

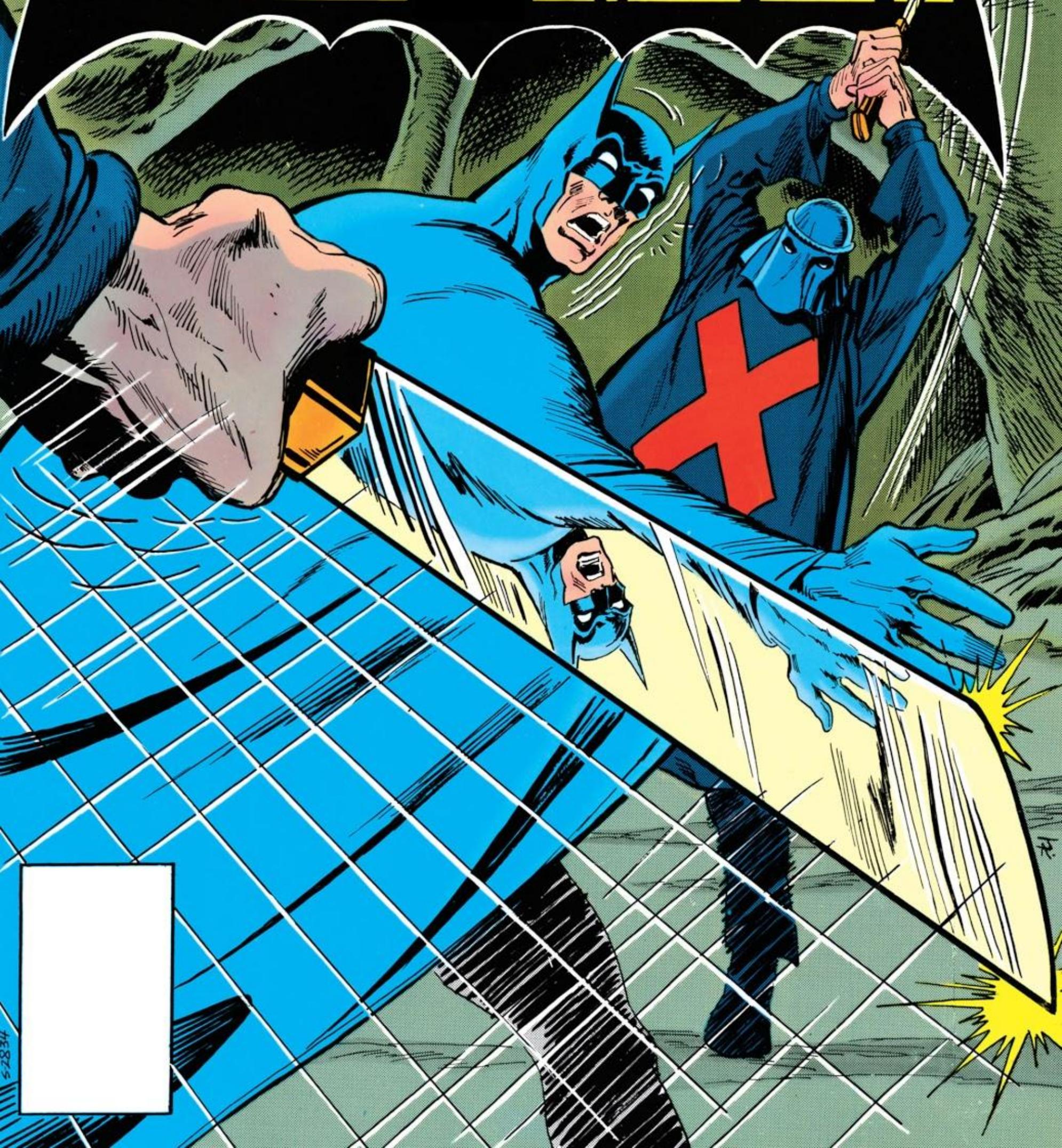


"CASE OF THE CRIMSON COFFIN"

APR.
NO. 298
30430

35¢
APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
C.C.
AUTHORITY

BATMAN



ORPHANED AS A CHILD WHEN HIS PARENTS WERE KILLED BEFORE HIS EYES, BRUCE WAYNE TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME AS THE DREAD AVENGER OF THE NIGHT...

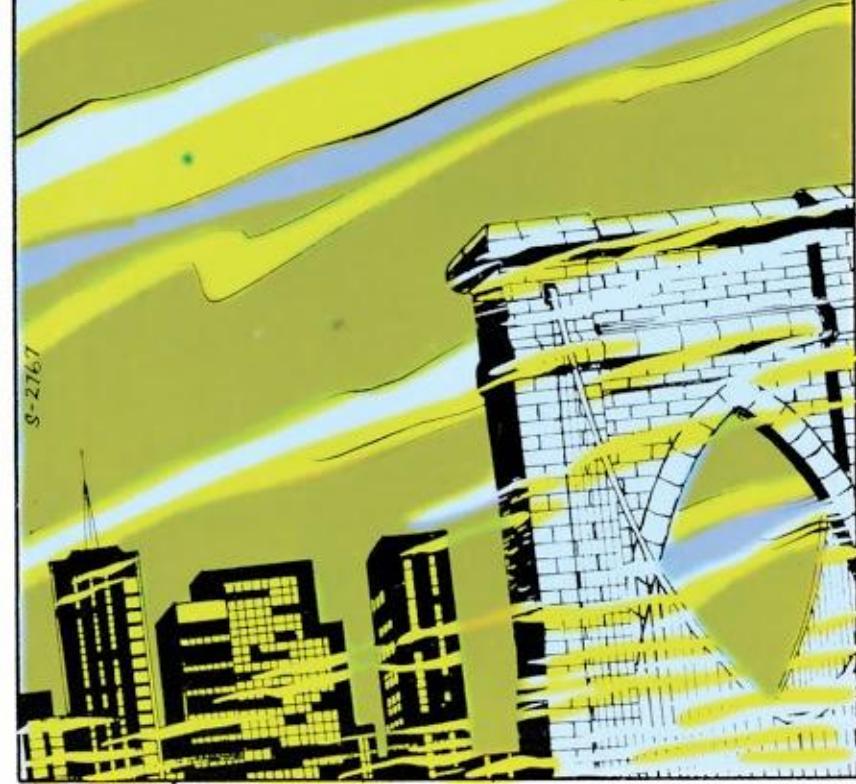
THE BATMAN

CREATED BY

BOB
KANE

IN THIS HAUNTED, UNFORGETTABLE NIGHT, FATE MADE AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE BATMAN! FATE COMMANDED HIS PRESENCE ON THIS FOG-SHROUDED BRIDGE... PRECISELY AT THE STROKE OF ELEVEN! BUT ONCE HE GOT THERE, THE REST OF IT WAS ALL THE BATMAN'S DOING!

HE STANDS NOW, STARING THROUGH THE GHOSTLY MIST AT THE CITY HE LOVES--ITS MYRIAD EYES BLINDED, ITS THUNDEROUS VOICE MUFFLED, QUIETLY PANTING LIKE A NOCTURNAL ANIMAL LYING IN AMBUSH--AND HIS SEVENTH SENSE WHISPERS TO HIM THAT DEATH IS SOMEWHERE CLOSE AT HAND!...



AND NOW HE HEARS ITS MUTED MOTOR AGAIN--BUT HE SEES NOTHING--UNTIL RUNNING LIGHTS SUDDENLY FLASH ON BELOW... AND THERE IT IS... RETRACING ITS COURSE!...

IT MUST'VE DOCKED CLOSE BY--FOR A FEW MOMENTS.., DURING WHICH IT TOOK NO CHANCE OF BEING OBSERVED!

RRRRRRRRMMMMMA

LET'S SEE WHERE THAT BOAT WENT!

AS SILENT AS THE SHADOWS AROUND HIM, HE LANDS AT THE RIVER'S EDGE...ON THE SEAWALL --

ONLY ONE PLACE ALONG HERE WHERE IT COULD'VE TIED UP AND RETURNED IN SO SHORT A SPAN --

--THE PIER!

AND ANYBODY COMING ABOARD-- OR GOING ASHORE-- WOULD'VE HAD TO USE THAT LADDER TO THE OLD HIGHWAY ABOVE!

