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12

THE NEW 52!

BATMAN®

SCOTT
SNYDER
BECKY
CLOONAN

OCT 2012

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DC COMICS presents BATMAN in

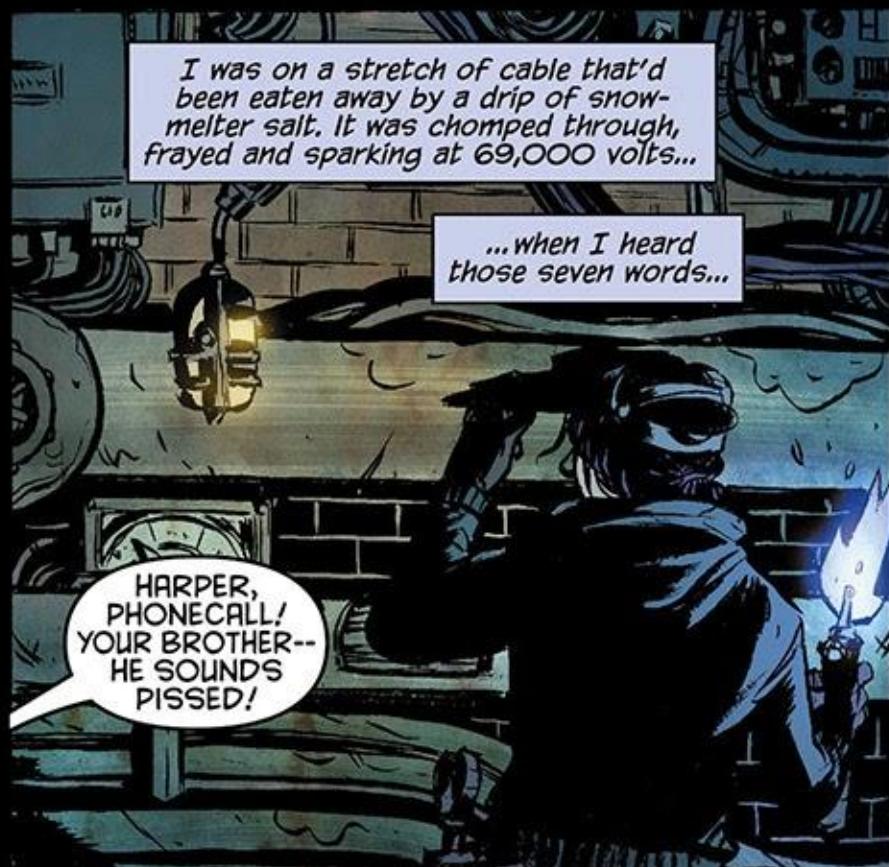
Ghost in the Machine

Sometimes all it takes is a few words to change your life.

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GOTHAM CITY, THE NARROWS.
SEVERAL WEEKS AGO...

...but this is where
my story begins...

CULLEN, ARE
YOU SERIOUSLY
NOT GOING TO
TALK TO ME?

QUIET. I'M
WORKING.

LOOK, I'M SORRY I DIDN'T
COME HOME WHEN I SAID I
WOULD! I JUST NEEDED TO
FINISH THAT SECTION OF
CABLE OR I'D HAVE
TO--

NO SPEAK.
ALMOST...
...THERE.
ALL RIGHT.
BEHOLD, DEAR
SISTER...

