



THE NEW 52!

4

BATMAN



FEB 2012

RATED T
TEEN

SCOTT
SNYDER
GREG
CAPULLO
JONATHAN
GLAPION

Capullo
11
-fco

dccomics.com

*Most people assume
the danger of a trip-
wire lies in the blast.*

WAP JAM



In Gotham, there is an old legend, a nursery rhyme about the Court of Owls.

A group of men who, the rhyme goes, rule the city from the shadows and enforce their will by means of an assassin named the Talon...

...a highly trained killer the Court keeps hidden in bases around the city.

Tonight, I discovered a series of such bases, seeming to date back to the 19th century--bases hidden in buildings constructed by my own family, the Waynes.

Lucky for me...

I was inspecting this one, the most recent, when the tripwire went off.



"...AND FRANKLY, I JUST CAN'T ACCEPT IT."

"TO BE FAIR, HE HAS TAKEN AN EXTRAORDINARY BIT OF PUNISHMENT OF LATE, MASTER RICHARD."

"BRUCE RESTING?"

"IT'S TRUE, SIR."

"AND HOW MANY DO YOU NEED TO SLIP HIM NOWADAYS...?"

"...ALFIE?"

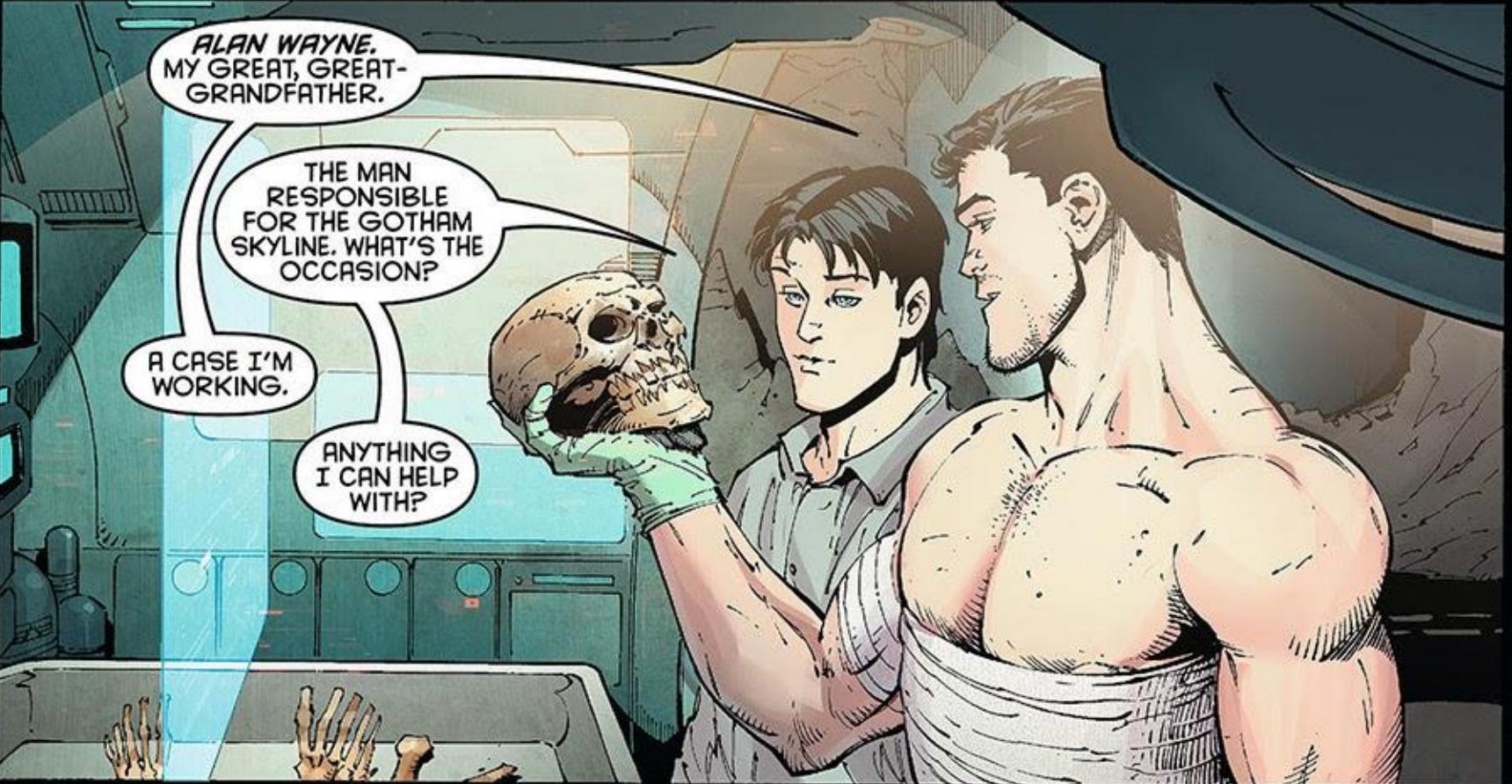
"5 MILLIGRAMS."

