



THE NEW 52!

3

BATMAN

SCOTT
SNYDER
GREG
CAPULLO
JONATHAN
GLAPION



RATED T
TEEN

Capullo
11
+fco

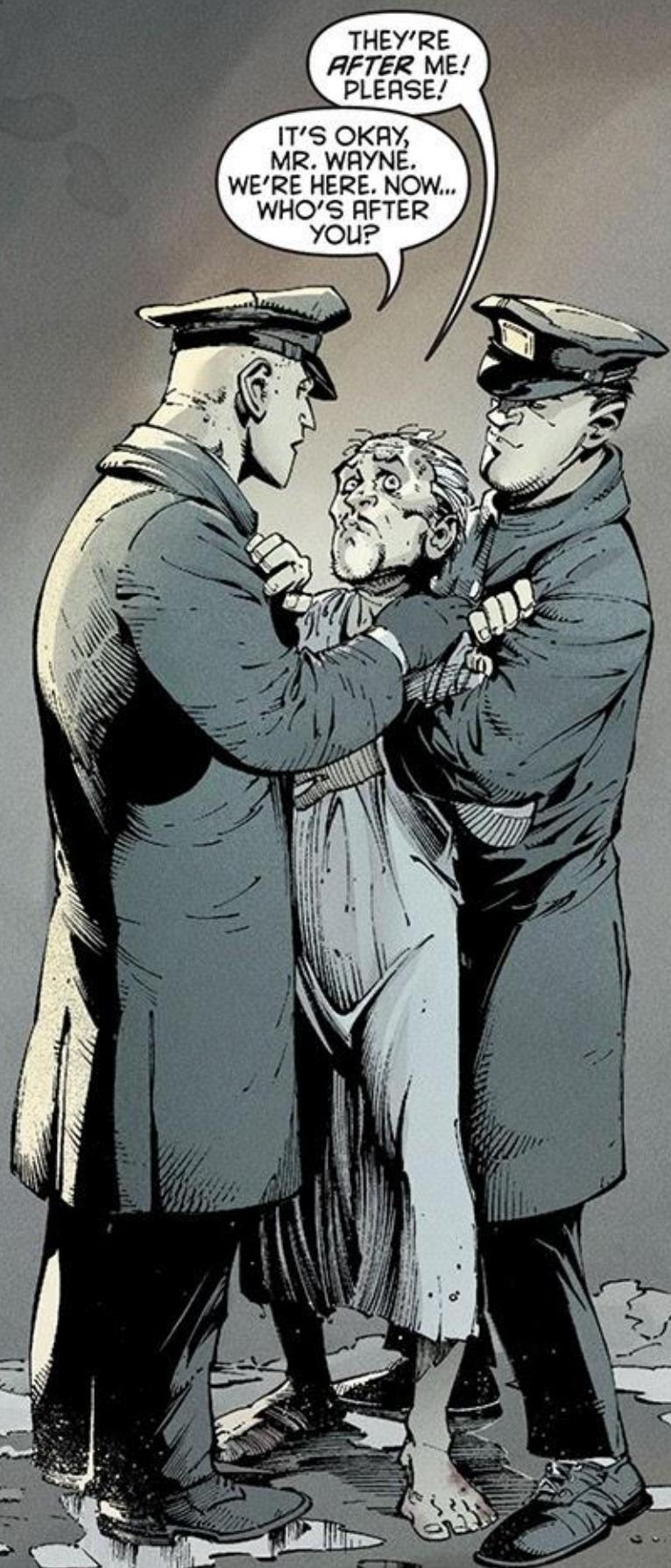