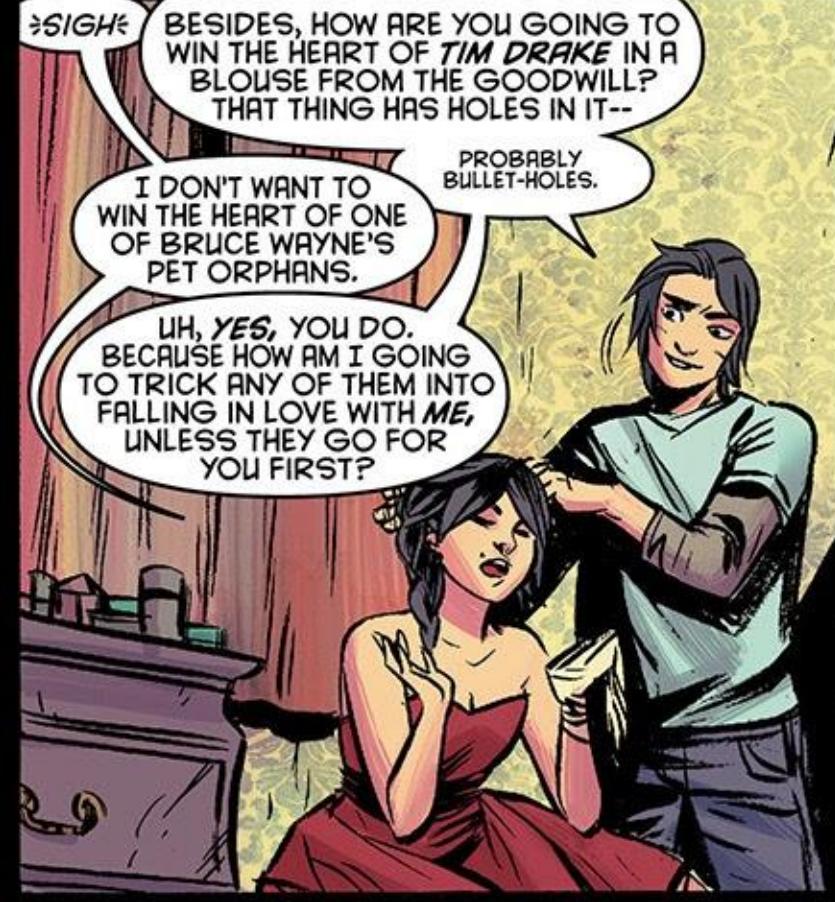
...THE NEW
AND IMPROVED
HARPER ROW.

YOU HAVE
GOT TO BE
KIDDING.

HARPER...

NO, THIS
IS STUPID,
CULLEN.

I FEEL
RIDICULOUS.
I'M GOING IN MY
OWN CLOTHES OR
I'M NOT GOING
AT ALL.
MAN, THIS
THING IS LIKE A
CHINESE FINGER
TRAP.





...A
BETTER, BRIGHTER
GOTHAM IS JUST ONE
DREAM AWAY.

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAPPY CLAP













Mostly it was because my dad--our dad--was always breaking them. A lot of times he'd break us, for sure, but it was worse when he broke the stuff Cullen and I needed to get by.

When he broke the lights in our apartment. When he broke the phone. When he broke the oven, the fridge. He'd break something and then leave, not coming back for days.

My earliest memories are of watching our building super strip and graft wires, watching him fix these things I didn't think could be fixed, watching him make them light up again.

I got good at it myself. Keeping the lights on. Soon as the emancipation came through, I applied for a job with the city electrical engineer.

Cullen makes fun of me, working down here in the grid. But deep down, I think he understands...

...because the Gotham electrical grid is nearly a hundred years old. Thousands of miles of cable, carrying tens of thousands of volts. It's old and rickety. It shouldn't work anymore. That's the thing.

But...if you take the time to fix this or that, put a little spit and elbow grease into it, the grid endures. And the lights stay on.

That's what I love about it. That's what I take away when it all seems like too much.

I look at the lights in the windows of the bodega, or the street lamps on my block.

I look at the traffic light outside my window. And I think, if that old piece of junk can keep going, so can you.

DON'T REMEMBER GIVING YOU THAT HAIRCUT, GIRLIE.

WE DID IT ALL SPECIAL FOR OUR FAVORITE LITTLE FAIRY. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, CULLEN?

JUST...JUST LEAVE US ALONE! PLEASE! WE'LL DO ANYTHING!

NO. WE WON'T.

I THINK IT'S TIME YOU DIRTBAGS LEFT ME AND MY BROTHER ALONE.

NO.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.





THE HELL
IS--

PSSFFF

I'M FINE.
HOLY...

UNH!

CULLEN!
ARE YOU--

FACK!

YOU'RE DONE
HERE. YOU HURT
THESE PEOPLE AGAIN,
AND THE NEXT VISIT
WON'T GO THIS WELL.
UNDERSTAND?

Y-YES.

THEN RUN.







"...BECAUSE THE THING IS, THE GOTHAM GRID CAN'T BE ACCESSED REMOTELY THE WAY IT'S CONSTRUCTED."

