

BATMAN



VAUGHAN • McDANIEL • STORY

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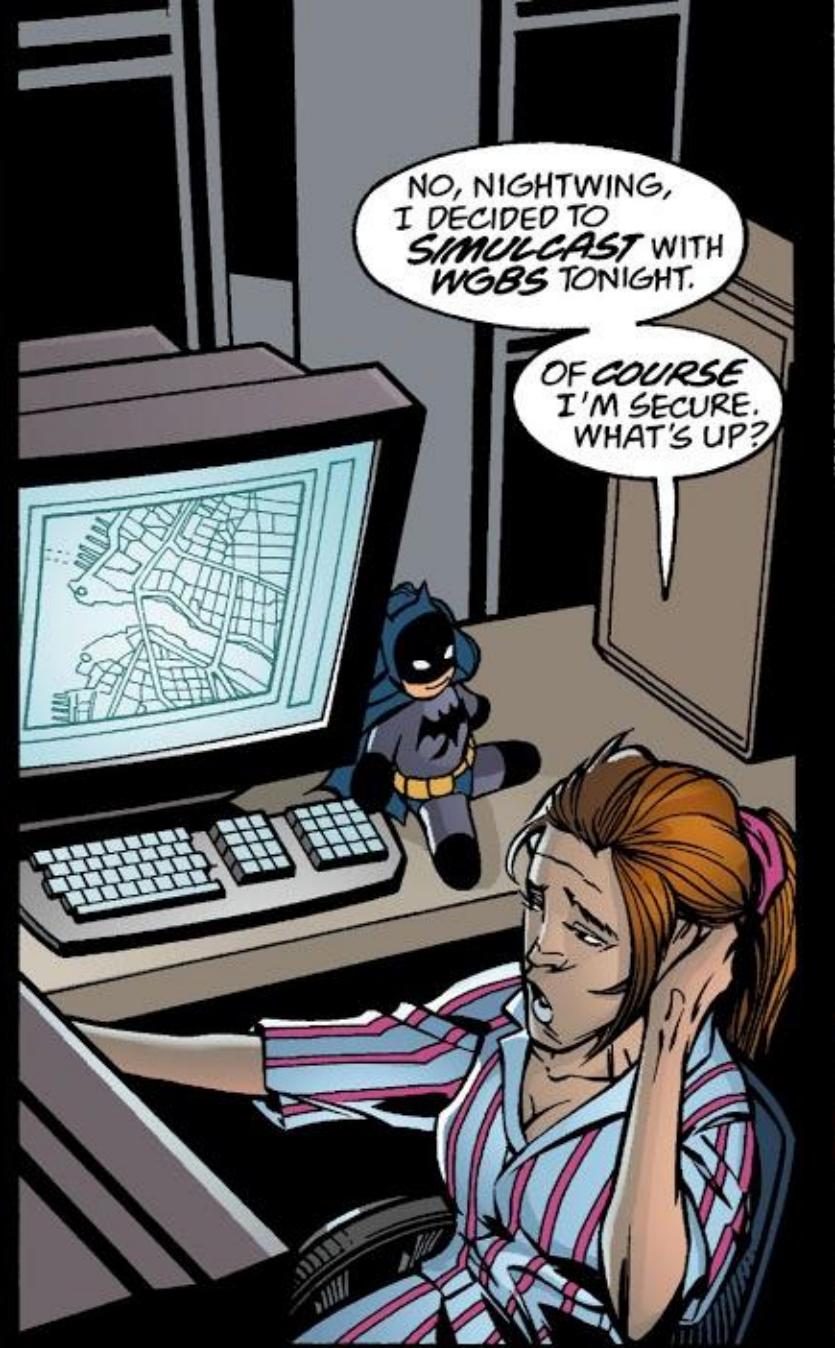


CLOSE BEFORE ENTRY

ACT TWO!



