



BATMAN

378
DEC. 84

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
C.C.
AUTHORITY

THE **MAD HATTER**
IS BACK--AND THIS TIME,
HE'S **MADDER** THAN EVER!

THINK HARDER,
NOCTURNA!
SHOW ME THE
BATMAN'S
TRUE IDENTITY!

NEWTON & GIORDANO





IN THE CAVE WHOSE JAGGED DEPTHS
SHAPE SANCTUARY, HIS DARK THOUGHTS
ARE ECHOED IN MADLY LURCHING
SWIRLS OF BATS...

...AND NOW, MORE THAN EVER,
HE IS--

SO MANY EVENTS AND
INTRIGUES SET IN MOTION...
HILL AND HIS ASSASSINS
THREATENING BULLOCK'S
LIFE...

NOCTURNA CLAIMING
TO LOVE ME, AND
KNOWING THAT I'M
REALLY BRUCE
WAYNE...

THE MURDER OF
STURGES HELLSTROM...
AND THE NIGHT-SLAYER
VANISHING INTO THIN AIR
AFTER BEING SHOT...

AND TOMORROW
THE JUDGE DELIVERS
HIS RULING ON JASON'S
ADOPTION CASE--A JUDGE
WHO IS ONE OF HILL'S
CORRUPT CRONIES...

BATMAN

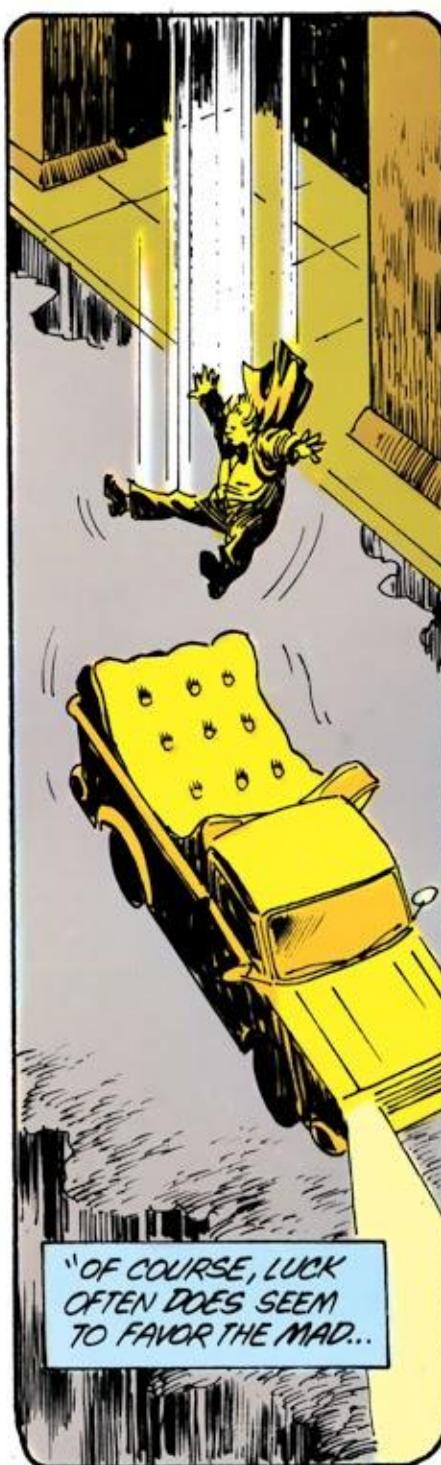
CREATED BY
BOB KANE



ONE HAT MADDER!

Doug Moench . Don Newton & Alfredo Alcalá . John Costanza . Adrienne Roy . Len Wein
WRITER ARTISTS LETTERER COLORIST EDITOR





NOW, ACCORDING TO THE BATMAN HIMSELF--

--HELLSTROM WAS MURDERED BY ONE ANTON KNIGHT, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE THIEF OF NIGHT, WHEREABOUTS REGRETTABLY UNKNOWN.

BUT AGAIN ACCORDING TO THE BATMAN, NATALIA KNIGHT-- ANTON'S ALLEGED FORMER ACCOMPLICE, LOVER, AND ADOPTIVE SISTER-- IS OR WAS NOCTURNA.

THUS, ALTHOUGH NO CHARGES HAVE BEEN FILED AGAINST HER, THE MATTER OF HER DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IS IRRELEVANT AND SHE REMAINS THE SINGLE MOST LIKELY AND ACCESSIBLE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING THE MISSING LOOT.