"SO FOR BATMAN TO BE ABLE TO SHUT DOWN THINGS LIKE THIS, HE'D NEED TO HAVE HIS OWN NETWORK. SOME KIND OF *GHOST GRID* BUILT INTO THE SYSTEM, OR BENEATH IT."

"SOMETHING HE CAN ACCESS REMOTELY, TOO. I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S COMING DOWN TO THE SEWERS TO FLIP A SWITCH WHENEVER HE NEEDS TO."

"I ASKED MY BOSS WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO *BUILD* SOMETHING LIKE THAT. A SORT OF PRIVATE GRID INSIDE THE GRID."

"AND HE SAID THE FIRST THING YOU'D NEED IS *POWER*. BECAUSE THE GRID ITSELF IS STRAINED TO CAPACITY. YOU RUN A SEPARATE SYSTEM OFF IT AND YOU'LL CRASH THE WHOLE THING."

"SO I RAN SOME LEVELS, AND WHAT I DISCOVERED IS THAT THERE'RE FIFTEEN SPOTS ON THE GRID--*HUBS* WHERE BATMAN COULD PENETRATE THE MAINFRAME AND SAP POWER."

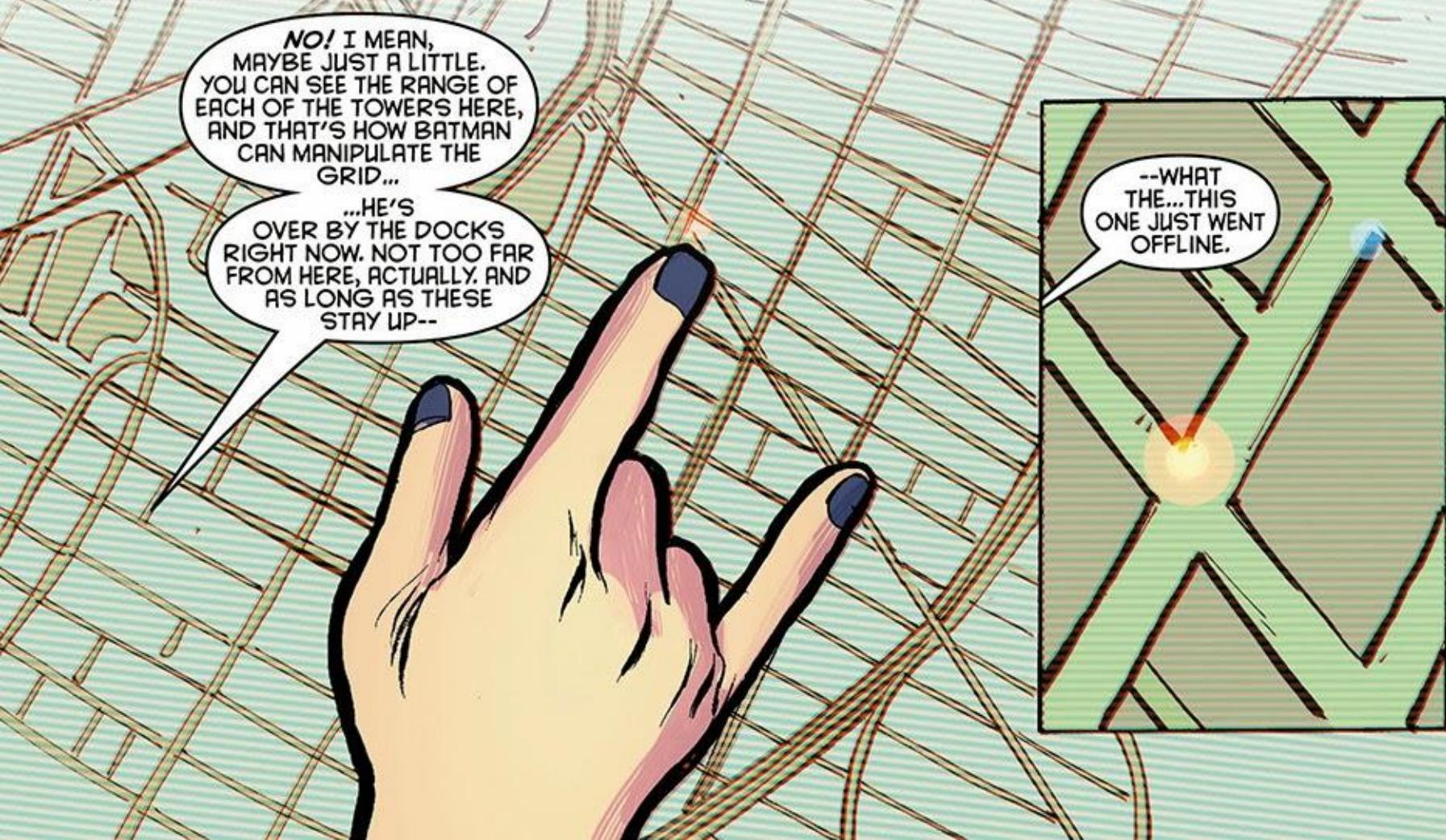
"BUT THE FUNNY THING IS, HE ISN'T USING HIS *GHOST GRID* TO SCRAMBLE SIGNALS AND VIDEO AND ALL THAT. GET THIS..."

