



DC  
COMICS™

39

THE NEW 52!

# BATMAN™

SNYDER  
CAPULLO  
MIKI  
PLASCENCIA





GOTHAM CITY, NOW.

*My enemies have  
a secret pact.*

*They think I don't  
know about it,  
but I do.*

*The pact is, on the  
day I die, they will  
shine the Bat-signal  
over the city.*

*It was Joker's idea.  
A light in the sky to  
commemorate me. A  
bat, hanging upside  
down, at rest.*

*Seeing it now, I can't  
shake the feeling  
I'm dead already.  
Narrating my  
funeral...*

## BATMAN: ENDGAME PART FIVE

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CREATED BY

**BOB KANE**

4 HOURS AGO.

...from deep in  
the underworld.

WELL,  
WELL. LOOK  
WHAT WE  
HAVE HERE.

OH, LET HIM  
SEE! WE'RE  
GROWING,  
AND HE CAN'T  
STOP US.

YOU MIGHT  
WANT TO GET  
THAT LEAK FIXED  
BEFORE YOU START  
BRAGGING. OH  
RIGHT, YOU  
*CAN'T*.

YOU  
GROW AS  
MUCH AS I  
*LET* YOU.

YOU  
REALLY BELIEVE  
THAT, DON'T YOU?  
YOU HAVEN'T EVEN  
NOTICED WHAT WE'VE  
DONE YET. THE  
SERRATIONS, ALL  
AROUND THE--

ENOUGH.  
I CAME HERE  
BECAUSE THE VIRUS  
THE JOKER SET LOOSE  
UP THERE, THE CHEMICAL  
AT ITS CORE IS  
SOMETHING I CAN'T  
OVERCOME.

"I NEED TO FIND IT. AND THE  
DOCTOR WHO DESIGNED THE  
VIRUS SPOKE OF A MINING  
PROJECT HUNDREDS OF YEARS  
AGO, AN ATTEMPT TO FIND THIS  
SUBSTANCE BENEATH GOTHAM."

"THERE'S ONLY ONE  
ORGANIZATION THAT  
HAD THE MEANS AND  
THE WILL TO UNDERTAKE  
SOMETHING LIKE THAT."



WE DID  
SEARCH, YES.  
BUT WHAT WE  
FOUND WAS A  
*CORRUPTED*  
VERSION.

YOU.  
YOU HAVE  
IT, DON'T YOU,  
THIS DIONESIUM.  
IT'S IN THE  
ELECTRUM YOU USE  
TO BRING BACK  
THE TALONS.

IT'S IN OUR  
ELECTRUM. AND  
IT SERVES OUR  
*PURPOSE*, NOW THAT  
WE HAVE THE CATALYST.  
BUT IT'S NOTHING AS  
PURE AS WHATEVER'S  
IN *THAT* CLOWN'S  
BLOOD.



THAT CLOWN  
IS BURNING THIS  
CITY TO THE GROUND.

YOU DON'T  
TELL ME THE TRUTH  
ABOUT WHERE HE MIGHT  
HAVE GOTTEN THAT  
CHEMICAL, ALL OF US,  
ME, YOU, **EVERYONE...**  
THE CITY WILL DIE.  
IT WILL--

