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THE DARK KNIGHT RISES™

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JULY 20

THE NEW 52!

11

BATMAN

THE EPIC
FINAL OF THE
COURT
OF OWLS!

SCOTT
SNYDER
GREG
CAPULLO
JONATHAN
GLAPION

SEP 2012

RATED T TEEN

DCCOMICS.COM

Capullo
12



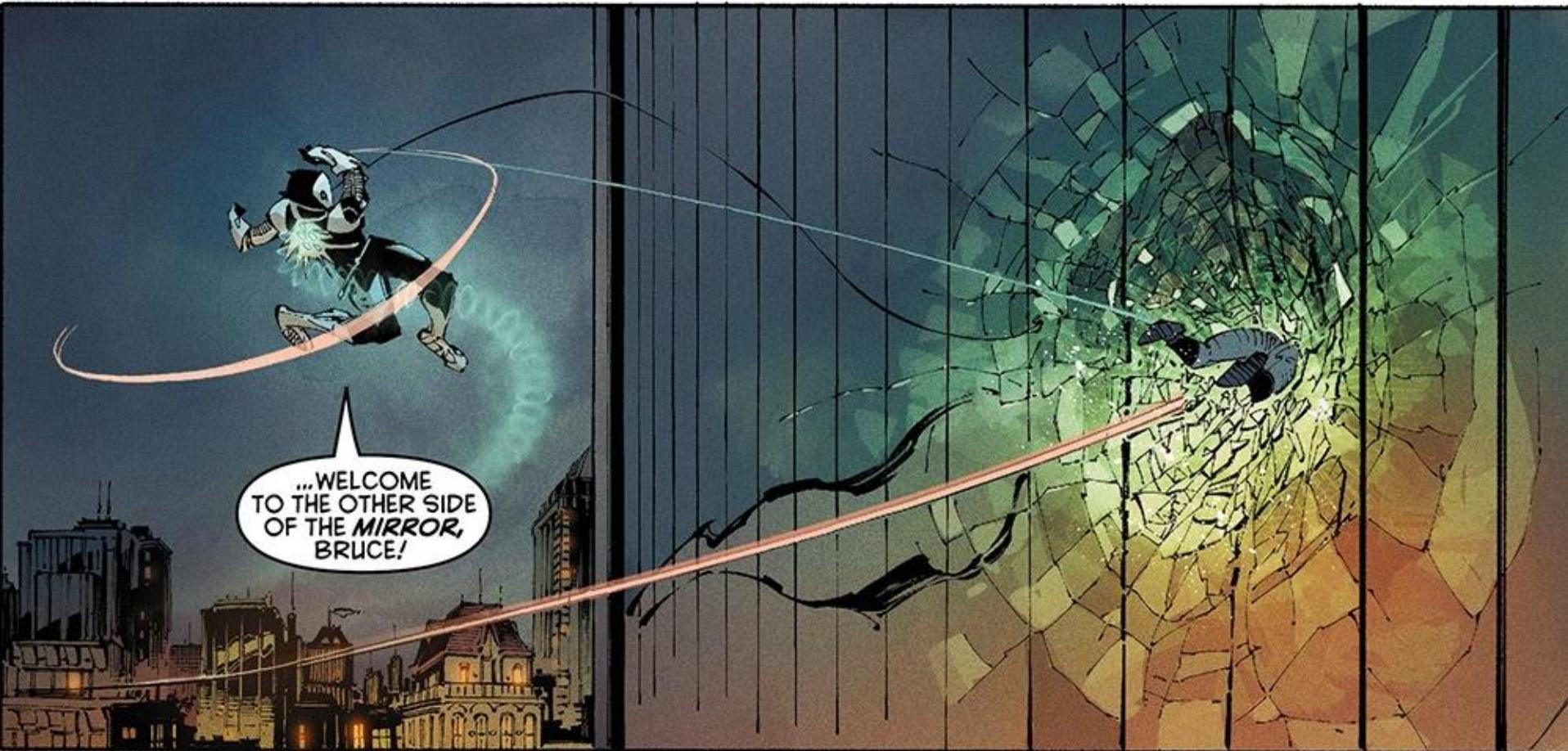
THAT
ALL YOU GOT,
BROTHER?
OR ARE
YOU JUST
PLAYING
NICE?

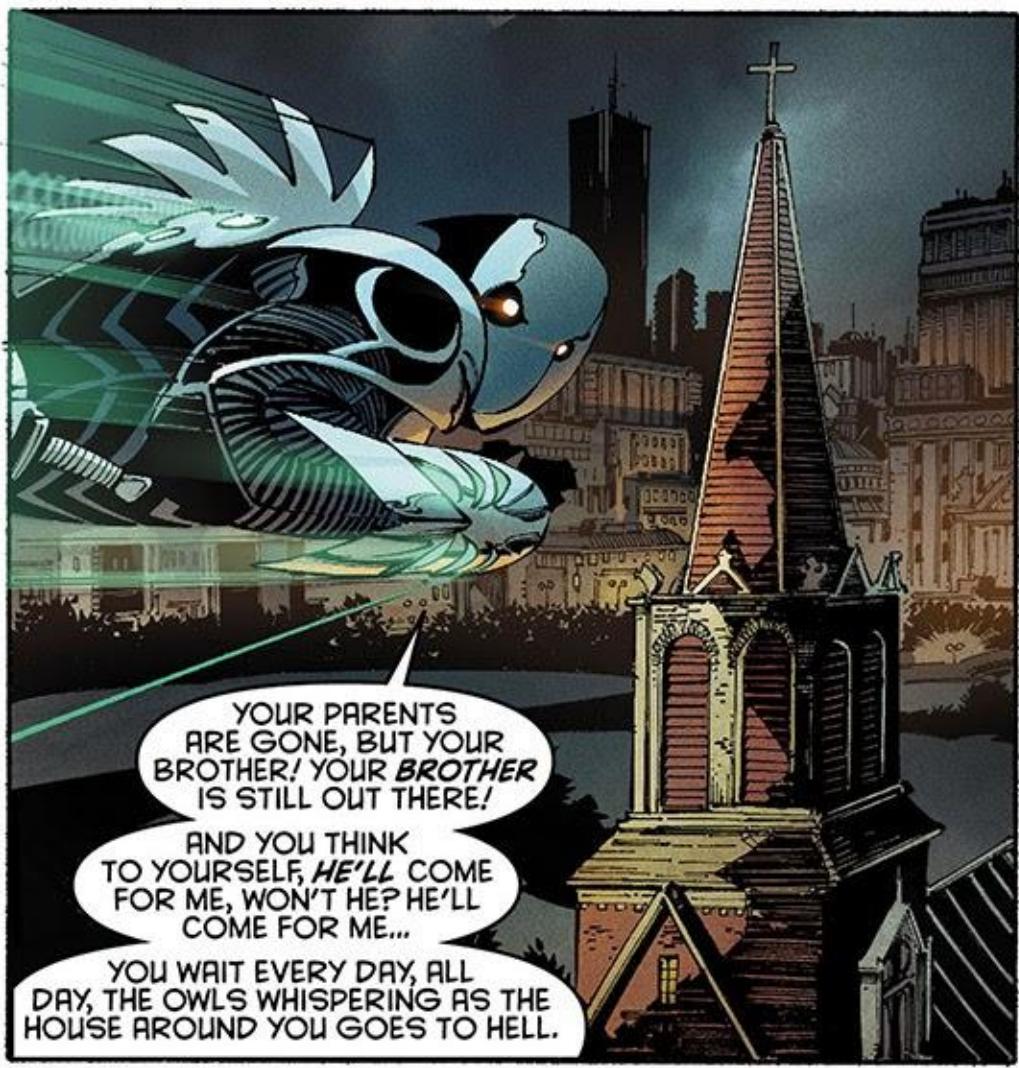












SO YOU FINALLY ACCEPT IT. YOU ACCEPT THAT YOUR BROTHER HAS FORCED YOU OUT OF HIS MIND SO HE CAN HAVE IT ALL--THE WHOLE CITY. AND YOU ACCEPT THAT THIS REVERSE CITY IS YOURS...