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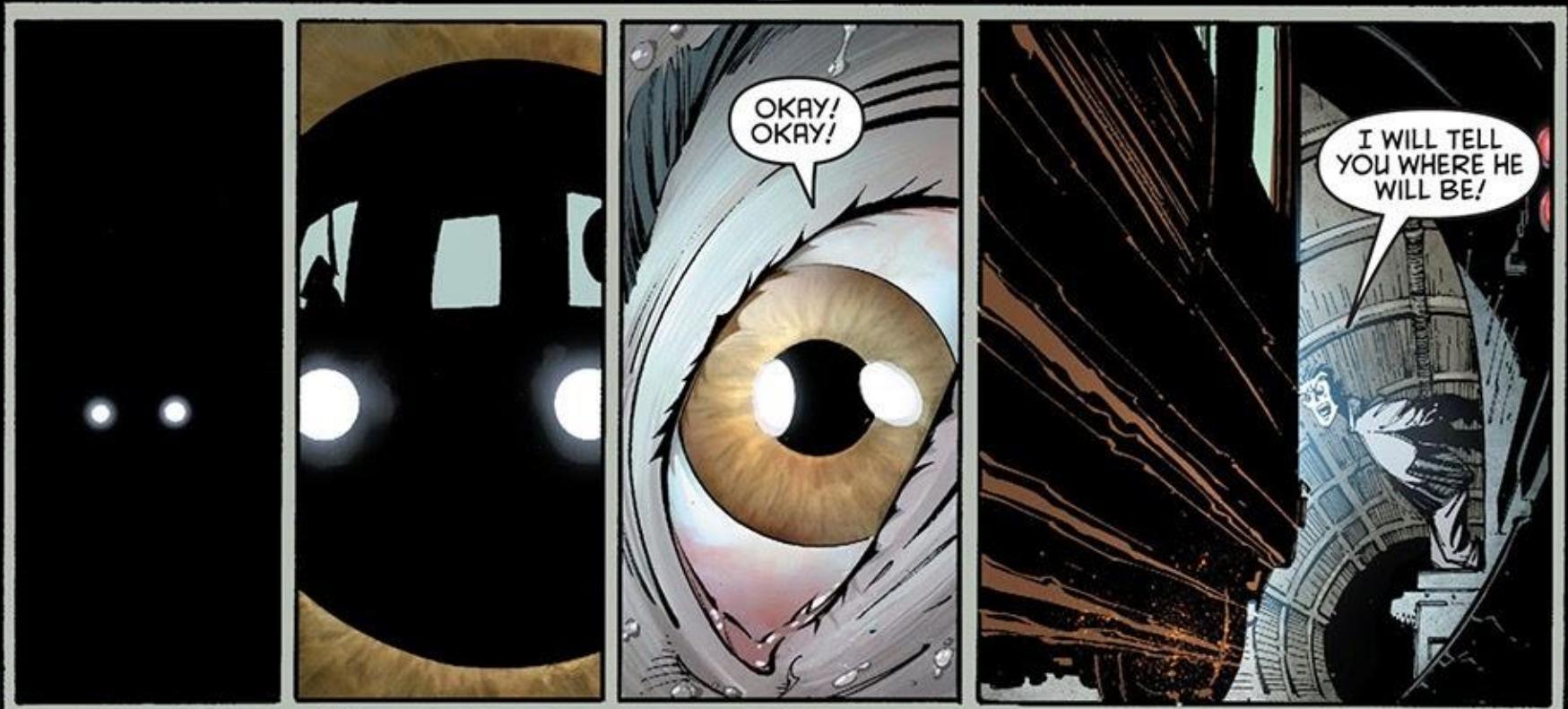
JAN 2012



