



DC
COMICS™

THE NEW 52!

27

SCOTT
SNYDER

GREG
CAPULLO

DANNY
MIKI

BATMAN



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RATED T TEEN

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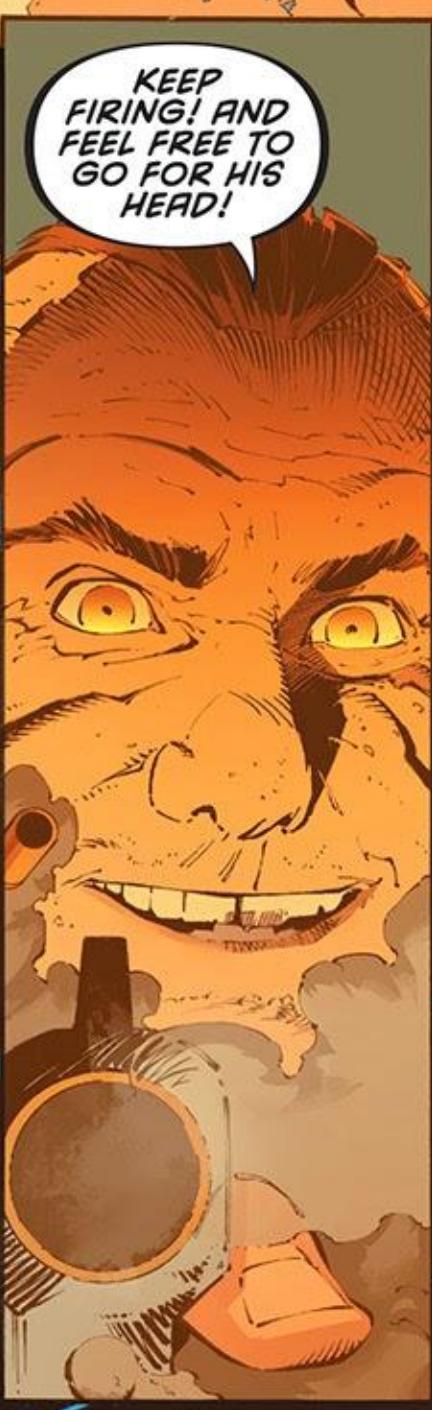
TOKYO, 1946.



GOTHAM CITY.
SIX YEARS AGO...



KEEP
FIRING! AND
FEEL FREE TO
GO FOR HIS
HEAD!



UNH!



