

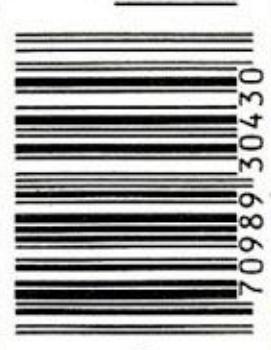
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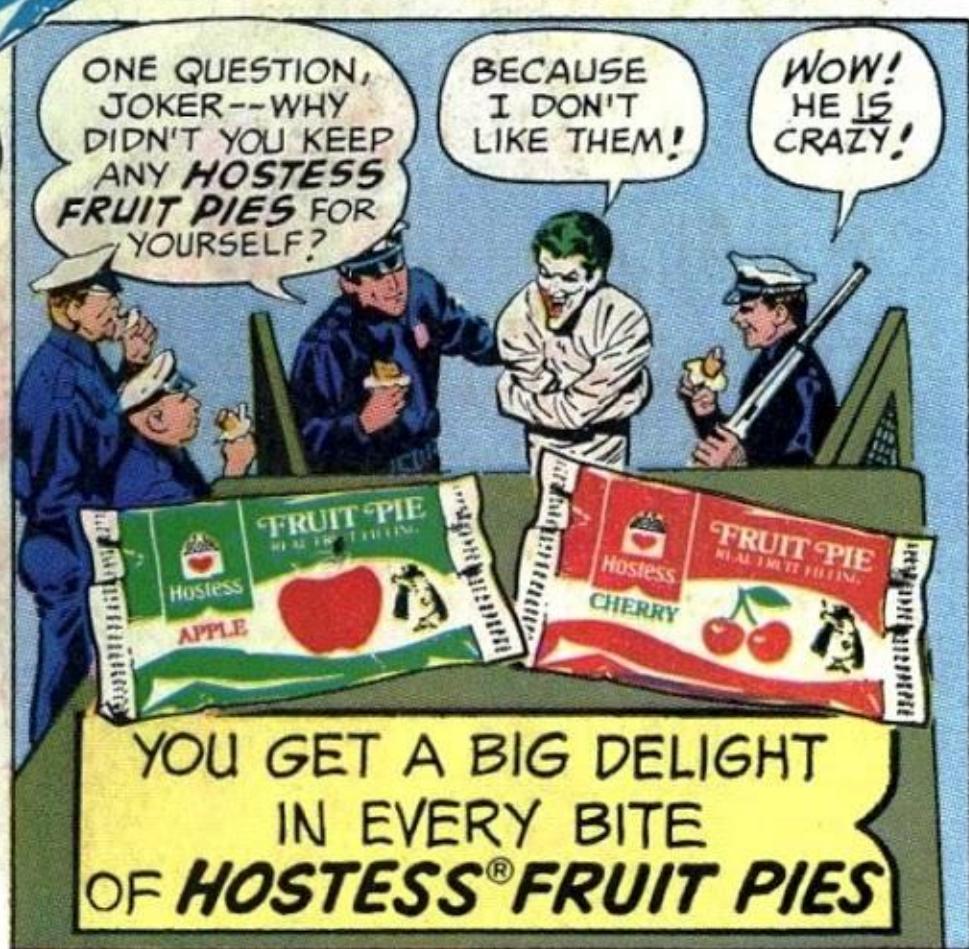
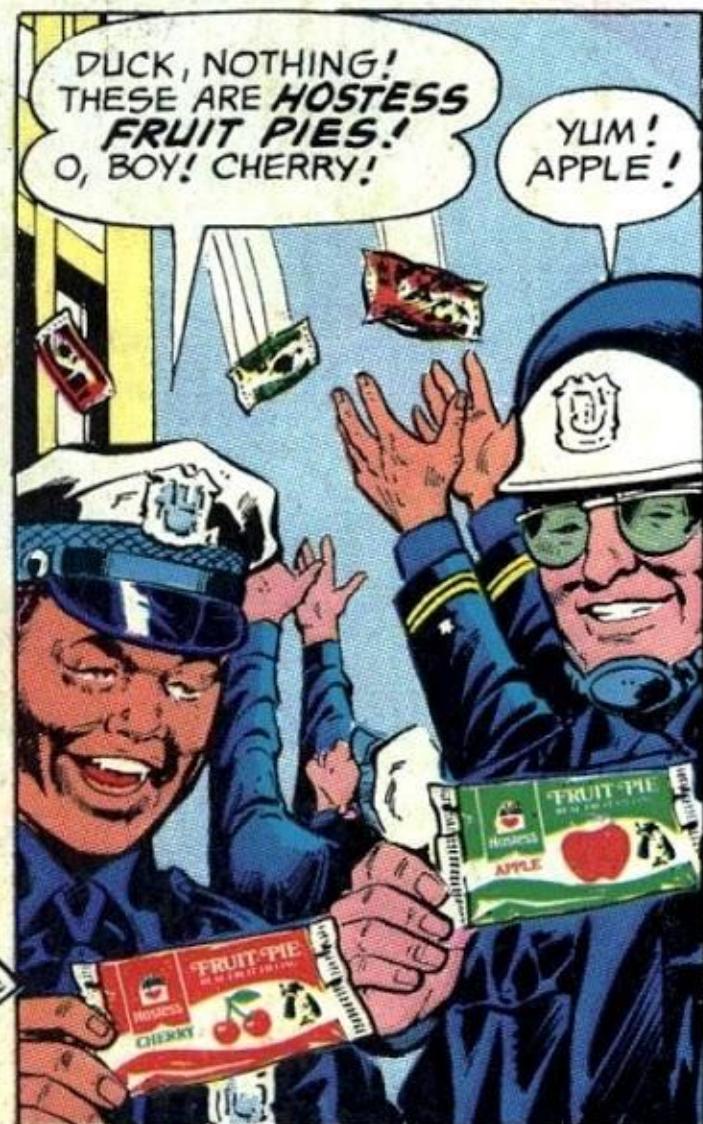
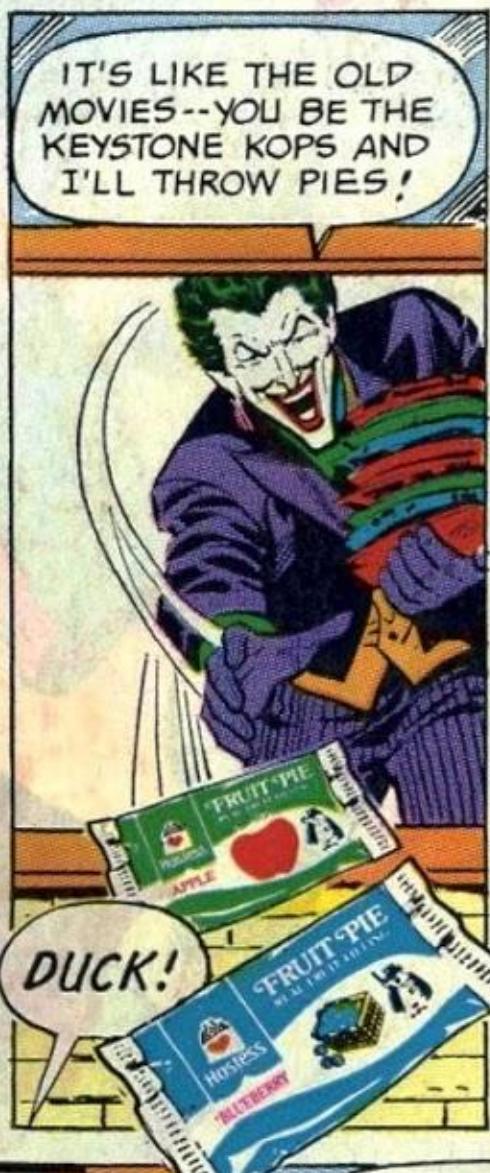
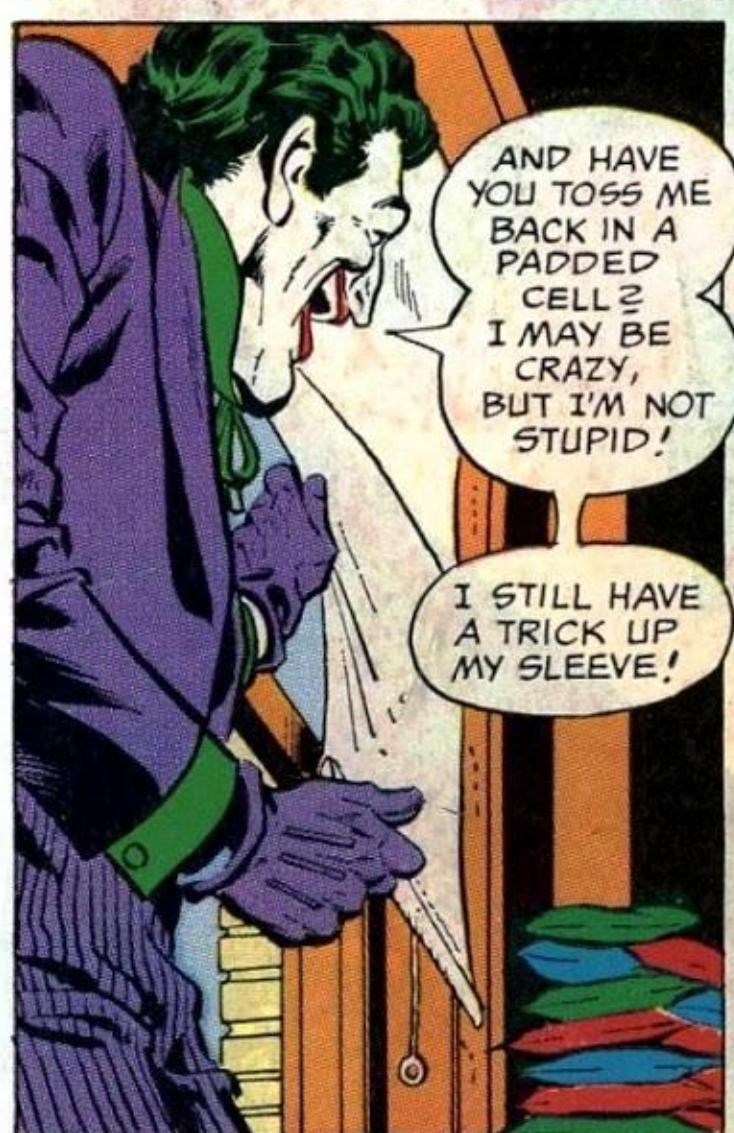
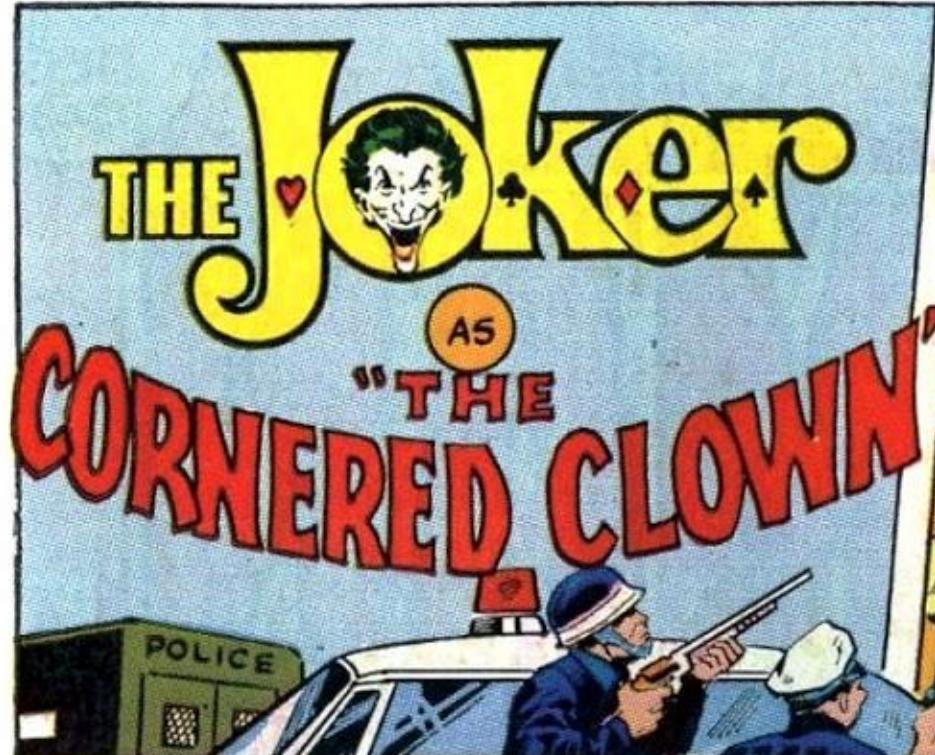