SECONDS LATER... A NO-MAN'S LAND.. A DESOLATE, VERMINOUS, VANDALIZED AREA, ROTTING AWAY--AND THERE, ON THE DAMP PAVEMENT IN THAT SCARRED AND PITTED ROAD--

--A FRESH FOOTPRINT--WITH THE TREAD OF A *SANDALIA DE CAUCHO!**--

--POINTED TOWARD THE RUINS OF THE OLD COLUMBIA HOUSE...

COLUMBIA HOUSE

* HOMEMADE SANDALS WORN IN THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS, WITH RUBBER SOLES CUT FROM DISCARDED TIRES. --JULIE

...THE RAVAGED SKELETON OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE GLORY OF A FLOURISHING MERCANTILE AND SHIPPING QUARTER...

EASY ENOUGH TO GET IN... IF ANYBODY WANTED TO... LORD KNOWS WHY!

...EXCEPT THAT I SEEM TO RECALL SOMETHING...

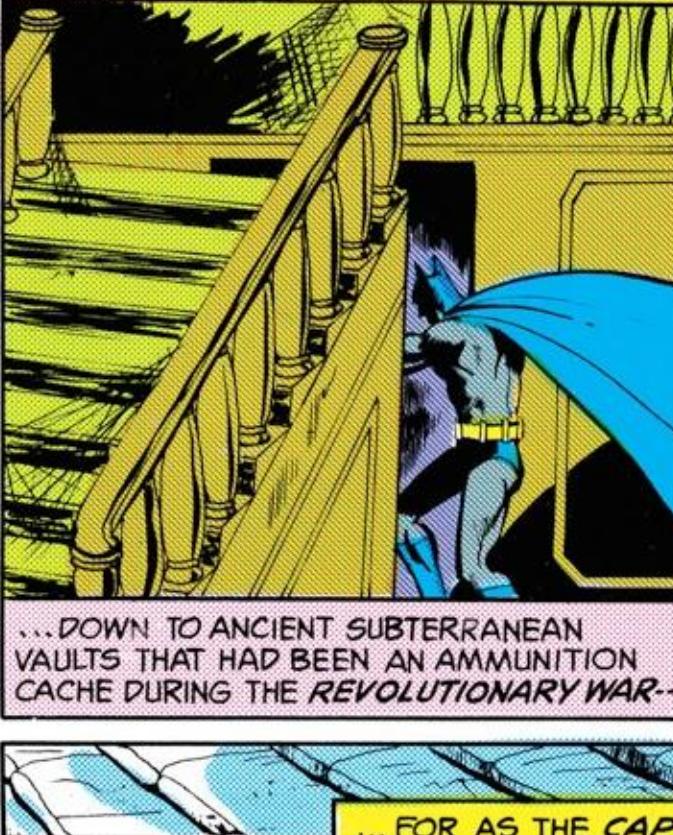


INSIDE, THE DANK AND MOULDERING STRUCTURE REEKS WITH HISTORY... AND MYSTERY... BUT IT CAN KEEP NO SECRET FROM THE BATMAN!



YES-- I
REMEMBER
NOW!

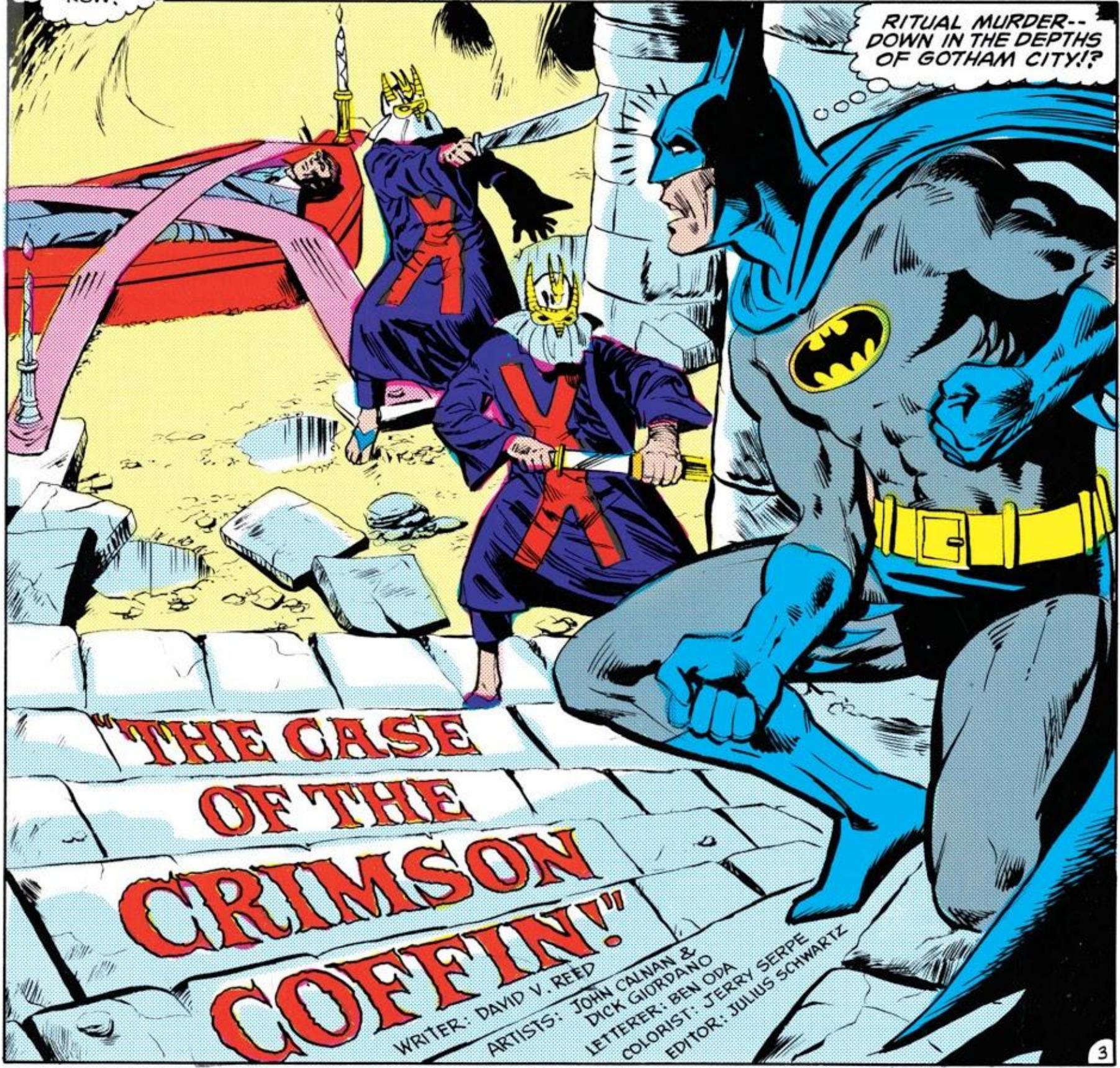
ONE STAIRWAY REVEALS ANOTHER...



--AND WERE LATER A WAY-STATION ON THE SLAVE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO CANADA--LONG FORGOTTEN, BUT APPARENTLY NOT BY EVERYONE...



RITUAL MURDER--
DOWN IN THE DEPTHS
OF GOTHAM CITY!?