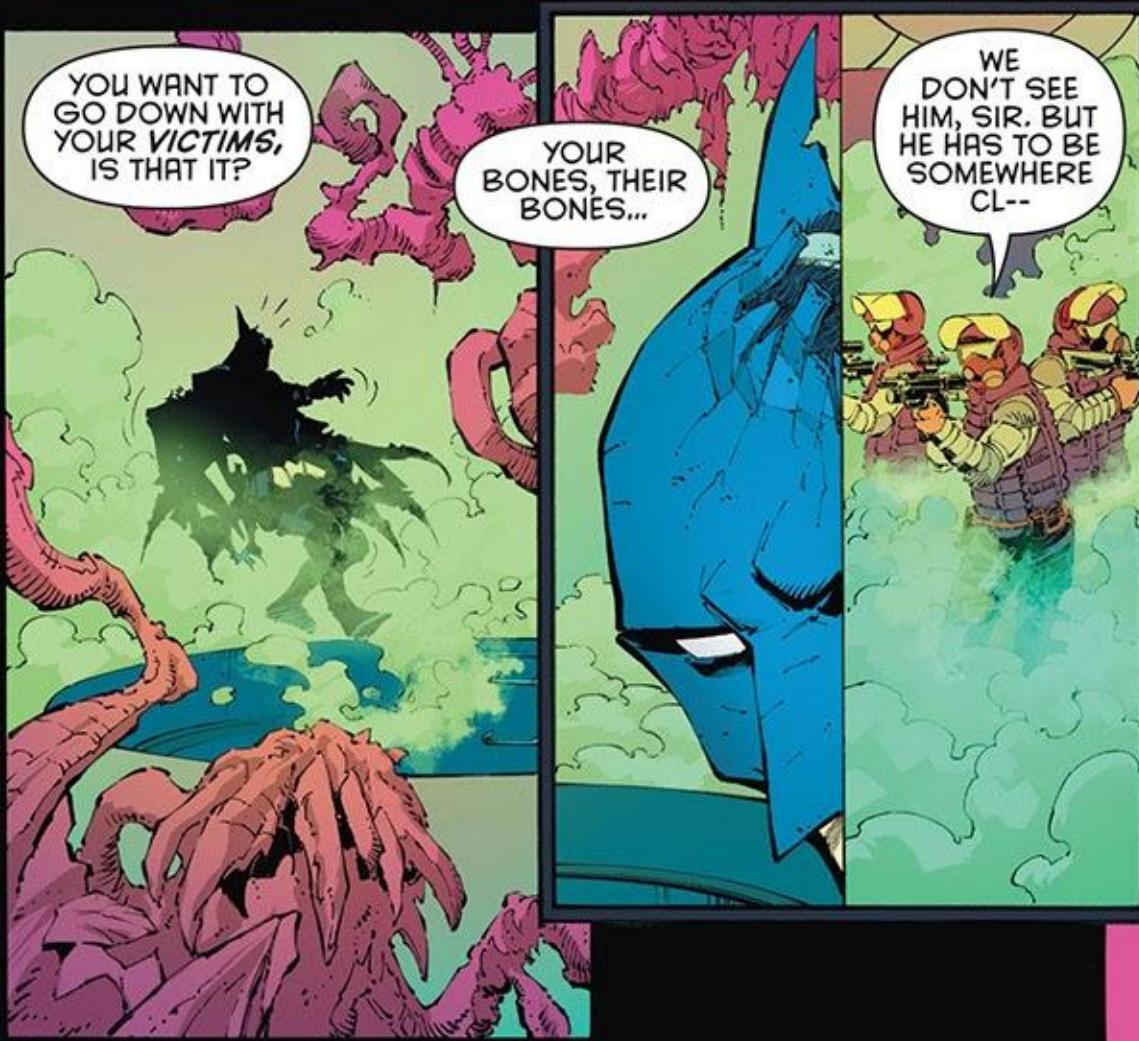




...HOW DO
YOU LIKE THE
CANDY I
LEFT YOU?

SOON AS
THE SMOKE
CLEAR'S, OPEN
FIRE.

