M SURE HE CONSIDERS IT YET ANOTHER CRUEL TWIST OF FATE THAT HE SURVIVED.
--AND IN MY CONSIDERED OPINION, MR. SAMUELS UNDERSTANDS THAT WHAT HE DID WAS WRONG, AND POSES NO FURTHER THREAT TO SOCIETY.

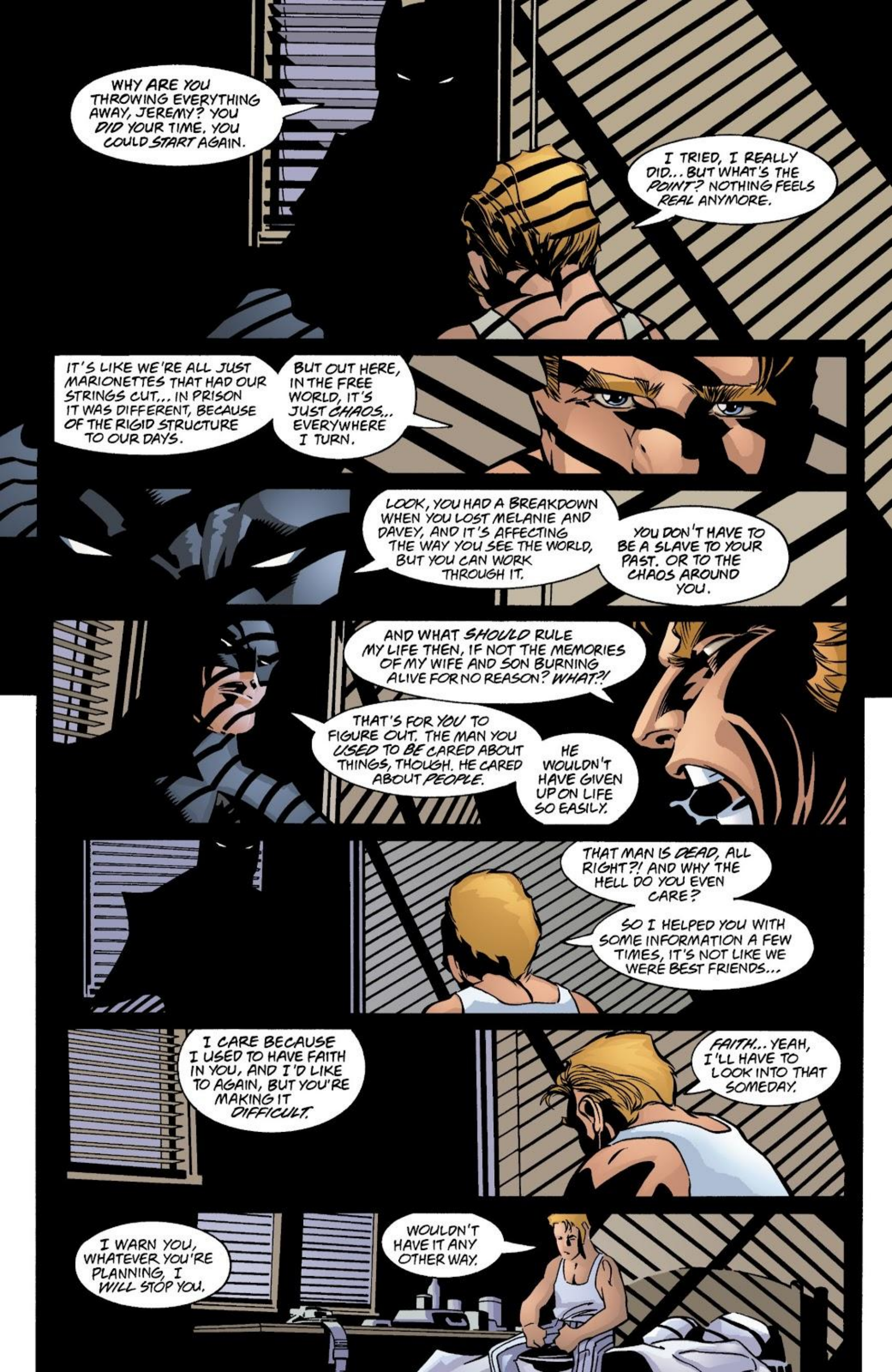
THANK YOU, DR. BABCOCK... WOULD THE PETITIONER LIKE TO SAY A FEW WORDS ON HIS OWN BEHALF?