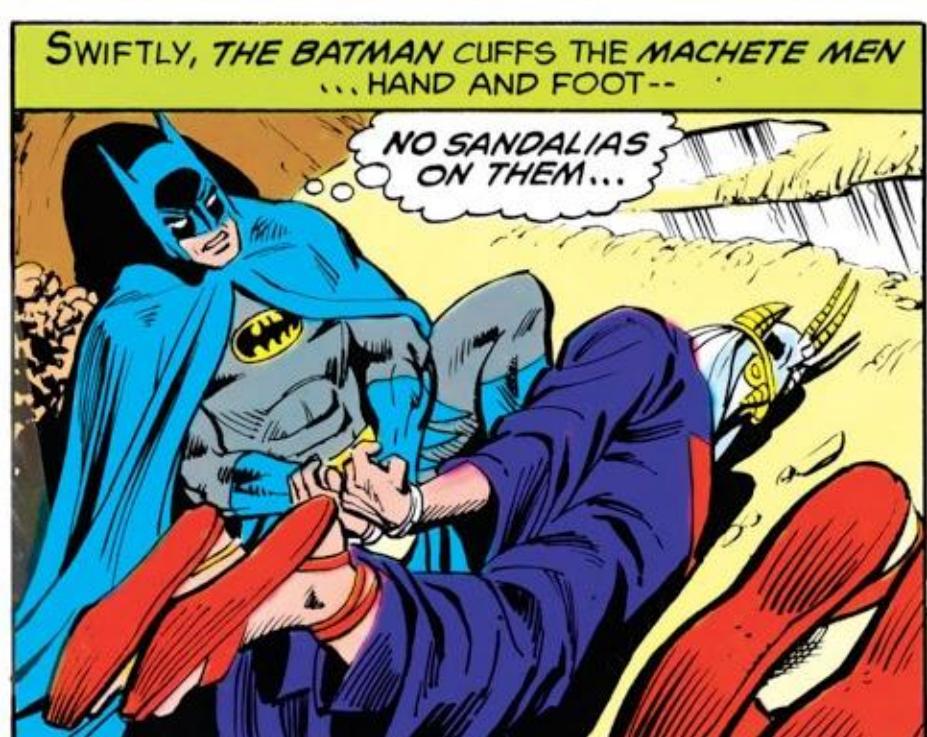
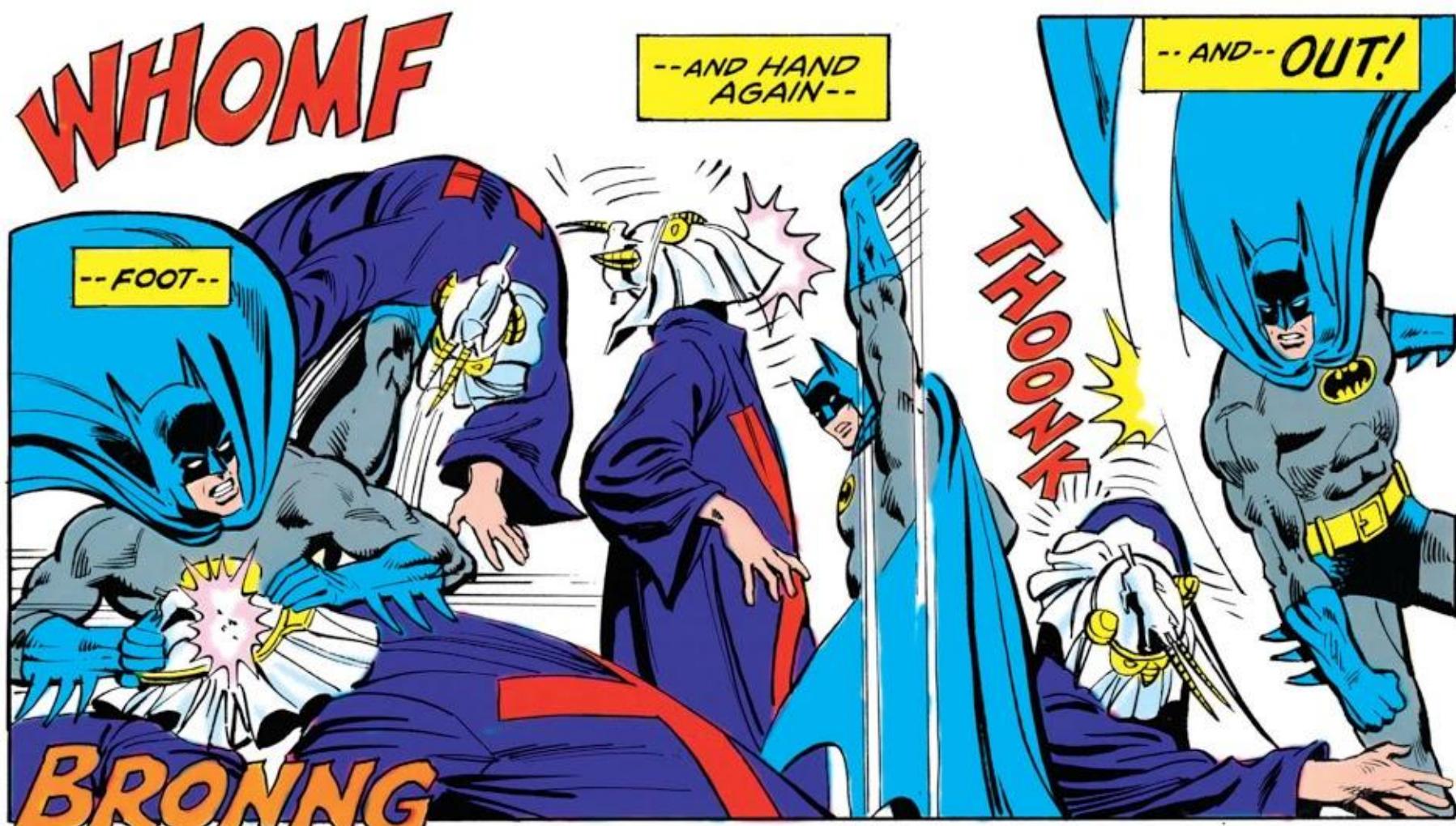
WRITER: DAVID V. REED

ARTISTS: JOHN CALNAN &
DICK GIORDANO
LETTERER: BEN ODA
COLORIST: JERRY SERPE
EDITOR: JULIUS SCHWARTZ

AS THE BATMAN HURLS HIMSELF
INTO COMBAT, HIS MIND IS IN
TURMOIL...

THE DEVIL ONLY
KNOWS WHAT
THIS IS ALL
ABOUT!

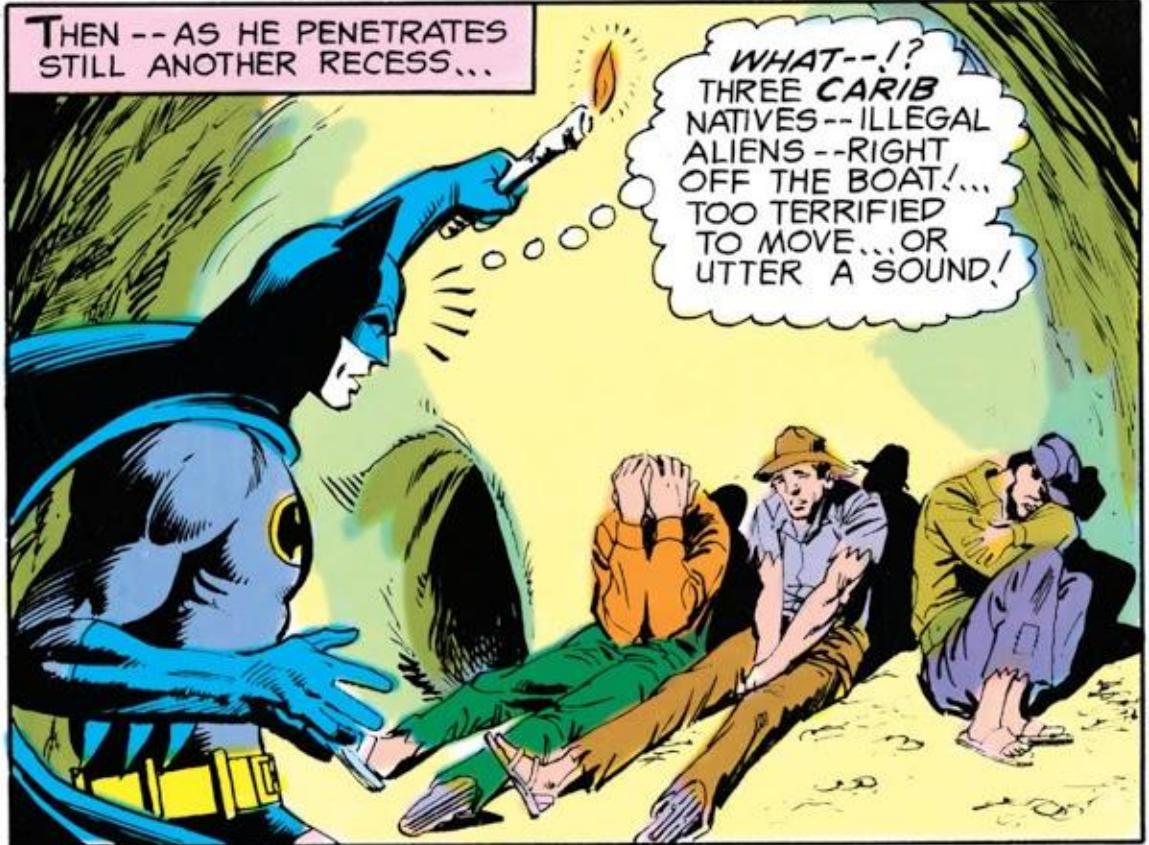




DEEPER INTO THE FOUL AND FETID CAVERNS PLUNGES THE MASKED MANHUNTER--



THEN -- AS HE PENETRATES STILL ANOTHER RECESS...