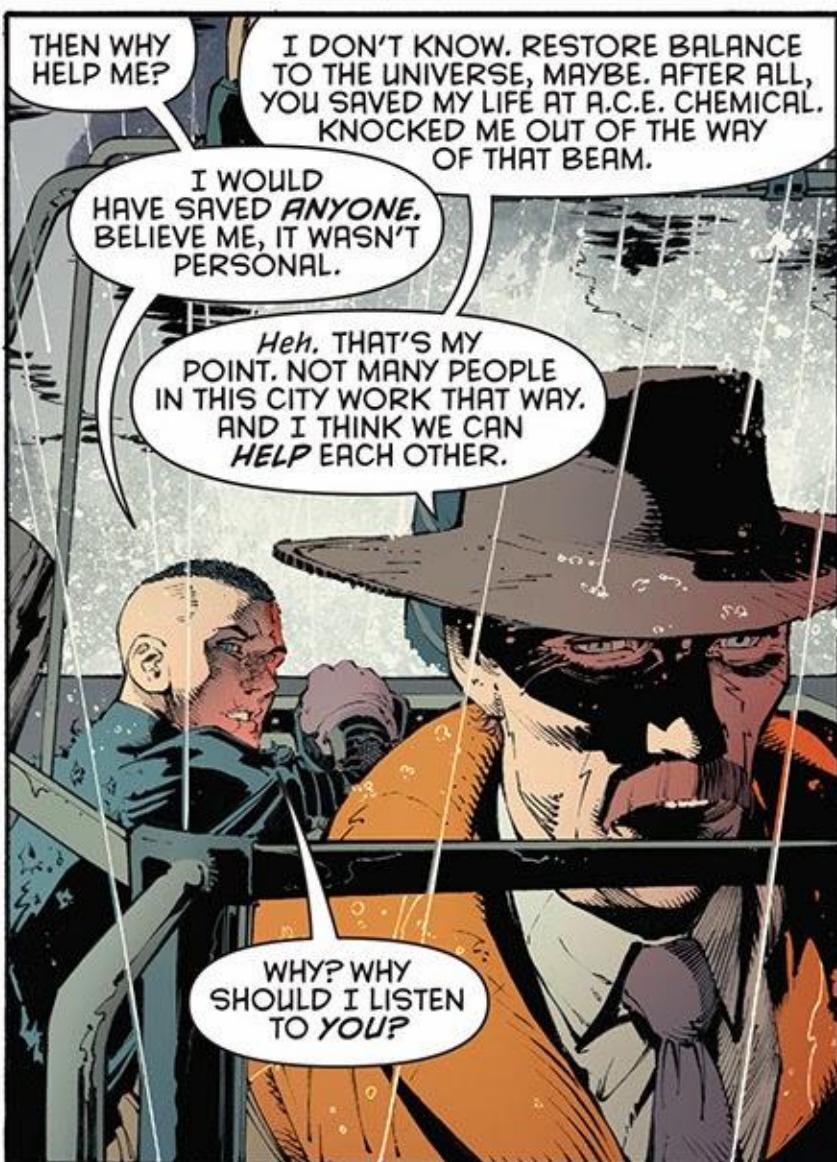






...AND
GET IN THE
BOAT.





WAYNE'S COMING BACK TO GOTHAM...IT STARTED SOMETHING FOR ME.

SEE, I MET HIM ONCE, WHEN HE WAS A KID. HE'D SKIPPED SCHOOL AND WE GOT THE CALL TO GET HIM. WE PICKED HIM UP, TOOK HIM BACK TO THE STATION FOR HIS FOLKS.

ON THE WAY, MY PARTNER AND I, WE MADE THE USUAL ROUNDS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, CHECKING IN WITH SHOP OWNERS.

"WAYNE...HE SAW ME GET A GIFT. A COAT."

"HE ASKED ME ABOUT IT, AND I TOLD HIM THE PEOPLE OF GOTHAM JUST LOVE US, BECAUSE WE KEEP THEM SAFE."

"AND THE KID. HE GAVE ME THIS...LOOK."

"IT WAS ONLY MY THIRD WEEK IN GOTHAM. I'D JUST MOVED HERE FROM CHICAGO, WHERE THINGS HAD BEEN VERY UGLY."

"SO UGLY, I GUESS, THAT I WAS STILL TRYING TO BE HOPEFUL ABOUT THIS PLACE. TO SEE IT THE WAY IT WAS BEING PRESENTED TO ME. BY THE DEPARTMENT, BY RECRUITMENT. THE WAY I WANTED IT TO BE FOR BARBARA AND JAMES."

"I'D ALMOST FOOLED MYSELF, TOO, DURING THOSE FIRST COUPLE WEEKS. I'D ALMOST GOTTEN THERE...UNTIL THAT MOMENT IN THE CAR, WHEN I SAW THE HOPE IN WAYNE'S FACE."

"IT KILLED IT FOR ME. IT JUST KILLED THE WHOLE ILLUSION."

"I HAD TO KNOW. SO THAT EVENING, BEFORE MY SHIFT STARTED, I WENT TO ONE OF THE STORES, THE TAILOR SHOP."

"JUST TO... SEE."

"I'D LEARN LATER THAT THE DOGFIGHT WAS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. I KNEW IT THEN, OF COURSE, BUT AT THAT MOMENT ALL I COULD SEE WERE THE ANIMALS."

"THEY KEPT THE DOGS IN ELECTRIC CAGES."