GOTHAM CITY. WINTER, 1922







GOTHAM CITY. NOW...

TALK.

YOU SAY YOU ARE LOOKING
FOR A MAN IN A DARK COSTUME,
AN ENFORCER WITH A
MASK TO HIDE HIS FACE.
I WILL TELL YOU THAT
TOMORROW...

...HEH HEH...
THERE WILL BE
ONE AT THE
MORGUE!

*The man making the
questionable jokes
is named Luka Volk.*

*He's the "pakhan" of a Gotham
branch of the Ukrainian mob.*

They call themselves
"Whisper Gang."



And they're one of five gangs
that control smuggling in
and out of Gotham by rail.



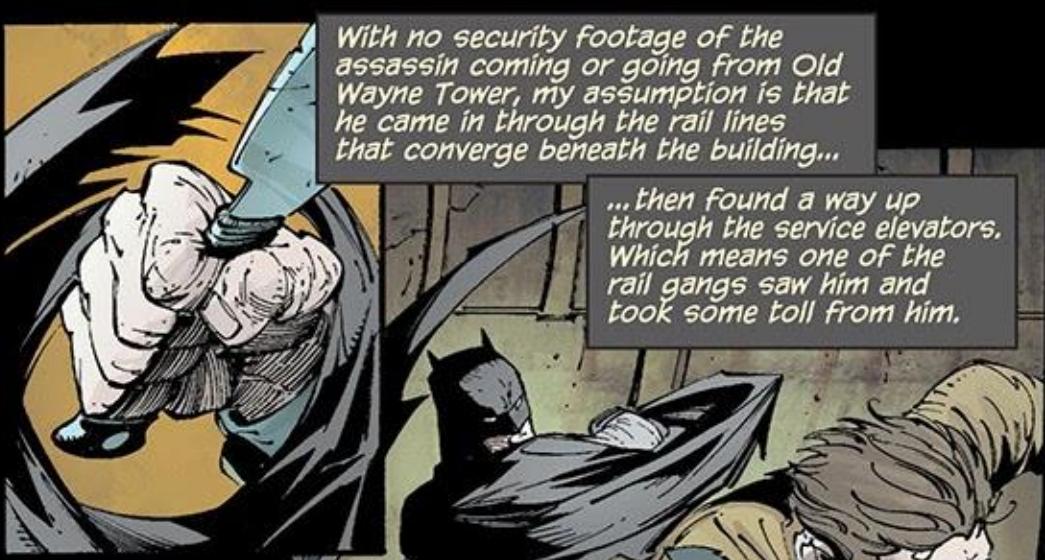
Two days ago, an assassin
dressed like an owl tried to
kill me while I was meeting
with a local politician.

With no security footage of the
assassin coming or going from Old
Wayne Tower, my assumption is that
he came in through the rail lines
that converge beneath the building...

...then found a way up
through the service elevators.
Which means one of the
rail gangs saw him and
took some toll from him.

The gangs have divided
the lines among them.

One line for each gang.
One is Yakuza. One is La Eme.
Five rail lines. Five gangs.





I've already chatted with the other four gangs.

Whisper Gang is known to be the most vicious and brutal of the five, though.



The candidates--or "sixths"--are given extensive weapons training overseas, before being allowed to travel to the States.



Once here, they're each fitted with an iron mask, symbolic of their loyalty to the gang. A muzzle to prove they'll never "snitch."



The mask is soldered together at the back of the head, and can't be removed for at least a year, until the sixth has proven himself.



All of which makes them pretty tough...



...unless you're
a magnet.

ABOUT TO
TELL ME EVERYTHING
YOU KNOW ABOUT
THE ASSASSIN YOU LET
INTO OLD WAYNE
TOWER.

PLEASE!
I WAS--



BUT I TELL
THE TRUTH! I DON'T
KNOW ANYTHING
ABOUT THIS "OWL"
MAN!

...LIE DETECTION
ASSESSING... ASSESSING

TRUTH.

GET
OUT OF MY
TUNNELS.

SECOND MATRIX READY
FOR VOICE ANALYSIS.

"BRUCE WAYNE.
THE COURT OF OWLS
HAS SENTENCED
YOU TO DIE."

SEARCHING.
SEARCHING...
VOICE ANALYSIS:
SEARCH FAILED.

LAUNCH
VOICE
ANALYSIS.
NOW
LET'S SEE WHO
YOU ARE.

I'LL
LEAVE THIS IN
ARM'S REACH,
SIR.

IF I MAY,
THOUGH, THE MORNING
BEFORE LAST, I CAME
ACROSS AN ARTICLE IN
THE SCIENCES PORTION
OF THE GAZETTE.