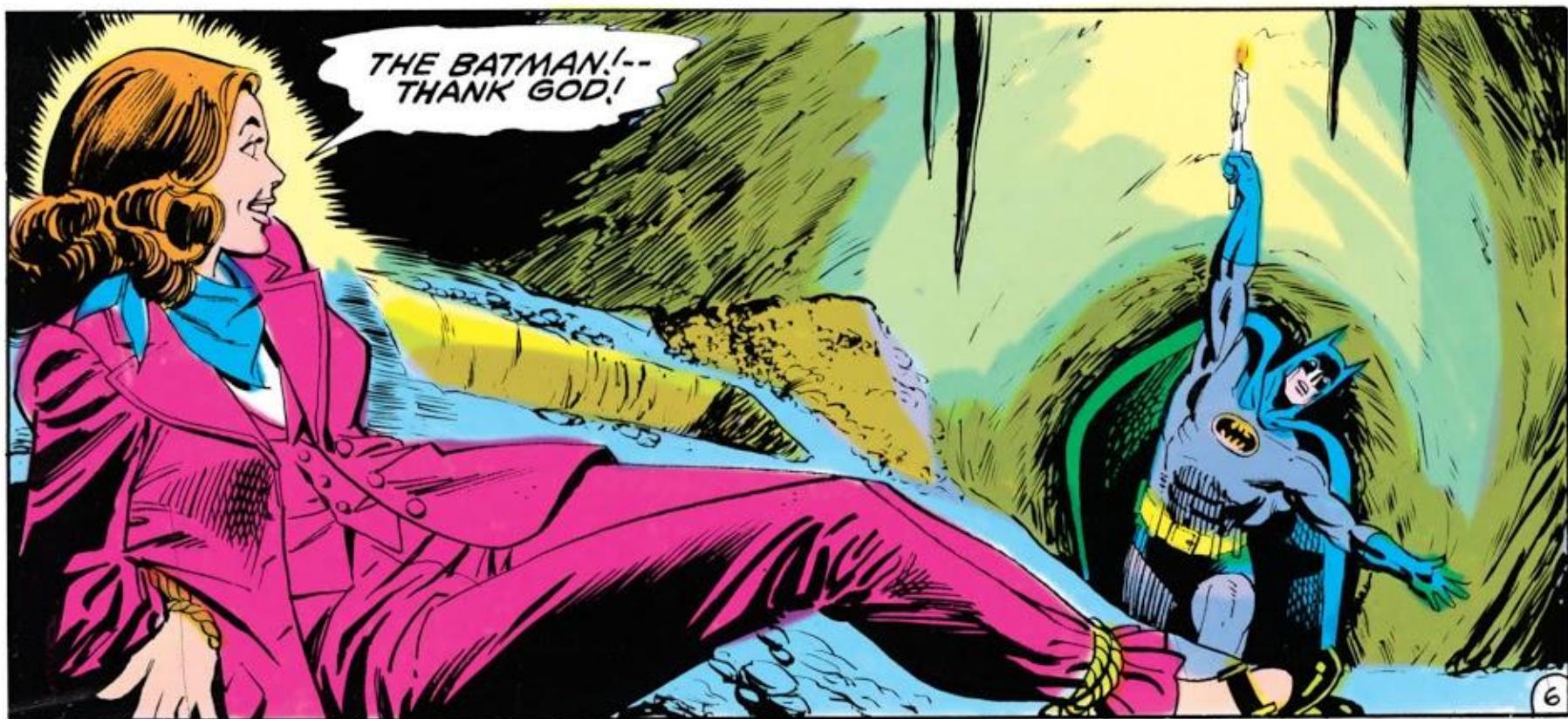
NOR DO THE COWERING MEN OFFER THE SLIGHTEST RESISTANCE TO THE BATMAN'S BRUSQUE SCRUTINY...



THERE'S MORE THAN FEAR KEEPING THEM SO DOCILE -- SOMETHING THAT PRODUCED THIS MYOSIS*!



THE BATMAN!--
THANK GOD!





LATER, AT POLICE H.Q... AS THE DARKNIGHT DETECTIVE CONCLUDES BRIEFING COMMISSIONER GORDON...

...AND THEY WERE ALL GONE... INCLUDING THE GIRL, THE VICTIM, AND HIS CRIMSON COFFIN!

OUTSIDE, I FOUND NEW TIRE-TRACKS FROM A TRUCK THAT MUST'VE BEEN HIDDEN NEARBY AMONG THE RUINS... AND THAT'S IT... WHATEVER IT IS!

SMUGGLING IN ALIENS IS ONE THING -- BUT WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF IT?

YOU'RE ASKING ME?

JUST RHETORICALLY, COMMISSIONER! I KNOW THE CEREMONY THEY WERE PREPARING... A RITUAL SACRIFICAL-KILLING --

--A MIXTURE OF HAITIAN VOODOO, AFRICAN OBEAH AND CARIBAN INDIAN WITCHCRAFT!

THERE'S NO ONE ON YOUR DEPARTMENTAL LIST OF MISSING PERSONS WHOSE DESCRIPTION MATCHES THE MAN ON THE COFFIN.

HE'D HAVE HAD TO BE REPORTED MISSING FOR AT LEAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TO BE ON THE LIST!

RIGHT-- BUT HE HAD A THREE-DAY BEARD -- SO HE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN MISSING FOR THOSE THREE DAYS!

AS FOR THE GIRL REPORTER-- I CHECKED ALL THE CITY PAPERS... NO SUCH PERSON MISSING!

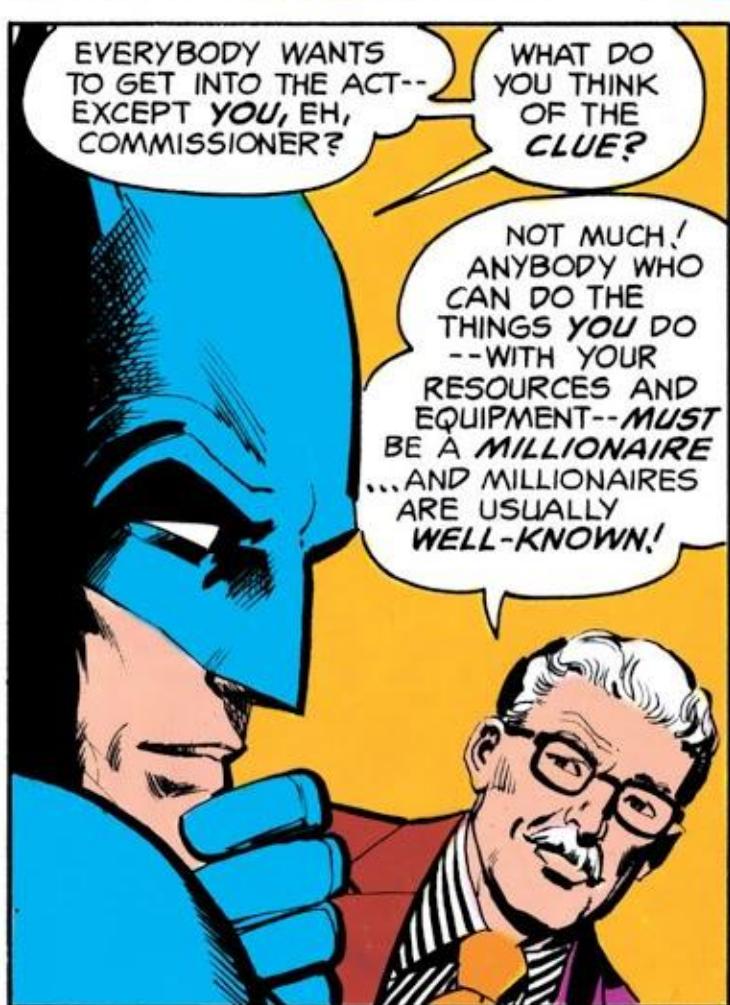
BUT THAT MEANS NOTHING... SHE COULD BE FROM ANYWHERE!