"THE FLOORS SENT LOW-VOLTAGE SHOCKS THROUGH THEIR PAWS DAY IN AND OUT, DRIVING THE ANIMALS CRAZY UNTIL THEY WERE SET LOOSE ON EACH OTHER."

"CORRIGAN WAS THERE, PARRA, LYNCH...THE PLACE WAS FULL OF COPS AND CRIMINALS, LAUGHING AND JOKING AS THEY WATCHED SOME BEATEN-DOWN ANIMALS KILL EACH OTHER."

WELL, LOOK AT THIS! IT'S JIMBO! WELCOME, PARTNER! GO AHEAD AND PLACE YOUR BET!

GOP JUST STICK AROUND. HE'LL BE HERE IN AN HOUR TO COLLECT HIS CUT! GOOD OLD COMMISH PRACTICALLY ROBS US POOR BOYS BLIND.

STOP THIS NOW, CORRIGAN, OR I GO TO LOEB!

... THEN HOW ABOUT I GO TO THE DAMN PRESS? HOW ABOUT I GIVE THEM AN EXCLUSIVE ABOUT EVERY CROOKED THING GOING ON UNDER LOEB'S WATCH?

HOW ABOUT YOU DO.

AND HOW ABOUT WE MAKE THIS BET A LITTLE MORE INTERESTING?



"AT THE END, CORRIGAN WENT AROUND COLLECTING THE MONEY FROM EVERYONE. CHASTISING PEOPLE FOR BETTING AGAINST HIS BOY."

"FOR THINKING A PROTEGÉ OF DAN CORRIGAN'S WOULDN'T COME OUT ON TOP."



"I GOT UP OFF THE GROUND..."



"...AND I PUT MY GUN TO HIS HEAD, AND I SWEAR...I WAS THIS CLOSE..."



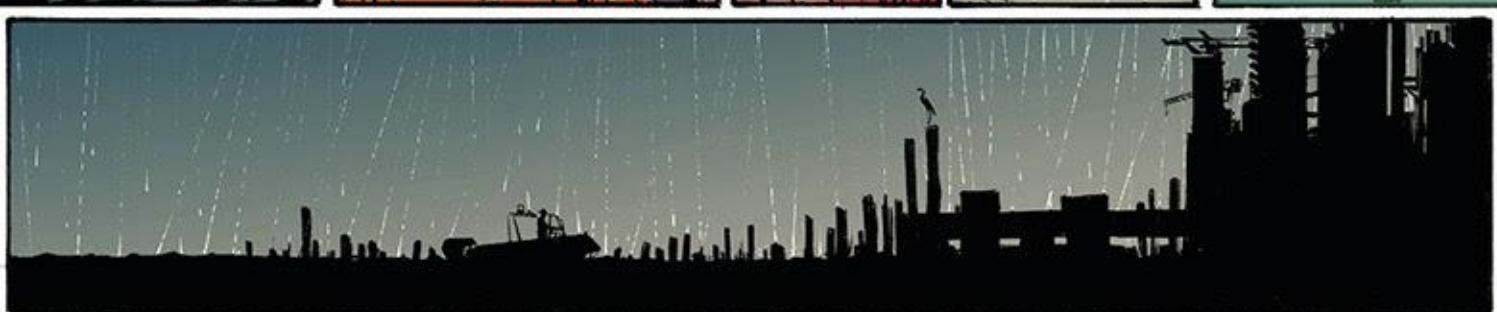
"...AND YOU KNOW WHAT HE SAID TO ME? HE SAID, 'I BET ON YOU TO LIVE TONIGHT, JIMBO. YOU THINK ABOUT THAT!'