"...HE'S ALSO USING HIS GRID TO HELP *SUSTAIN* THE GOTHAM ELECTRICAL GRID. HIS GRID IS HELPING PROP UP THE CITY'S. HE'S LIKE THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE."

"HE ACTUALLY SAPS POWER SECRETLY FROM WAYNE INDUSTRIES BUILDINGS, LIKE ROBIN HOOD, TO POWER THESE BOXES HE KEEPS AT THE HUBS. THEY'RE AMPLIFIERS...*BAT-BOXES*."

"THE BOXES ALSO HELP HIM GHOST HIMSELF."

"WHOR, WHOR. YOU FOUND A *BAT-BOX*?"







SOMEONE
WHO COULD
STILL BE
DOWN H--



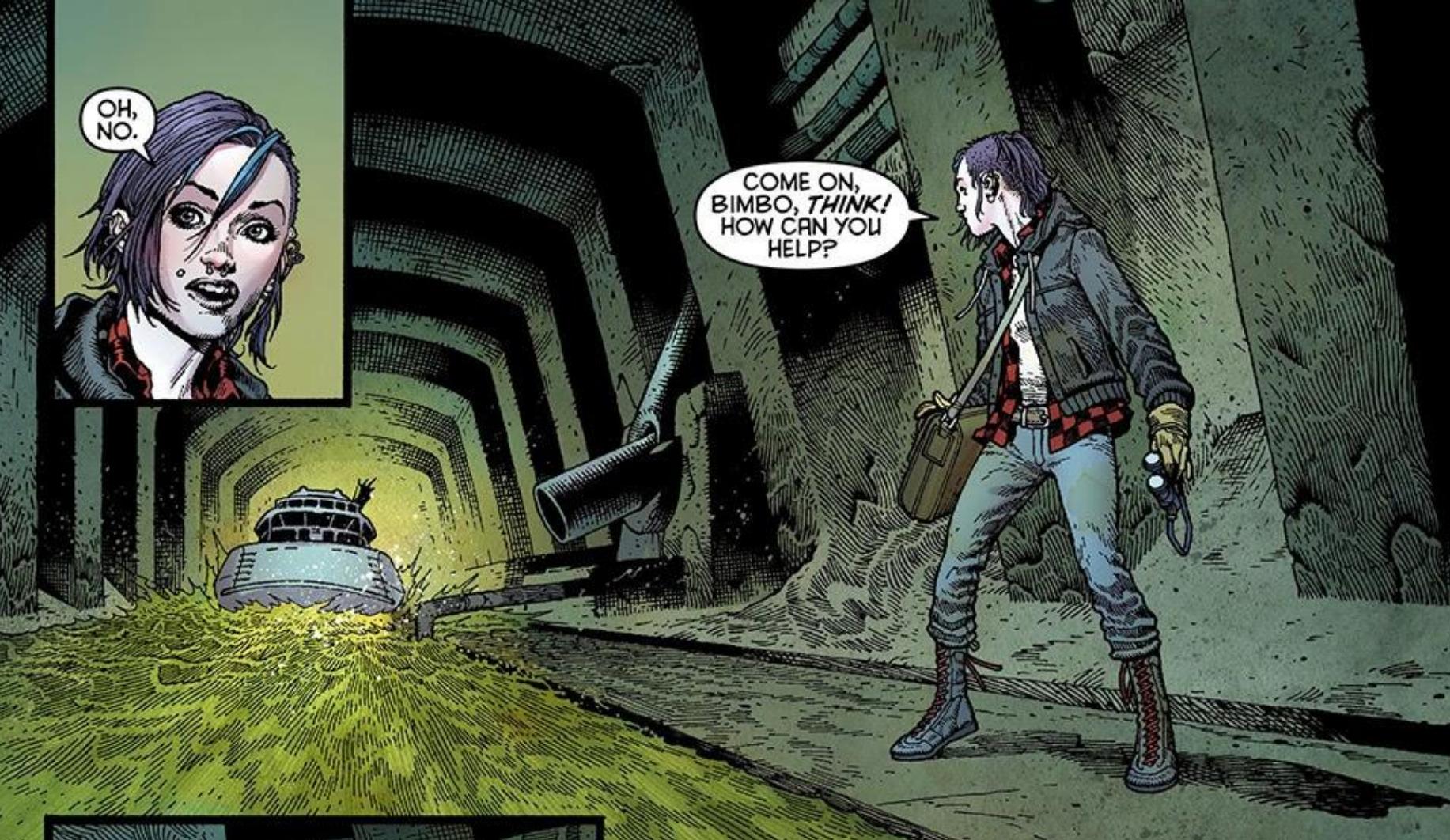


*IT HAPPENED IN BATMAN #3!--MIKE





COME ON,
BIMBO, THINK!
HOW CAN YOU
HELP?



THE
RUN-OFF
VALVE...

RUN OFF
VALVE
RELEASE

...UNH!
COME...
ON!