HERE'S WHAT THE MAN ON THE COFFIN LOOKED LIKE-- FOR THE DEPARTMENT FILES, COMMISSIONER!

BATMAN, THERE'S NO END TO YOUR TALENTS!

--BUT IN THIS CASE, MY TALENTS SEEM TO HAVE LED ME TO A DEAD END!

HOLD IT, BATMAN! BEFORE YOU GO, I'VE GOT SOMETHING INTERESTING TO SHOW YOU-- SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN TOO BUSY TO KNOW ABOUT!



IT IS FIVE A.M. WHEN THE BATMAN RETURNS TO HIS PENTHOUSE HOME. HE SPENDS THE NEXT HOUR IN THE BATCAVE REFERENCE LIBRARY... AND AFTER HIS CUSTOMARY THREE-HOUR MORNING SLEEP... AWAKENS TO ASSUME THE PUBLIC IDENTITY OF HIS ALTER EGO--

--BRUCE WAYNE, SPORTSMAN, PLAYBOY, AND MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIAL TYCOON-- AS THE NORMAL SCHEDULE OF HIS DAY BEGINS AT NINE...

I AM, ALFRED. I MUST'VE SPOKEN TO A DOZEN FINGER-MEN LAST NIGHT WITHOUT GETTING THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF A LEAD TO THIS NEW CASE I'M ON.

YOU SEEM RATHER TROUBLED THIS MORNING, MASTER BRUCE.

A NEW CASE, SIR?

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER, RIGHT NOW I'M TRYING TO SORT OUT MY THOUGHTS.

BUT YOU'VE SCARCELY TOUCHED YOUR BREAKFAST!

SORRY, ALFRED... NO APPETITE!

TEN A.M.--THE START OF THREE CONCENTRATED HOURS DEVOTED TO THE VAST BUSINESS INTERESTS OF WAYNE ENTERPRISES--

WAS I JUST HAVING AN UNUSUALLY BAD RUN OF LUCK WITH THE RANDOM SOURCES I HAPPENED TO FIND LAST NIGHT?

BUT TODAY HIS MIND IS ELSEWHERE...

...EVEN THROUGH LUNCH AT THE 21 CLUB... WITH ONE OF HIS FAVORITE PEOPLE--

--EITHER THAT, OR IT'S THE MOST HUSH-HUSH OPERATION I'VE BEEN UP AGAINST IN A LONG TIME!

BRUCE, DEAR, YOU'VE HARDLY SAID A WORD SINCE WE GOT HERE!

OH...?

THREE P.M.--AT HIS TENNIS CLUB... WHERE HE EXPLODES HIS MOUNTING TENSIONS IN A DAZZLING DISPLAY OF SKILL--

WHACK

WHEW! ANOTHER ACE!

BRUCE, YOU'RE A SHOO-IN FOR THE SINGLES CUP AGAIN!

...BUT MY MESSAGES ARE OUT... AND TONIGHT I'LL BE HEARING FROM SOME OF THE BEST BIRDS IN THE BUSINESS!

AT FOUR-THIRTY, A BRIEF AFTERNOON NAP... THEN, DINNER AT SEVEN. BY EIGHT, THE CAPE CRUSADER IS MAKING HIS ROUNDS...

BUT THE HOURS ARE WASTED... NOT A WORD COMES HIS WAY... NOT UNTIL--

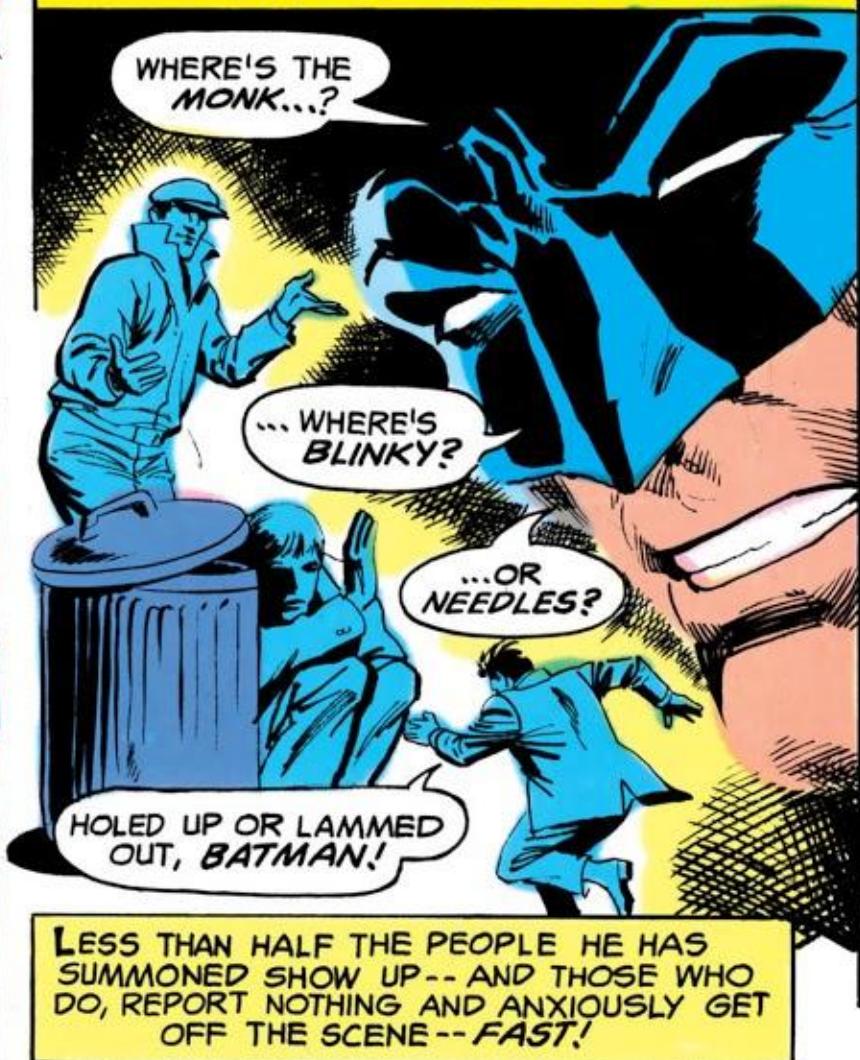
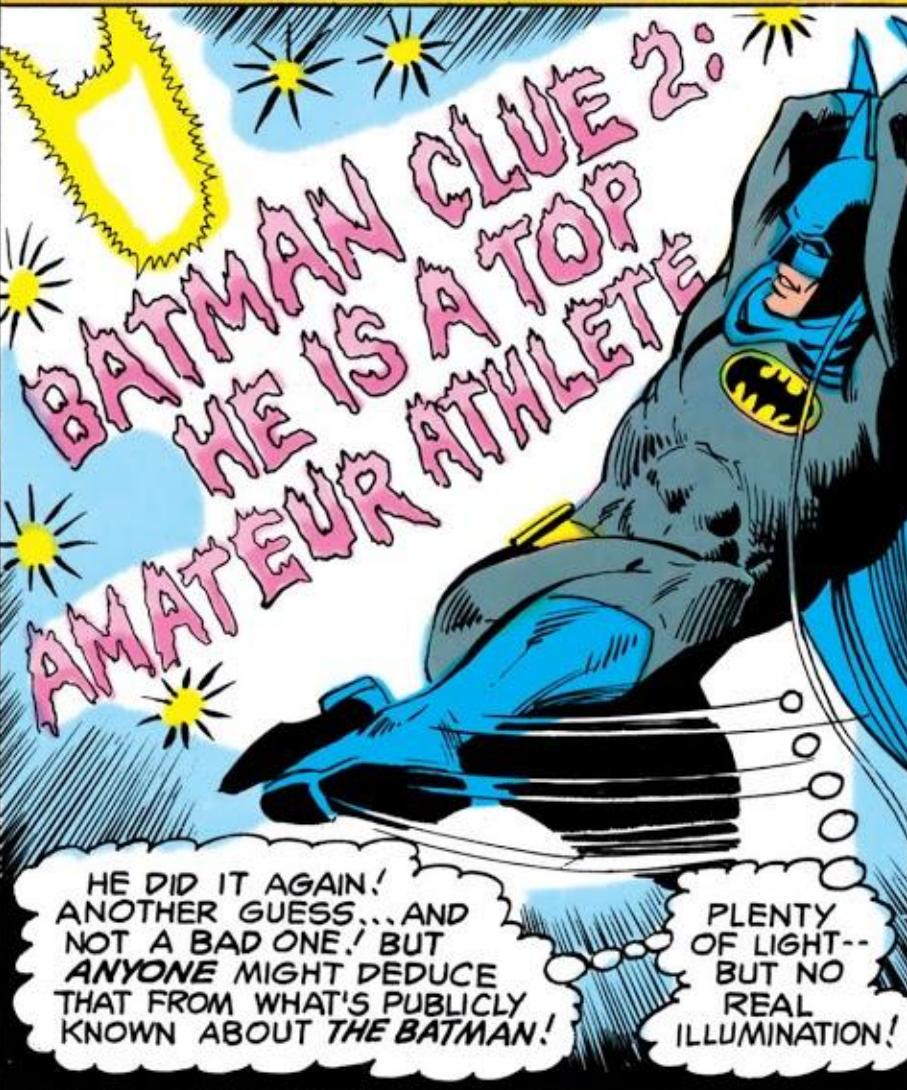
--TEN-THIRTY... THE MEETING WITH SCHEMER LEO-- A SOURCE WHO HAS SELDOM FAILED HIM...

