



BATMAN #598



WHALE

FEB 2002

BRUBAKER • McDANIEL • OWENS

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

WAYNE MANOR,
ONE WEEK BEFORE
CHRISTMAS...

WHAT
EXACTLY DO
YOU THINK YOU'RE
DOING, SASHA?

WHAT DOES IT
COOK LIKE I'M
DOING, BRUCE?

I FOUND ALL
THESE BOXES OF DECORATIONS
IN THE ATTIC, IT'S NICE STUFF
... YOU WANNA GIVE ME
A HAND?

NO.

WE DON'T
USUALLY
CELEBRATE THE
HOLIDAYS
AROUND
HERE.





WHO
DID
THIS?

WELL, THAT'S AN
INTERESTING STORY, ACTUALLY...
I'D THINK IT WAS A JOKE,
EXCEPT FOR THESE
CORPSES...

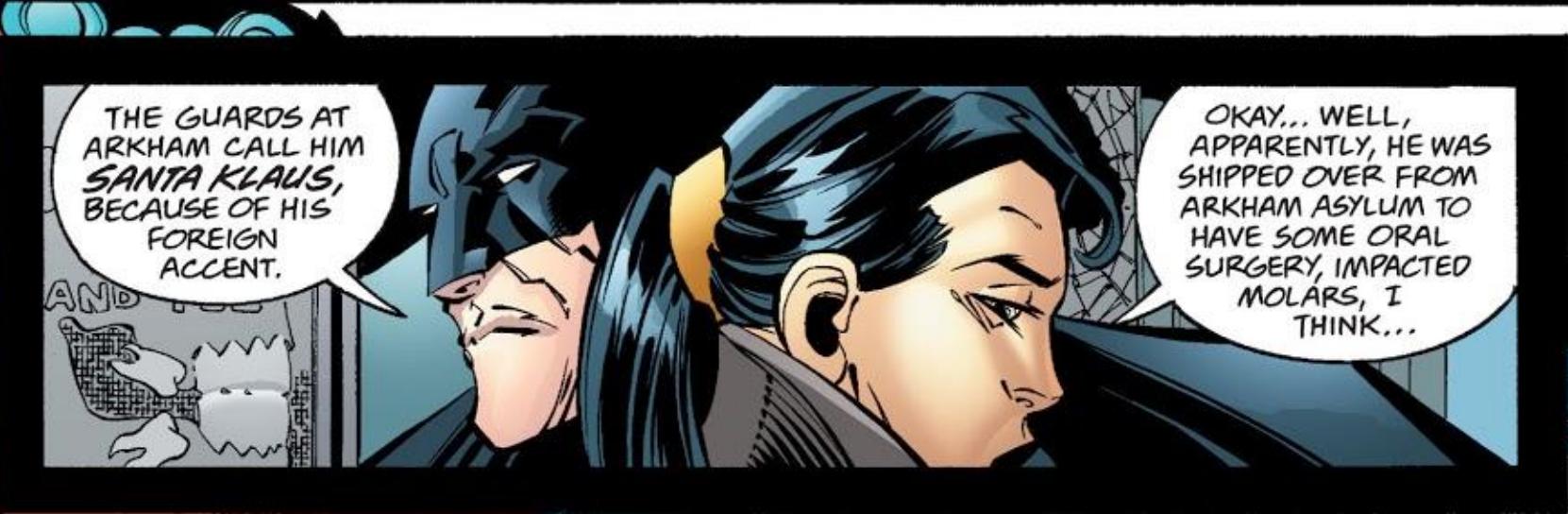
BUT, I GUESS
THERE'S A NEW FREAK
IN TOWN... YOU RAN
INTO HIM BEFORE,
I THINK...

GUY IN A
DEPARTMENT STORE
SANTA SUIT? SOUND
FAMILIAR?

UNFORTUNATELY.

Santa Klaus is Coming To Town!

ED BRUBAKER, writer · SCOTT Mc DANIEL, penciller · ANDY OWENS, inker
ROBERTA TEVES, colorist · WILDSSTORM FX, separations · JOHN COSTANZA, letterer
MICHAEL WRIGHT, associate editor · BOB SCHRECK, editor · BATMAN created by BOB KANE



"WE CAN ONLY ASSUME HE PALMED THE LIGHTER FROM ONE OF THE ORDERLIES DURING HIS EARLIER STRUGGLE..."