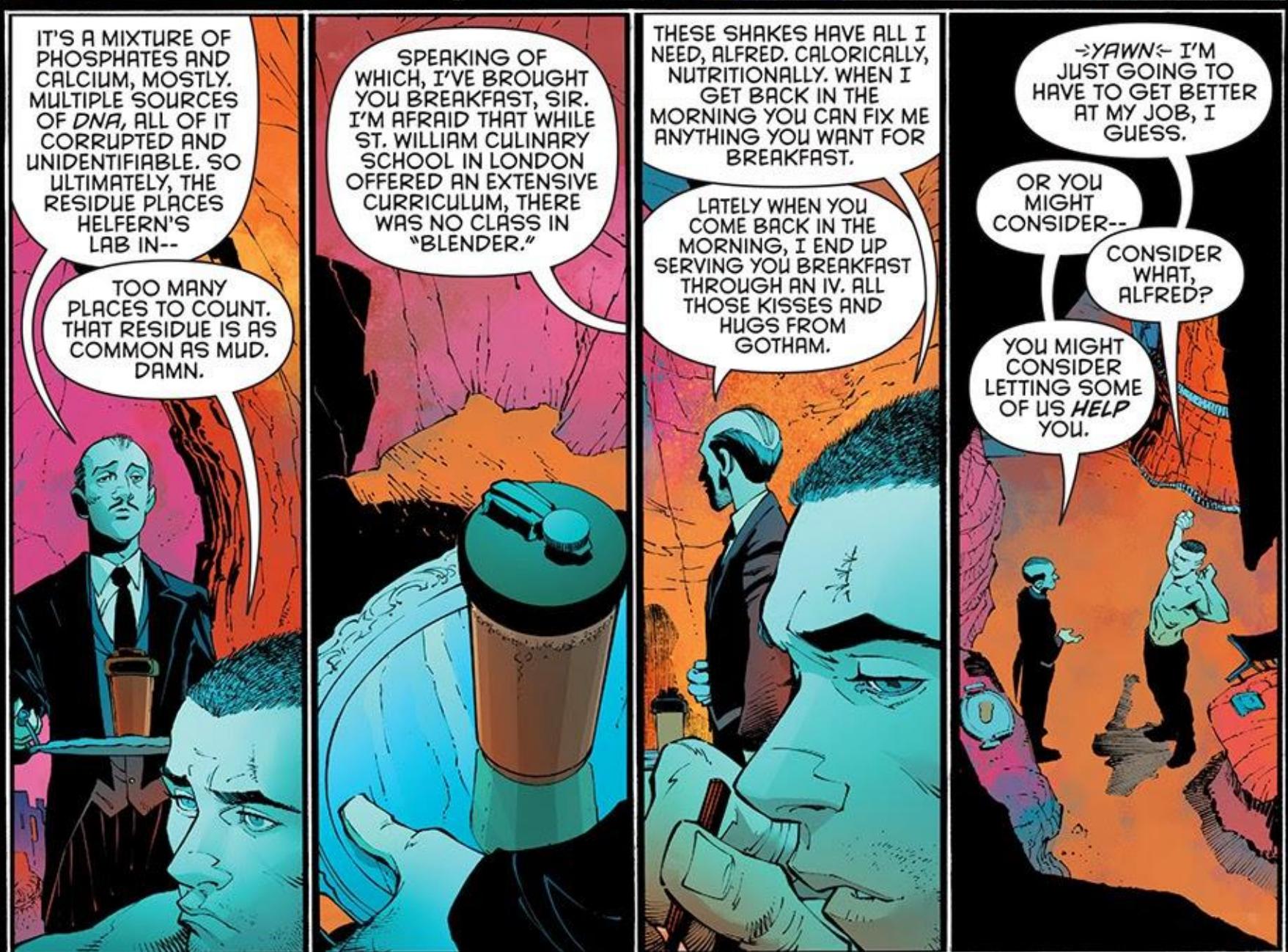
"THEN HE REMINDED ME ABOUT MY LITTLE GIRL, BARBARA, AND MY LITTLE BOY, AND HE WONDERED IF THEY ENJOYED PLAYING WITH DOGS AS MUCH AS I DID."



"I LEFT THEN, AND WHEN HE ASKED ME WHERE I WAS GOING, I TOLD HIM..."

"...I TOLD HIM I WAS GOING TO WALK MY DAMN BEAT."