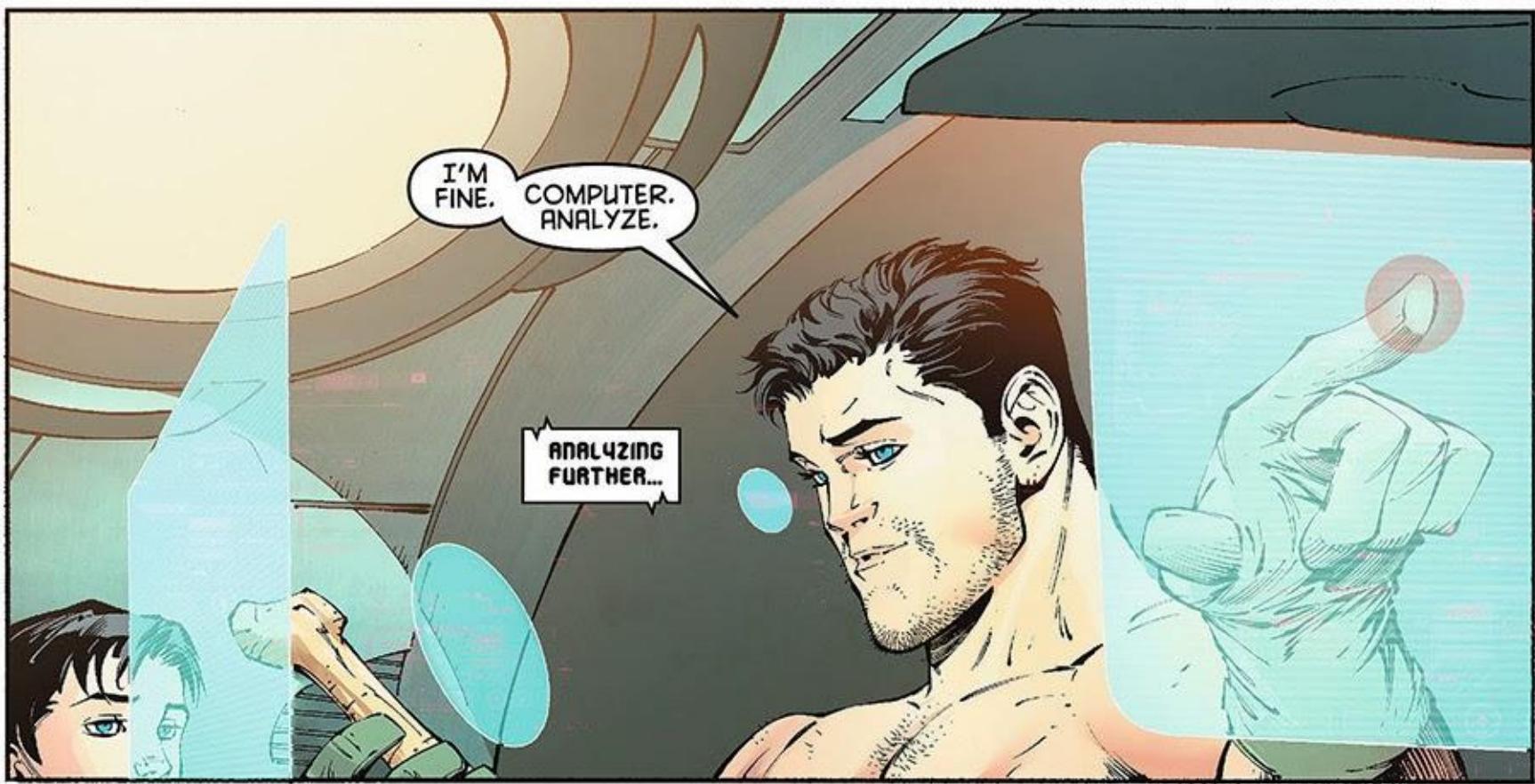
"5 MILLIGRAMS OF ACE? THAT'D BRING DOWN A--"

"I'M AWARE OF THE EFFECTS, MASTER RICHARD. NOW, I'M AFRAID I MUST RETURN TO MY DUTIES. IF THERE'S NOTHING ELSE YOU NEED...?"