THE ONE YOUR BROTHER EXILED YOU TO, A PALE REFLECTION, A BACKWARDS CITY THAT PEOPLE ENTER BUT NEVER LEAVE. A GOTHAM THAT TRAPS YOU IN PLACE!

I MEAN THAT LITERALLY, BRUCE! SEE THE GOTHAM AIRPORT OVER THERE? THE RUNWAYS ARE ALL DIRECTED EAST FOR TAKE-OFF AND WEST FOR LANDING!

SO ALL DAY I HEARD PLANES COMING, NEVER LEAVING. NEVER EVER LEAVING...

AND SO ENDS OUR TOUR, BROTHER!

I'LL WATCH THE PIECES OF YOU COME OUT THE OTHER SIDE, SCATTERED OVER THE CITY YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW SO WELL...

...BUT DIDN'T KNOW AT ALL!



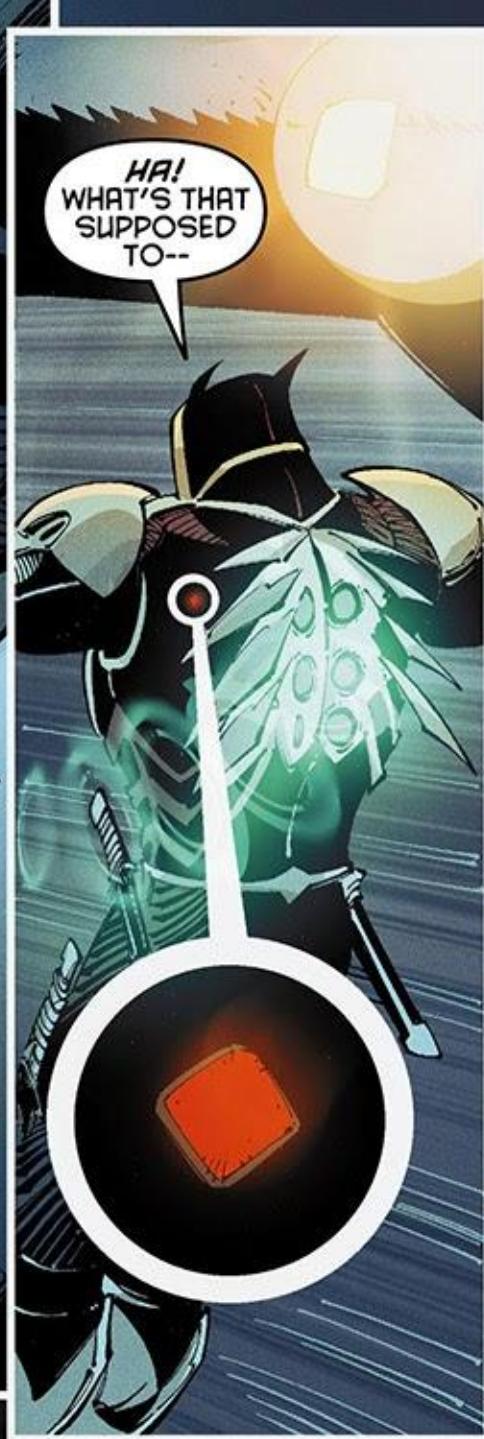
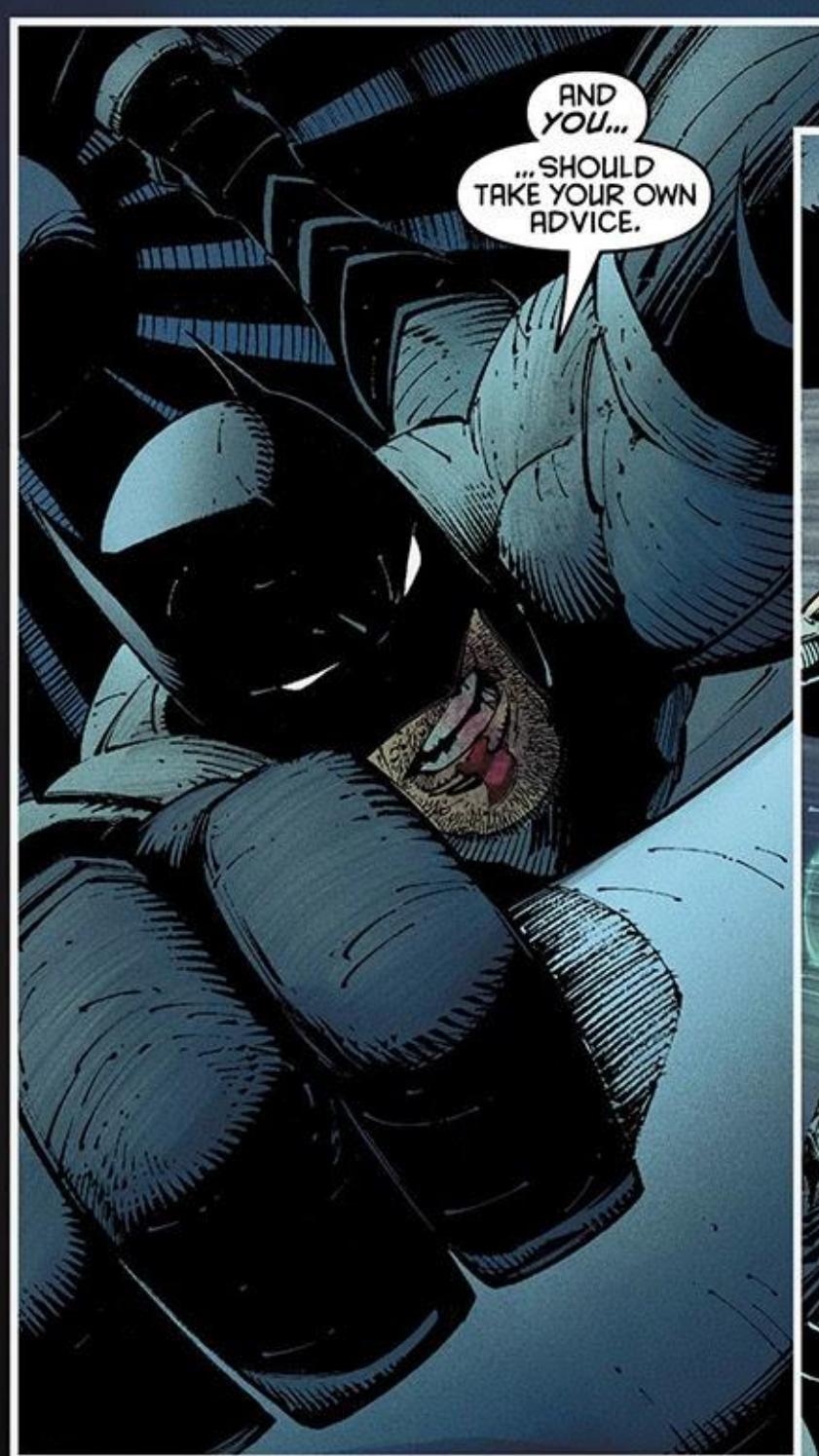