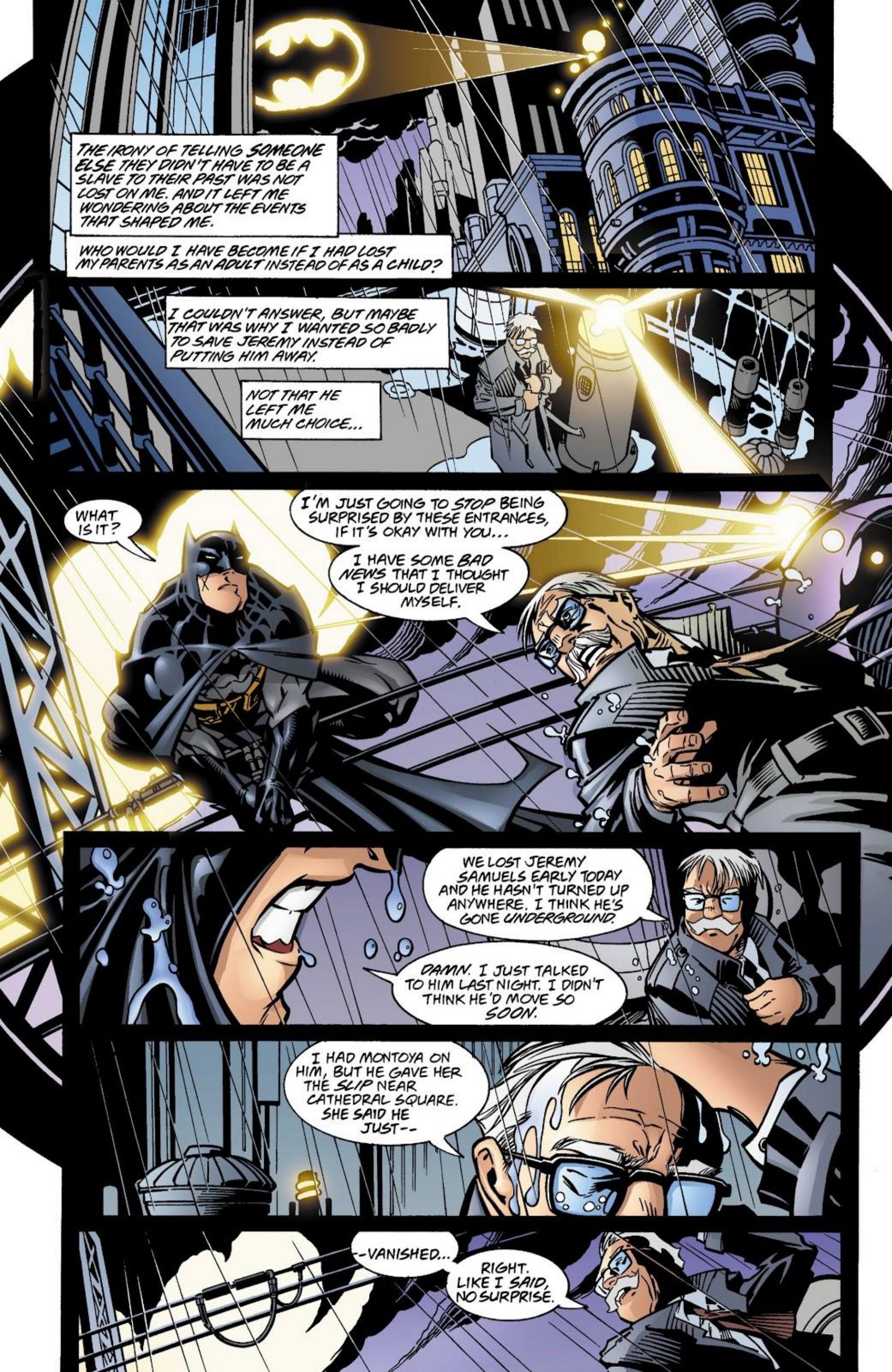
YES, I WOULD.
I WENT THROUGH A HARD TIME... AFTER MY FAMILY DIED, AND I DID A LOT THAT I'M NOT PROUD OF. BUT I NEVER REALLY MEANT TO HURT ANYONE BUT MYSELF.
I'VE HAD A LOT OF TIME TO THINK, OVER THE YEARS, AND ALL I REALLY WANT NOW IS TO TRY AND GET BACK A LITTLE OF THE PERSON I WAS BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT WRONG.
TO BECOME A PRODUCTIVE MEMBER OF SOCIETY AGAIN.
I'VE HEARD ENOUGH LIES TO KNOW HE WAS FORCING HIS WORDS, BUT STILL, PART OF ME WANTED THEM TO BE TRUE ANYWAY.
WANTED MY FRIEND TO WANT HIS LIFE BACK, INSTEAD OF JUST BEING BACK ON HIS ROAD TO OBLIVION.
PAROLE APPROVED
BUT THE OTHER PART OF ME WAS NOT QUITE SO TRUSTING. IT WAS TOO IN TOUCH WITH THE CRUELTIES OF LIFE.