BRUCE?
BRUCE, ARE YOU AWAKE?

AND ALL IS
RIGHT IN THE
WORLD.





I DO...BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU'RE BURNING IT AT **BOTH ENDS** ON THIS ONE. YOU'RE WORKING LIKE A MAN OBSESSED--OR **MORE** OBSESSED THAN USUAL--AND AS SUCH, IT'S POSSIBLE YOU'RE NOT SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES.

ANALYSIS NEARLY COMPLETE...

CONTINUE.
THE POINT IS--
HOLD ON.
I WAS TALKING TO
THE COMPUTER.

YOU DROP THE GUY OFF A BUILDING AND HE GETS UP AND KILLS HIS RIDE TO THE MORGUE. NOW YOU DISCOVER THESE BASES, HIDDEN IN WAYNE BUILDINGS...

COMPUTER--
BRUCE, WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOU, ALL RIGHT?

TWICE THIS MONTH YOU CAME CLOSE TO **GETTING KILLED**, AND SOME OF US THINK IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE UNDERESTIMATING YOUR ENEMY HERE.

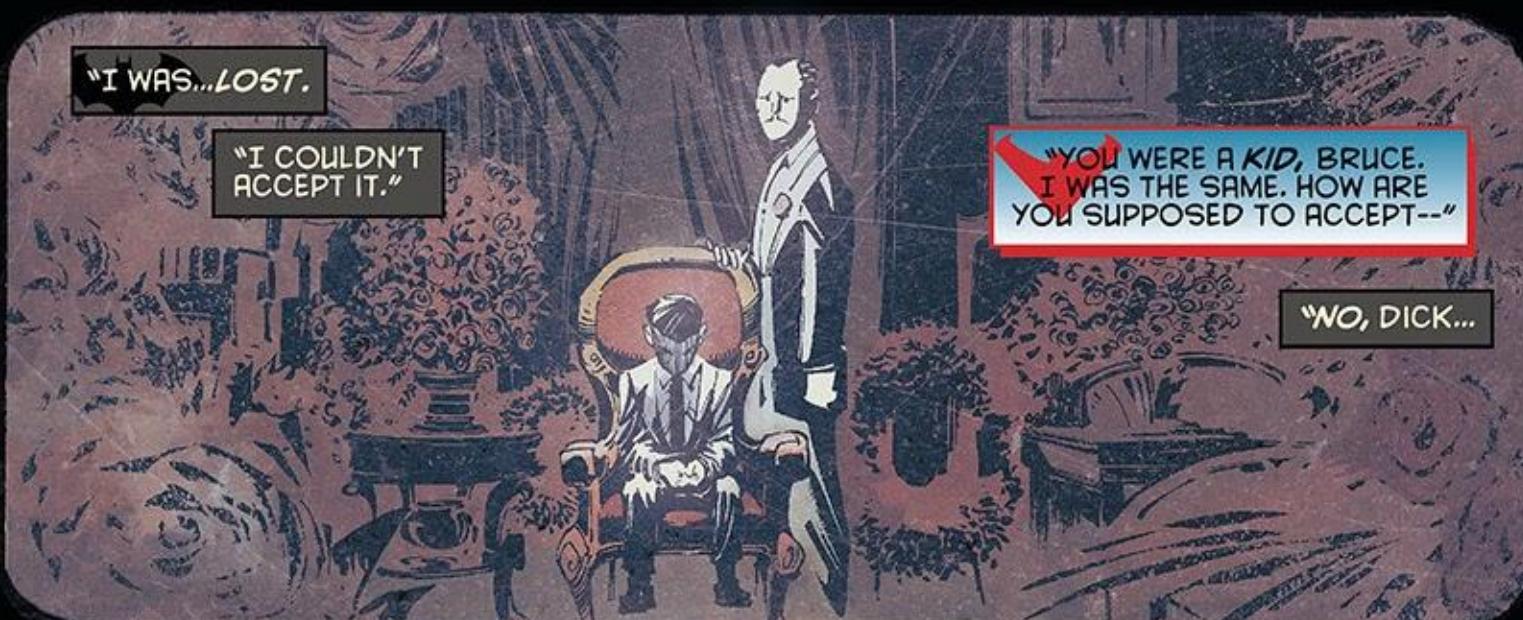
JIM SAID THAT?
YES, HE DID.
THE JOHN DOE WHO CAME UP TO ME--A HIGHLY GHOSTED ID. HE'S KILLED BY AN ASSASSIN CALLING HIMSELF THE TALON.