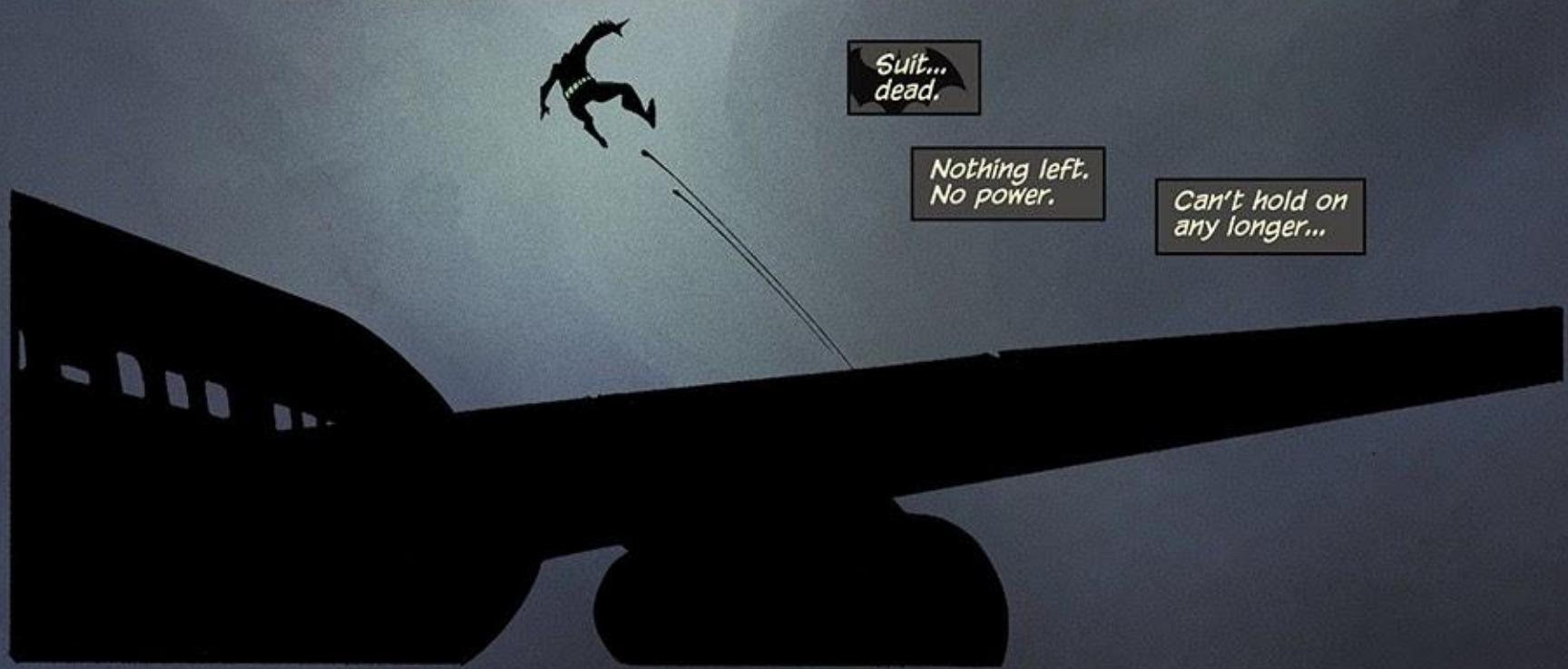
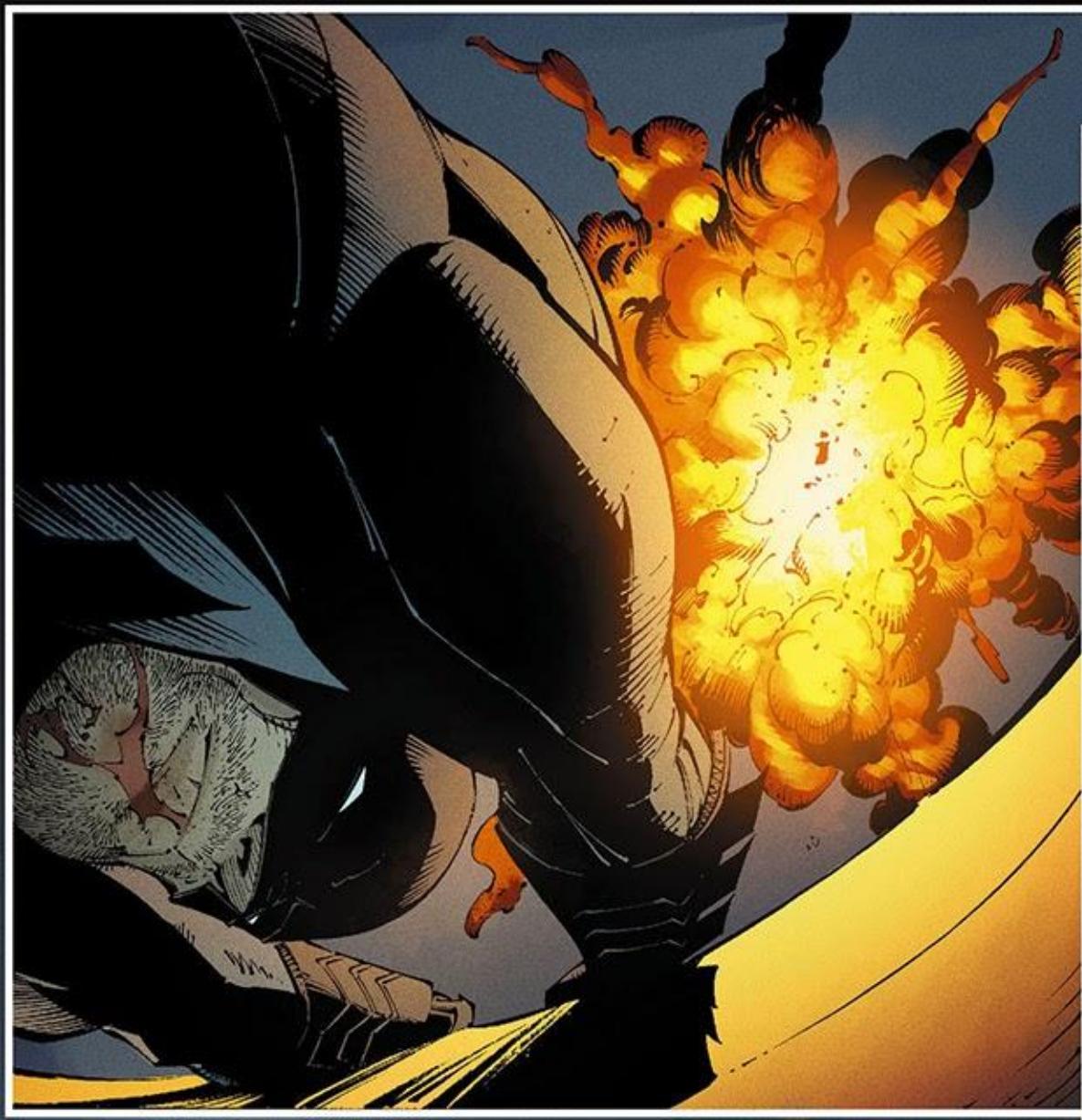
YOU MUST HAVE FELT IT SOMETIMES, BRUCE-- THAT SENSATION OF **BEING WATCHED**?