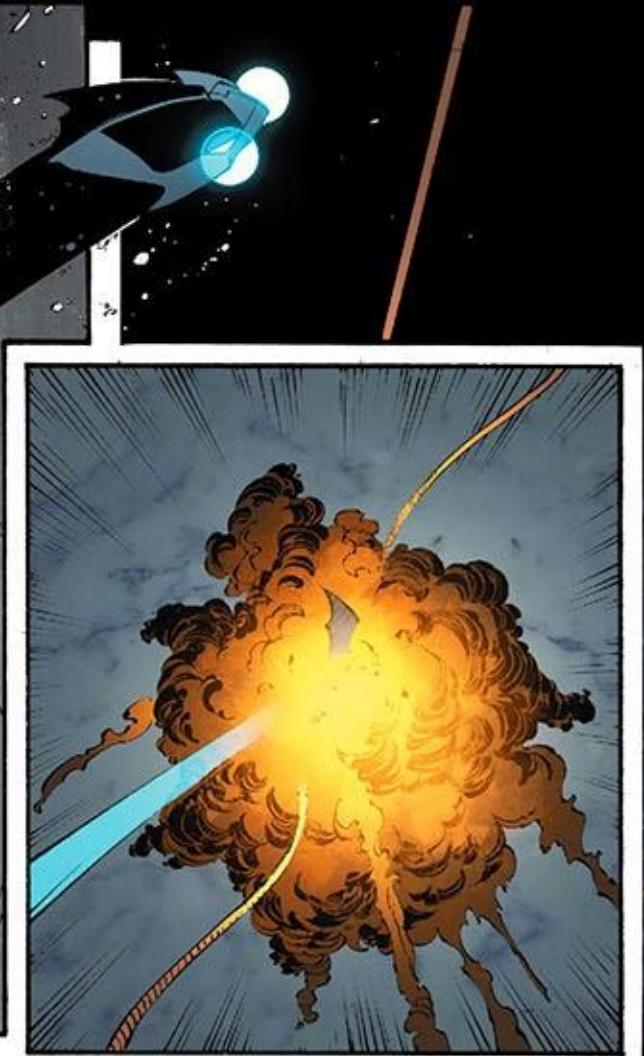
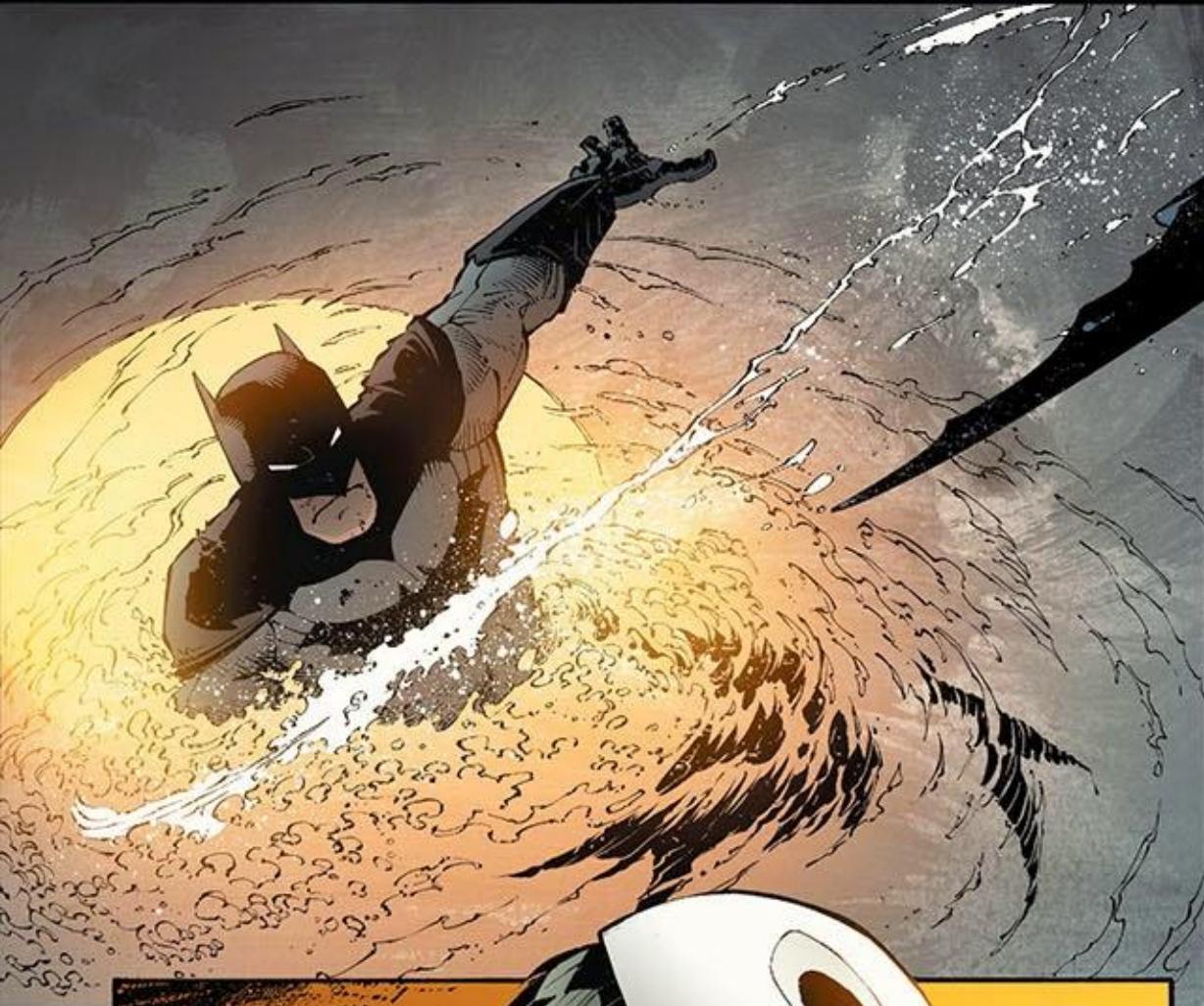
Psst.  
UP.