*TRANSLATION: RUMORS, NO VERIFIED INFORMATION... THIS MOB IS CLOSED TO OUTSIDERS... SOME SAY THEY'RE SMUGGLERS SPECIALIZING IN CARIBBEAN NATIVES, OTHERS SAY THEY'RE SHANGHAIERS... BUT VERY STRANGE AND VERY DANGEROUS!

ONE NOSE SAYS THEY'RE WORKING A RED ROD ACADEMY--FOR DROPPERS! --RIGHT HERE IN G-TOWN! YOU NEED OTHER BUZZMEN! *

MINUTES LATER-- AS THE BATMAN SWINGS TO ANOTHER RENDEZVOUS...

NOT ONLY DOES THE REST OF THAT NIGHT PROVE FRUITLESS, BUT THE SUCCEEDING NIGHT AS WELL --WITH AN OMINOUS NEW TWIST!...



EVEN WHEN HE GOES TO "THE BOARDS"-- THE BATMAN'S ULTRA-SECRET MEANS OF COMMUNICATING-- VIA COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS-- WITH ULTRA-SECRET SOURCES WHO NEVER MEET WITH HIM--

SEVEN BOARDS
--SEVEN ZIPS!

THEN--THIS WEIRD ENCOUNTER--

FACE IT, BATMAN-- YOU'RE GETTIN' EVERYBODY JITTERY! THEY FIGURE IF YOUR COVER BLOWS, THEIRS BLOWS WITH IT!

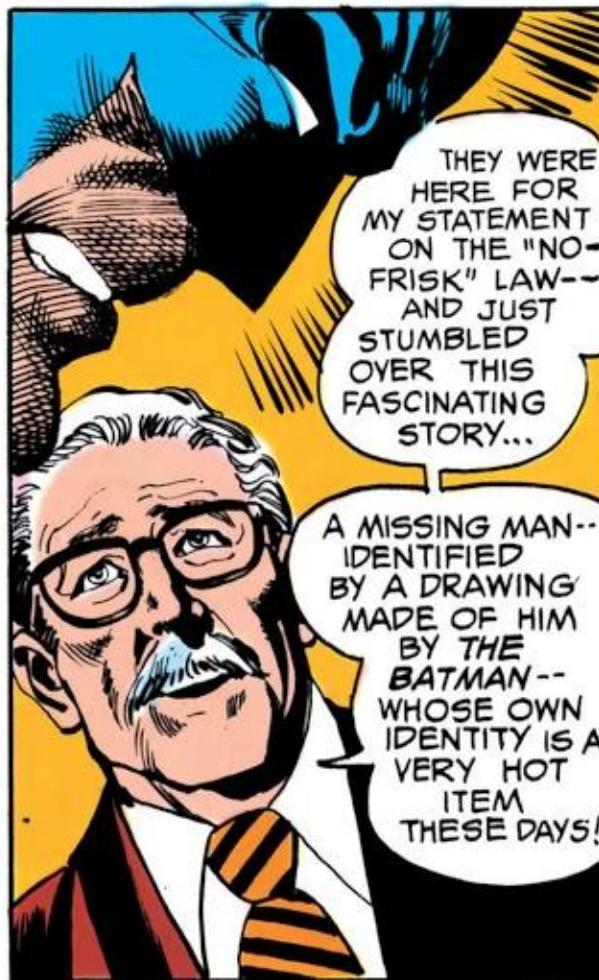
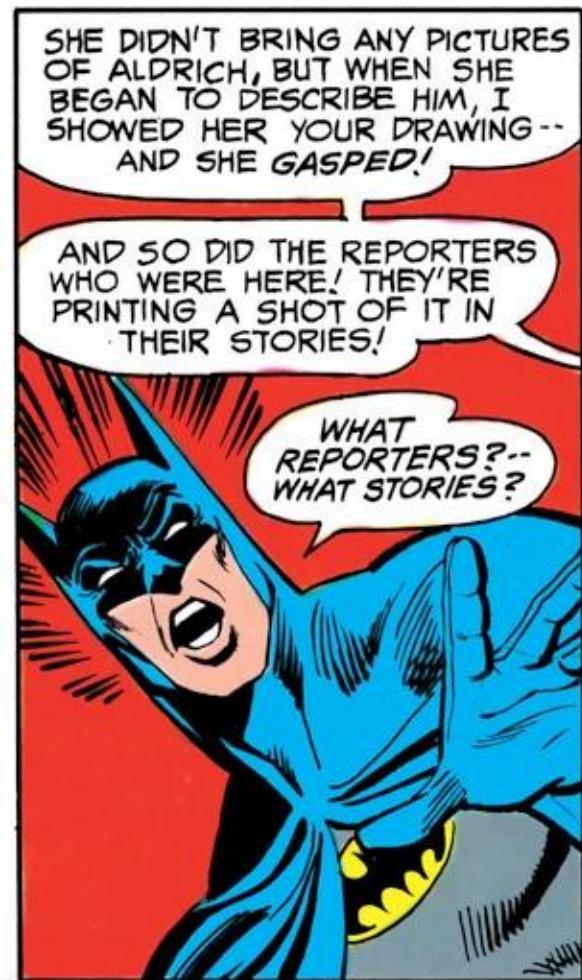
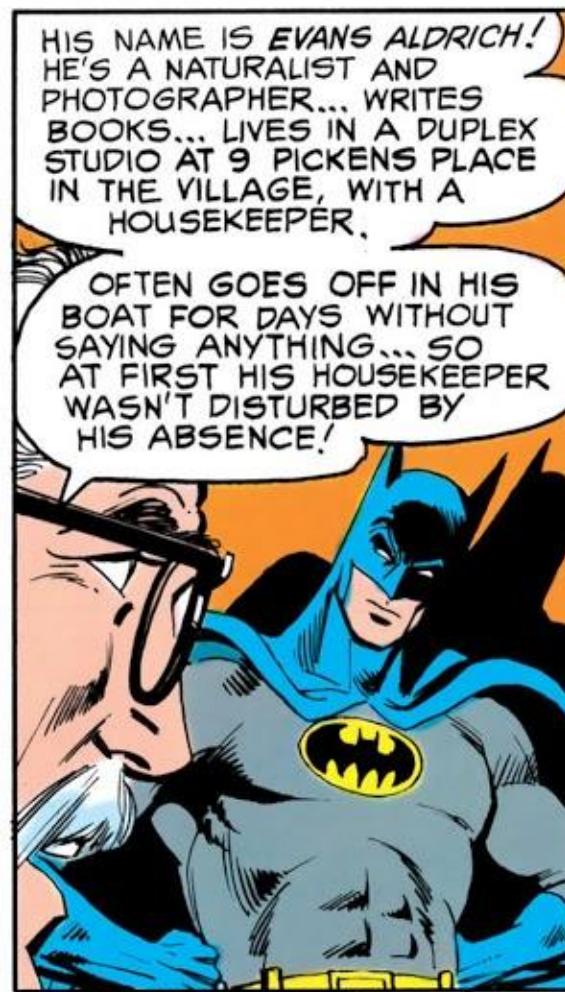
DIDJA CATCH THAT THING ABOUT YOU ON TV TONIGHT?