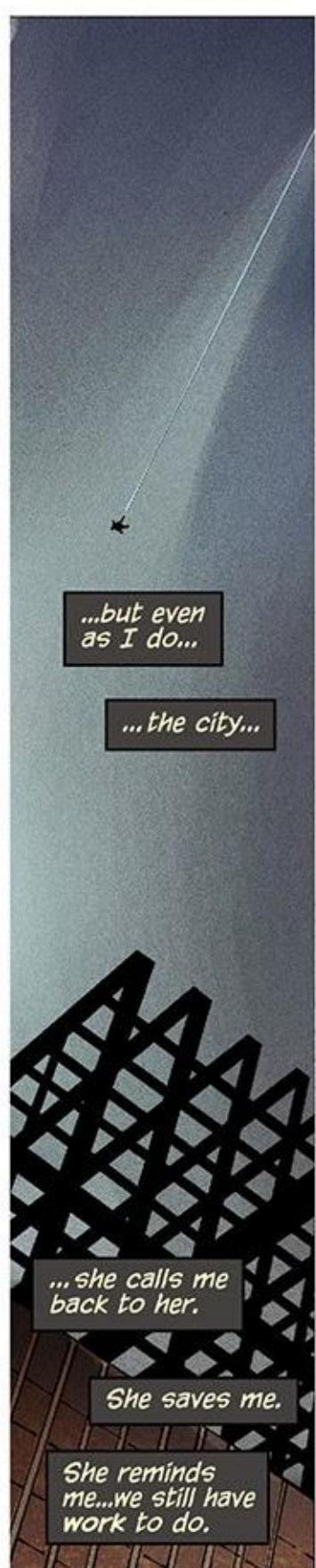
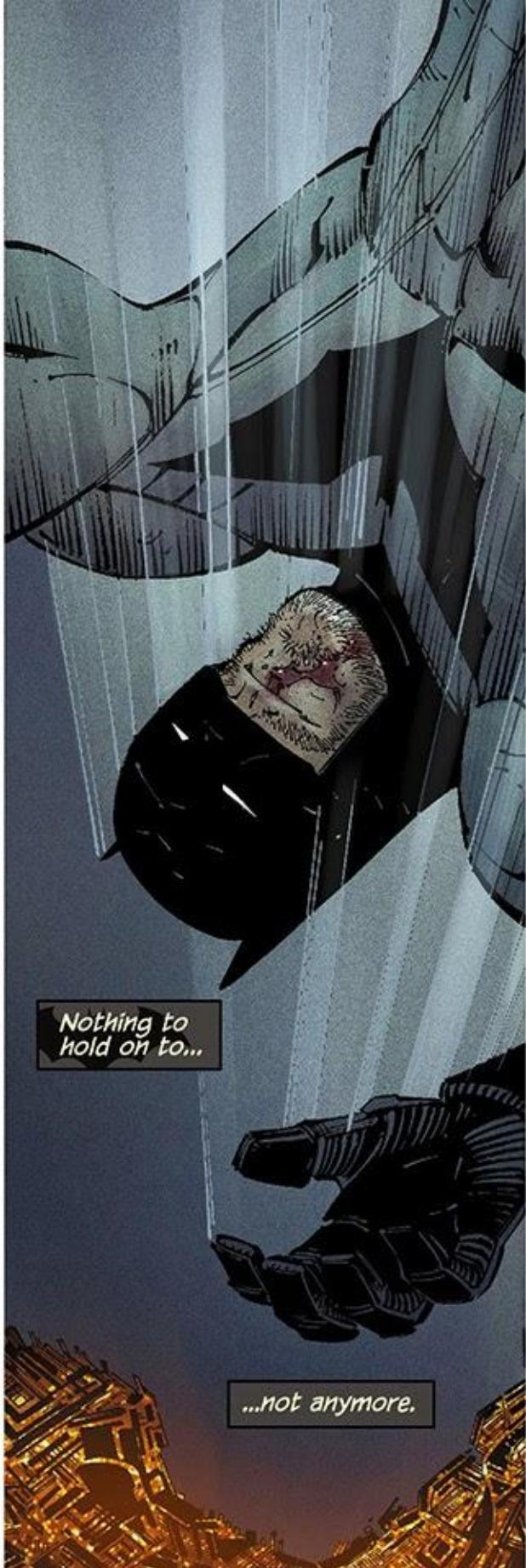
WELL, THOSE WERE **MY EYES** YOU FELT. MY EYES WATCHING YOU DAY AND NIGHT, HATING YOU FOR NOT SEEING ME, FOR NOT LOOKING BACK! **HATING** YOU WITH EVERY FIBER IN MY BODY!

AND ALL THAT TIME YOU SPENT WATCHING OVER YOUR LITTLE KINGDOM, NOSE TO THE STREETS AND WINDOWS... ALL THAT TIME I WAS GETTING **BETTER, STRONGER** WITH THE OWLS, GETTING READY TO BECOME **THEIR KING!**

ALL THAT TIME YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN WATCHING YOUR **OWN BACK!**



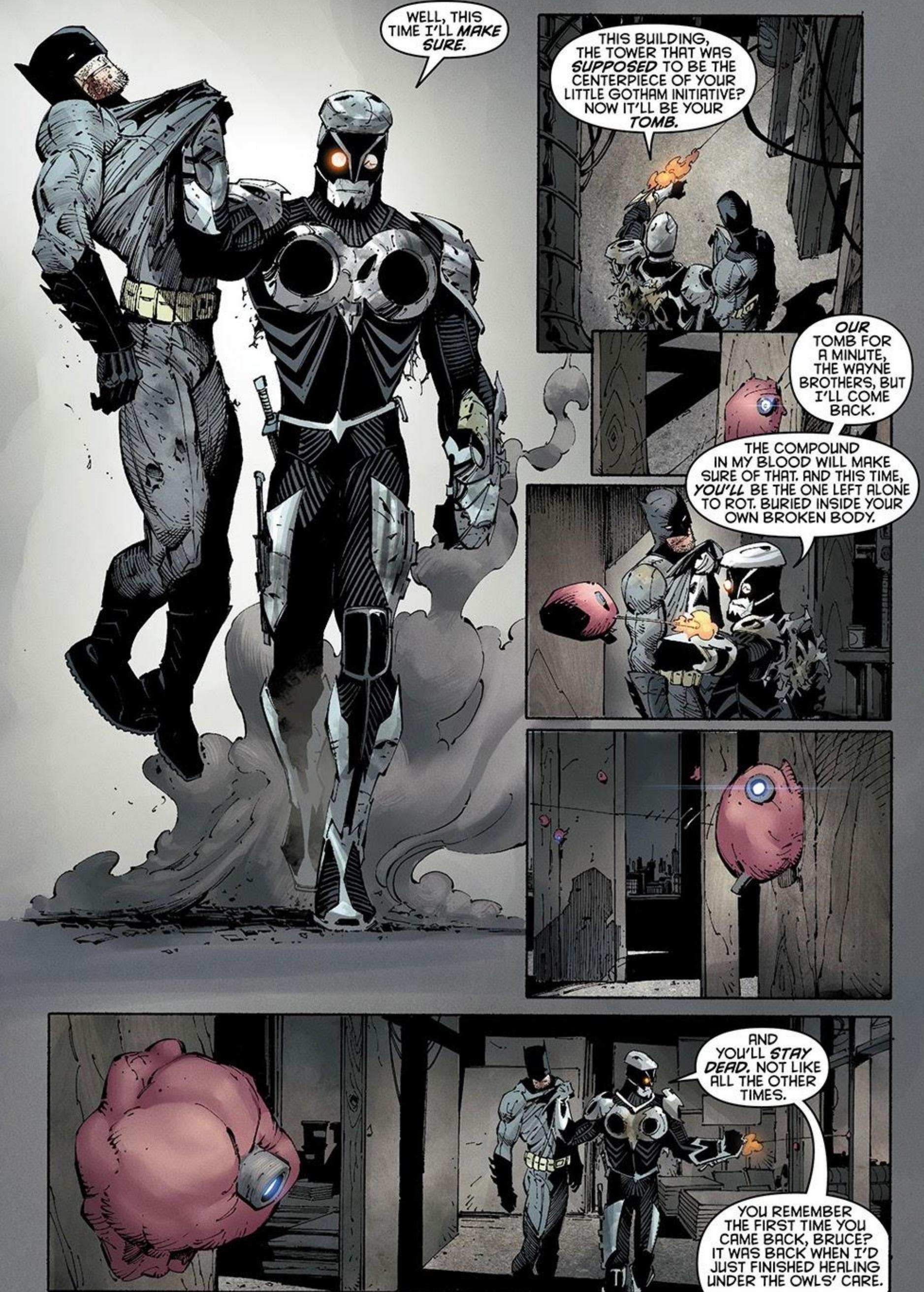






YOU
JUST WON'T STAY
DEAD--WILL YOU,
BROTHER?