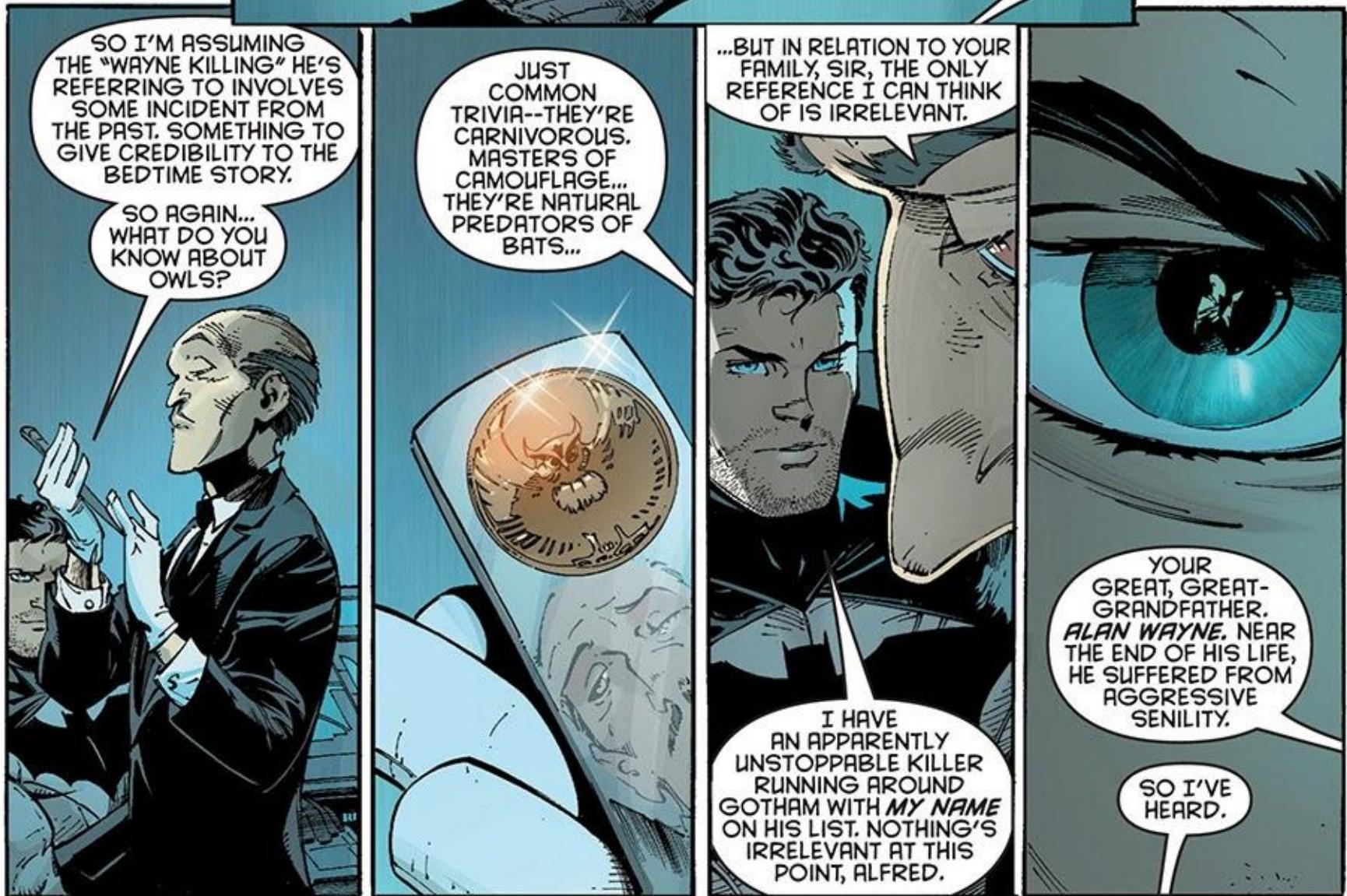
IT APPEARS
THAT RESEARCHERS
IN GERMANY--
ORNITHOLOGISTS--
RECENTLY DISCOVERED
THAT MOST BATS DEPEND
ON THE SUNSET FOR
LONG-DISTANCE
NAVIGATION.

I KNOW
PLENTY ABOUT
BATS, ALFRED.
TELL ME WHAT YOU
KNOW ABOUT
OWLS.

WHICH IS TO
SAY THEY NEED
TO EXPERIENCE
TWILIGHT IN ORDER
TO CALIBRATE
THEIR INTERNAL
COMPASS.

IN OTHER
WORDS, MASTER
BRUCE, BATS NEED
A LITTLE *SUNLIGHT*
ONCE IN A WHILE TO
FLY STRAIGHT, IF
YOU WILL.

SIR?





HE SUFFERED FROM A SEVERE PARANOIA ABOUT THE BIRDS, SOME OBSESSION WITH THE IDEA THAT THEY WERE *CONSPIRING* AGAINST HIM.



TO HEAR MY FATHER TELL IT, MASTER ALAN BOARDED UP HIS WINDOWS FOR FEAR THAT ONE NIGHT THE OWLS WOULD COME FOR HIM.