AND UNFORTUNATELY, IT SOON PROVED TO BE RIGHT...
WHAT DO MEAN, YOU QUIT?
IT'S JUST NOT WORKING OUT, BRUCE... I'M SORRY.
YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE IT A LITTLE MORE TIME, JEREMY. YOU'VE ONLY BEEN OUT TWO WEEKS...
NO, IT'S NOT THAT... I JUST CAN'T GET INTO IT, BEING BACK ON SECURITY DETAIL. IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE TO ME.
WELL, SURELY YOU UNDERSTAND THAT I COULDN'T JUST REINSTATE YOU INTO YOUR OLD POSITION. BUT WITH SOME TIME MAYBE WE--
NO, BRUCE. YOU DON'T GET IT... HOW CAN I MAKE SURE YOU'RE SAFE WHEN NOTHING REALLY MATTERS TO ME?
BUT, JEREMY... YOU'VE GOT TO AT LEAST TRY...
FROM THEN ON, IT WAS JUST A WAITING GAME. AND JEREMY SAMUELS WAS A TICKING BOMB.

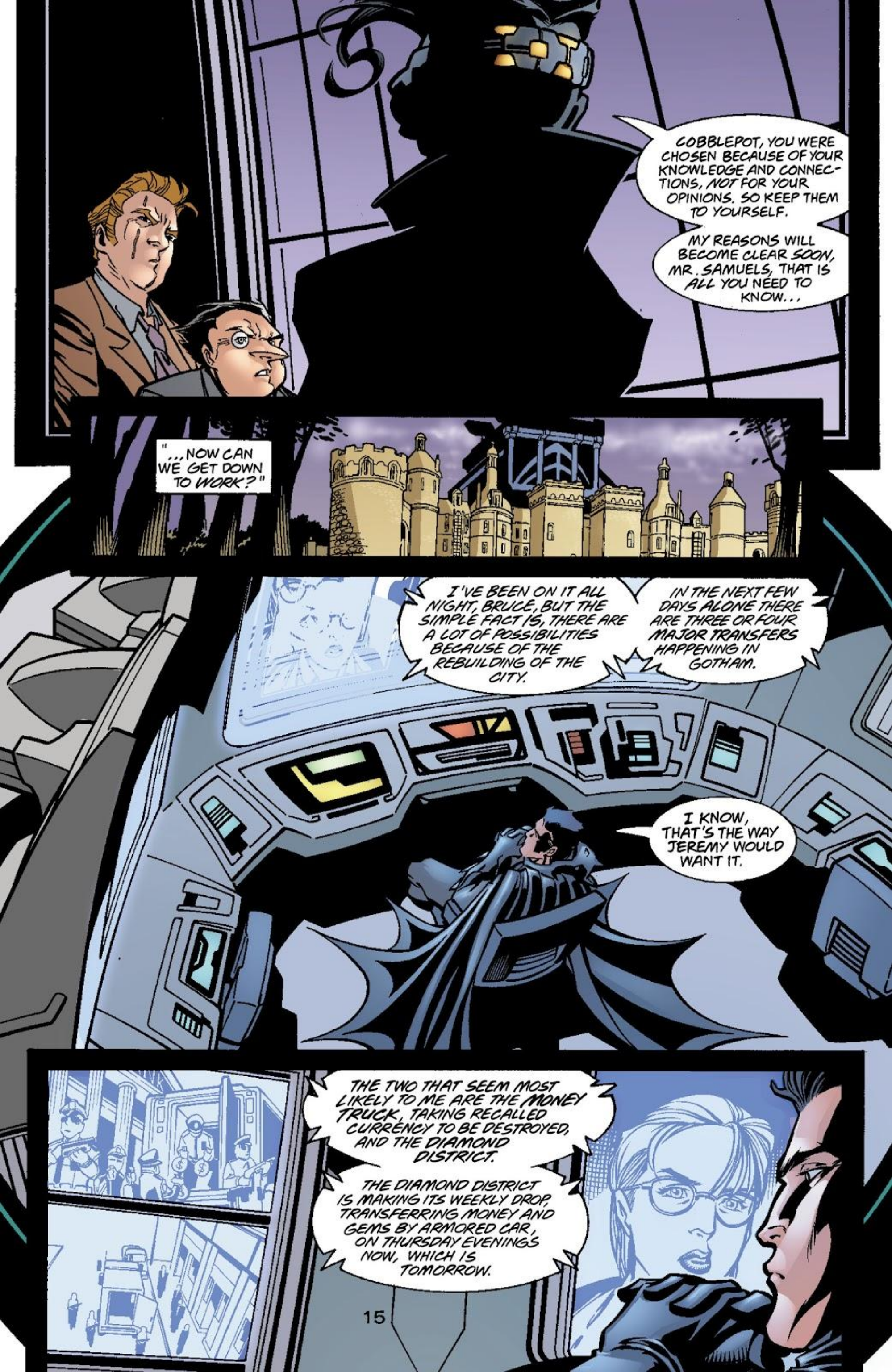
SO FOR THE NEXT WEEK AND A HALF, I, ONE OF MY ASSOCIATES, OR THE GOTHAM P.D., KEPT HIM UNDER WATCH--
--WHICH WASN'T EASY. JEREMY WAS ONE OF THE BEST THERE WAS AT LOSING A TAIL.
HERE'S HOW HE LOST ME: HE SWITCHED TRAINS 3 TIMES, TOOK A CAB ACROSS TOWN, GOT ONTO ANOTHER TRAIN...