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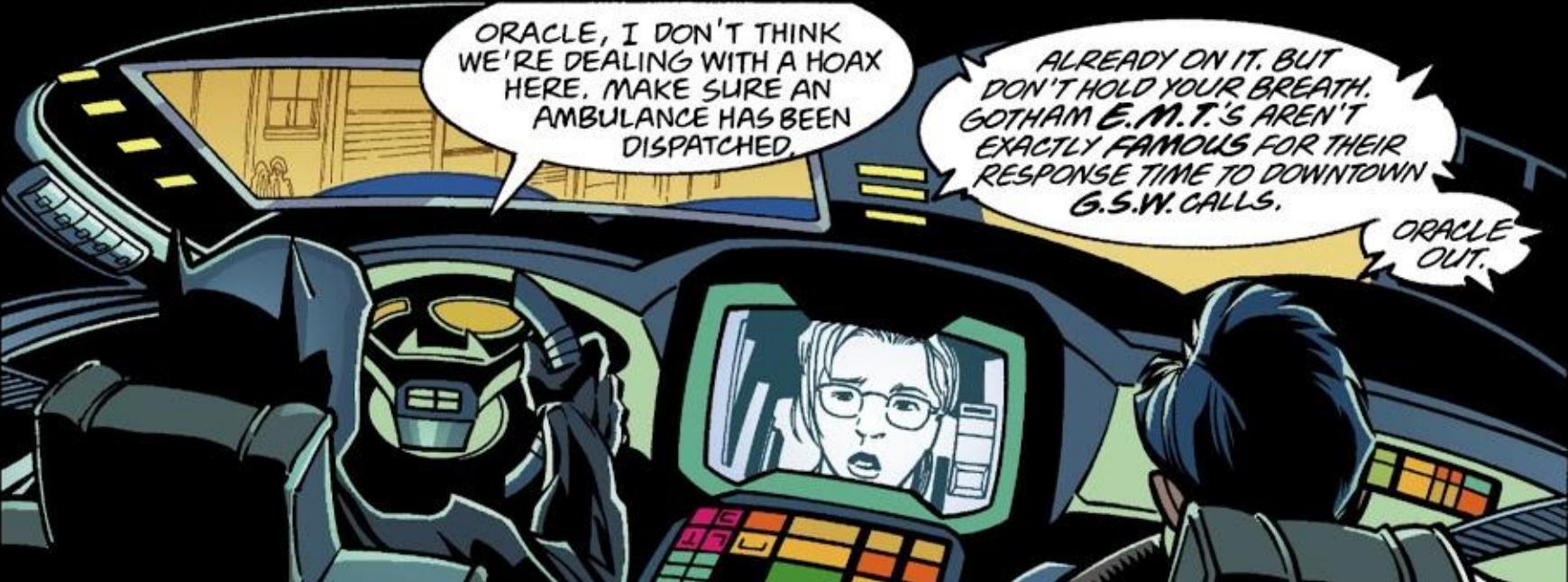




ORACLE, I DON'T THINK
WE'RE DEALING WITH A HOAX
HERE. MAKE SURE AN
AMBULANCE HAS BEEN
DISPATCHED.

ALREADY ON IT. BUT
DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH.
GOTHAM E.M.T.'S AREN'T
EXACTLY FAMOUS FOR THEIR
RESPONSE TIME TO DOWNTOWN
G.S.W. CALLS.

ORACLE
OUT.



SO, UH, YOU
WANT TO FILL ME
IN OR...?

THIS
STARTED
BEFORE I
EVER MET
YOU.



DURING MY YEARS
OF TRAINING, I STUDIED
WITH AN F.B.I. AGENT
NAMED ARTHUR MCKEE.

FRANK THE HAMMER?
THE DEEP-COVER GUY THEY
MADE THE MOVIE ABOUT?
YOU KNEW HIM?

UNDER MCKEE,
I LEARNED THE VALUE
OF MAINTAINING A
CRIMINAL ALIAS.



WHEN I BEGAN MY OWN CAREER
IN GOTHAM, I DECIDED TO CREATE
AN ADDITIONAL ALTER EGO TO HELP
COLLECT INFORMATION FROM
THE UNDERWORLD.

I WASN'T MUCH
OLDER THAN YOU
ARE NOW...







I WAS ABOUT TO ABANDON THE IDEA ALTOGETHER...WHEN A MAN NAMED MATCHES MALONE CAME TO TOWN.

WHAT?!