...BASES THAT SEEM TO BE FROM DIFFERENT DECADES DATING BACK TO THE 1800s. HOW CAN YOU **NOT** BE A LITTLE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT MIGHT BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EQUAL SIGN HERE?

I'M BEING OBJECTIVE, DICK. LIKE I TAUGHT YOU TO BE.
COMPUTER--RUN A SECONDARY TEST FOR SHALE.

RUNNING...

TAKE CARE,
BRUCE. I HAVE A PLANE TO CATCH.



"OF COURSE, GROWING UP,
I'D HEARD THE OLD LEGEND
OF THE COURT OF OWLS."



"I'D ASKED MY FATHER
ABOUT THEM, BUT
HE ALWAYS LAUGHED
OFF THE IDEA."



"BUT EVEN SO, IN THE DAYS BEFORE MY
PARENTS' DEATH, THERE'D BEEN A **SIGN**."

"A NEST. AN OWL NEST IN
THE ATTIC. HE'D SHOED
THE BIRDS AWAY, BUT
THEY'D COME BACK."



"IN AN OLDER VERSION OF THE
RHYME, THERE'S A LINE ABOUT
'HEEDING THE SIGNS,' THE
OMENS OF THE COURT."

"IN THE AFTERMATH OF THEIR
DEATH, I SAW THE NEST
AS A SIGN, A **WARNING** MY
PARENTS HADN'T HEDED."



"AND THEN AND THERE,
I VOWED **REVENGE**."



"I WAS JUST A BOY, BUT I'D FIND
THEM--THE COURT OF OWLS--AND
I'D **EXPOSE** THEM. I'D **CRUSH**
THEIR WORLD AS THEY HAD MINE."



"SO I BEGAN MY OWN INVESTIGATION INTO THE COURT. IN MANY WAYS, IT WAS MY FIRST CASE AS A DETECTIVE."

"AND I WAS DETERMINED TO SOLVE IT."

"IMMEDIATELY, CLUES BEGAN PRESENTING THEMSELVES."

"IN A MATTER OF DAYS, IT SEEMED EVERYWHERE I LOOKED THERE WAS SOME SIGN, SOME NEW PIECE OF EVIDENCE POINTING TO THE COURT'S EXISTENCE."

"SO I BEGAN DELVING DEEPER."

"IF THE COURT WAS MADE UP OF POWERFUL GOTHAM FAMILIES, THERE WAS NO BETTER PLACE TO START LOOKING THAN MY PARENTS' FRIENDS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS."

0 1 2 3 MI.
GOTHAM CITY

"DESPITE HIS WORK AS A DOCTOR, MY FATHER HAD BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE CIVIC MECHANICS OF GOTHAM. NOT JUST CHARITIES, BUT EVERYTHING FROM MUSEUMS TO THE GOTHAM SHIPYARD."

"ANYONE COULD BE ONE OF THE COURT. NO ONE COULD BE RULED OUT."

"IN THE COURSE OF JUST A FEW WEEKS, I'D COMPILED NOTES ON SOME OF GOTHAM'S MOST PROMINENT FAMILIES. TO MY MIND--THE MIND OF A BOY DETECTIVE, ALL OF IT WAS EVIDENCE--EVIDENCE OF A FAR-REACHING CONSPIRACY AGAINST MY FAMILY."

"I'D EVEN LOCATED A BUILDING...AN OLD ABANDONED SOCIAL CLUB WITH A DOUBLE OWL ON THE CREST. A PLACE CALLED HARBOR HOUSE. IT WAS--"

I KNOW IT.

"ALL OF THE FAMILIES I SUSPECTED HAD BELONGED TO THE CLUB AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER."

"AND LOOKING AT THE SCHEMATICS OF THE BUILDING, I'D DISCOVERED A ROOM IN THE UPPER TOWER--WHAT LOOKED LIKE A WINDOWLESS MEETING PLACE, RIGHT ABOVE THE CREST OUTSIDE."

"I WAS SURE
THIS WAS IT."



"I HAD FOUND THE
COURT OF OWLS.
THE MEN BEHIND
MY PARENTS' DEATH."



"BUT WHAT I ACTUALLY
FOUND THAT NIGHT..."



"...UP THERE IN THAT SECRET
ROOM, WAS SOMETHING
MUCH MORE FRIGHTENING..."