RUSHING HOME, HE FINDS THE ANSWER WAITING--

ASTOUNDING, SIR!
SIMULTANEOUS
INTERRUPTION ON
EVERY CHANNEL!

I TAPED IT, OF COURSE!



TOO BAD IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO GORDON
THAT I'D WANT TO GET TO ALDRICH'S
STUDIO BEFORE THE STORY HIT THE
STREETS!

THE ROOFTOP OF 9 PICKENS PLACE...

NO LIGHTS
ANYWHERE! THE
HOUSEKEEPER WAS
TOO UPSET TO STAY HERE
ALONE, AND TOOK HERSELF
ELSEWHERE!

A CLASSIC "OPEN HOUSE" INVITATION
TO EVERY COLD SLOUGH WORKER*
WHO CAN READ!

* A BURGLAR WHO ROBS WHILE THE TENANTS ARE AWAY!-- J.S.

SURE ENOUGH-- THERE'S
ONE NOW... LOOKING
AT WHAT--?

LET'S FIND OUT--!

IT'S-- THE REPORTER!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHAT ARE THOSE
PHOTOS YOU'RE SO BUSY INSPECTING?

SEE FOR
YOURSELF!

SWIFTLY, THE BATMAN RIFLES THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHS...

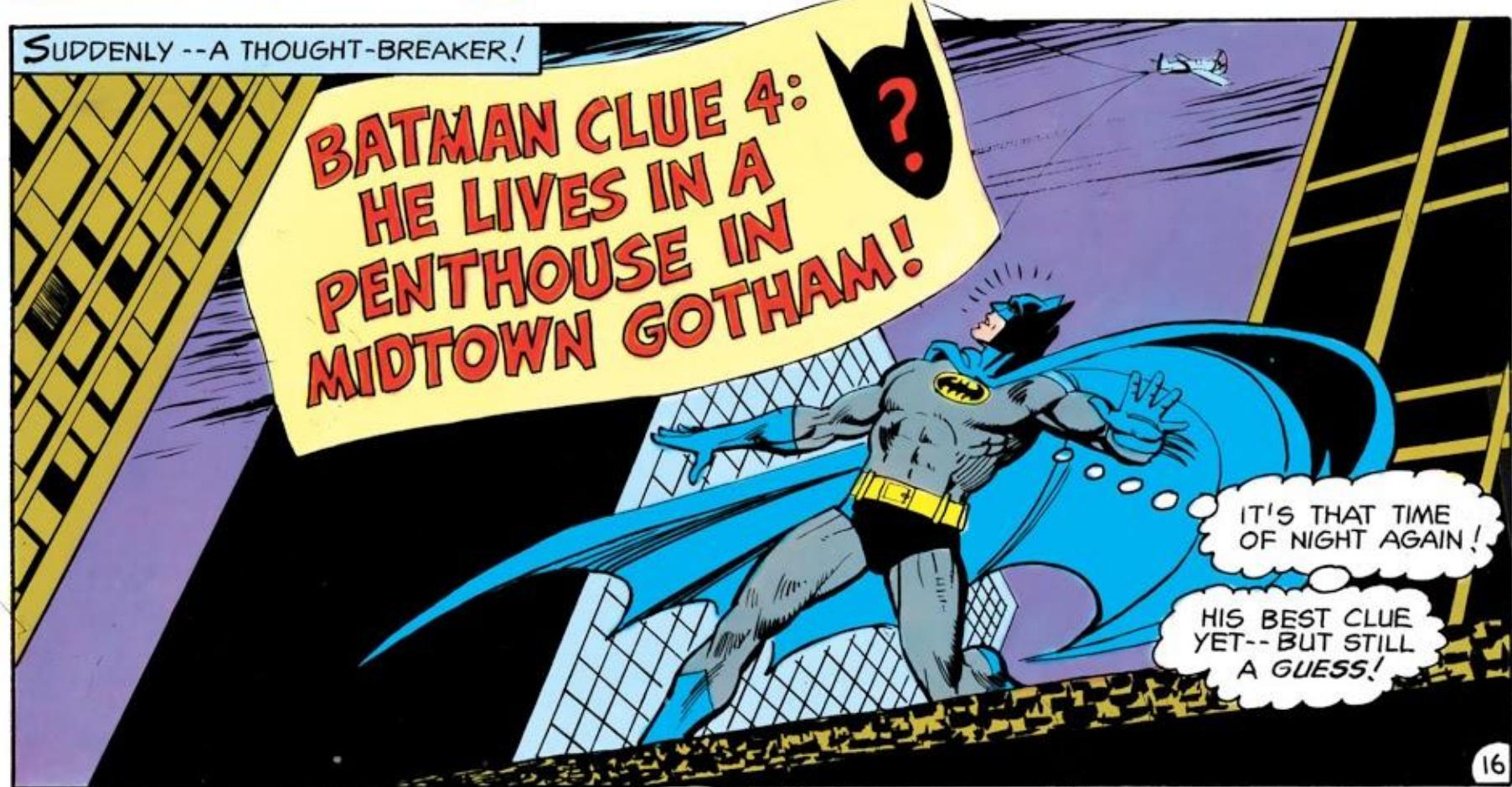
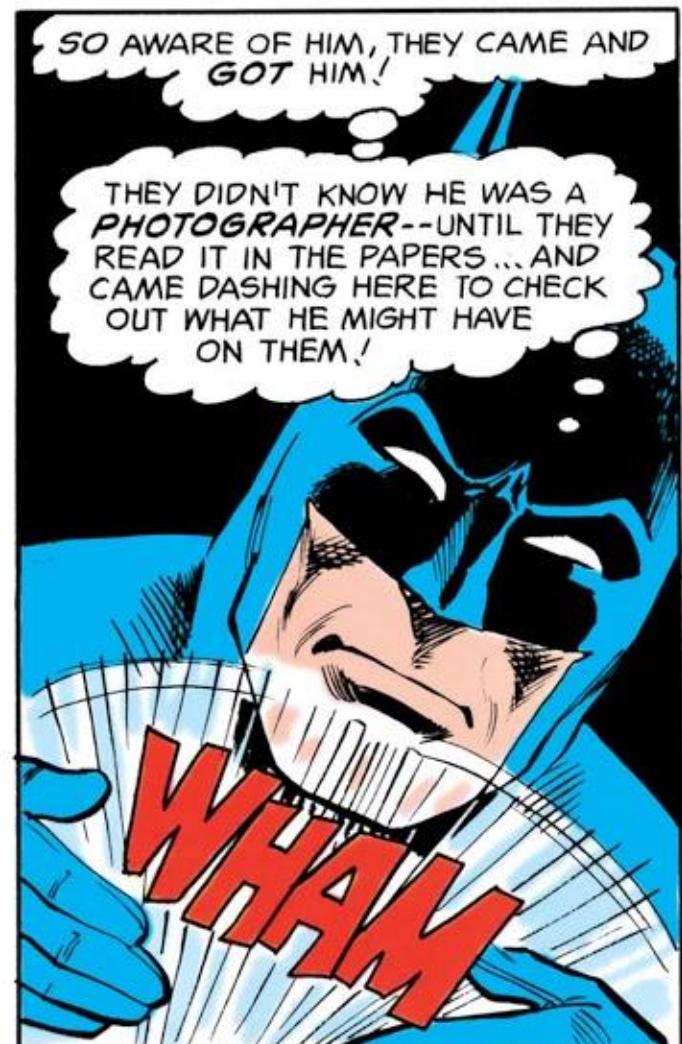
THEY ALL SHOW AN ISLAND...
THICKLY OVERGROWN...
SURROUNDED BY GREAT
BANKS OF MIST--
EXCEPT THIS ONE...