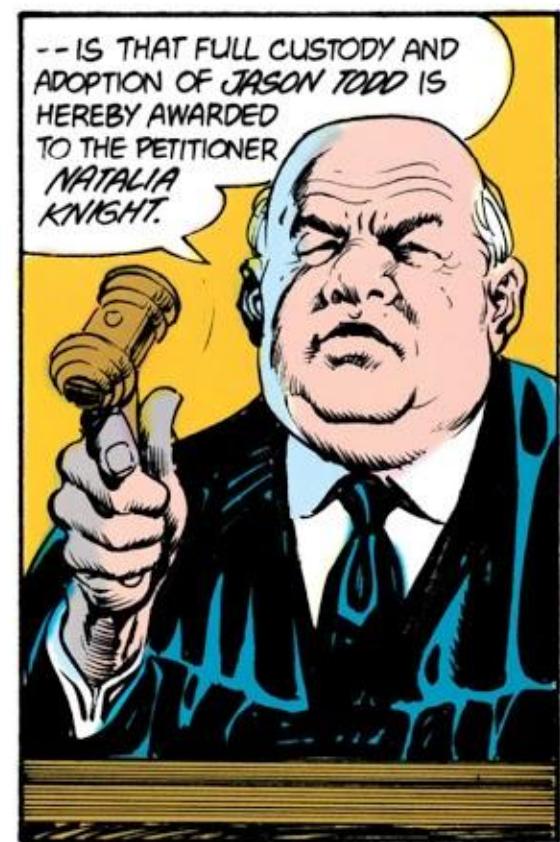
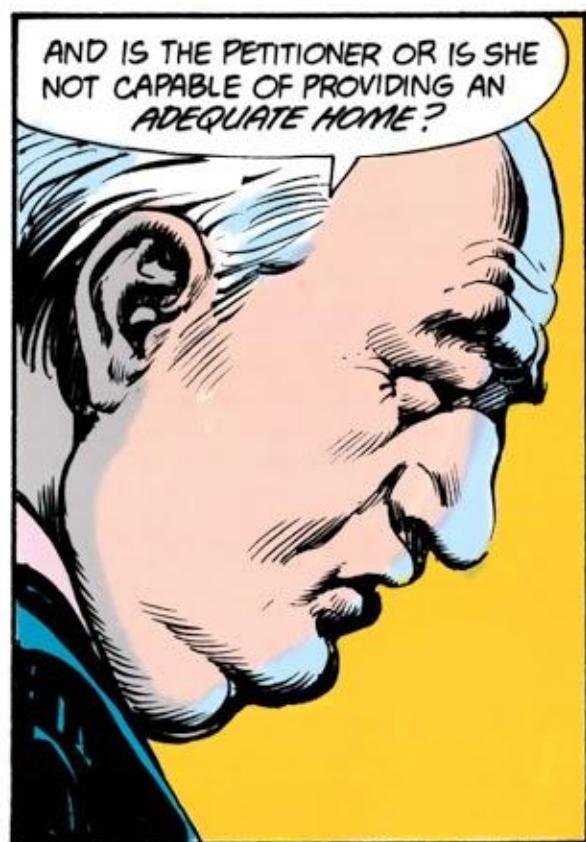
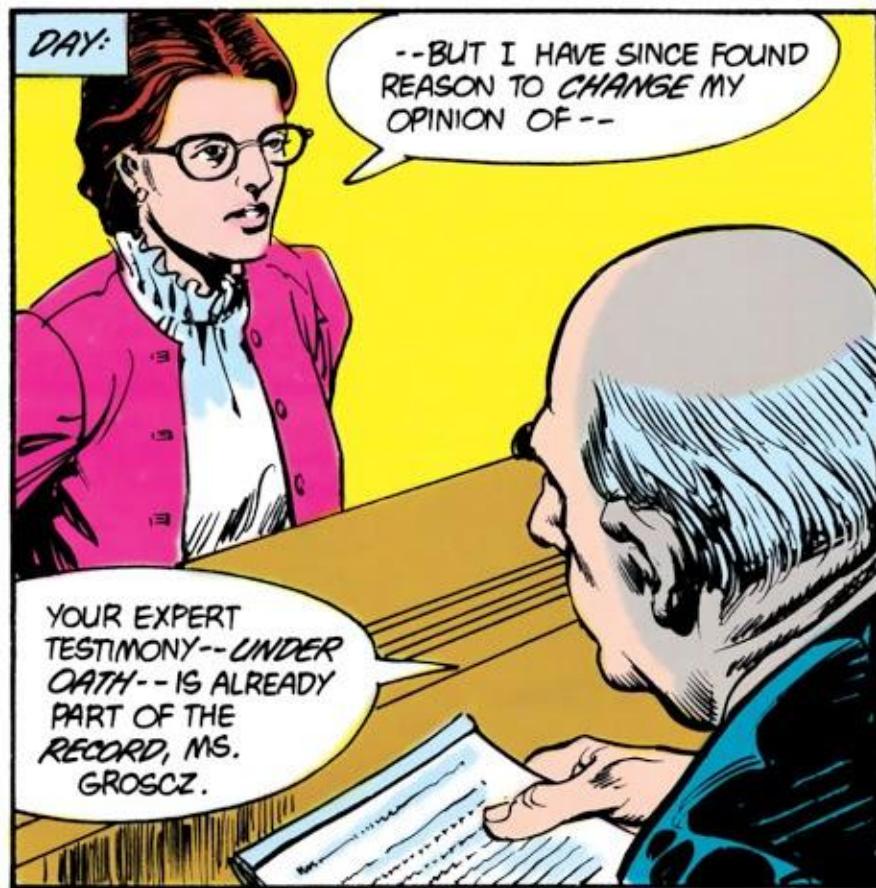
"AND FROM THE SEEMINGLY UNRELATED ADOPTION CASE OF ONE JASON TODD, WE KNOW THAT NATALIA KNIGHT--PROFESSING RESPECTABILITY THESE DAYS-- CURRENTLY RESIDES IN THE PENTHOUSE SUITE OF THE RITZ-CARLTON..."