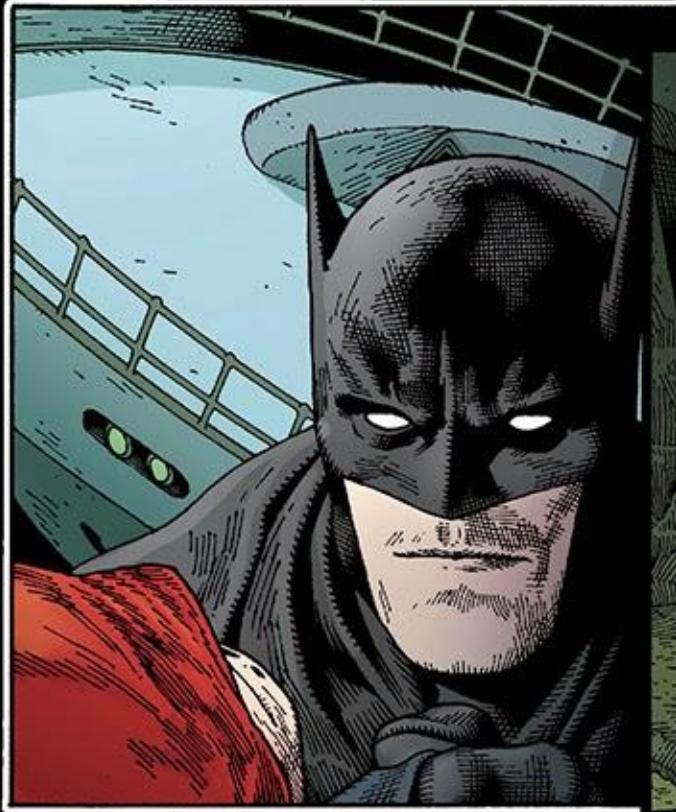
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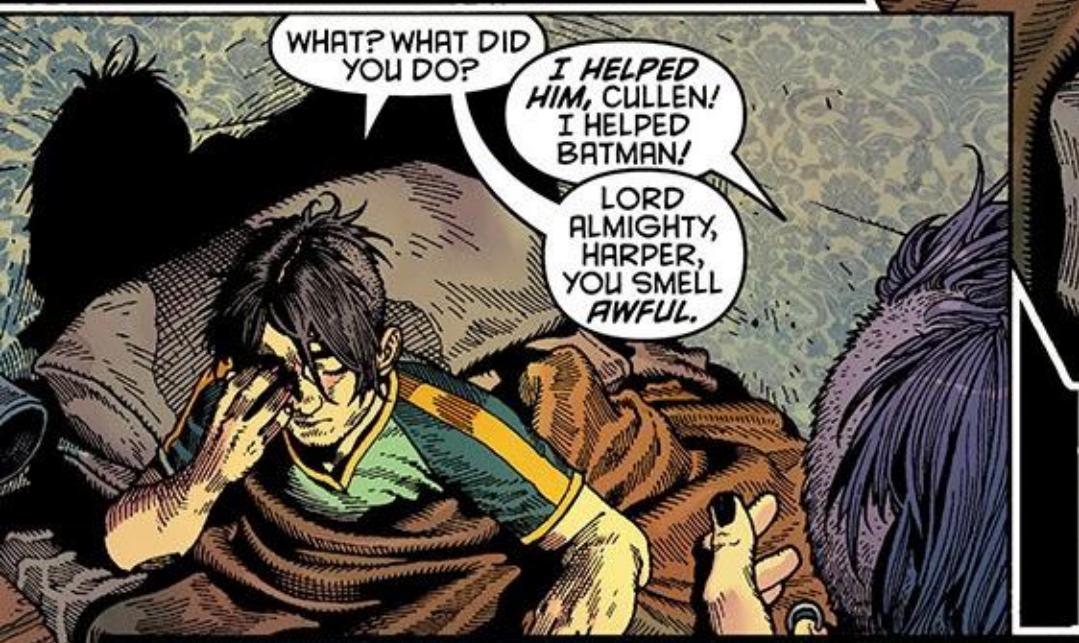