"WHICH HELPED HIM TURN THE NITROUS OXIDE INTO A BLOW TORCH."

"AND WHILE THEY WERE BURNING, HE SMASHED THEIR HEADS IN... THEN HIT THE EXIT."

HE CUT UP A GUARD AND A NURSE ON HIS WAY, TOO... EVERYONE ELSE WAS DISTRACTED BY THE FIRE.

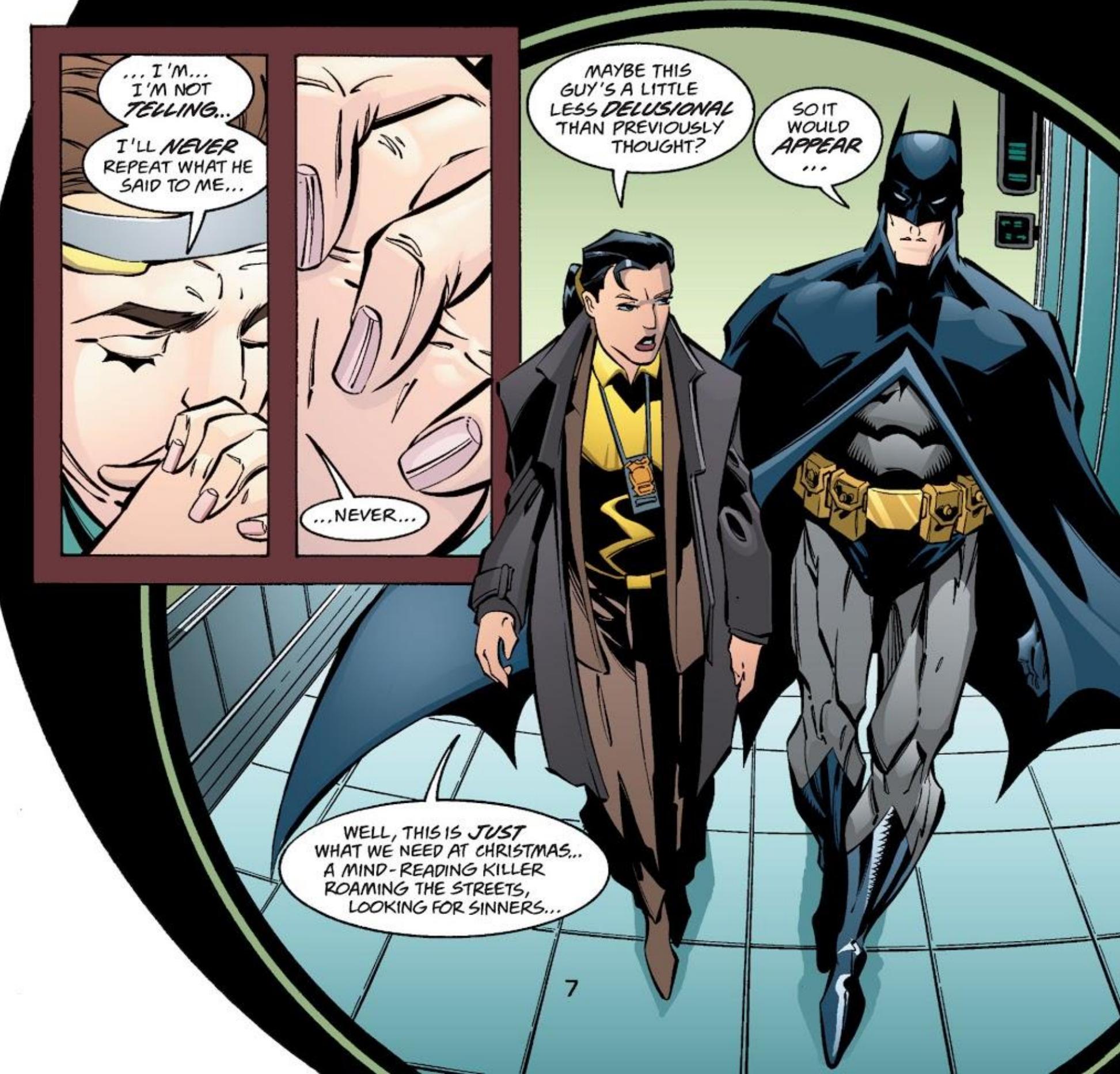
I SEE.