YOU'D BEEN GONE FOR YEARS. YOU'D LEFT TO TRAVEL THE WORLD...

...AND YOU DISAPPEARED. THE COURT HAD SAID YOU DIED SOMEWHERE IN THE HIMALAYAS, OR THE BACK ALLEYS OF PARIS.

I WAS HEALED, AND THE OWLS' PLAN WAS TO PRESENT ME TO THE CITY AS MYSELF, AS THOMAS WAYNE, JR. I WAS GOING TO BRING THE HOUSE OF WAYNE TO ITS GREATEST HEIGHTS, WITH THEIR HELP.

BUT THEN... YOU RETURNED. OUT OF NOWHERE.

AND THE COURT THOUGHT THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE WAYNE FAMILY WAS TOO BRIGHT...

SO THEY CAME UP WITH "LINCOLN MARCH." A MAN I COULD BECOME TO RECLAIM THE CITY FOR THEM IN A DIFFERENT WAY. "YOU'LL BE THE BEAK OF THE GREAT OWL," THEY SAID.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED, BRUCE. I WANTED THE CITY IN EARNEST. IT WAS MY TIME.

NOW I CAN NEVER HAVE IT. I KNOW THAT. BUT IF I CAN'T BE THIS CITY'S FUTURE, I'LL BE ITS SECRET PAST...

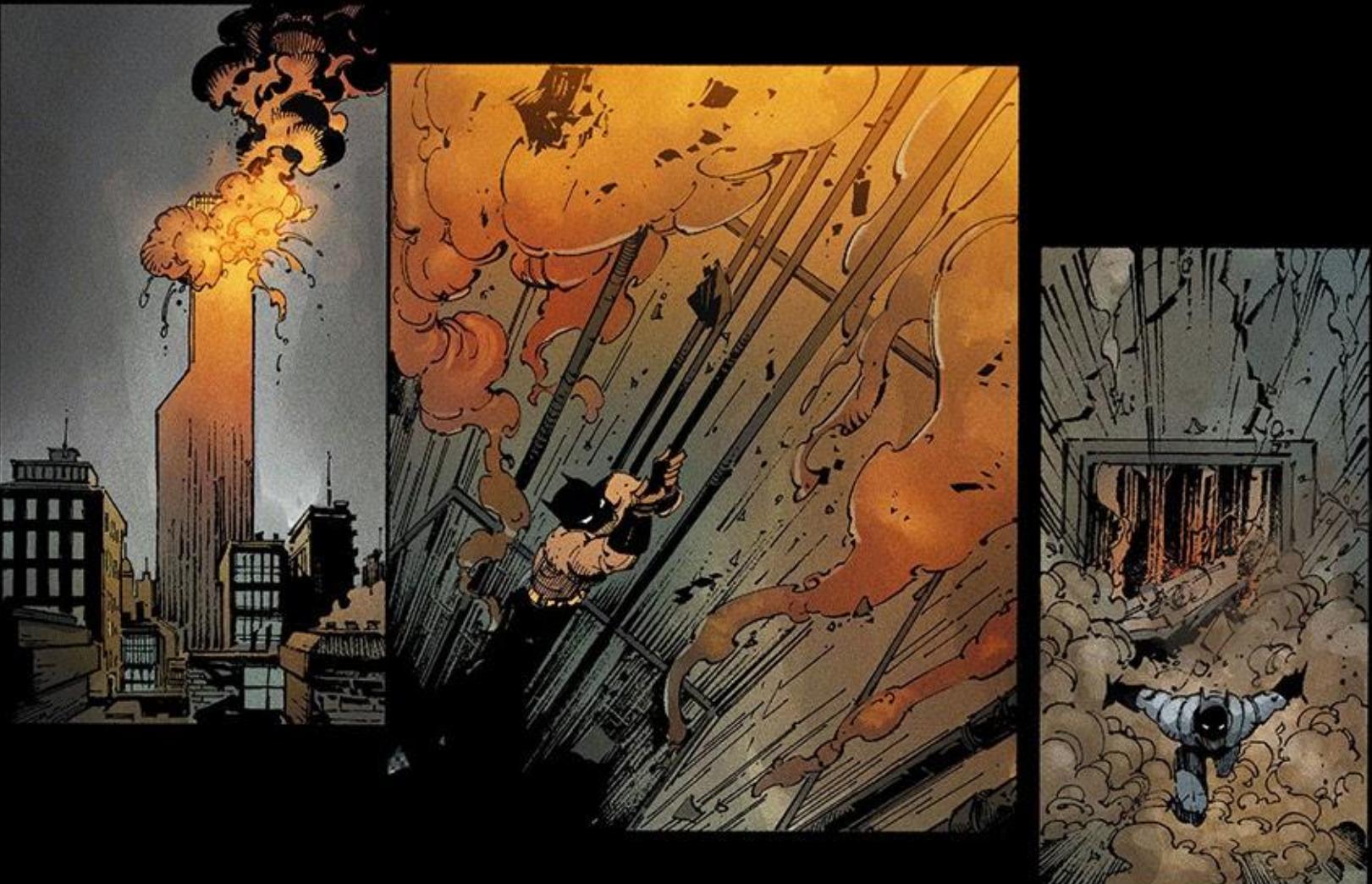
...I'LL BE THE PAST COME TO GET YOU. THE GOTHAM OF THE DEAD, THE GHOST CITY. ALL THE ONES YOU NEVER LOOKED BACK AT IN YOUR ARROGANCE. I'LL STAND FOR THEM.

SO DIE KNOWING THIS, BROTHER. YOU? YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A FOOTNOTE, A BLIP, DESTINED TO BE FORGOTTEN.

ME, I AM GOTHAM'S HISTORY!

FINALLY
KOFF...



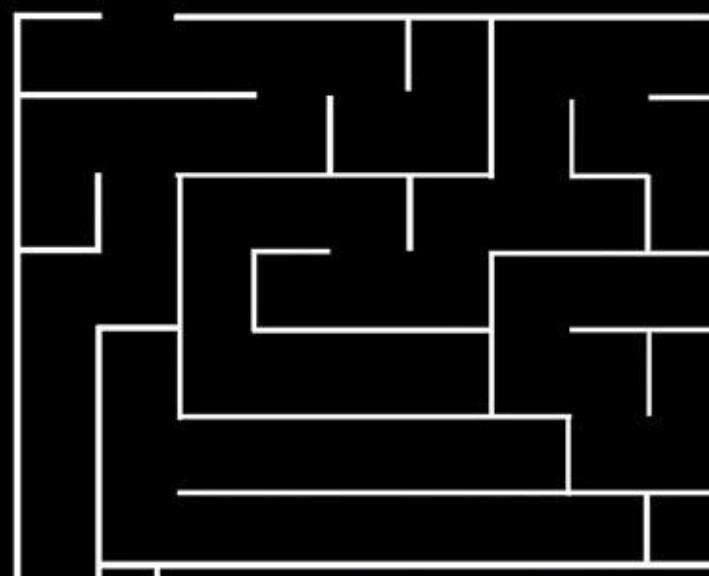




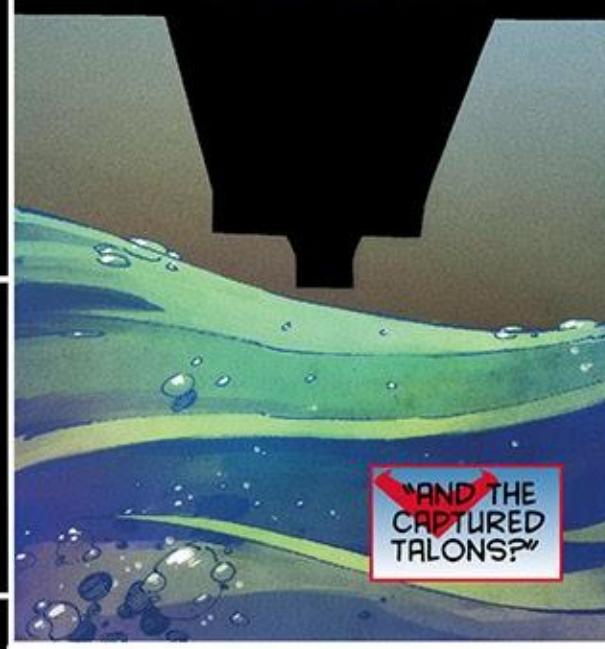


"IM STILL MAKING INROADS, FOLLOWING THE MONEY. BUT THE TRUTH IS, THEIR RESOURCES ARE STAGGERING. AND THE MAZE THEY'VE MADE TO HIDE THEIR TRAIL...WITHOUT A DOUBT, THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE..."