THERE WAS AN ACTUAL MATCHES? I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST YOUR CREATION.

"MATCHES WAS A SMALL-TIME ARSONIST FROM HOBOKEN.

"HE AND HIS BROTHER CARVER HAD BEEN RUNNING INSURANCE FRAUD SCAMS SINCE THEY WERE ORPHANED AS TEENAGERS.

I GOTTA GO GET MORE SAWDUST. DON'T LET THE PERMANGANATE TOUCH THE DAMN GLYCERIN.

I KNOW, I KNOW..

"THEY ULTIMATELY DECIDED ON GOTHAM AS THE IDEAL CITY TO PLY THEIR TRADE.

"IT WAS A BAD DECISION."





"THIS WAS BACK WHEN HARVEY DENT WAS STILL DISTRICT ATTORNEY."

"WE BOTH THOUGHT THAT MATCHES WAS RESPONSIBLE, BUT HARVEY WAS CONCERNED THAT WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVINE A JURY THAT THIS MAN HAD KILLED HIS OWN BROTHER."

"I PROCEEDED WITH MY OWN INVESTIGATION."

I DON'T NEED A CONFESSION TO KNOW THAT YOU MURDERED CARVER, MATCHES.

YOU DON'T KNOW NOTHIN' ABOUT ME AND MY BROTHER, FREAK.

DON'T LEAVE TOWN, MALONE.

I'LL BE WATCHING.

"I SHADOWED MATCHES' EVERY MOVE FOR THE NEXT FEW NIGHTS."

"I WAS AFRAID HE MIGHT TRY SOMETHING DRASTIC."

MALONE!

"UNFORTUNATELY, HE DID."

HE LEFT A NOTE. IT WASN'T EXACTLY AN ADMISSION OF GUILT, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH TO CONVINCE ME THAT THE CASE WAS CLOSED.

I WAS ABOUT TO CALL GORDON, WHEN I REALIZED THAT BEING THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNEW ABOUT MALONE'S SUICIDE COULD AFFORD ME A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY.

OH, MY GOD. YOU MEAN...?

"I BURIED HIM NEXT TO HIS BROTHER THAT SAME NIGHT."

"MATCHES HAD NO SURVIVING RELATIVES, NO CLOSE FRIENDS... BUT HE DID HAVE A REPUTATION. AND IN GOTHAM'S UNDERWORLD, REPUTATION IS EVERYTHING."

"I SPENT THE NEXT MONTH LEARNING WHATEVER I COULD ABOUT HIM. I LIVED IN HIS APARTMENT. I READ HIS SCRAPBOOKS. I WORE HIS CLOTHES. I ATE HIS FOOD."

THIS IS MATCHES.
DO WHATCHA GOTTA DO
AFTER THE BEEP.

DO WHATCHA GOTTA DO. DO WHATCHA GOTTA DO. DO WHATCHA GOTTA DO...

"I HAD NO IDEA WHETHER OR NOT IT WOULD WORK."

IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
WHERE THE HELL YOU BEEN, MAN?

WE WAS ALL REAL SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR BRO, PAL. HE WAS GOOD PEOPLE. YOU GONNA GO SOLO WITH THE FIREBUG RACKET?

NAH, I DON'T THINK SO.
BUT I MIGHT BE LOOKIN' FOR SOME NEW ACTION...

"I FINALLY HAD MY IN."

HOLD UP. IF THE REAL MATCHES IS DEAD, AND YOU'RE HERE... WHO GOT SHOT IN THERE?

HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT MY ONE MISTAKE YET, HAVE YOU?



HANG ON,
MATCHES. HELP
IS ON THE WAY,
OKAY, BABY?