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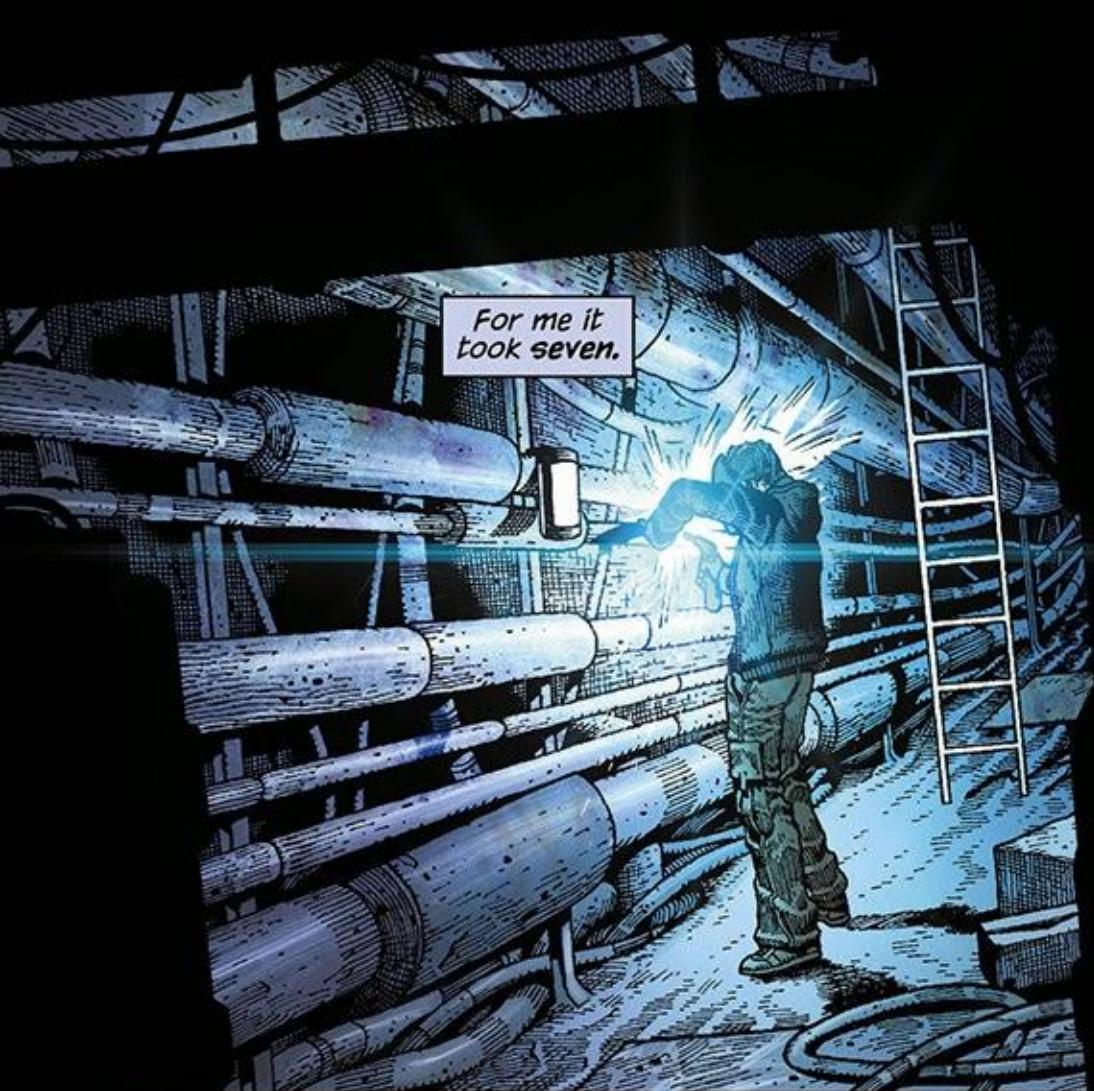