WE ALWAYS  
BUILD THEM HANGING  
UPSIDE DOWN, THEN TURN  
AND PLACE THEM, BATMAN.  
WE DO IT TO REMIND  
OURSELVES THAT WE'RE  
BENEATH GOTHAM, THAT  
IT'S SOMETHING  
ABOVE US,  
ALWAYS.

WE SHAPE  
IT, BEND IT TO  
OUR WILL, BUT  
IT'S GREATER  
THAN ANY ONE  
OF US.

SO LET THE  
CLOWN BURN IT AND  
MOVE ON TO SOME  
OTHER PLACE. IT'S WHAT  
CLOWNS DO. THE CITY  
WILL RISE AGAIN. PURE  
AND CLEANSED AND  
WE'LL HELP IT ALONG.  
A NEW G--





COME  
ON...



...I  
KNOW  
YOU'RE  
HERE.



BATMAN...



...THE  
COURT OF  
OWLS...



Unh!

...HAS  
SENTENCED  
YOU...

...TO  
DIE!



YOU'RE ONE OF THE FIRST TALONS, URIAH! YOU'RE FROM BEFORE ALL THIS! THE SKYSCRAPERS! FROM WHEN THE CITY WAS BRICK AND WOOD! URIAH BOONE!

Unh!

JUST TELL ME ONE THING! WAS HE AROUND THEN?

I AM A TALON. I AM FROM HERE, ALWAYS. YOU...

...ARE SCRATCHED ON THE WALL!



GOTHAM CITY, NOW.

I've trained myself not to be concerned with death. Not to believe in it. That was the first, most important precursor to becoming Batman.

The last time I remember believing--really believing--I was going to die, I was thirteen years old, falling through the darkness of the cave.



I've had my share of near-death experiences.

When he was Robin, Dick used to joke that it wasn't a real weekend unless my heart had stopped at least twice. He'd ask me if I remembered to say hi to some long-dead actress for him this time around. No? Then next weekend.



The ground was rushing up at me, and I was screaming and the realization hit me--and hit me hard.



Bruce, you're going to die today.

I don't remember hitting the ground. I just recall lying there in total darkness, sure I was dead.



GOTHAM CITY, THREE HOURS AGO.

It was peaceful,  
that darkness.  
Tempting.