THAT'S JUST IT, THOUGH, SIR. YOU DON'T *LET* ME HELP. YOU DON'T *TRUST* ME TO. THERE ISN'T A THING I DO FOR YOU THAT YOUR GENIUS MIND COULDN'T FIGURE OUT SOME WAY OF DOING *REMOTELY*.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE HERE WITH ME, IN THE DAMN *BATCAVE*. IF I DIDN'T TRUST YOU, WHY THE HELL WOULD I KEEP YOU AROUND?

LIEUTENANT JAMES GORDON
MARITAL STATUS: SEPARATE
CHILDREN: BARBARA, 15 JAMES
CRIMES SOLVED: 28
CURRENT CASES: 18
CLOSED CASES: 12

YOU KNOW, BRUCE, DURING THOSE YEARS YOU WERE GONE, THERE WAS A MOMENT WHEN YOU WERE SPOTTED.

WORD CAME IN THAT YOU WERE LIVING WITH A NOMADIC PEOPLE IN THE NIGERIAN DESERT, A PEOPLE KNOWN FOR THE GRUELING TRAINING THROUGH WHICH THEY PUT THEIR WARRIOR.

YOUR UNCLE PHILIP SAID HE WAS GOING TO BRING YOU HOME.

I USED MY OLD MILITARY CONTACTS TO SEND WORD AHEAD OF HIM FROM GUSAU.

I THOUGHT IF I GOT TO YOU BEFORE PHILIP, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO *RUN*.

I GAVE EVERYTHING I HAD, ALL MY SAVINGS TO PAY FOR A COURIER. HE SAID HE'D BRING A PHONE TO THE TRIBE AND HAND IT TO YOU. I REMEMBER WAITING UPSTAIRS FOR YOU TO COME ON THE LINE...

...I COULD BARELY BREATHE, I WAS SO ANXIOUS TO SPEAK WITH YOU. I CALLED YOUR NAME, BUT THEN...

...SILENCE.

LIEUTENANT JAMES GORDON
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I TOLD MYSELF THE COURIER HAD SIMPLY LIED TO GET THE PAYMENT. BUT TRUTHFULLY, I KNEW. I *KNEW* YOU WERE LIKELY THERE, ON THE OTHER END, AND DIDN'T TAKE THE CALL.

I UNDERSTOOD, THOUGH. AFTER ALL, WHEN YOU WERE HERE, IT WAS MY JOB TO REPORT YOUR BEHAVIOR TO YOUR PARENTS. TO CALL THE TRUANT OFFICE WHEN YOU SNUCK OFF INTO THE CITY.

WHY WOULD YOU THINK I'D TRY TO *HELP* YOU RUN THIS TIME?

BUT WATCHING YOU THESE PAST WEEKS, I SEE THAT WASN'T THE CASE. YOU WEREN'T SUSPICIOUS OF ME BECAUSE I'D TURNED YOU IN OTHER TIMES IN THE PAST.

AND YOU'RE NOT SUSPICIOUS OF GORDON BECAUSE YOU THINK HE'S CROOKED.

YOU'RE ANGRY WITH US. ALL OF US.

YOU WERE A LITTLE BOY, ALL ALONE IN THAT ALLEY, AND NO ONE WAS THERE FOR YOU. NOT ME, NOT GORDON, NOT YOUR FELLOW GOTHAMITES...

...AND NOT *BATMAN*.

NOW, I'M VERY PROUD OF WHAT YOU'VE BECOME, SIR. BUT I FEAR THAT DEEP DOWN, YOU'RE DOING THIS ALL, BEING *BATMAN*, AS SOME WAY OF *PUNISHING* US--

PUNISHING YOU? HOW WOULD I BE PUNISHING YOU?

"BY MAKING US BEAR WITNESS."

"YOU ASKED ME WHY YOU KEEP ME HERE, AND I BELIEVE IT'S NOT TO WATCH OVER YOU, SIR, BUT TO WATCH. TO WATCH YOU DO WHAT I COULDN'T."