...AND THEN WHEN WE WENT INTO A TUNNEL, HE DECIDED TO GET REALLY SLICK.
YO' DUDE, 'RE YOU WHACK OR WHAT?
I GUESS... UHN... OR WHAT... UGHN...
GO, DUDE! GO!
OW...
OW... OW... OW...
AS I SAID, HE WAS GOOD. NOT CARING IF YOU LIVE OR DIE CAN DO THAT TO A MAN.

HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN HOME?
ABOUT AN HOUR, HE GOT DROPPED OFF IN A CAB.
I RAN THE HACK NUMBER BY ORACLE AND IT WAS A PICKUP FROM GOTHAM CENTRAL STATION, SO THAT'S NO HELP.
YOU'D BETTER GET BACK TO BRENTWOOD. I CAN HANDLE IT FROM HERE.
WHY ARE WE PUTTING SO MUCH ENERGY INTO THIS GUY? WHO SAYS HE'S GOING BACK TO A LIFE OF CRIME, ANYWAY? MAYBE HE'S JUST DEPRESSED.
YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND, IT WAS BEFORE YOUR TIME.
I'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE...
DON'T FEEL BAD, IT WAS BEFORE DICK'S TIME, TOO.
YOU'RE QUIET, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE HERE. I HEARD THAT WINDOW OPEN IN THE OTHER ROOM.