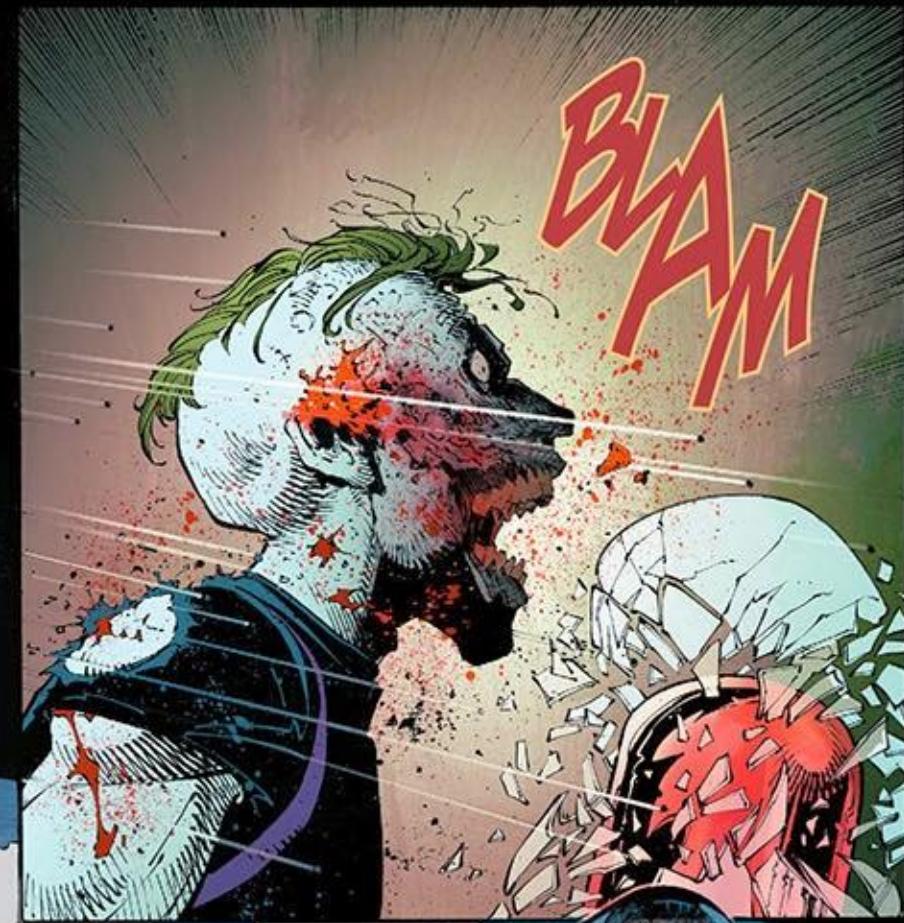
*It was the taste in my mouth that brought me back. The dirty water, the coppery tang of blood. A fly landed on my lip.*

*And suddenly it all came rushing back. I was a boy, lost in a cave. Alive, hurt, and desperate to find a way out of that same calm darkness.*



"...AND IT JUST  
KEEPS GETTING  
WORSE."

AND THIS DAY JUST  
KEEPS GETTING BETTER  
AND BETTER!



SO NATURAL,  
JEEVES...THE THING MOST  
PEOPLE MISSES ABOUT  
THAT FOOL IS THAT DEEP  
DOWN, HE'S A BIG PHONEY.  
AM I RIGHT?

I MEAN, HE SEEMS  
SO LOYAL, BUT THEN...AS SOON  
AS THINGS GET ROUGH FOR  
OLD LEAR, HE DISAPPEARS!  
GONE BY SCENE SIX OF ACT  
THREE! WHOOSHHHH!

SHUT  
YOUR FILTHY  
MOUTH!

HIDING OFF-STAGE  
SOMEWHERE...TUCKED AWAY,  
ALWAYS SO SSSSSAFE. YOU  
TELL ME. BUT TO MY MIND, THAT  
FOOL'S NOT MUCH OF A RIGHT  
HAND MAN TO ANYONE  
BUT HIMSELF...

...IS  
HE?!

THEN AGAIN,  
WHAT THE HELL DO  
I KNOW ABOUT  
THEATER?!

I MEAN  
LET'S FACE  
IT...

...I'VE ALWAYS  
BEEN MORE OF AN  
IMPROV MAN MYSELF!  
HAHAHAHA!

"BATMAN?"





GOTHAM CITY, NOW.

"I HAVE A  
PLAN."



STOP  
BEING SO  
DAMN LAZY  
AND LET'S  
DO THIS.

BLUEBIRD,  
GIGGLER  
ON YOUR  
RIGHT.

GOT  
HIM. MERCY  
BUCKETS,  
BATGIRL.

"WAIT, WAIT..."