BUT EVEN THIS DIDN'T HELP, AS HE SOON BECAME GRIPPED BY THE NOTION THAT THEY--THE OWLS-- WERE ROOSTING INSIDE HIS HOME. IN THE WALLS.



IF YOU LOOK AT HIS LAST PORTRAIT IN THE GALLERY, AT THE BUILDINGS HE DESIGNED, FEATURED IN THE BACKGROUND, YOU'LL NOTICE OWLS PERCHED ALONG THE MOLDINGS.



BUT HIS DEATH...



NO, YOU'RE CORRECT. HE DROWNED, HAVING FALLEN INTO AN OPEN MANHOLE IN THE GOTHAM SEWER. NO FOUL PLAY WAS SUSPECTED.



I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF PREPARING YOU SOME BLACK TEA WITH MEDICINAL--



NO TIME, ALFRED. I'M ON MY WAY OUT.

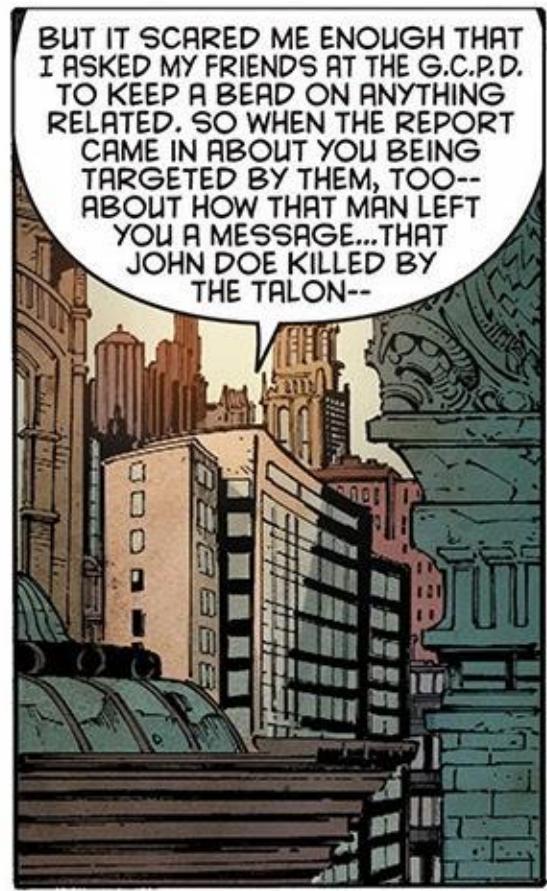


MAY I SUGGEST YOU TAKE THE DAY TO REST, SIR. WITH THE INJURIES YOU SUSTAINED IN THE FALL, AND THE STAB WOUNDS--



YOU SAID IT YOURSELF, ALFRED...







I'M NOT AFRAID OF GHOST STORIES. AND YOU SHOULDN'T BE, EITHER.



HELL YES, I'M AFRAID. BUT I'M NOT DROPPING MY BID FOR MAYOR, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE IMPLYING.

GOTHAM HAS GIVEN ME EVERYTHING I HAVE, AND I'LL BE DAMNED IF I HAND IT OVER TO BUNCH OF OLD BIRDS.

THEN YOU HAVE MY VOTE, LINCOLN.



BRUCE, THE HOME FOR BOYS I LIVED IN, AFTER MY PARENTS DIED, IT HAD THIS OLD WOODEN FLOOR. ALWAYS CREAKING. DROVE EVERYONE CRAZY.