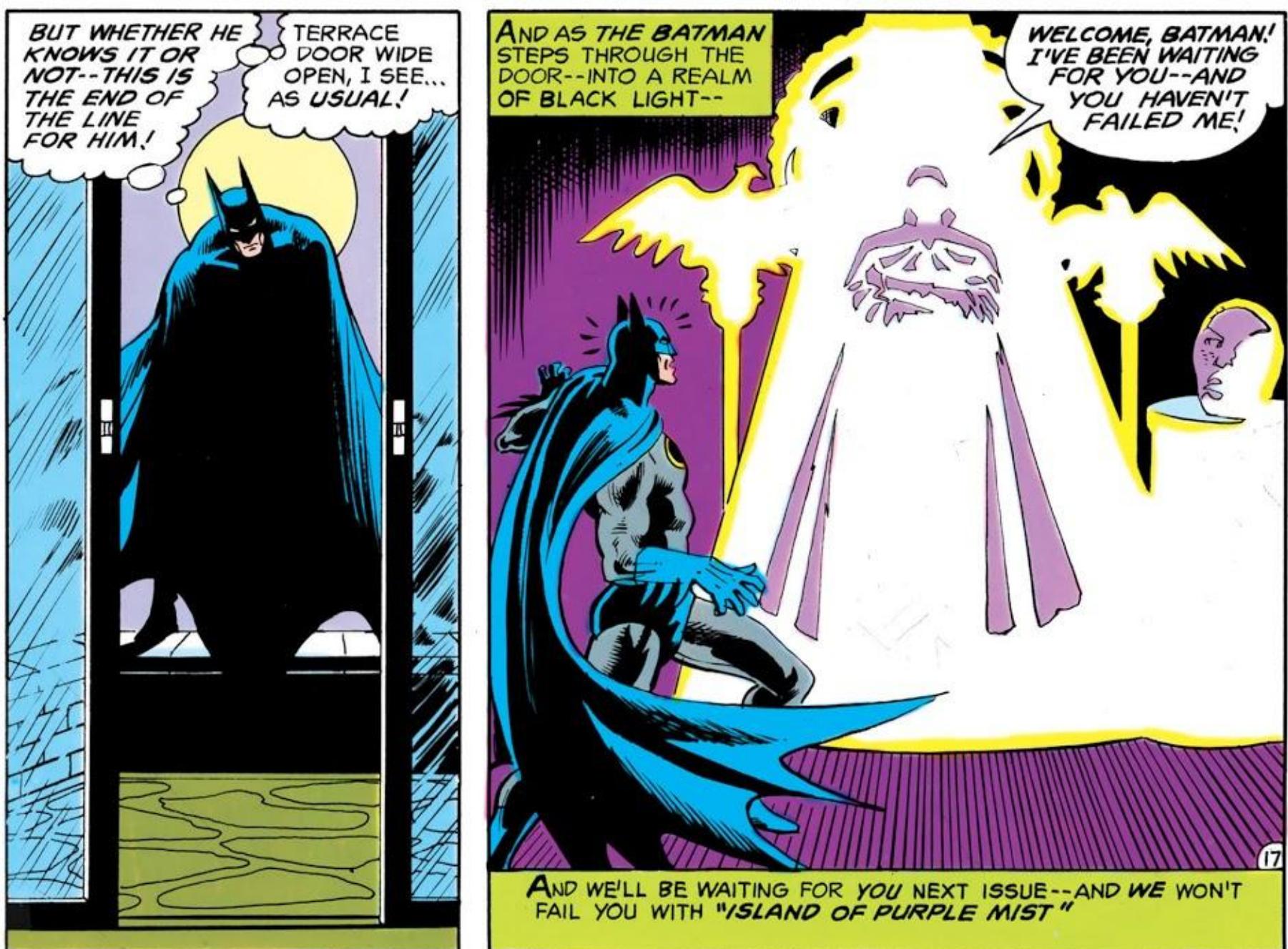
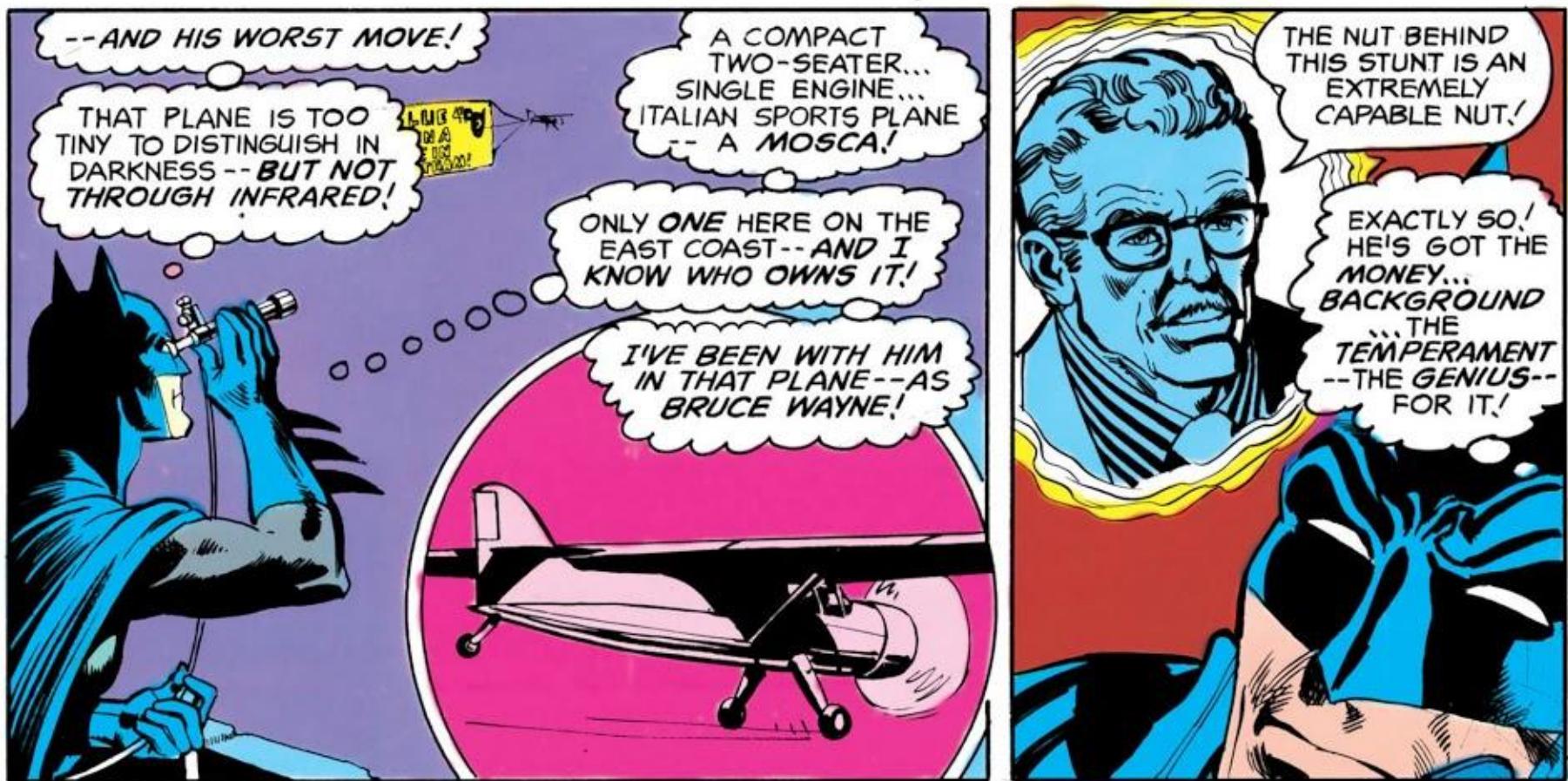
...LESS DISTINCT THAN THE
OTHERS... A BLONDE WOMAN
IN WHITE... RUNNING ALONG
THE SHORE WITH TWO
HUGE DOGS!

YOU SKIPPED THE
MOST IMPORTANT ONE!
TAKE ANOTHER LOOK!











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