YOU'RE A TRAINED EXPERT. HOW CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS MAN GETTING THE DROP ON YOU?

I DON'T... I DON'T KNOW...

I HAD HIM, Y'KNOW? I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TAKE THE BLADE AWAY FROM HIM...

BUT THEN... HE SAID SOMETHING FUNNY...



"IN THIS TOWN,
HE'LL HAVE PLENTY
TO CHOOSE FROM..."

BAHH... ZIS
DAMN'D PRETENDER...
HE IZ LUCKY ZAT I
LEAVE HIM
ALIVE...

STEALINK
MONEY FROM
ZEE NEEDY...

WHAT'S THE
HURRY, SANTA?
THERE'S STILL SIX
SHOPPING DAYS
'TIL CHRISTMAS...

I KNOW ZIS...
AND ARE YOU
SHOPPIN' FOR
YOUR ILLEGITIMATE
CHILD, AS WELL?

ZE LITTLE
BOY YOU HAFF
MIT YOUR
SECRETARY?

WHAT--
WHAT'S HE
TALKING
ABOUT,
CRAIG?



TRYING TO FIND SANTA KLAUS IN THE MIDST OF THE HOLIDAY CRAZE...

...MIGHT AS WELL BE TRYING TO FIND A SPECIFIC SNOWFLAKE.

RIGHT NOW IT SEEMS LIKE YOU CAN'T GO HALF A BLOCK WITHOUT SEEING A JOLLY RED-SUITED MAN...

FROM THE BARRIO TO THE UPPER WEST SIDE, EVERY PART OF THIS CITY IS OVERRUN WITH THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT... SO, IF HE WANTED, HE COULD HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT...



BUT I HAVE A FEELING GOTHAM WILL BE HEARING A LOT FROM THIS LUNATIC BEFORE THE SHOPPING SEASON IS OVER.





OF COURSE, I'M RIGHT ABOUT SANTA KLAUS NOT HIDING IN THE SHADOWS FOR TOO LONG.

THE NEXT FIVE DAYS ARE PUNCTUATED BY A SERIES OF DISTURBING EVENTS...



SANTA AND HIS HELPERS (WHO WITNESSES REPORT CAN'T BE MORE THAN TWELVE OR THIRTEEN YEARS OLD) SEEM TO STRIKE AT RANDOM...

...GIVING OUT PRESENTS TO PASSERSBY ON VARIOUS BUSY STREETS.



ACCORDING TO REPORTS, THE CHILDREN ONLY GIVE GIFTS TO THOSE THAT SANTA KLAUS POINTS OUT.

I SINK IT
VILL BE... ZAT
ONE ZERE, ZE
VIFE-BEATER.



THE GIFTS ARE NOT SURPRISINGLY, HOMEMADE EXPLOSIVES.

BY CHRISTMAS EVE THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR FATALITIES, AND OVER TEN WITH SERIOUS INJURIES HOSPITALIZED.





SANTA KLAUS
AND HIS ELVES
SHOWED UP JUST
AS THE PARTY WAS
GETTING LOUD...



THEY
HAND OUT
PRESENTS TO
EVERYONE
IN THE
PLACE...

AND
THEN THEY
SPLIT.

BUT THE
BARTENDER FOLLOWS
THEM OUT, HOPING
TO GET A PRESENT
FOR HIS KID FROM
SANTA, THOUGHT IT
WOULD BE CUTE,
I GUESS...



SO HE'S
STANDING RIGHT
THERE WHEN
SANTA KLAUS
HITS THE
DETONATOR.



HE USED A
DETONATOR THIS
TIME? SYNCHRONIZED
THE BOMBS TO ALL
GO OFF AT ONCE...

THAT'S
NEW, TOO.

IT'S THE NIGHT
BEFORE CHRISTMAS...
HE'S GETTING MORE
INVENTIVE BECAUSE
SOON IT'LL BE
OVER.

IF WE DON'T
CATCH HIM
TONIGHT, HE
MAY JUST
DISAPPEAR
UNTIL NEXT
YEAR.