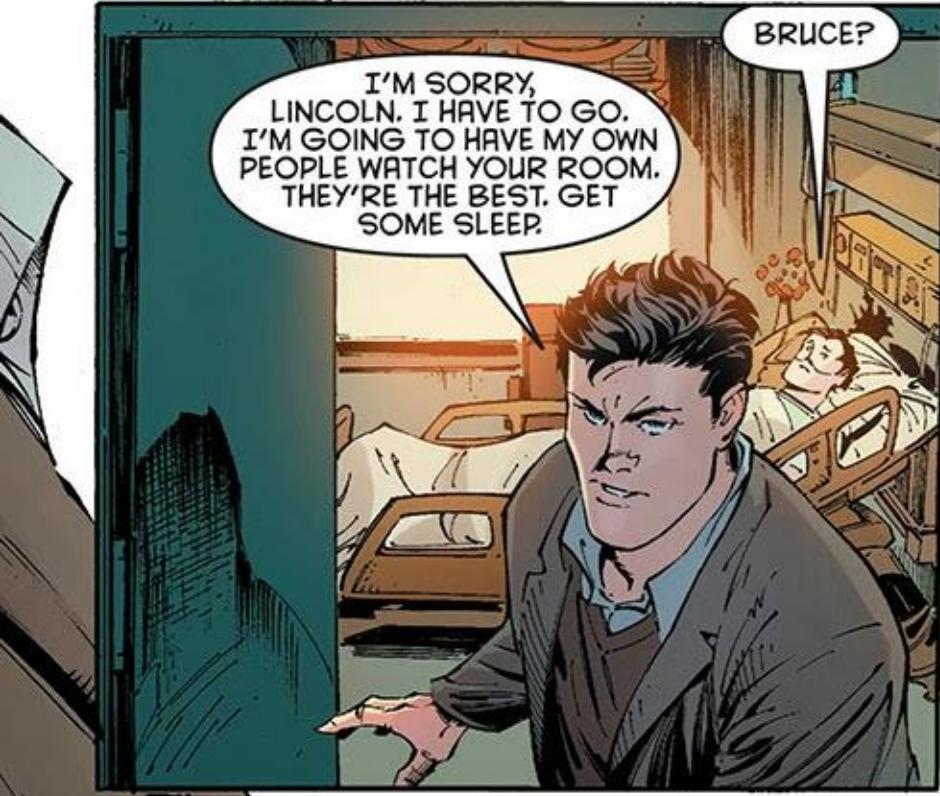
NO ONE THE NUNS BROUGHT IN COULD FIGURE IT OUT. THEN ONE DAY SISTER ALISON NOTICED THIS DEPRESSION BY THE CORNER OF THE BUILDING.



TURNS OUT, THE PLACE WAS ON A SINKHOLE. WITHIN A YEAR, THE WHOLE BUILDING WOULD'VE COLLAPSED WITH US INSIDE, IF SHE HADN'T REALIZED IT.



MY POINT IS, SOMETIMES WE BECOME SO CONCERNED WITH LITTLE DANGERS THAT WE DON'T SEE THE BIG ONE, RIGHT BENEATH OUR FEET. THAT'S ALL.



I'M SORRY, LINCOLN. I HAVE TO GO. I'M GOING TO HAVE MY OWN PEOPLE WATCH YOUR ROOM. THEY'RE THE BEST. GET SOME SLEEP.

BRUCE?

BUT, BRUCE, IF THEY'RE WATCHING ME...



"...WHO'S
WATCHING
YOU?"

Historically,
cities are
places of
superstition.

After all, people come to them from all over the world, from small towns and villages, places they've lived for generations, to inhabit giant mazes of glass and steel, shadow and merciless light.

They'd cling to beliefs from home about what keeps you safe, and what to avoid.

A black cat crosses your path, you'll be plagued by bad luck.