"YOU'RE MAKING US ALL WATCH. THE WHOLE CITY. YOU SHUT US OUT AND PUNISH US NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, AS YOU GO OUT THERE AND PROTECT THOSE WE CAN'T."

"BUT IF YOU DO THAT, SIR, IF YOU LET THE PAST DRIVE BATMAN, HIS SCARS, HE BECOMES SOMETHING DARK, A DEMON OF VENGEANCE. NOT A CREATURE OF JUSTICE OR HOPE. AND HE WILL NOT LAST, NOR WILL YOU."

"LISTEN WHEN I SAY--WE ARE HERE FOR YOU NOW, MASTER BRUCE."

"WE SEE YOU OUT THERE AND WE WANT TO HELP."

"I HAVE TO GO, ALFRED..."

"...BECAUSE I KNOW WHERE HELFERN IS."



BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SIR. THE CATACOMBS ARE AN HISTORIC TOURIST ATTRACTION. I HAVE TROUBLE BELIEVING--

IT'S NOT AN ATTRACTION IN A BLACKOUT.

YOU SAW IT YOURSELF. THE DNA IN THE RESIDUE FROM HELFERN'S HANDPRINTS, IT WAS FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES, BUT TOO CORRUPTED FOR IDENTIFICATION.

BUT THAT SORT OF CORRUPTION COMES FROM EXPOSURE TO THE ATMOSPHERE OVER TIME. AND THE DUST IT'S IN, PHOSPHATE AND CALCIUM--

OLD BONES... STILL, THAT SORT OF MIXTURE IS QUITE COMMON.

THE CATACOMBS WERE BUILT TO PROTECT THE CITY FROM THE MARSHY, DISEASE-RIDDEN CEMETERIES OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PARISHES.

WHICH WOULD MAKE THIS A PRETTY DRAMATIC LOCATION FOR HELFERN'S LAB.

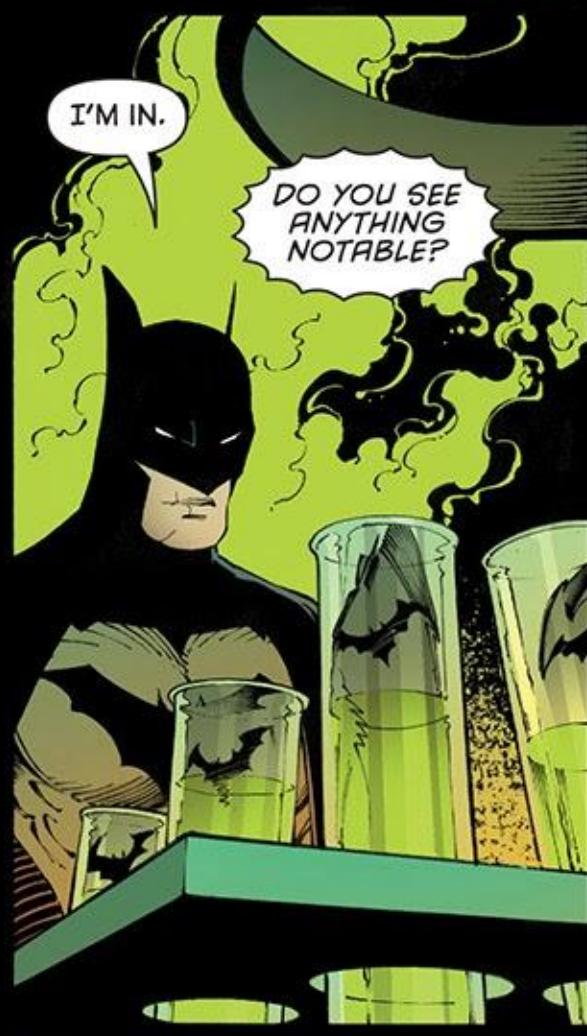
BUT THEY BECAME SO POPULAR SO FAST THAT SOON FAMILIES WERE ONLY ALLOWED TO DONATE A SINGLE BONE FROM THEIR LOVED ONES FOR PRESERVATION.