GOTHAM CITY, ONE HOUR EARLIER.



Like I said, my enemies have a pact. Shine an upside down bat-signal and mourn me...

...Here, together, at Ace Chemical where it all began.

WE WERE WONDERING THE SAME THING.

Heh. OR SNACK.  
I'LL START WITH VEGAS HERE. NICE SUIT, KID.



GOTHAM CITY, NOW.

"...WHO'S IN?!"

HEE-HEE!

PERFECT.

TO BE CONCLUDED!

# THE LAST SMILE

WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV  
PENCILS BY DUSTIN NGUYEN  
INKS BY DEREK FRIDOLFS  
COLORS BY DAVE MCCARTY  
LETTERS BY STEVE WANDS  
BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE

"I DON'T...  
I DON'T  
UNDERSTAND."

"THIS ISN'T WHAT  
HE SAID. THIS ISN'T  
THE RIGHT END TO  
THE STORY."

D-DO  
WE GO?

WE HAVE  
TO. WE HAVE  
TO SEE. WE  
HAVE TO FIND  
OUT...

THIS ISN'T A  
MATTER OF ONE  
OF YOU BEING RIGHT.  
YOU NEED TO SEE  
THAT BY NOW. YOU  
HAVE TO!

ALL  
I SEE... IS  
ANOTHER  
STEP IN THE  
PATH.

IT'S AN  
ELEVATOR,  
CASSIDY. JUST  
ANOTHER  
SERVICE  
ELEVATOR.

NO. IT'S  
ANOTHER STEP  
TOWARDS THE  
TRUTH.

LET'S...  
LET'S  
GO.

HEEEEEE...  
HERE WE  
GOOOOO...

WHAT ON EARTH?

MARQUIS  
PUBLISHING GROUP

NO.  
OH GOD  
NO.

THIS ISN'T  
RIGHT...

IT'S  
BOOKS.  
IT'S ALL  
BOOKS...

IS THIS...  
IS THIS WHERE  
THEY DO IT?  
WHERE THEY  
REPLACE  
US?

THIS ISN'T RIGHT!  
HE'S SUPPOSED  
TO BE HERE. HE'S  
SUPPOSED TO  
GIVE US THE  
ANSWER!

PLEASE  
GOD, I  
NEED TO  
KNOW!

HUSH HUSH...

...IT IS  
MRS. CHEN'S  
TIME NOW.

NOT MY  
STORY. HER  
STORY.

SEE?

# CLOWN PRINCE

The TRUE STORY of the JOKER  
written by Dr. Mahreen Zaheer

NO...NOT THE RULES. THE RULES ARE ALL WRONG... DON'T GET IT. I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HER. IT'S YOU!

WHAT STORY DO I HAVE? STABBED FOURTEEN PEOPLE IN THE NECK. LEARNED TO KNIT. DOCTORS WANTED TO TALK. I DIDN'T. DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR STORIES.

HE SAW THAT. SAW I WAS PLAYING PRETEND. SAID IT WAS A GOOD JOKE. WE LAUGHED TOGETHER. SAID HE LIKED MY LAUGH...

...HEE HEEE HEEE...

THIS IS HER TURN. THIS IS WHEN SHE TALKS.

THIS...THIS IS WHAT I CAME TO ARKHAM TO RESEARCH. THE PROBLEM I'VE BEEN TRYING TO SOLVE FOR YEARS.

DON'T UNDERSTAND...WHY IS THE PICTURE SO BIG...

AND I FINALLY DID IT. THE BOOK IS BEING ANNOUNCED NEXT WEEK.

HE CAME TO YOU, TOO?

NO! HE NEVER CAME TO ME. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO. THIS ISN'T SOME CRAZY STORY HE TRIED TO TELL ME. THIS IS THE TRUTH.

I DID RESEARCH. HARD, PAINFUL RESEARCH. I'VE WORKED ON THIS FOR YEARS...AND IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS, WE FINALLY CRACKED IT.

I'VE WORKED AT ARKHAM FOR AGES. I'VE TALKED TO EVERY DOCTOR WHO HAS EVER ANALYZED THE JOKER...READ EVERY FILE... EVERY NEWS ARTICLE.