ERGO, MY DEAR, THE PATH TO THE LOOT BEGINS IN THE RAREFIED HEIGHTS OF THAT PENTHOUSE.

HAH! NOT SO MAD AFTER ALL, AM I, DARLING?

...EXPENSIVE DIGS, TO SAY THE LEAST, BUT HARDLY PRICED BEYOND RANGE OF THE MISSING LOOT.

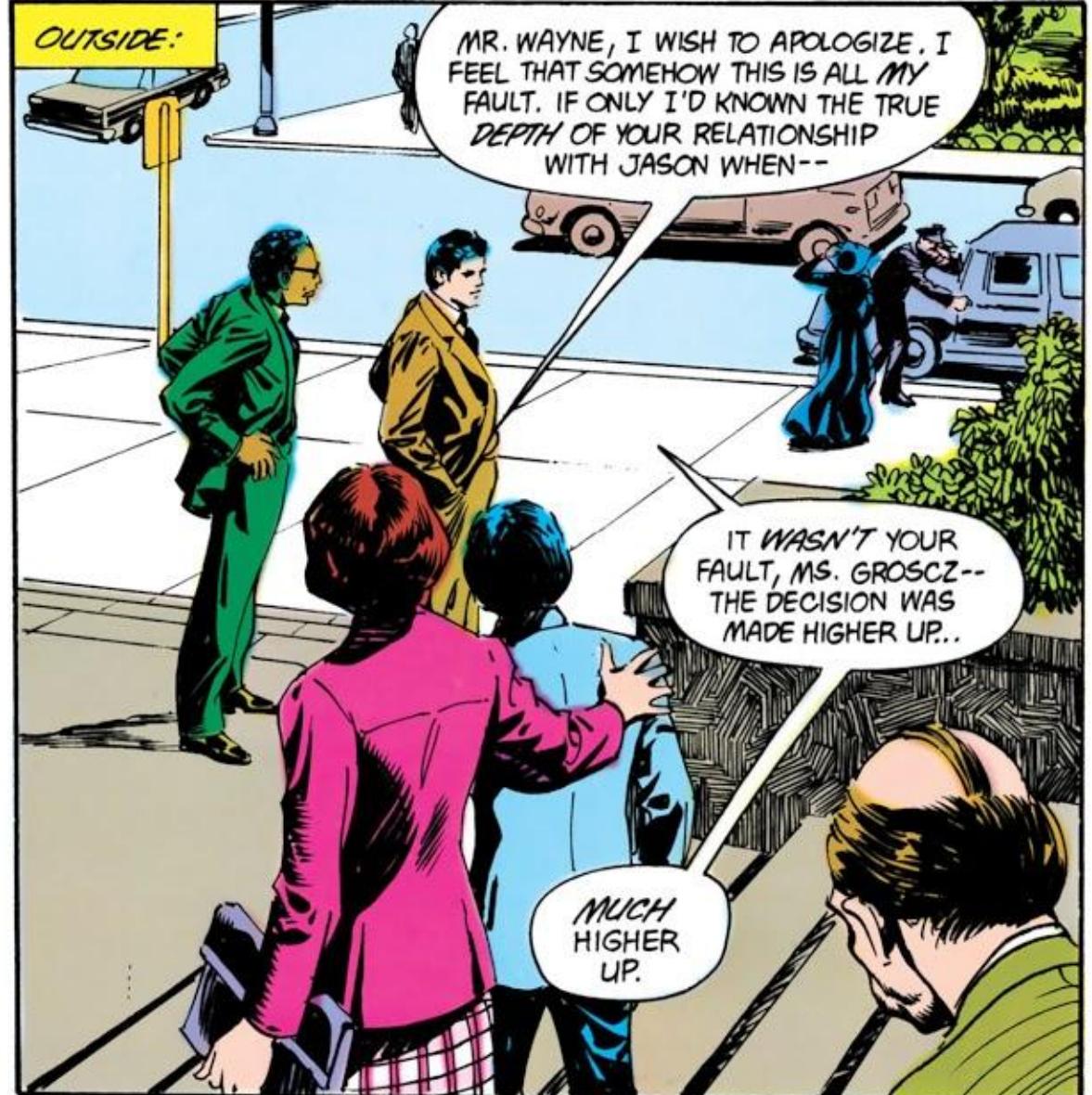
OO-OOH
OO-OOH-OH



AND WHEN NATALIA KNIGHT FINALLY, SLOWLY, TURNS TO FACE BRUCE WAYNE, HER EYES CONVEY SOME ELUSIVE FORM OF MUTE APPEAL.

HE EXPECTED THIS FROM THE JUDGE...

...BUT HE EXPECTED SOMETHING MORE FROM NATALIA--NOT GLOATING, NEVER THAT FROM HER, BUT...SOMETHING.



AND SUDDENLY THE BOY IS RUSHING TO HIM, FILLING HIS ARMS...

ANOTHER UNEXPECTED REACTION, FOR IT WAS JASON WHO REQUESTED TO BE ADOPTED BY NATALIA KNIGHT, HOPING TO USE HIS OWN FATE TO FURTHER PROVE HIMSELF AS ROBIN-- AND NOW, IS HE ACTUALLY WEEPING?

STAY COOL, BRUCE, 'CAUSE IT'LL ALL WORK OUT-- ONCE I GET ENOUGH GOODS ON NATALIA FROM THE INSIDE TO EXPOSE HER AS NOCTURNA.

NO TEARS--THE "EMOTIONAL" FAREWELL IS BUT A RUSE.

THEN HE WAS WRONG ONLY ABOUT NATALIA...

...AND YOUTH KNOWS NO SET-BACKS.

AS FOR BRUCE WAYNE HIMSELF, THE IMPACT OF HIS LOSS HITS ONLY THAT NIGHT...

DON'T WORRY, SIR--
I'M SURE THE SETBACK IS ONLY TEMPORARY.