DID HE SAY
ANYTHING AT ALL
WHILE HE WAS
HERE?

WHO?
THE SANTA
GUY? I...UH...
I DUNNO...

THAT'S
WHAT I WAS
THINKING.

THINK
ABOUT IT. WHAT
WAS HE DOING
RIGHT BEFORE
THEY LEFT?

RIGHT BEFORE...?
OH, YEAH, HE WAS LOOKIN'
AT THE TV. HE SAID
SOMETHIN' IN SOME KINDA
ACCENT ABOUT "ZE
PERFECT CHANCE."

-- AND FESTIVITIES
CONTINUE HERE IN GOTHAM
SQUARE... SOON, THE MAYOR
HIMSELF WILL BE ON HAND
TO HELP GIVE OUT PRIZES...

6 SAM STEELE
TREE LIGHTING



VAT!?

YOU DON'T
REFUSE A GIFT!
YOU IMMORAL
SACK OF DUNG!

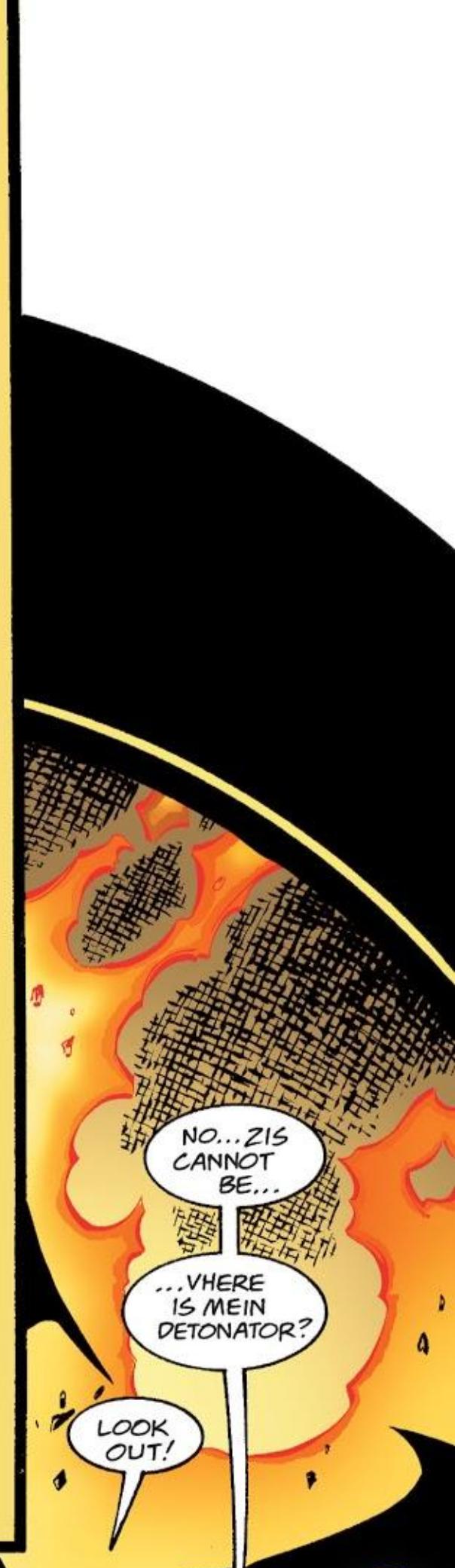
HELP!
HELP
ME!

SOMEBODY
CALL A
COP!

HEY!

YOU TAKE
THE HELPERS!
FIND OUT HOW
MANY BOMBS!