HE'S THE ONLY ONE WE ALL THINK OF LIKE THIS. THE ONLY ONE WHERE *ANY* STORY CAN FIT, BECAUSE THERE'S NO TRAIL TO WHAT HE WAS BEFORE.

UNTIL FOUR MONTHS AGO. MY RESEARCH PARTNER AND I DISCOVERED THE TRUTH.

HE ISN'T A SOLDIER. HE ISN'T THE DEVIL, OR A ROBOT, OR SOME NIGHTMARE FROM ANOTHER TIME...HE'S JUST A MAN. A VERY SICK MAN.

STOP... STOP LYING...

CASSIDY, LOOK... HERE, THEY'VE BEEN VETTING THE INFORMATION FOR WEEKS AND IT ALL PANS OUT. THIS IS WHO HE REALLY IS. ALL HE EVER WAS.

HIS NAME WAS WILLIAM DISTAL.

WHEN HE WAS FOUR YEARS OLD, HIS SISTER WENT MISSING. HIS PARENTS WERE SO FRIGHTENED THEY ABANDONED HIM.

"HE GREW UP IN SIX DIFFERENT FOSTER HOMES. I'VE TALKED TO THE PARENTS. I'VE HEARD THE FEAR IN THEIR VOICES.

"HE WAS A BULLY. HE NEVER KNEW HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS, HE WOULD JUST TALK TO THE OTHER CHILDREN, PIT THEM AGAINST EACH OTHER...

"HE RAN AWAY AT SIXTEEN. CAME TO THE NARROWS. HIS NEIGHBORS TELL STORIES OF THE THINGS HE'D WHISPER UNDER THE DOOR AT NIGHT...

"BACK IN THE ZERO YEAR, THEY FOUND A BODY WITH TRACES OF HIS BLOOD RESTING IN LYE, A MEMBER OF THE RED HOOD GANG, MAYBE EVEN THE LEADER...BUT THE DENTAL RECORDS DIDN'T MATCH.

HE FADED HIS DEATH SO HE COULD SHAPE HIS OWN STORY. BECOME SOMETHING NEW...

SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

NO! YOU ALL NEED TO UNDERSTAND. HE ISN'T THE ANSWER TO ANY OF YOUR *DELUSIONS*, ALL HE EVER WANTED TO DO WAS PLAY INTO THE WORLDS IN YOUR HEAD.

CAN'T BE TRUE...THIS CAN'T BE TRUE...

THIS IS A TEST. HE'S TRYING TO TEMPT US... TEMPT US TO BELIEVE WHAT WE KNOW ISN'T TRUE.

BUT I KNOW THE TRUTH. I KNOW MY MASTER.

HE'S STILL JUST THE LITTLE BOY, A LITTLE SMARTER THAN ANYONE ELSE, PITTING PEOPLE AGAINST EACH OTHER. PLAYING GAMES. TELLING JOKES.

SLAM

NO!

FUCK



OH GOD...  
OH GOD...  
PLEASE...

ERIC...  
PICK UP.  
PLEASE...  
PICK UP.

BZZZ...  
BZZZ...  
BZZZ...



WHAT?  
ERIC?

I GOT  
YOUR MESSAGE,  
MAHREEN.\* YOU  
THINK I WOULDN'T  
COME WHEN MY  
FRIEND IS IN  
DANGER?

\*BACK IN  
BATMAN #36!  
--MARK



THANK  
GOD... IT'S BEEN  
A NIGHTMARE.  
AN ABSOLUTE  
NIGHTMARE.

IT'S THE  
JOKER... HE FOUND  
OUT ABOUT OUR  
PROJECT. WHAT WE'VE  
BEEN WORKING ON  
FOR ALL THESE  
MONTHS.

HE'S TOLD  
THEM ALL THESE  
LITTLE STORIES, AND  
THEY BELIEVE THEY'RE  
TRUE, AND NOW THEY'RE  
TRYING TO KILL ME  
FOR LEARNING THE  
ACTUAL TRUTH.