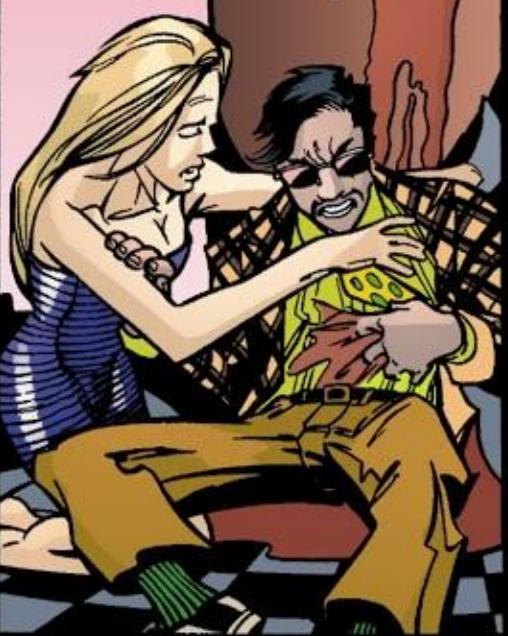
GET YOUR
HANDS OFFA ME,
YA CRAZY
BROAD!

I TOLD YOU,
I NEVER SEEN
YOU BEFORE IN
MY LIFE!

EVERYONE OUT.

NOW.

TRUST ME,
KIDS, YOU DON'T
WANT TO TRY
HIS PATIENCE
TONIGHT.



LONG TIME,
NO SEE, BAT'S.
;KOFF:

WHAT'S IT BEEN, A
DECade? THOUGHT
YOU MIGHT'VE
CHANGED YOUR
DUDS A **BIT**
OVER THE
YEARS.

THIS
COMING
FROM YOU?
THAT SUIT
LOOKS
AWFULY
FAMILIAR.

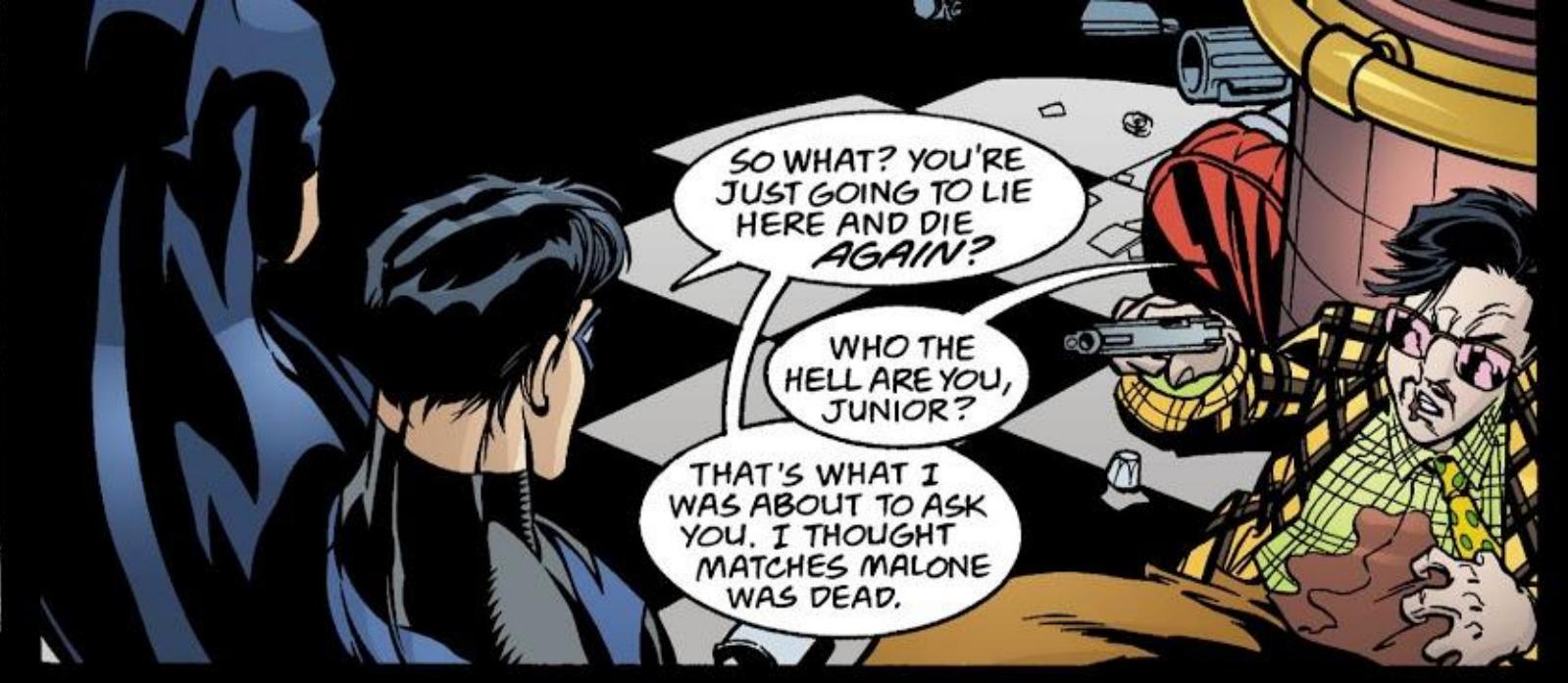
LET'S GO,
MATCHES. WE
NEED TO GET
YOU TO A
DOCTOR.