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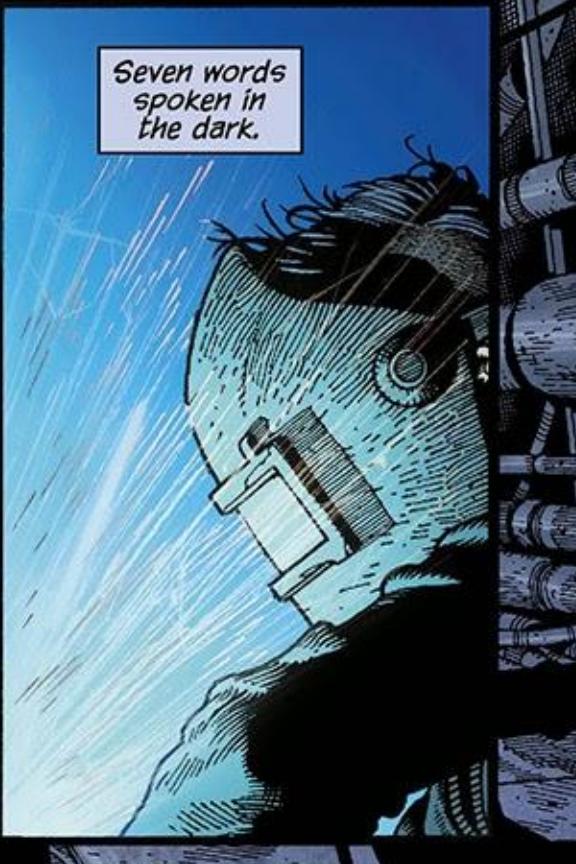
CLUNK







For me it took seven.



Seven words spoken in the dark.



WHATEVER YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, YOU'RE FINISHED.



I WAS... I WAS JUST HELPING YOU.



NO, YOU WEREN'T.



BUT THAT GUY, WITH THE MASK. HE KNOCKED OUT YOUR BAT-BOX SO YOU'D BE VISIBLE TO THE POLICE AND...

...OH...

...HE DIDN'T KNOCK IT OUT, DID HE? YOU DID IT SO THAT THE POLICE WOULD KNOW WHERE YOU WERE AND SET UP A NET AT THE SEWER MOUTH.



BUT I DID GROUND THE BOAT.

THIS ISN'T UP FOR DEBATE. YOU'RE FINISHED.

LOOK, I REALIZE
I GOT MYSELF INTO A TIGHT
SPOT THERE. BUT YOU HAVE
TO UNDERSTAND--YOU STOOD
UP FOR MY BROTHER AND ME.
NOBODY HAS EVER DONE
THAT BEFORE...

...NOBODY
WILL PROBABLY
DO IT AGAIN.

Like I was saying...
sometimes all it takes
is a few words to
change your life.

Sometimes they're
words spoken by
someone else.

But sometimes, like
now, they're words you
tell yourself, in the dark.
Words that you see in
your head, lit up, like the
grid on a good day.

Words like: Harper
Row, you're not
finished. No way.

NEXT: ISSUE #0
BRUCE'S FIRST YEARS IN
A VERY DIFFERENT GOTHAM...