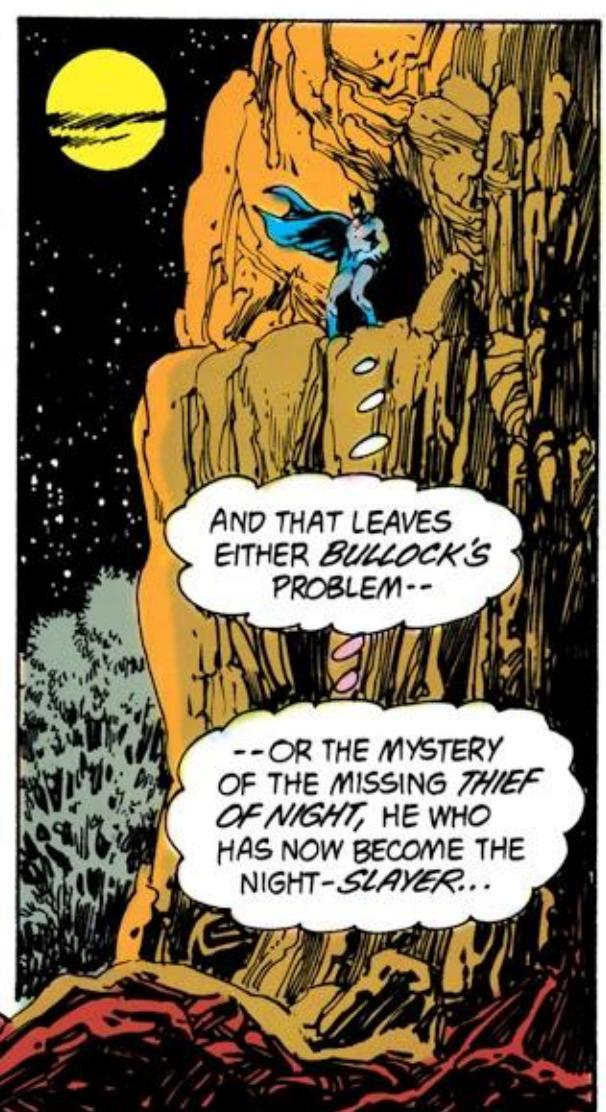
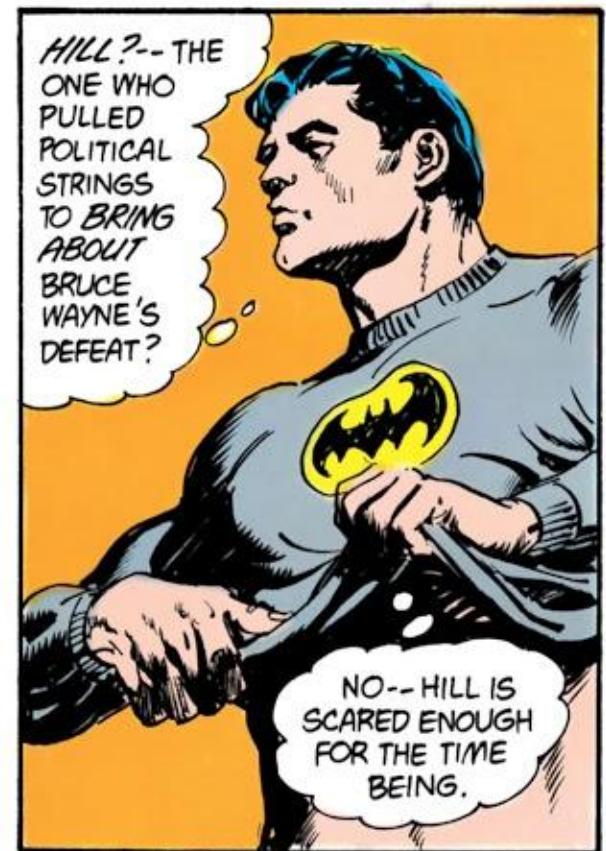
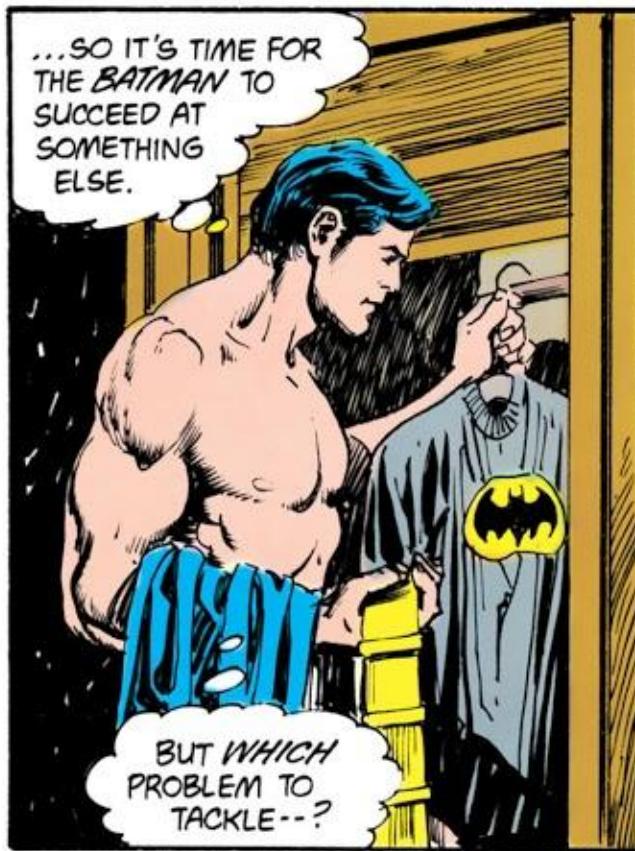
FATHER'S RIGHT, BRUCE--
YOU'LL HAVE JASON BACK BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

LIGHTS
ON--SO HE'S HOME...

ALFRED... JULIA... I APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS TO CONSOLE ME, BUT--

BING BONG









WHILE, IN A DEAD-END ALLEY SPATTERED WITH BLOOD...

NOTHING -- NOT A SINGLE OVERLOOKED CLUE -- AND THEREFORE NO CHOICE BUT TO TRACE THE TRAIL OF BLOOD BACK TO ITS SOURCE...

... THE PLACE WHERE ANTON KNIGHT WAS SHOT -- HOPING TO FIND SOMETHING NEW ON THE WAY...

... AND KNOWING WHAT I ALWAYS KNEW, IF ONLY SUBCONSCIOUSLY--

-- THAT THIS NIGHT WOULD TAKE ME TO THE ROOF UNDER NOCTURNA'S PENTHOUSE BALCONY...

MADNESS.