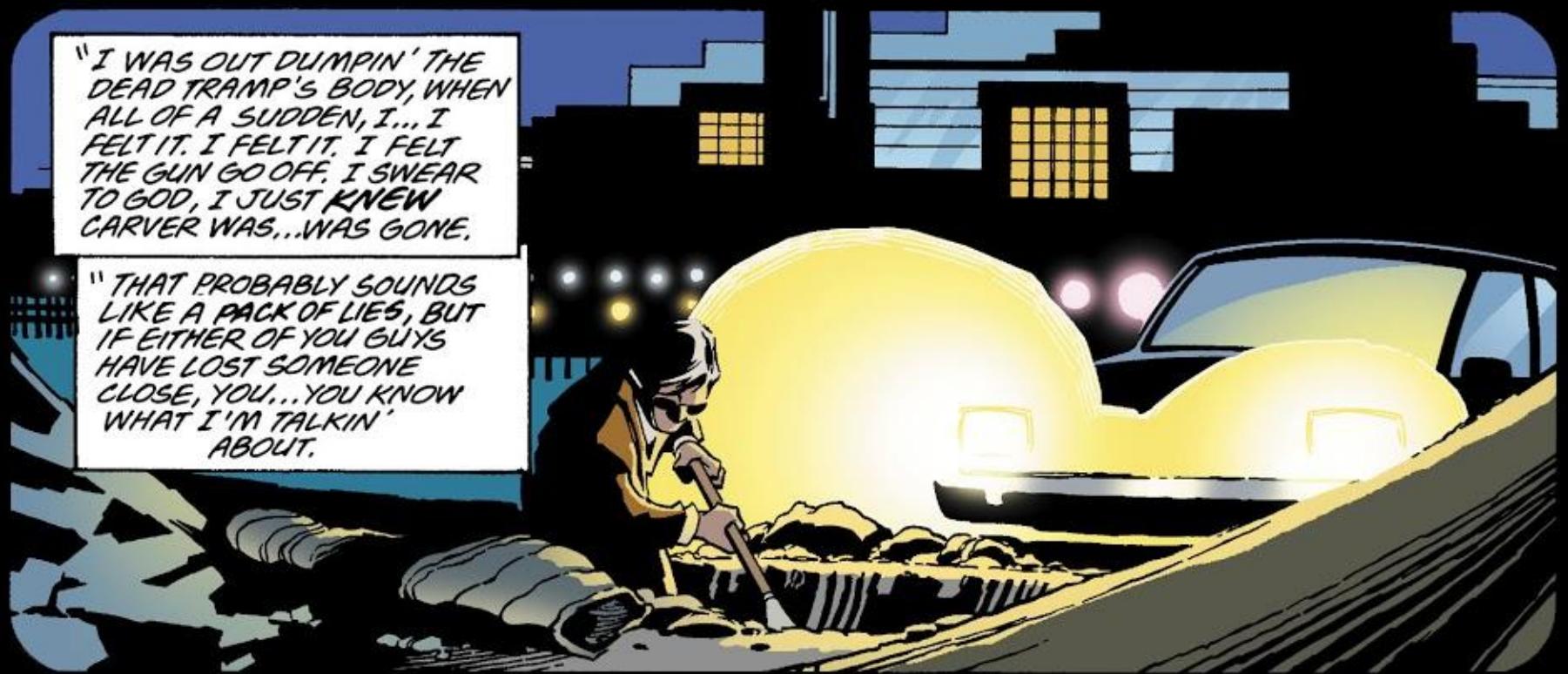


AND BLEED TO DEATH IN
GOTHAM GENERAL WITH
ALL THEM JUNKIES?