WHY ARE YOU THROWING EVERYTHING AWAY, JEREMY? YOU DID YOUR TIME. YOU COULD START AGAIN.
I TRIED, I REALLY DID... BUT WHAT'S THE POINT? NOTHING FEELS REAL ANYMORE.
IT'S LIKE WE'RE ALL JUST MARIONETTES THAT HAD OUR STRINGS CUT... IN PRISON IT WAS DIFFERENT, BECAUSE OF THE RIGID STRUCTURE TO OUR DAYS.
BUT OUT HERE, IN THE FREE WORLD, IT'S JUST CHAOS... EVERYWHERE I TURN.
LOOK, YOU HAD A BREAKDOWN WHEN YOU LOST MELANIE AND DAVEY, AND IT'S AFFECTING THE WAY YOU SEE THE WORLD, BUT YOU CAN WORK THROUGH IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A SLAVE TO YOUR PAST. OR TO THE CHAOS AROUND YOU.
AND WHAT SHOULD RULE MY LIFE THEN, IF NOT THE MEMORIES OF MY WIFE AND SON BURNING ALIVE FOR NO REASON? WHAT?!
THAT'S FOR YOU TO FIGURE OUT. THE MAN YOU USED TO BE CARED ABOUT THINGS, THOUGH. HE CARED ABOUT PEOPLE.
HE WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN UP ON LIFE SO EASILY.
THAT MAN IS DEAD, ALL RIGHT?! AND WHY THE HELL DO YOU EVEN CARE?
SO I HELPED YOU WITH SOME INFORMATION A FEW TIMES, IT'S NOT LIKE WE WERE BEST FRIENDS...
I CARE BECAUSE I USED TO HAVE FAITH IN YOU, AND I'D LIKE TO AGAIN, BUT YOU'RE MAKING IT DIFFICULT.
FAITH... YEAH, I'LL HAVE TO LOOK INTO THAT SOMEDAY.
I WARN YOU, WHATEVER YOU'RE PLANNING, I WILL STOP YOU.
WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.


THE IRONY OF TELLING SOMEONE ELSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO BE A SLAVE TO THEIR PAST WAS NOT LOST ON ME. AND IT LEFT ME WONDERING ABOUT THE EVENTS THAT SHAPED ME.
WHO WOULD I HAVE BECOME IF I HAD LOST MY PARENTS AS AN ADULT INSTEAD OF AS A CHILD?
I COULDN'T ANSWER, BUT MAYBE THAT WAS WHY I WANTED SO BADLY TO SAVE JEREMY INSTEAD OF PUTTING HIM AWAY.
NOT THAT HE LEFT ME MUCH CHOICE...
WHAT IS IT?
I'M JUST GOING TO STOP BEING SURPRISED BY THESE ENTRANCES, IF IT'S OKAY WITH YOU...
I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS THAT I THOUGHT I SHOULD DELIVER MYSELF.
WE LOST JEREMY SAMUELS EARLY TODAY AND HE HASN'T TURNED UP ANYWHERE. I THINK HE'S GONE UNDERGROUND.
DAMN. I JUST TALKED TO HIM LAST NIGHT. I DIDN'T THINK HE'D MOVE SO SOON.
I HAD MONTOYA ON HIM, BUT HE GAVE HER THE SLIP NEAR CATHEDRAL SQUARE. SHE SAID HE JUST--
--VANISHED...
RIGHT. LIKE I SAID, NO SURPRISE.

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU SHOWED UP, I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'D FLOWN THE COOP...
NOT LIKELY. I JUST HAD TO CASE THOSE LOCATIONS ONE LAST TIME.
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?
PRACTICING, HE SAYS.
I NEED TO STORE THESE MEN'S MOVES, SO I CAN REFERENCE THEM AGAINST THE BAT. IT IS NOT JUST PRACTICE.
WELL, TAKE IT EASY! THESE GUYS DON'T COME CHEAP!
IS THIS WHO I'LL BE WORKING WITH?
NOT EXACTLY. YOU WILL BE WORKING FOR ME. AND I WILL BE THERE TO ASSIST WHEN THE TIME COMES.
RIGHT. SO WHY DO YOU NEED ME TO PLAN TWO JOBS? I DON'T GET IT...
YOU'LL ONLY BE WORKING ONE OF THEM. DON'T WORRY. IT WAS HIS IDEA.