"...BUT THEY'RE HURTING. AND I'LL MAKE SURE THEY KEEP HURTING UNTIL I FIND THEM ALL..."



"...AND WASH AWAY THE STRAIN OF THE COURT ALTOGETHER."



"I'VE HAD THEM MOVED TO A CRYO-PRISON BENEATH BLACKGATE. WAYNE FUNDED, OF COURSE."

"AS FOR THE ONES WHO GOT AWAY, WE'LL FIND THEM SOON ENOUGH."



OF COURSE WE WILL. JUST A MATTER OF TIME.

I'LL BE SEEING YOU, BRUCE.

DICK, WAIT...

I ASSUME ALFRED TOLD YOU ABOUT LINCOLN MARCH'S CLAIMS?



HE DID,
BUT WITH HOW
THINGS HAVE
BEEN BETWEEN US
LATELY...HONESTLY,
I DIDN'T WANT
TO PRY.

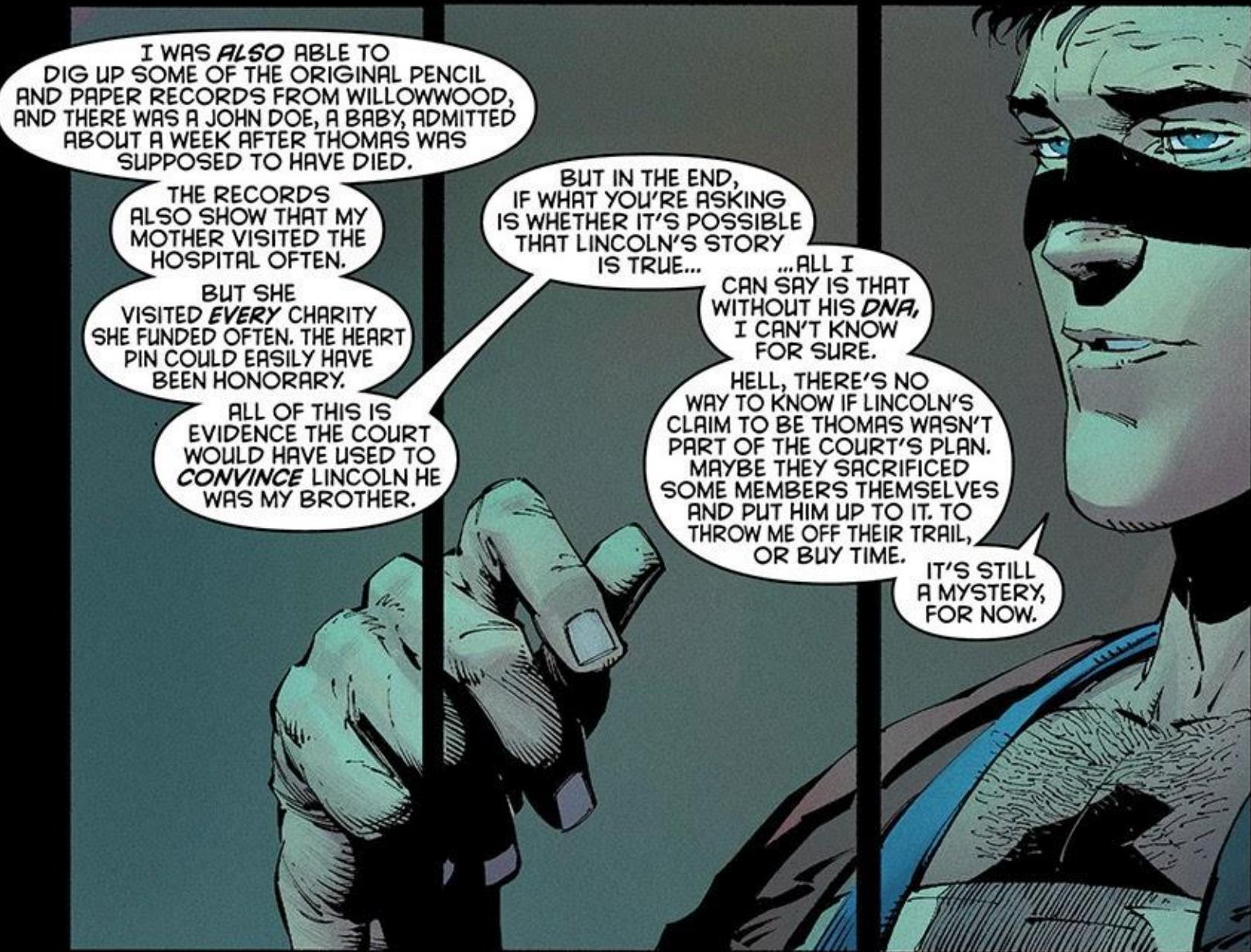
NO, I'D
LIKE YOU TO
KNOW.
THERE WAS
ANOTHER WAYNE
CHILD...

...I WAS THREE
WHEN MY MOTHER WAS
PREGNANT WITH...HIM. WE
WERE IN A CAR ACCIDENT
TOGETHER. I DON'T...I DON'T
REMEMBER THE ACCIDENT.
BUT THERE'S A
RECORD.

THE CHILD WAS
BORN PREMATURE,
WITH NEUROLOGICAL
DAMAGE. SEVERE ENOUGH
THAT HE WOULD HAVE
REMAINED IN A PERMANENT
VEGETATIVE STATE HAD
HE LIVED THROUGH
THE INITIAL
TRAUMA.

HE
DIDN'T LIVE,
THOUGH?

HE
DID...
...FOR
A SINGLE
NIGHT.





SO YOU GOING TO REBUILD?

THE TOWER? I AM. TALLER. IN FACT, I'M REDOUBLING MY EFFORTS WITH THE INITIATIVE.

THE OPPOSITE, ACTUALLY. IT'S STRANGE, DICK. LATELY, RIGHT UP UNTIL ALL THIS WITH THE COURT, I'D COME TO THINK OF THE CITY AS MINE. AS BATMAN'S.

WELL, IT'S NICE TO KNOW THAT THE OWLS DIDN'T SCARE BRUCE WAYNE BACK INTO HIS CAVE.

EVEN WITH THE INITIATIVE, PART OF ME WAS DOING IT TO HAVE MORE LOOKOUTS. MORE BASES FOR BATMAN RATHER THAN FOR THE CITY ITSELF. BUT I SEE NOW THAT I WAS *WRONG*.



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BATMAN
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...I'LL BE
WATCHING.
ALWAYS.

THE END

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF WAYNE **CONCLUSION**

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BATMAN CREATED BY
BOB KANE

Screeching metal, burning
rubber and fire...followed
by perfect blackness.

...that's what
I remember
of that terrible
night, Alfred.

The screams...and the
blood. Mine, hers, Bruce's...
on my face, my hands.

Oh, my boy...
the blood.

Screeching metal, burning
rubber and fire...followed
by perfect blackness.