...DUST.



"NOTHING.
NO ANSWERS.
NO VILLAINS."



"JUST AN OLD, EMPTY
ROOM THAT HADN'T
BEEN USED IN YEARS."

"I WAS SO SHOCKED
I DIDN'T SEE THE DOOR
CLOSE BY MY FOOT."



"I WAS LOCKED
UP THERE FOR
OVER A WEEK."



"WHEN ALFRED
FINALLY FOUND ME,
I WAS ALREADY
COMATOSE."

I SPENT THREE WEEKS
IN THE HOSPITAL,
RECOVERING.

WHEN I WOKE UP, THOUGH, I'D
LEARNED A VALUABLE LESSON.
A LESSON I BUILT MY SKILLS
AS A DETECTIVE ON.

NEVER LET
YOUR EMOTIONS
GUIDE YOU ON
A CASE.

I NEEDED THERE
TO BE A COURT OF OWLS.
SOME GREAT EVIL BEHIND
MY PARENTS' MURDER.
I LET THAT NEED GUIDE MY
INVESTIGATION AND IT
ALMOST KILLED ME.

YOU WERE
JUST A KID,
BRUCE.

I'VE LOOKED INTO
THE COURT SINCE THEN
AND ALWAYS COME
UP EMPTY.

HOW
HARD HAVE
YOU LOOKED,
THOUGH?

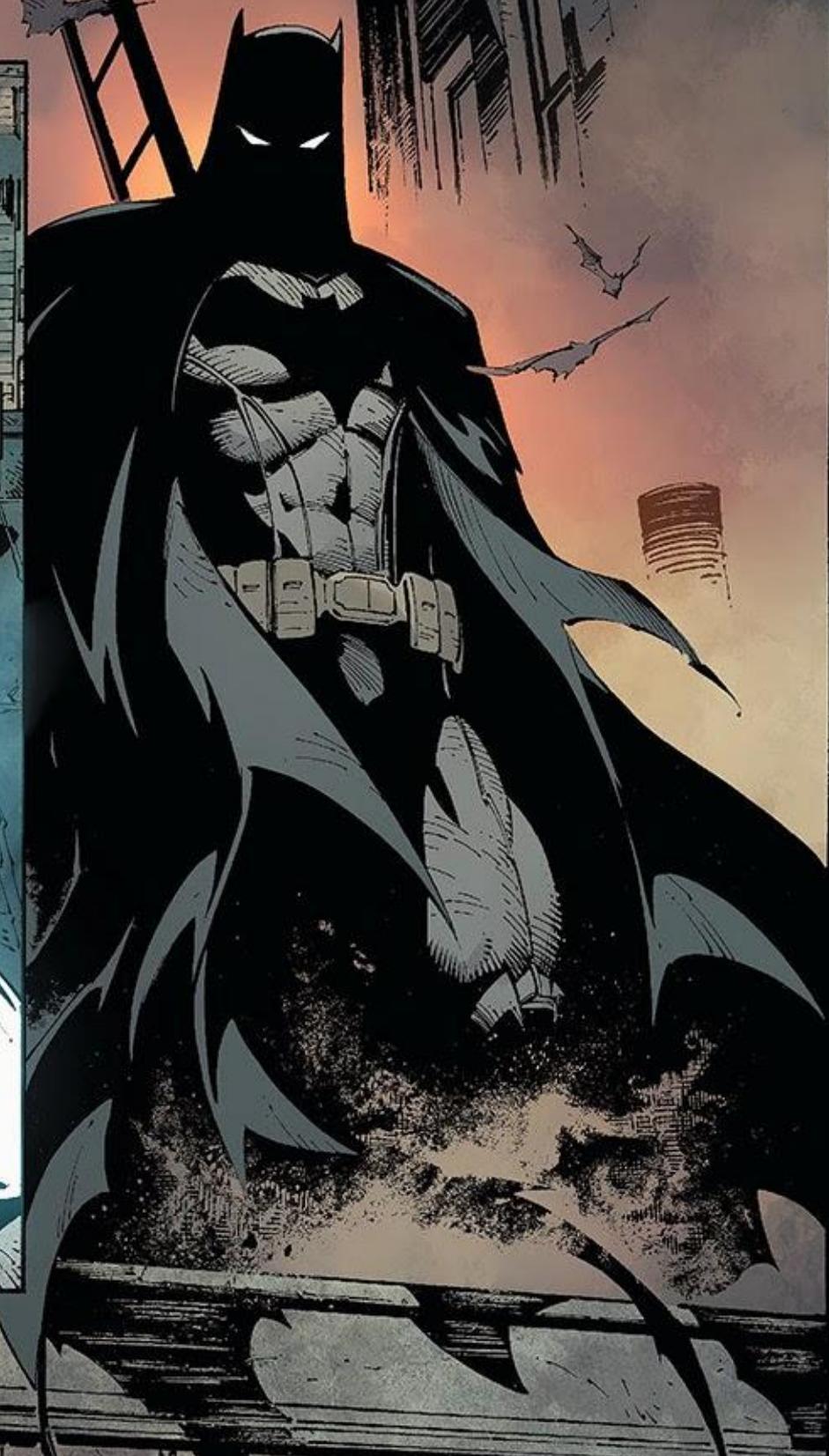
DEEPER
THAN THE EVIDENCE
WARRANTED.