PATIENCE, MY DEAR, IT WILL ONLY BE A WHILE LONGER-- AND THEN MY MENTOR AND I SHALL LEAVE YOU.

WERE WE WORKING WITH MY MASTER COMPUTER, ALL THIS WOULD TAKE LESS THAN A MINUTE, BUT WITH MY PORTABLE MINI-COMPUTER HERE... WELL, YOU'VE SEEN HOW LONG CHANGING THE DISKS CAN TAKE...

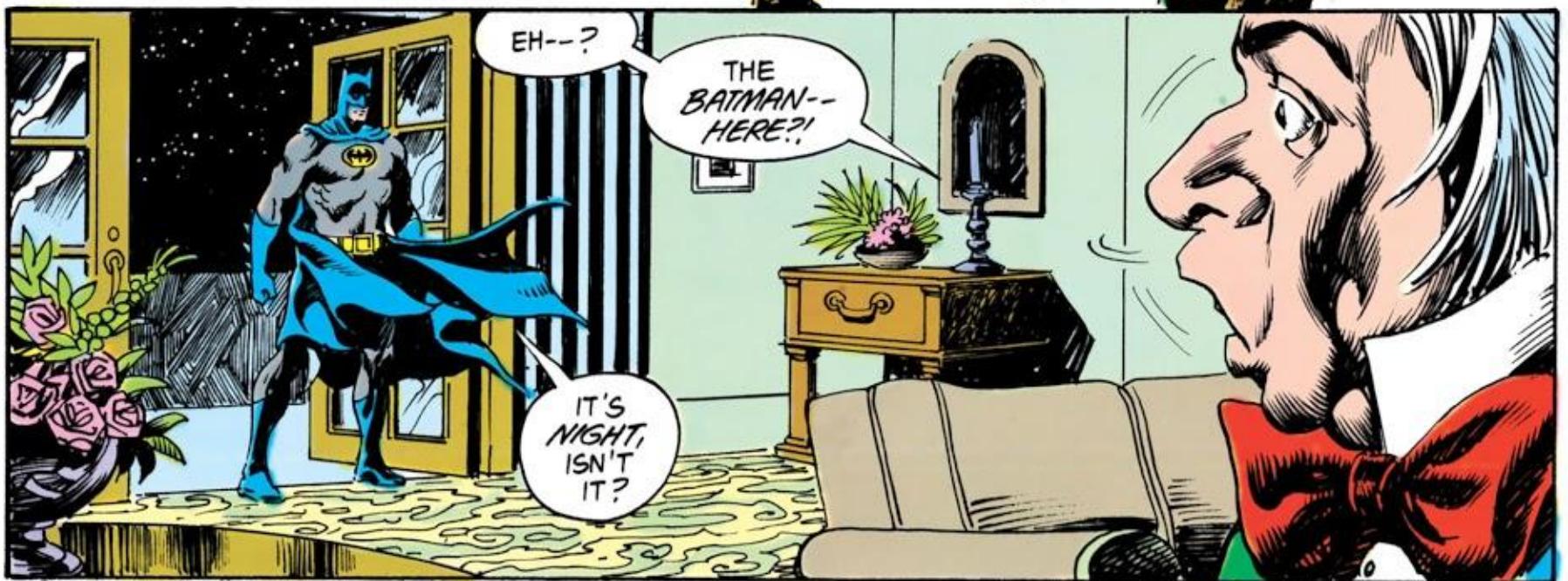
IT WAS RIGHT HERE-- NIGHT-SLAYER WAS ABOUT TO KILL ME AND NOCTURNA SHOT HIM TO SAVE MY LIFE...

... BUT STILL THERE ARE NO CLUES, AS I KNEW THERE WOULDN'T BE...

... AND SHE'S UP THERE RIGHT NOW, PERHAPS THINKING ABOUT ME... ABOUT BRUCE WAYNE... AS I KNEW SHE WOULD BE...

I SIMPLY COULDN'T STAY AWAY-- HER LURE IS TOO STRONG...

BUT I CAN'T GO UP THERE-- CAN'T LET MYSELF-- I CAN'T!