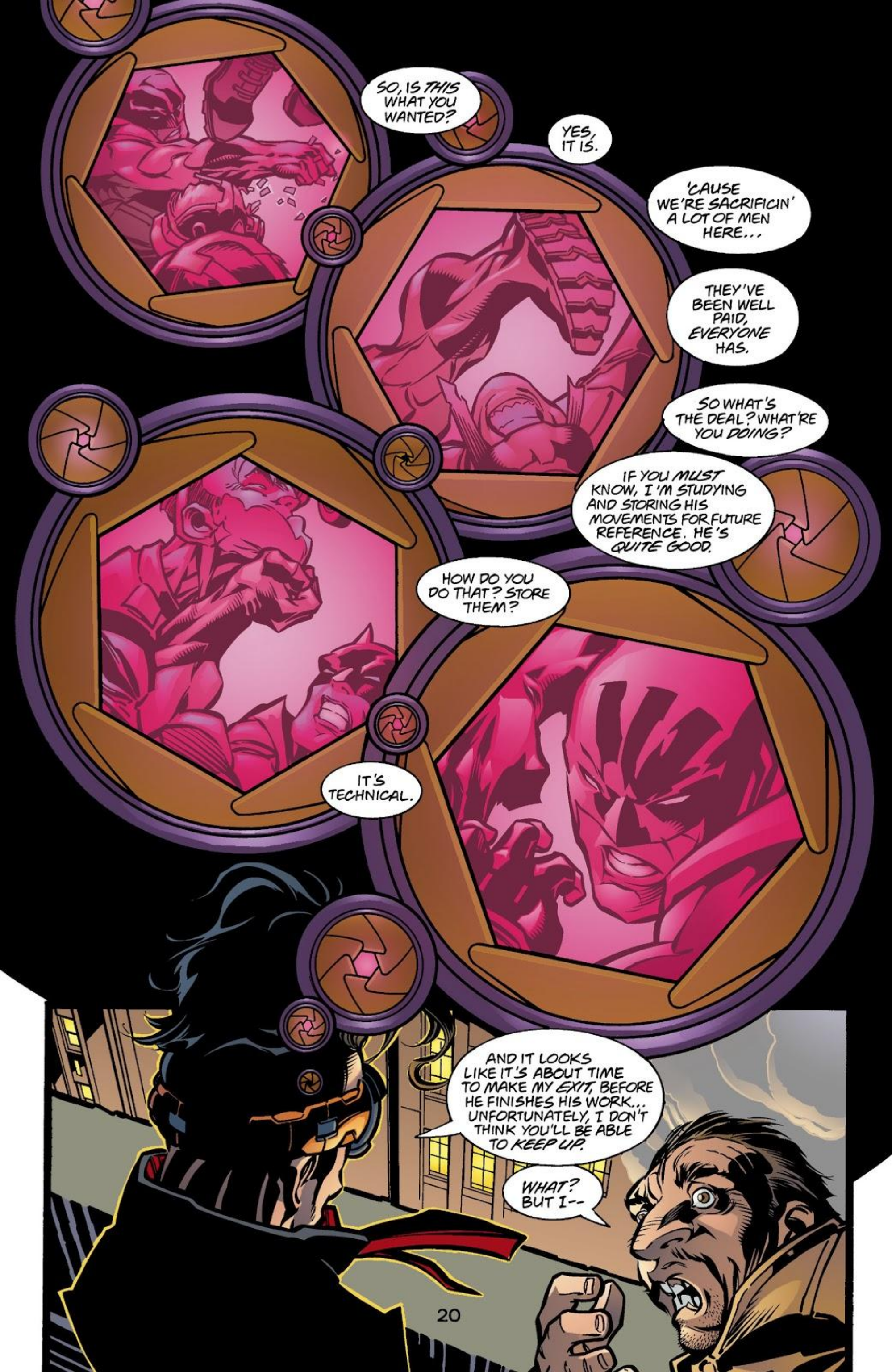

COBBLEPOT, YOU WERE CHOSEN BECAUSE OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTIONS, NOT FOR YOUR OPINIONS. SO KEEP THEM TO YOURSELF.
MY REASONS WILL BECOME CLEAR SOON, MR. SAMUELS, THAT IS ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW...
"...NOW CAN WE GET DOWN TO WORK?"
I'VE BEEN ON IT ALL NIGHT, BRUCE, BUT THE SIMPLE FACT IS, THERE ARE A LOT OF POSSIBILITIES BECAUSE OF THE REBUILDING OF THE CITY.
IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS ALONE THERE ARE THREE OR FOUR MAJOR TRANSFERS HAPPENING IN GOTHAM.
I KNOW, THAT'S THE WAY JEREMY WOULD WANT IT.
THE TWO THAT SEEM MOST LIKELY TO ME ARE THE MONEY TRUCK, TAKING RECALLED CURRENCY TO BE DESTROYED, AND THE DIAMOND DISTRICT.
THE DIAMOND DISTRICT IS MAKING ITS WEEKLY DROP, TRANSFERRING MONEY AND GEMS BY ARMORED CAR, ON THURSDAY EVENINGS NOW, WHICH IS TOMORROW.

I KNOW, IT'S ONE OF THE BIGGEST PURSES A THIEF COULD GRAB.
IT WOULD NEVER WORK, THOUGH. EVEN IF THEY PULLED IT OFF, THERE ARE TOO MANY MOBSTERS WITH THEIR HANDS IN THAT BUSINESS RIGHT NOW. WHO WOULD THEY FENCE TO?
TRUE. A PERSON WOULD HAVE TO BE CRAZY TO TRY IT, WOULDN'T THEY?
WHAT TIME IS THE MONEY TRUCK LEAVING?
THEY'RE ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS.
OF COURSE THEY ARE. HE'S GOOD, BUT HIS FATAL FLAW GIVES HIM AWAY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HE DOESN'T CARE IF STEALING THOSE JEWELS WILL GET HIM IN HOT WATER WITH EVERY MOBSTER IN GOTHAM. HE'LL FLAUNT IT IN THEIR FACES.

ALL CLEAR AT THE DIAMOND DROP. HOW GOES THE MONEY TRUCK?