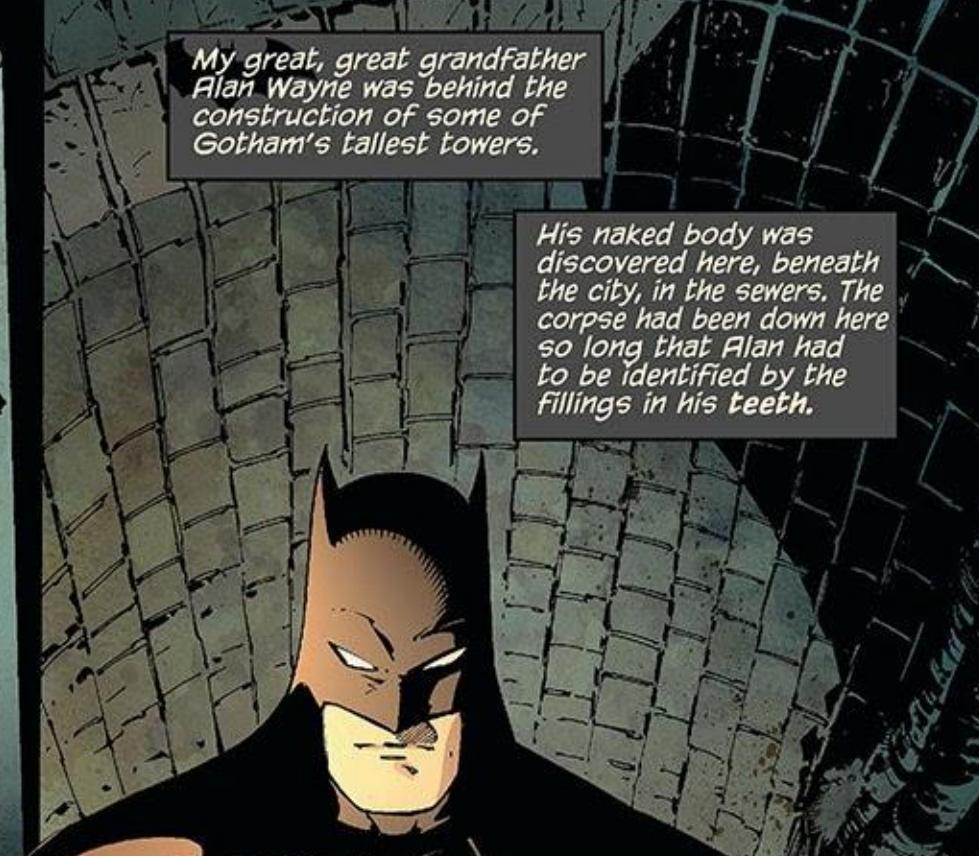
BECAUSE
THERE'S NEVER
BEEN ANY.

LOOK,
BRUCE. NO ONE
KNOWS GOTHAM BETTER
THAN YOU. IT'S YOUR CITY.
IT'S BATMAN'S CITY...

~~“...BUT IT’S ALSO NEARLY FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OLD.~~ WHICH MEANS, OVER THE YEARS, MAYBE IT BELONGED TO SOMETHING ELSE, TOO. SOMETHING BIG. SOMETHING DARK.”

“I HAVE TO GO.
“I HAVE A LEAD TO FOLLOW UP ON.”





My great, great grandfather Alan Wayne was behind the construction of some of Gotham's tallest towers.

His naked body was discovered here, beneath the city, in the sewers. The corpse had been down here so long that Alan had to be identified by the fillings in his teeth.

A nightmarish end for a man who spent so much time building Gotham up, to drown in its sewage.