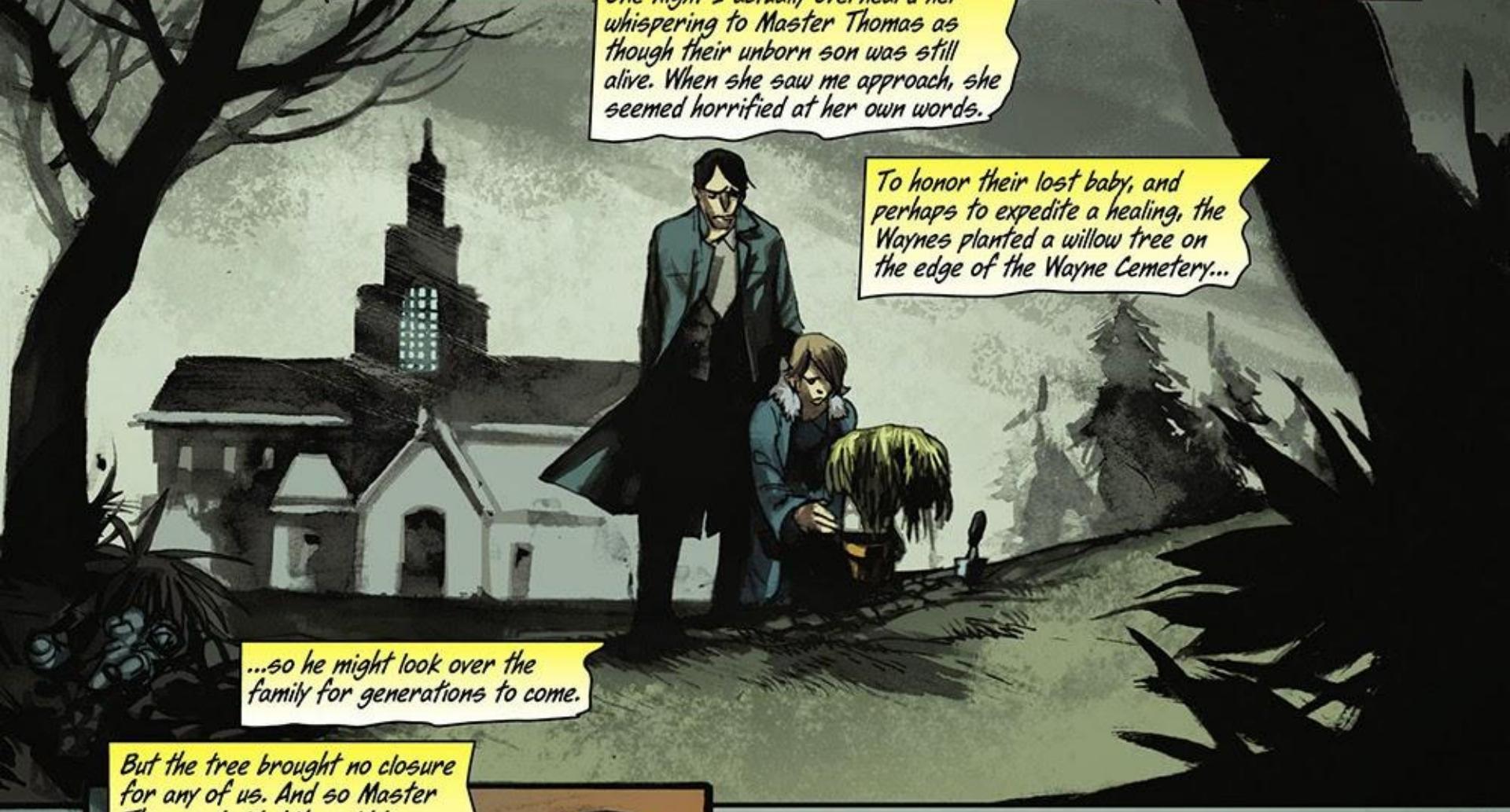




Lady Martha had taken the brunt of the crash, shielding young Bruce from danger, and the trauma of the accident had caused the early birth, and loss, of her unborn child.

The days following the crash were the blackest...Martha was so consumed by sadness.

One night I actually overheard her whispering to Master Thomas as though their unborn son was still alive. When she saw me approach, she seemed horrified at her own words.



To honor their lost baby, and perhaps to expedite a healing, the Waynes planted a willow tree on the edge of the Wayne Cemetery...

...so he might look over the family for generations to come.



But the tree brought no closure for any of us. And so Master Thomas decided it would be best if they left the country for the summer. So they might heal away from the city.

...that I could reclaim the sheer joy of life I had experienced just a few short months ago.



But the back of my mind itched with the original threat that sent us out on the road that fateful afternoon.



As I helped him pack his belongings, I wished deep in my heart that I could simply forget the trauma of these days like young Master Bruce...

And when the phone rang a second time this evening, I knew who would be on the line.

BBBRIIINNG

BBRING

YOU DIDN'T GO WHERE WE TOLD YOU, MR. PENNYWORTH, BUT WE STILL TOOK WHAT WE WANTED... THE SCHOOL IS GONE, AND A LITTLE WAYNE, TOO... HEH...

NOW THAT OUR LARGER WORK IS DONE, THE EYES OF THE OWLS HAVE TURNED TOWARD YOU.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN!?

YOU... YOU LEAVE MY SON ALONE, YOU MONSTERS! YOU HEAR ME?!

JARVIS PENNYWORTH... WE ARE A POWERFUL ENEMY TO HAVE IN GOTHAM. NOT JUST FOR YOU, BUT FOR THOSE YOU LOVE. YOUR OWN FAMILY. YOUR SON... ALFRED...

WE WATCH YOU AT YOUR HEARTH, WE WATCH YOU IN YOUR BED...



Tonight, Alfred, the shadows haunting Wayne Manor have come for me.



My goal--my only goal--is to reach you, my dear Son. And hold you again. But...

...should we never meet again in this lifetime, remember these simple truths.



Remember my love for you. Forgive me for all my many fatherly sins and know I tried my hardest to create a better life for you.



And remember, please, to fear Gotham City. Never visit, even in the event of my passing. This is a cursed place, a place that tricks you into loving it, into hoping... and the Wayne grounds, they are the most unholy of all. These lovely grounds...