AND HELFERN DOES SEEM TO HAVE A FLAIR FOR THE DRAMATIC.

MY POINT IS, THE WHOLE PLACE IS A TRIBUTE TO THE IDEA THAT THE ESSENCE OF A PERSON CAN BE CARRIED ON THROUGH HIS OR HER BONES.

SAYS THE YOUNG MAN IN THE BAT-SUIT.





SIR! SIR,
WHAT'S GOING
ON?

I WAS WRONG
ABOUT HIM! HELFERN...
HE'S NOT OUT FOR
REVENGE! THE KILLINGS...
THEY'RE JUST A
SMOKESCREEN.

A
SMOKESCREEN
FOR W--

SOMETHING MUCH WORSE. HE'S...HE'S
BEEN STEALING MATERIAL FROM THE
SCIENTISTS HE'S KILLED! MATERIAL
TO MAKE SOME KIND OF...
DOOMSDAY MACHINE.

HE'S GOING TO TAKE
CONTROL OF THE WHOLE CITY,
ALFRED. IN JUST HOURS, HE'S
GOING TO BRING IT TO
ITS KNEES!

HELFERN? BUT
HE SEEMED--

NO, NOT
HELFERN. THE MAN
HE'S WORKING FOR.
THE **REAL** MONSTER
HERE. THE ONE I
UNDERESTIMATED...

PLEASE...
GO ON...

NYGMA.

THAT'S RIGHT,
BATMAN! YOU'VE
BEEN MAKING QUITE
THE IMPRESSION ON
THE CITY! BUT I'M
AFRAID I'M ABOUT
TO MAKE AN EVEN
BIGGER ONE.

NYGMA,
LISTEN TO ME.
DON'T DO THIS.
THOUSANDS OF
PEOPLE COULD
DIE!

...THAT'S MY WHOLE
POINT, BATMAN. CAN'T
YOU SEE? ENTROPY HAS SPED
UP! THE WORLD IS DYING. THE
SEAS ARE RISING. RESOURCES
ARE DWINDLING. THE
POWERFUL ARE GETTING
MORE SO...

...WE ALL FEEL IT.
WE ALL KNOW IT. THE
ONLY WEAPON ANY OF
US HAS AGAINST THE
TIDE IS INTELLIGENCE.
SMARTS...!

...SO WHY NOT
SPEED THINGS UP EVEN
MORE, THOSE FORCES
OF DESTRUCTION, AND
MAKE PEOPLE GET
SMART. GET SMART
OR DIE!



AND UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, DETECTIVE, YOU WEREN'T SMART ENOUGH TO CUT IT THIS TIME. THAT IS HOW YOU THINK OF YOURSELF, ISN'T IT? AS A DETECTIVE?

AND DETECTIVE NOVELS, WELL, THEY'RE LIKE RIDDLES AFTER ALL. BATTLES OF WITS. EMPIRICAL RIDDLES, SURE. NOT AS PURE, BUT STILL, THEY QUALIFY.



THE DETECTIVE, HE ADDS UP ALL THE CLUES AND REPAIRS THE STANDARD DESIGN OF THINGS.

BUT IN THIS CASE, THE DETECTIVE, WELL... -heh-



...SO IT'S TIME TO BURY SAID DETECTIVE DOWN HERE WITH THE FALLEN MARTYRS. BECAUSE IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, GOTHAM CITY WILL BELONG TO ME. EVERY FIBER OF IT...

...THE VERY AIR IT BREATHES. AND I HAVE A MUCH MORE DEADLY RIDDLE FOR THE CITY THAN THE ONE YOU JUST FAILED TO SOLVE.





...BECAUSE
THIS IS WHERE
YOUR PART OF
THE STORY
ENDS.

ZERO
YEAR

DARK CITY

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BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE JON KATZ AFTER BOB KANE

NEXT: A GLIMPSE INTO THE
FUTURE OF BATMAN ETERNAL!