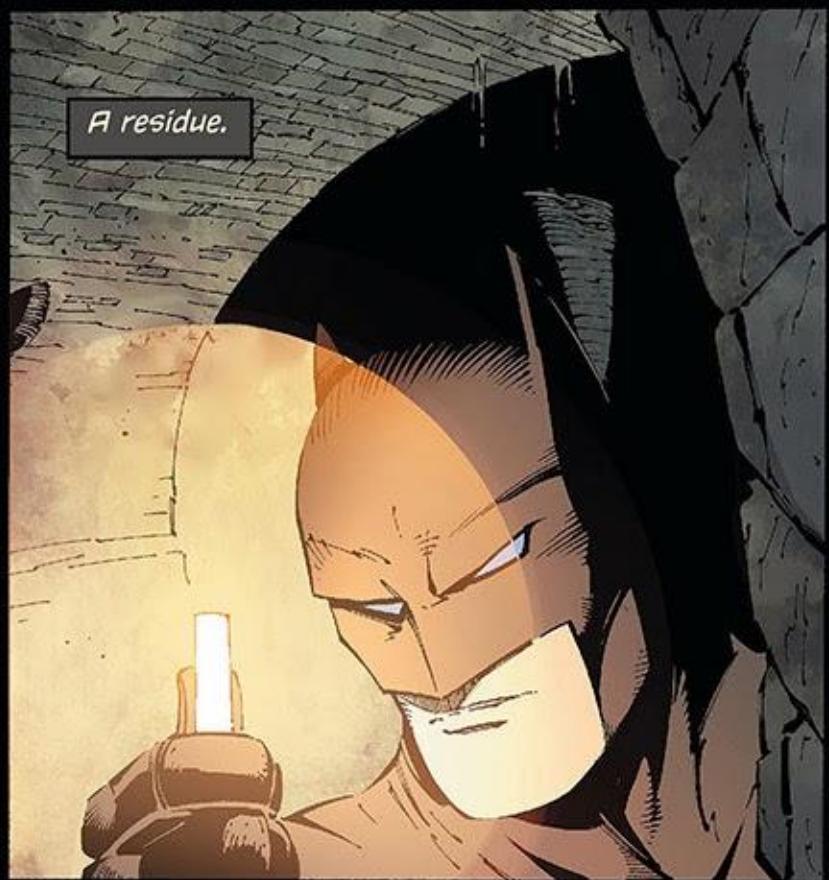
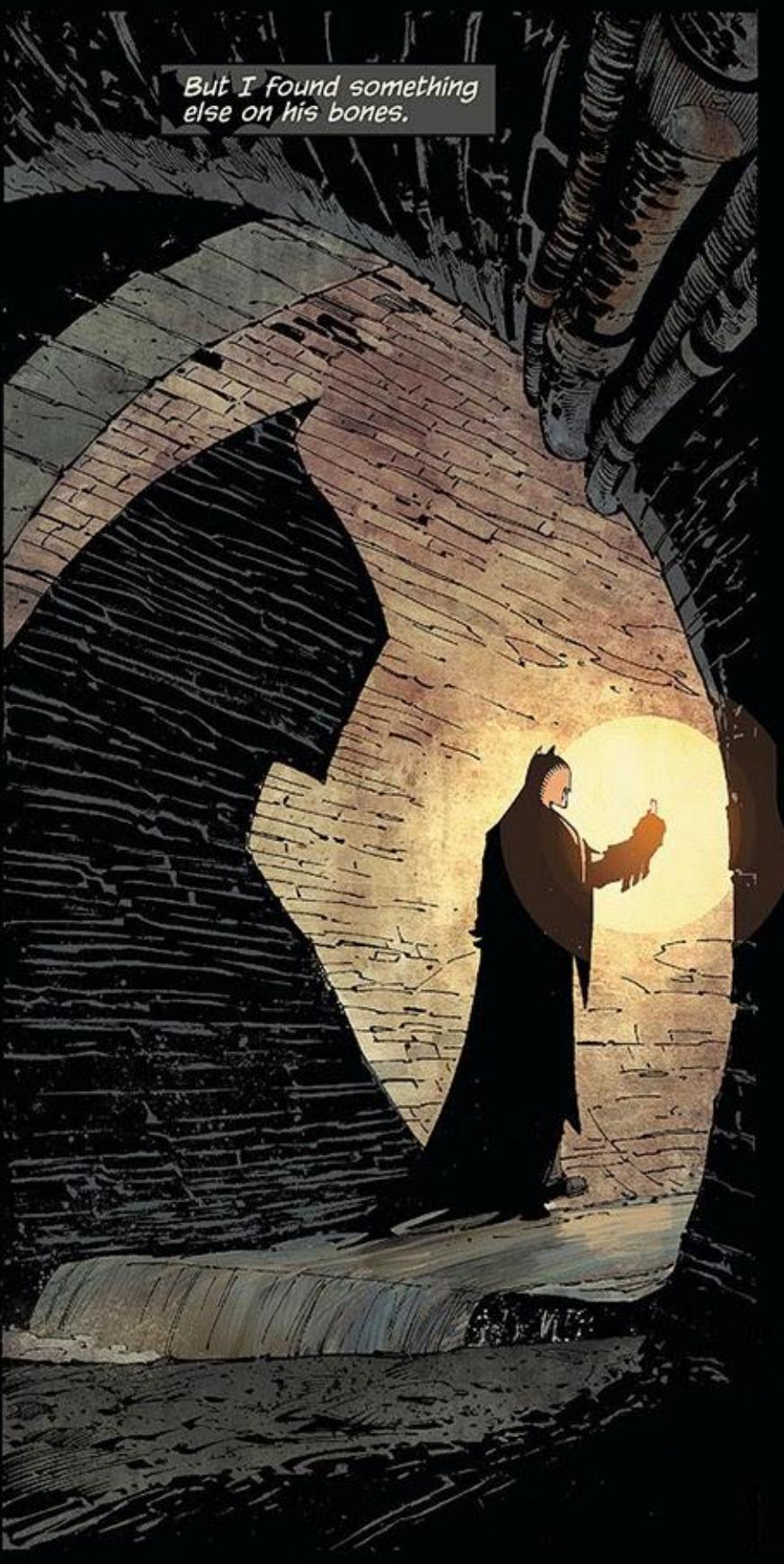
The dirty blood of the city he helped build.