DON'T THINK SO,
FREAK. ;KOFF: I'D
RATHER PUNCH OUT
IN THIS LOUSY GIN
JOINT...







FOUR WORDS.
;KOFF: WASN'T GOOD
ENOUGH FOR ME.

SEE, WHERE I COME
FROM, TAKIN' YOUR OWN
LIFE IS SOMETHIN' TO BE
ASHAMED OF. ;KOFF:
;KOFF: IT'S A COWARD'S
WAY OUT OF THIS
WORLD...

REMEMBER
WHO YOU
ARE

SO TO SAVE FACE, YOU
MADE HIS SUICIDE LOOK
LIKE A MURDER.

AND DID A
LOUSY JOB OF
IT, I GUESS. HAD
YOU MORONS
CONVINCED THAT I
OFFED MY OWN
FLESH AND BLOOD.

I DIDN'T WANT TO
SPEND THE REST OF MY DAYS
BEIN' HASSLED BY FREAKS
LIKE YOU, SO I DECIDED TO
FAKE MY OWN
SUICIDE.

THE BODY I FOUND IN
YOUR APARTMENT... IT WAS
THE MAN YOU AND YOUR
BROTHER ACCIDENTALLY
KILLED.

GUY HAD MY BUILD. ;KOFF:
FIGURED THE COPS WOULD
EVENTUALLY FIND OUT HE WASN'T
ME, BUT I THOUGHT THE SCAM
MIGHT BUY ME ENOUGH TIME
TO SKIP TOWN...

IN MY HASTE TO
ASSUME HIS IDENTITY, I
NEVER TOOK THE TIME TO
MAKE SURE THAT CORPSE
WAS ACTUALLY MATCHES'.
AN INEXCUSABLE
ERROR.

IT WAS YEARS
AGO. YOU'RE NOT
TO BLAME HERE.

I WISH
YOU WERE
RIGHT...



WHERE DID YOU RUN TO, MATCHES?

A WORLD AWAY FROM HERE. ;KOFF: BACK HOME TO HOBOKEN...



CHANGED MY NAME, CHANGED MY LOOKS. TRIED TO ROUND UP SOME WORK IN THE ARSON BUSINESS, BUT WHATEVER CREDENTIALS I HAD EVAPORATED WHEN I GOT A NEW LIFE.



DON'T KNOW IF YOU DO-GOODERS UNDERSTAND HOW MY KIND OPERATES, BUT NO CROOK WANTS TO RUIN WITH A GUY HE'S NEVER HEARD OF.