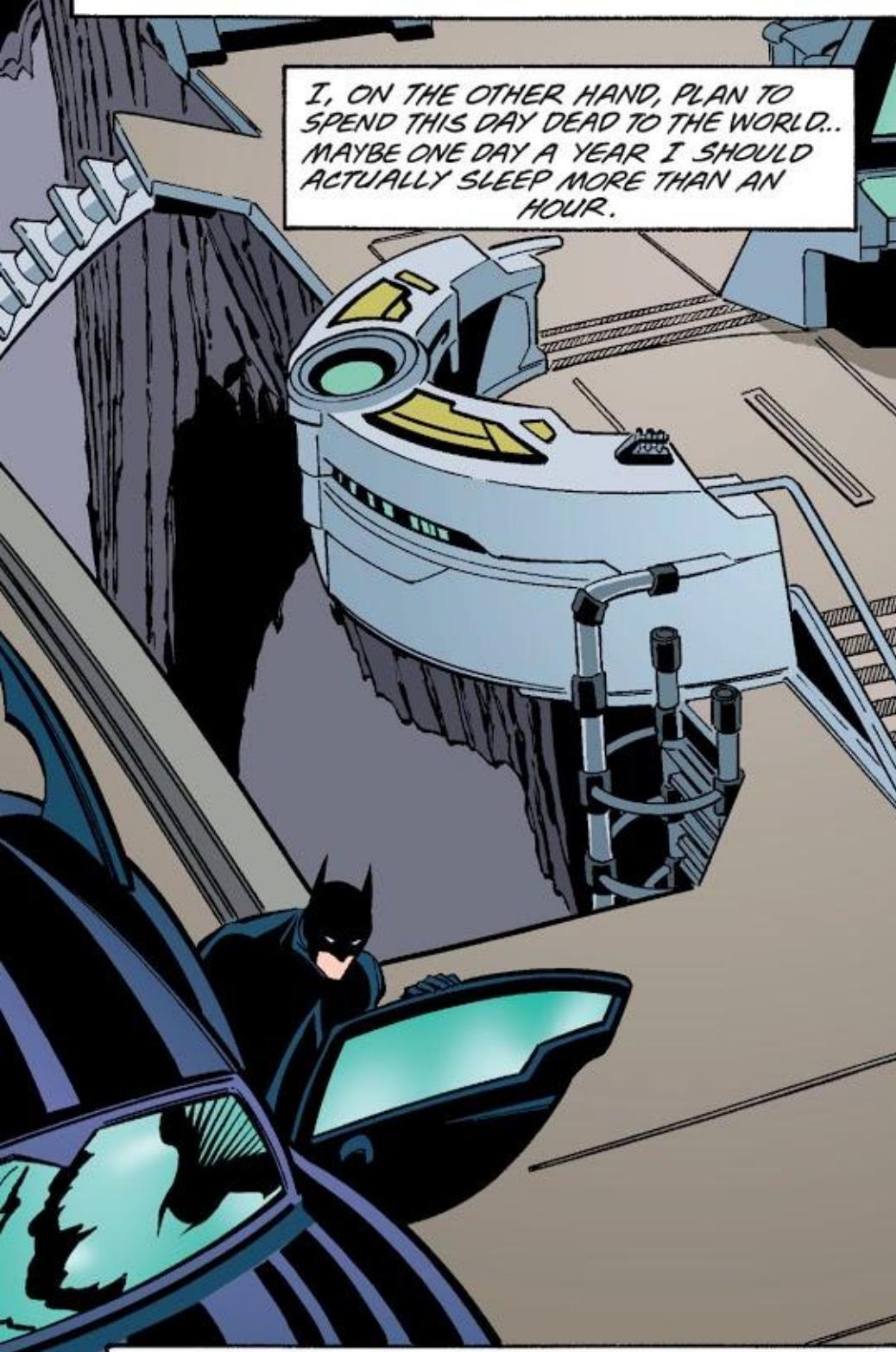




IT TAKES HOURS, BUT THE BOMB SQUAD IS FINALLY ABLE TO ISOLATE ALL OF SANTA KLAUS'S GIFT BOMBS. THE CROWD ISN'T ALLOWED TO DISPERSE UNTIL NEARLY 4 A.M.

SO, THERE'LL BE A LOT OF TIRED FAMILIES IN GOTHAM THIS CHRISTMAS MORNING.

BUT AT LEAST THEY'LL BE ALIVE.



I, ON THE OTHER HAND, PLAN TO SPEND THIS DAY DEAD TO THE WORLD... MAYBE ONE DAY A YEAR I SHOULD ACTUALLY SLEEP MORE THAN AN HOUR.



WAIT A MINUTE--



WHO MOVED MY TEST TUBE?

BRUCE? IS THAT YOU?



WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU GOT HOME...



SASHA, HAVE YOU BEEN COOKING AROUND DOWN HERE?