BUT YOU'RE HERE.  
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN  
HERE, AND NOW WE CAN  
FIX THIS TOGETHER. WE  
NEED TO CALL THE  
POLICE.



HEH...  
...HEHEHEHE  
HEHEHE...

NO... NO NO NO...

OH, COME NOW,  
MAHREEN... WE'VE BEEN  
SUCH CLOSE PALS. I  
STILL REMEMBER HOW  
NICE YOU WERE THE  
DAY I CAME TO  
ARKHAM.\*

YOU  
SHOWED ME  
THE ROPES...



I WAS SO SAD TO SEE ALL THE BLANKS YOU  
COULDN'T FILL. I COULDN'T HELP BUT LEND A  
HAND. I MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIDING...

...BUT I CAN'T HELP MYSELF. I JUST  
LIKE TO MAKE PEOPLE SMILE.

HEHEHEHE...



...AND THEN  
THAT NIGHT, OVER THE  
WINE AND THE CANDLES, AND  
THAT OH SO BEAUTIFUL  
MUSIC, YOU SHOWED ME  
YOUR MANUSCRIPT.

\*SEE BATMAN  
ANNUAL #2!  
--MARK

ALL THE WORK WE DID...

OH, IT'S A GOOD STORY, ISN'T IT?

NOT QUITE AS GOOD AS THE ONE WHERE I'M A SECRET ROBOT. BEEP BOOP BEEP.

I DID MY BEST TO HELP COME UP WITH THE STORY YOU WANTED.

THE ONE YOU NEEDED. THE GRIM AND GRIMY TALE OF WOE. THE ONE A PUBLISHER WOULD LAY DOWN SIX FIGURES FOR.

AND HECK, ALL I HAD TO DO IS PAY OFF A FEW FOSTER PARENTS. WRITE A FEW GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS. IT MADE YOU SOOOO HAPPY.

...WHY?

THE SAME REASON I VISITED ALL OF THEM. YOU WANTED TO KNOW WHO I WAS. YOU WANTED THE TRUTH. THE DEEP DOWN REAL TRUTH.

AND HERE I AM...GIVING IT TO YOU.

WHAT'S THIS?

FIVE BULLETS IN THE CYLINDER. SINCE WE'RE PALS, I'M GIVING YOU THE CHANCE TO DECIDE.

WHICH STORY DO YOU THINK IS THE REAL ONE? THAT'S THE ONE WHO GETS TO LIVE. THAT'S WHAT I SAID FROM THE BEGINNING.

BUT...NONE OF THEM ARE REAL, ARE THEY?

HMM... THEN HERE'S A SIXTH. JUST IN CASE.

HEH...

I'LL... I'LL SHOOT YOU.

NO, I DON'T THINK SO...THEY'LL BE BREAKING THROUGH ANY SECOND NOW, AND I HAVE PLACES TO BE. DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A SHOOTING.

WHERE DID YOU GO?

WHERE I ALWAYS GO. TO THAT LITTLE CORNER IN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD WHERE ALL THE BAD THINGS HIDE.

THAT'S WHERE I'M REALLY FROM. THAT'S THE REAL TRUTH OF IT.

HAH. OR NOT.

I PREFER NOT TO THINK OF IT AS MULTIPLE CHOICE...IT'S MORE CHOOSE-YOUR-OWN-ADVENTURE.

ERIC? ERIC?!

I'M ALMOST THROUGH...

OH GOD...

JUST...JUST ONE MORE PUSH...

OH SWEET GOD...

CRASH

BLAM BLAM  
BLAM BLAM  
BLAM BLAM  
THE END

STORY DR. MAHREEN ZAHEER

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could have never written this work without the help of my dearest friend and colleague, Eric Border. It was his tireless research that allowed me to piece together the story I'd been chasing for years. I remember the night I told him I planned to write the true story of the Joker. The way he looked at me, I couldn't read him for a second, but then he smiled so wide it made my heart leap.

"Now that's a story I'd read in a heartbeat," he said.  
Well here it is, my dear. I hope you enjoy it.

From the desk of DR. MAHREEN ZAHEER