THEY'RE MAINTAINING RADIO SILENCE SO FAR.
Feldman's Jewelers
Roeberg's
JEWELE
BUNDAR
ARMORED
HOLD ON, I THINK IT'S ABOUT TO GO DOWN HERE.
SOMETHING'S WRONG... THIS IS TOO BLATANT, AND NONE OF THE PERPS LOOK LIKE JEREMY AT ALL.
AASHH
SKR

ORACLE, STAY ON TOP OF THAT MONEY TRUCK, AND GET NIGHTWING OR ROBIN OUT THERE IF YOU HAVE TO...
THIS DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT AT ALL.

Gottlieb Jewele


SO, IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED?
YES, IT IS.
'CAUSE WE'RE SACRIFICIN' A LOT OF MEN HERE...
THEY'VE BEEN WELL PAID, EVERYONE HAS.
SO WHAT'S THE DEAL? WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
IF YOU MUST KNOW, I'M STUDYING AND STORING HIS MOVEMENTS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE. HE'S QUITE GOOD.
HOW DO YOU DO THAT? STORE THEM?
IT'S TECHNICAL.
AND IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S ABOUT TIME TO MAKE MY EXIT, BEFORE HE FINISHES HIS WORK... UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO KEEP UP.
WHAT? BUT I--

Kraska JEWELERS
THIS WAS A SETUP, A DIVERSION, BUT TO WHAT PURPOSE? THESE MEN ARE FIGHTERS, MARTIAL ARTISTS, NOT ROBBERS.
IT TOOK ALL I HAD TO PUT THEM DOWN.
SO THE QUESTION IS, WHO WAS WATCHING THIS EXHIBITION, AND WHY? WHO'S PULLING MY STRINGS?
AAIIIEEEE!!
KARASH
I CATCH A BRIEF GLIMPSE...

...AND IT'S SOMEONE I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
BUT HE'S GONE BY THE TIME I REACH THE ROOFTOP.
THAT'S WHEN I REALIZE THAT THINGS ARE A LOT MORE COMPLICATED THAN I THOUGHT THEY WERE ALREADY. WHAT HAS JEREMY GOTTEN HIMSELF INTO?
TO BE CONCLUDED