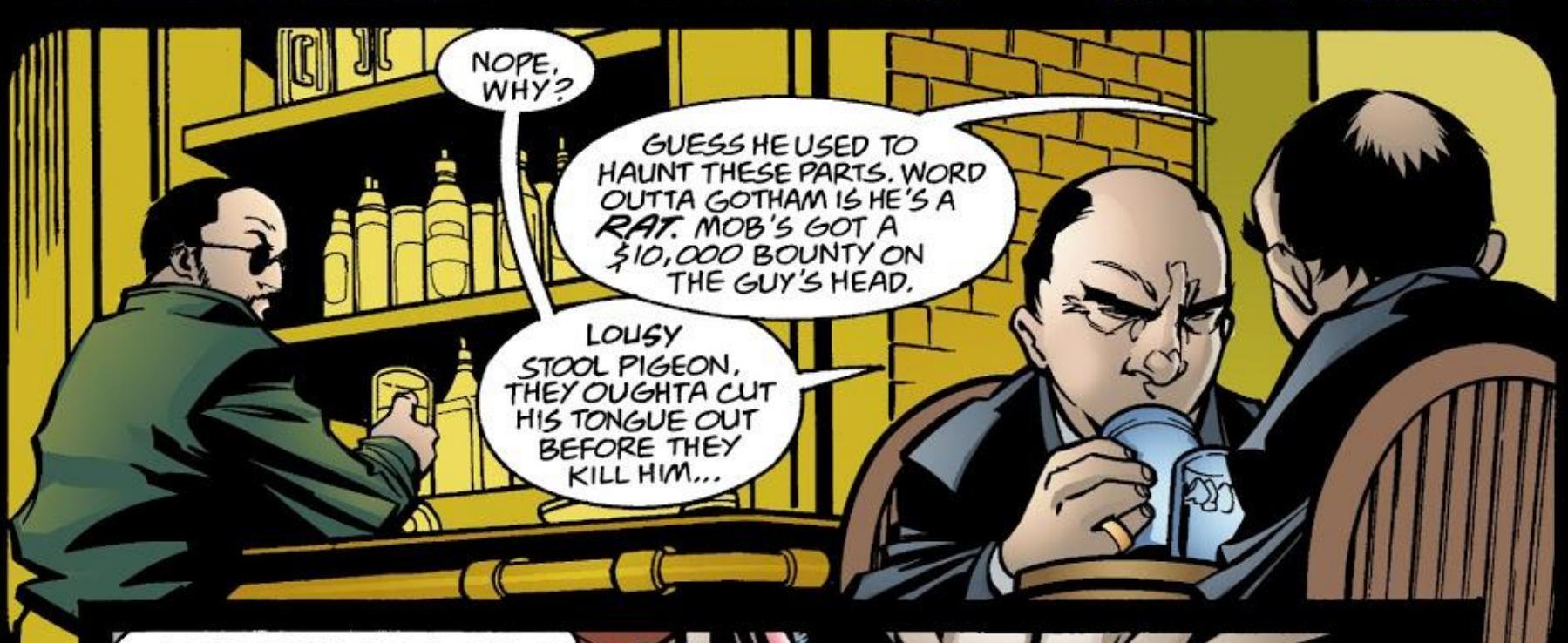
I HAD TO RESORT TO REAL NICKEL-AND-DIME STUFF JUST TO PAY THE RENT.



I DIDN'T EVEN CARE ANYMORE. LIFE WAS BORING AS HELL WITHOUT MY BROTHER.

I KEPT THINKIN' ABOUT THOSE LAST WORDS OF HIS... BUT REMEMBERIN' WHO I WAS WAS THE LAST THING I WANTED.

AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED, MATCHES MALONE WAS HISTORY.



"IT WAS TIME FOR MATCHES MALONE TO COME BACK FROM THE DEAD."

"I TOOK THE NEXT TRAIN OUTTA HOBOKEN. SPENT THE DAY POUNDIN' GOTHAM'S PAVEMENT IN SEARCH OF WHOEVER WAS SPREADIN' LIES ABOUT ME."

EVENIN', GENTS.
NAME'S MATCHES MALONE.

ANYBODY HERE GOT A BEEF WITH ME?
IF SO, SPEAK UP NOW AND SAY IT TO MY FACE, YA COWARD.

MATCHES? SWEETIE,
YOU... YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE.

I KNOW YOU, LADY?

NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO SHOW YOUR MUG HERE, MALONE. YOU ARE EITHER VERY STUPID...

...OR VERY CRAZY.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?

DON'T PLAY STUPID WITH ME, MALONE. YOU SOLD ME DOWN THE RIVER TO THE GATMAN LAST NIGHT AND YOU KNOW IT.

PAL, I'VE NEVER MET YOU OR YOUR MUPPET.

THE NAME'S SCARFACE, WISE GUY.

AND THEY CALL MY PARTNER THE VENTRILOQUIST, 'CAUSE HE KNOWS HOW TO KEEP HIS YAP SHUT.

HERE'S WHAT WE DO TO GUYS WHO DON'T!

BUBBA BUBBA BUBBA





PROMISE YOU'LL
KILL THE LOUSE
THAT DID THIS TO
ME...



PROMISE...:-



I PROMISE.

"HE SAID THAT?"



I SWEAR,
BABS.

AND WHAT'S
WORSE, WHEN HE
DID, HE DIDN'T
SOUND LIKE
HIMSELF...



"...HE SOUNDED
LIKE MATCHES."

TO BE CONTINUED...