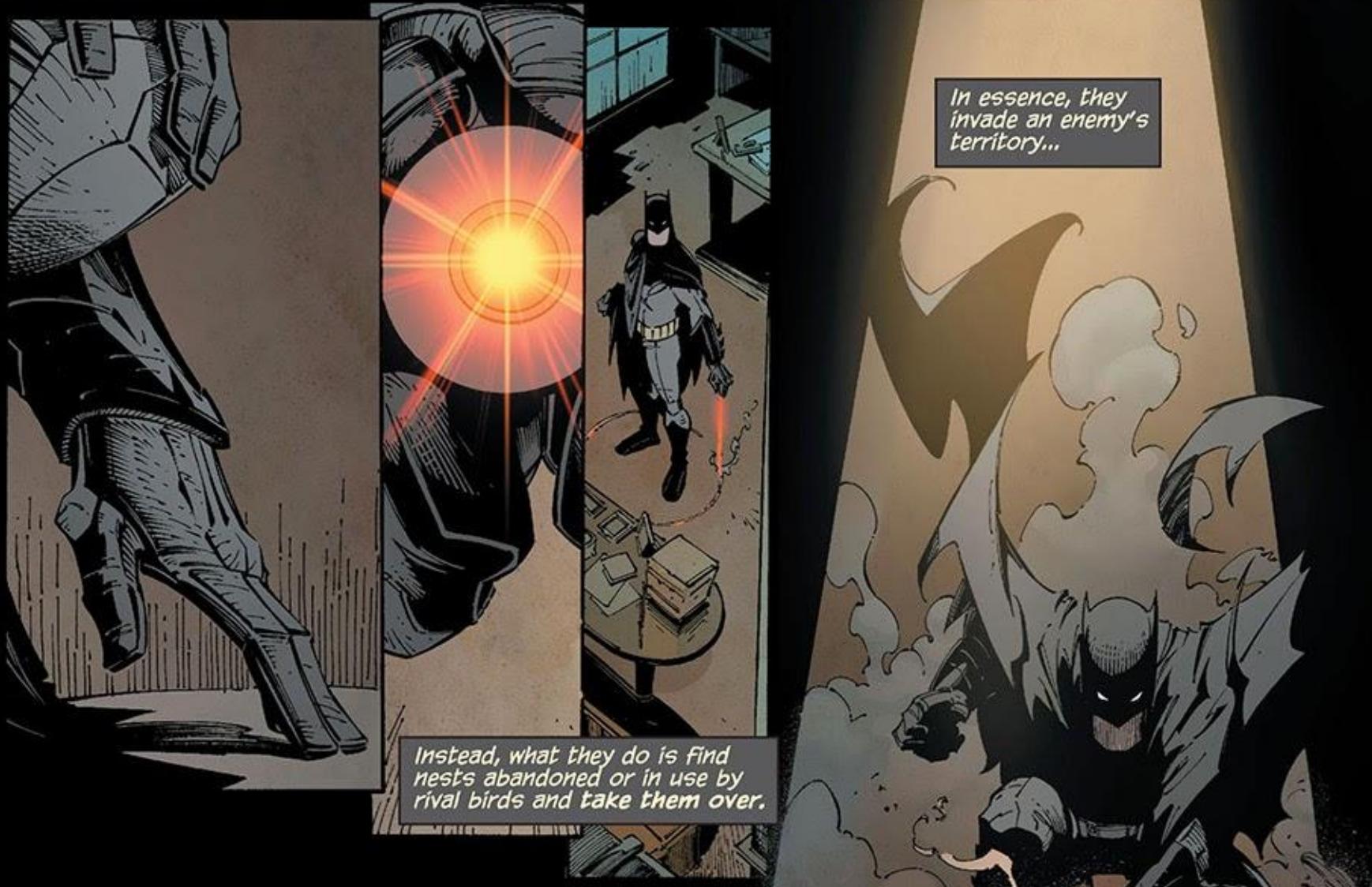
A thirteenth guest at dinner means someone in the party will die at midnight.

My great-grandfather, Alan Wayne, understood the power of superstition. As such, he was one of the first men to eliminate a thirteenth floor from his buildings.

A space sealed off from the world, inaccessible. Just a blank slot in the building. An absence like a breath held when passing a graveyard.

Funny thing, though. To really make good on the superstition, you were supposed to leave a small space in the building between floors twelve and fourteen, a false floor, to contain the bad luck of number thirteen.

A space just big enough--in theory--for a man to hide in. Perhaps a killer dressed like an owl.







"IT STILL EXISTS,
DOESN'T IT?"

THE ALAN
WAYNE TRUST FOR
ASSISTING YOUNG
ARCHITECTS. IT'S A
FUND TO BE USED
FOR PROGRESSIVE
ADDITIONS
TO GOTHAM'S
SKYLINE.

"PULL UP THE ADDRESSES OF ALL THE
BUILDINGS FUNDED BY THAT TRUST
OVER THE LAST CENTURY AND A HALF."

I'M
UPLOADING THE
ADDRESSES
NOW.

THERE ARE
NEARLY TWENTY
BUILDINGS IN ALL,
ROUGHLY ONE EVERY
DECADE FOR THE
LAST HUNDRED AND
FIFTY YEARS...





ALFRED.
I WANT YOU
TO OPEN ALAN
WAYNE'S
CRYPT.



ALL THIS
TIME. RIGHT
UNDER OUR
FE--

SIR?

The THIRTEENTH HOUR

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ZAPBOOOOM!

NEXT: FACE THE COURT!