There are worse ways to go, though.

Like the way he actually went. Because examining his body myself, I discovered tiny punctures—not unlike stab wounds—in his bones. A lot of his bones, too.

Which is to say he was stabbed to death, most likely by throwing knives.

Almost fifty of them.





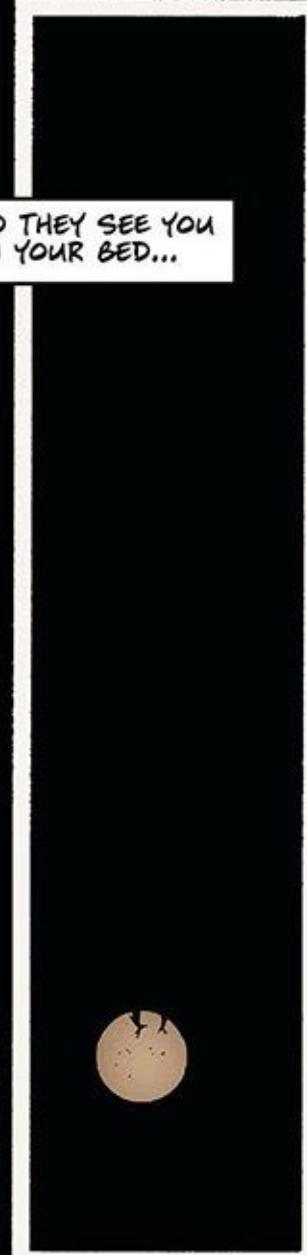
"THE COURT OF OWLS
WATCHES, WATCHES
ALL THE TIME.



"RULING GOTHAM FROM A
SHADOWED PERCH, BEHIND
GRANITE AND LIME.



"THEY SEE YOU AT
YOUR HEARTH.



"AND THEY SEE YOU
IN YOUR BED...



"... SPEAK NOT A
WHISPERED WORD
ABOUT THEM...



"... OR THEY'LL
SEND THE
TALON FOR
YOUR HEAD!"

WELCOME,
BATMAN, TO THE
LABYRINTH!



FACE the COURT

SCOTT SNYDER

writer

pencils

JONATHAN GLAPION
inks

GREG CAPULLO

RICHARD

KATIE
KUBERT
assistant
editor

STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S

JIMMY BETANCOURT lettering
HARVEY RICHARDS
associate editor



FCO colors

MIKE
MARTS
editor

BOB
KANE

BATMAN CREATED BY

DC COMICS presents

BATMAN in

CAPULLO & FCO

cover - variant cover

MIKE CHOI