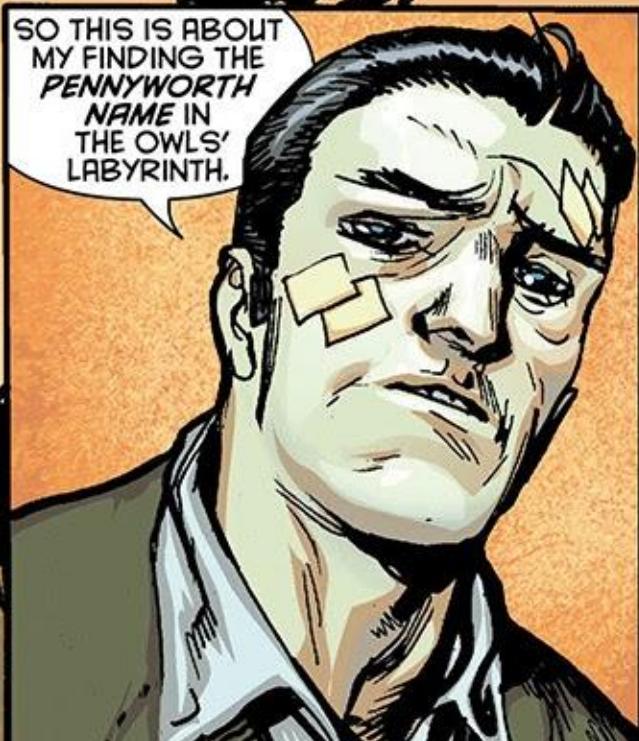
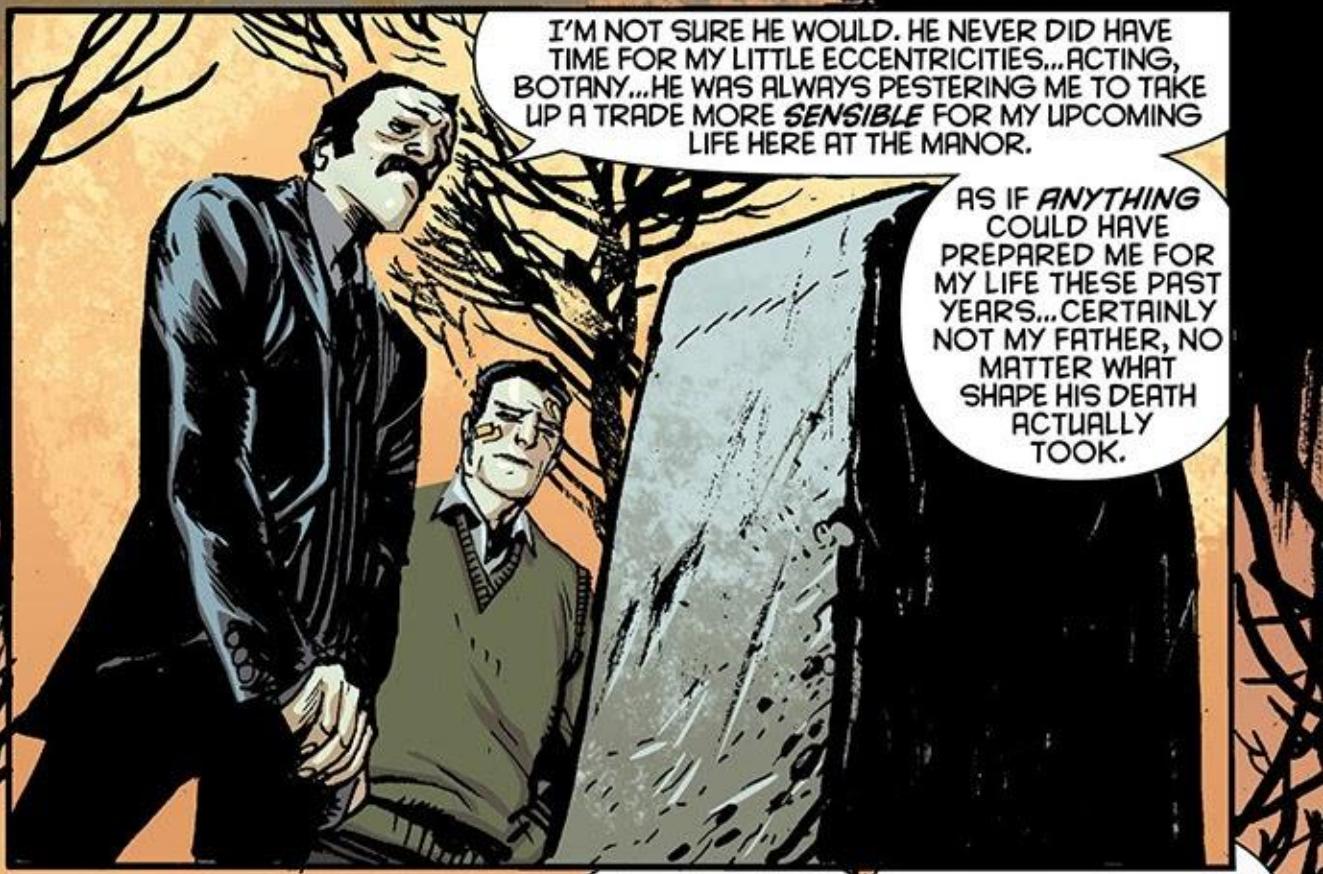
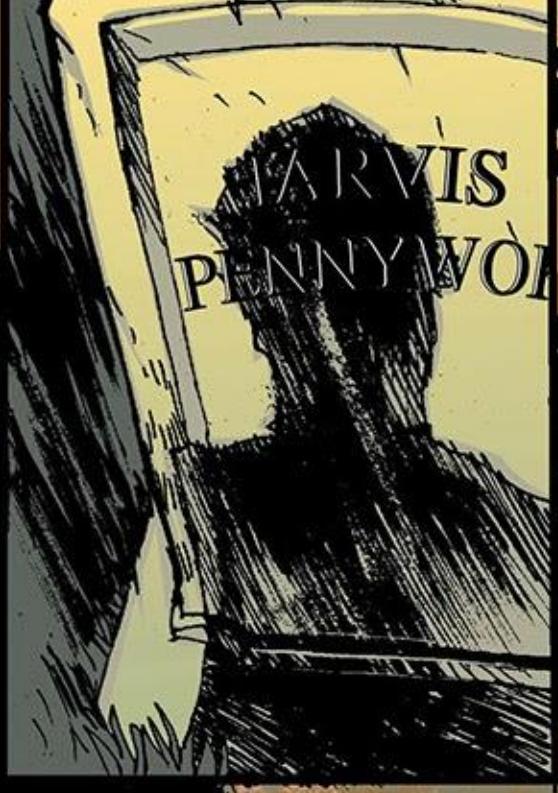
...but I must hurry. I trust that if I should die, this warning will reach you and keep you safe from harm.

With deep love and regret,

Your father

Jarvis Pennyw...

PRESENT DAY...



....A MAN WHO DIED VIOLENTLY A FEW WEEKS AFTER YOUR MOTHER MISCARRIED THE BROTHER YOU NEVER KNEW YOU LOST.

WHICH IS WHY I THINK IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT.

WE ARE ACTING. EACH IN OUR OWN WAY.

I REMEMBER THE CLOUD OF DARKNESS WHEN I FIRST CAME TO THIS PLACE...AT THE TIME, I TRULY FELT THAT THE MANOR WAS CURSED. SOMEHOW HAUNTED.

I SUPPOSE IT WAS, IN A WAY. I IMAGINE THE ACCIDENT WOULD HAVE LOOMED LARGE DURING YOUR FIRST YEAR.

IT WAS MORE THAN THAT...DID YOU KNOW I NEVER CAME TO VISIT MY FATHER HERE? I BARELY KNEW HIM WHEN HE DIED.

AND YET, IN THOSE EARLY YEARS, I FELT HIM HOVERING OVER ME. LIKE A FORCE TRYING TO IMPART SOMETHING. BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO BUT TRY TO LIVE UP TO THE MAN HE WANTED ME TO BE.

MY POINT, MASTER BRUCE, IS THAT I'VE ALREADY SPENT A LIFETIME TRYING TO DIG UP A SENSE OF WHO MY FATHER WAS. I HAVE NO DESIRE TO LITERALIZE THE PROCESS.

IF THE COURT OF OWLS HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH MY FATHER'S DEATH, YOUR ACTIONS THESE PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE BEEN TRIBUTE ENOUGH.

WE
COULD KNOW
FOR SURE,
ALFRED...

BUT THAT'S
JUST IT, MASTER
BRUCE. I ALREADY
KNOW EVERYTHING
I NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT MY
FATHER.

JUST AS YOU
DO ABOUT YOUR
DECESSED BROTHER
AND THE OUTLANDISH
CLAIMS OF LINCOLN
MARCH.

YOU KNOW
I'LL FIND LINCOLN,
ALFRED. I WILL
FIND THE
TRUTH.

YOU'LL
FIND THE
FACTS.

THE TRUTH IS THAT
EVEN IF YOU AND LINCOLN
SHARE THE SAME BLOOD,
YOU STILL LOST YOUR
BROTHER IN A CAR
ACCIDENT WHEN YOU
WERE JUST A BOY.



PJ RAY 2012

I KNOW YOU'LL
DO WHAT YOU MUST,
WHEN THE TIME
ARISES.
BUT FOR NOW
THE SPECTERS OF
THESE LONG LOST
KIN DESERVE TO
REST...

...UNDISTURBED.

THE END