GOTHAM'S CHILD WELFARE BUREAU:



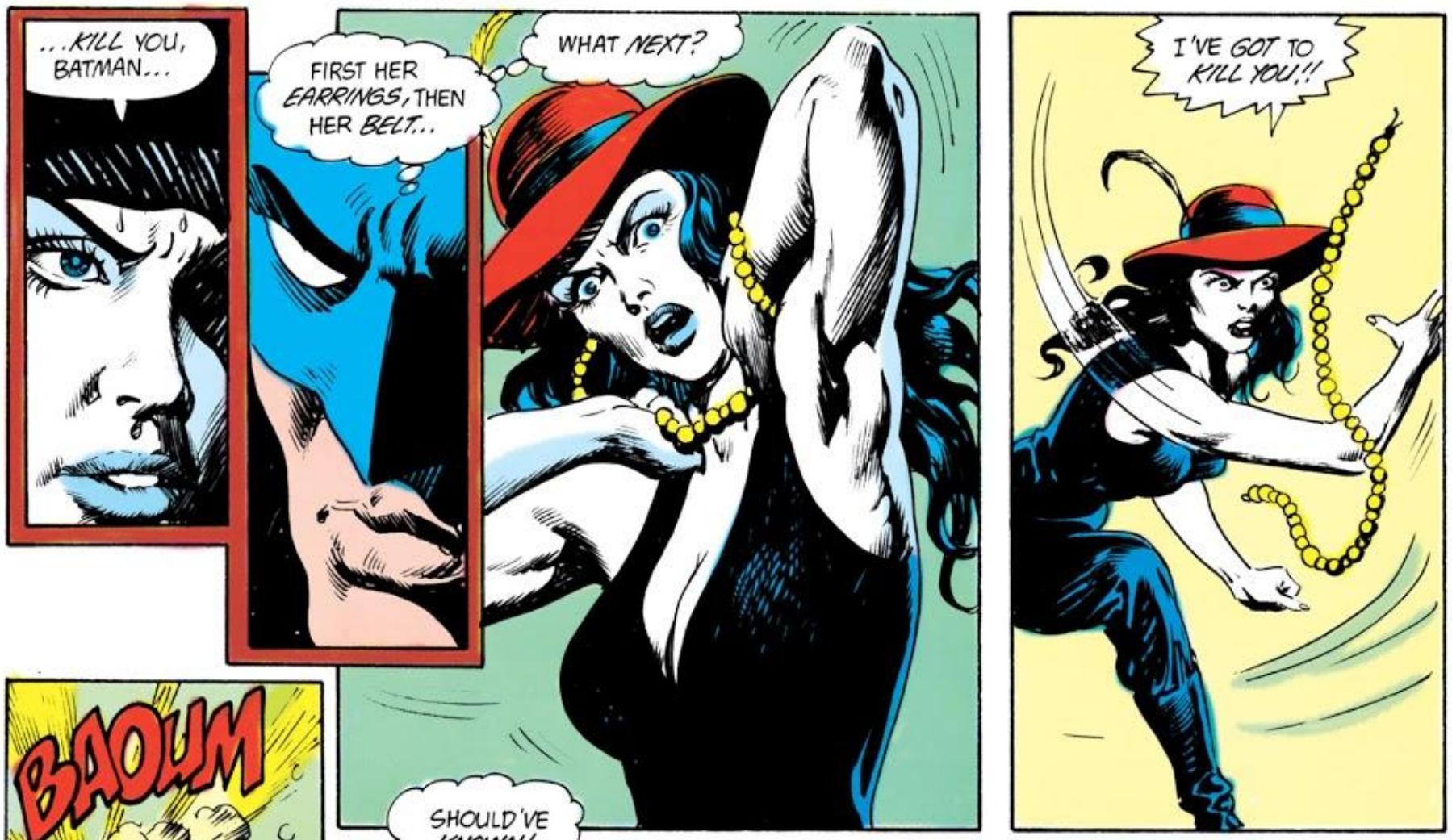


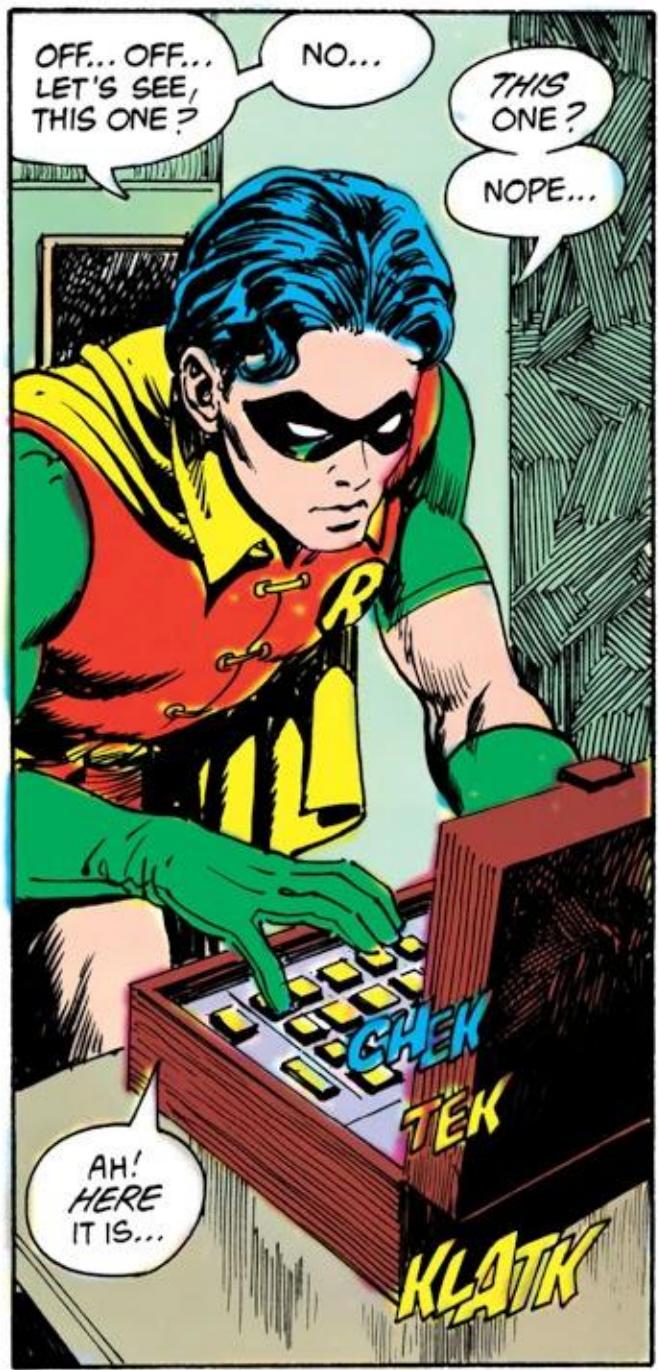


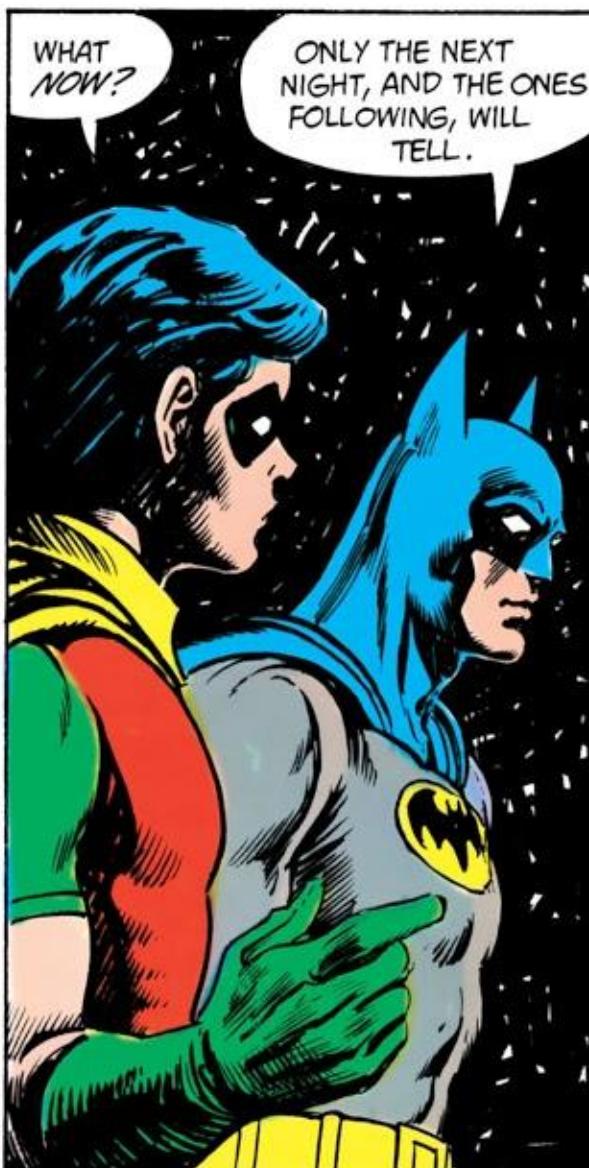












EVEN IF BRUCE WAYNE
AND JASON TODD CAN'T
SHARE THE SAME HOUSE
DURING THE DAY...

...AT LEAST
WE CAN BE TOGETHER
DURING THE NIGHTS--
AS BATMAN AND
ROBIN.

IT'S NOT
ENOUGH,
SON.

AS ALFRED WOULD SAY...
WHO WE REALLY ARE CAN
NEVER BE CONCEALED BY
MERE MASKS.

AND BITTER AS IT
MAY BE, THAT'S ONE
TRUTH WE MUST
LEARN TO FACE.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
DETECTIVE (ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS):
THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING
NIGHT-SLAYER--SOLVED!



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