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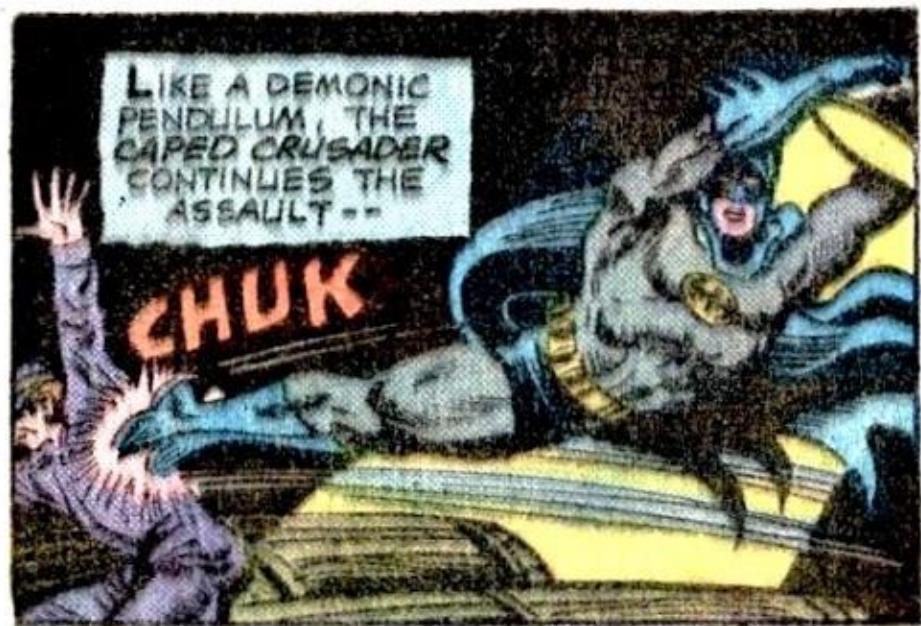
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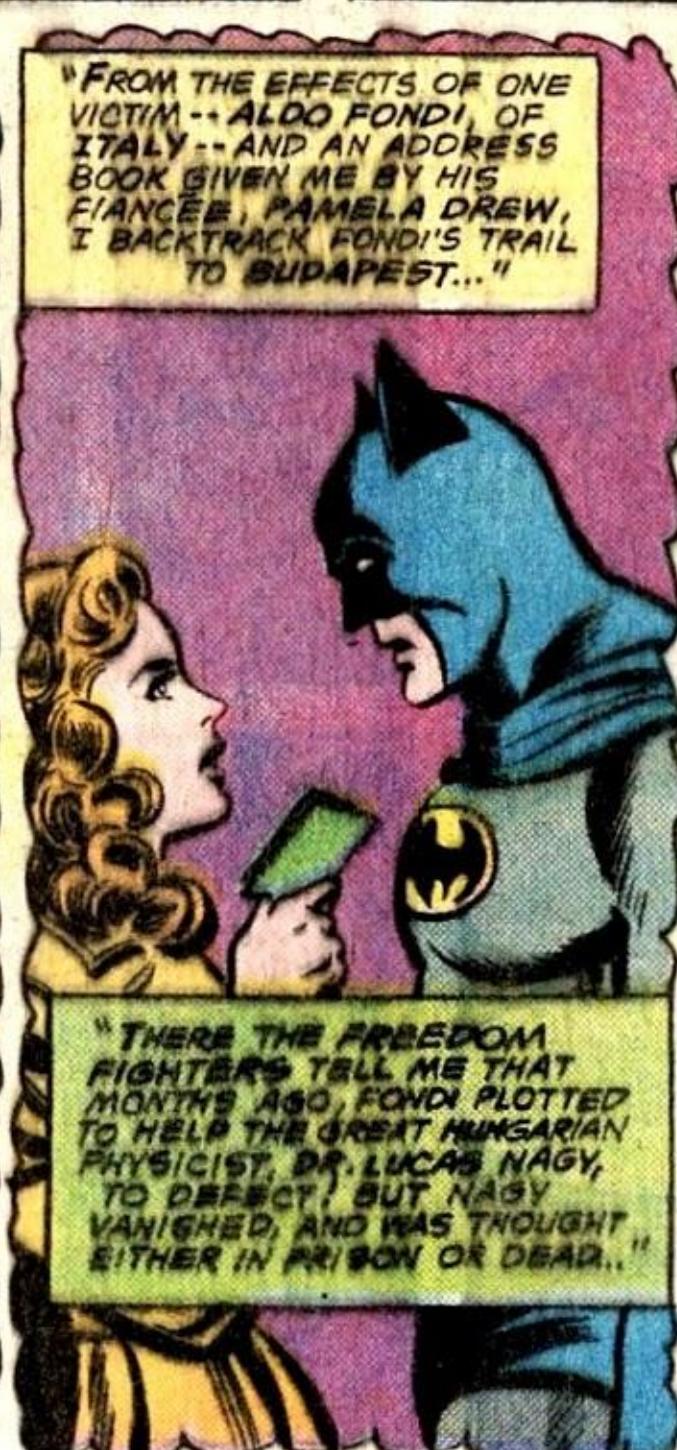
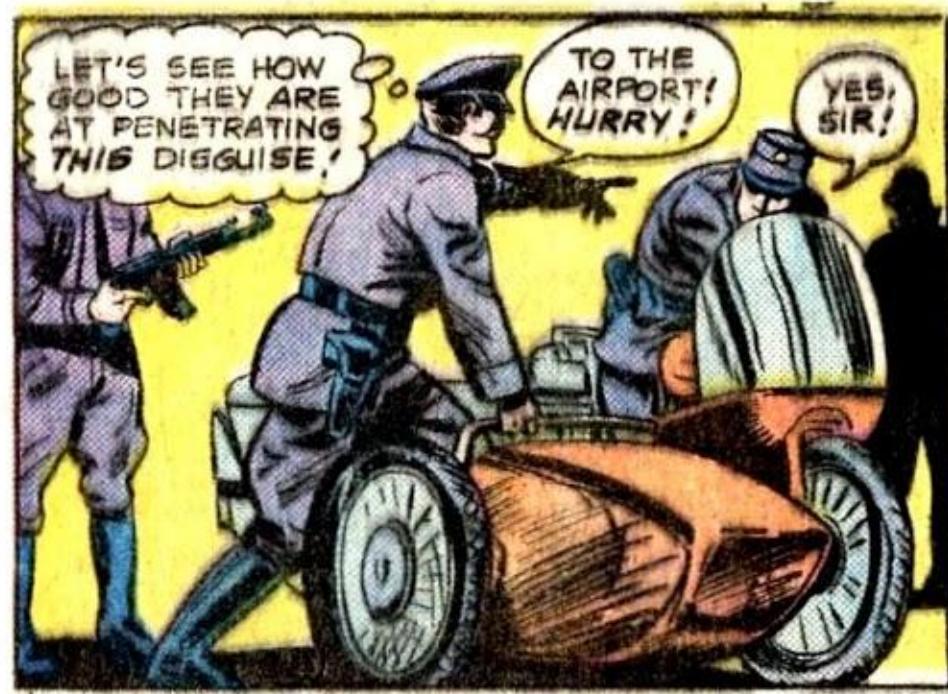
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Please State Age



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BUJUNA AIRPORT
BURUNDI

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MONSIEUR,
YOU ARE
UNDER
ARREST!

NO MORE CLEARING ANYTHING THROUGH INTERPOL... UNTIL I FIND OUT WHO TIPPED OFF THE HUNGARIAN SPECIAL POLICE ABOUT ME!

BESIDES, THIS IS THE FASTEST WAY OF GETTING WHERE I WANT TO GO!

FIVE MINUTES LATER...
THE PALACE OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF COLONEL KAFI, BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE--

THESE ARE VERY SERIOUS OFFENSES, MONSIEUR! WHY DID YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO ME IN PRIVATE?

LISTEN CAREFULLY!

GOTHAM... U.N. DELEGATION FROM BURUNDI... YOU IN CHARGE OF SECURITY... SUNDAY NIGHT ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT --

WHAT?! IS IT POSSIBLE?

YOU--HERE?!

IT IS YOU--
THE BATMAN--
MY DEAR FRIEND!

MURDERED?
IN GOTHAM CITY?

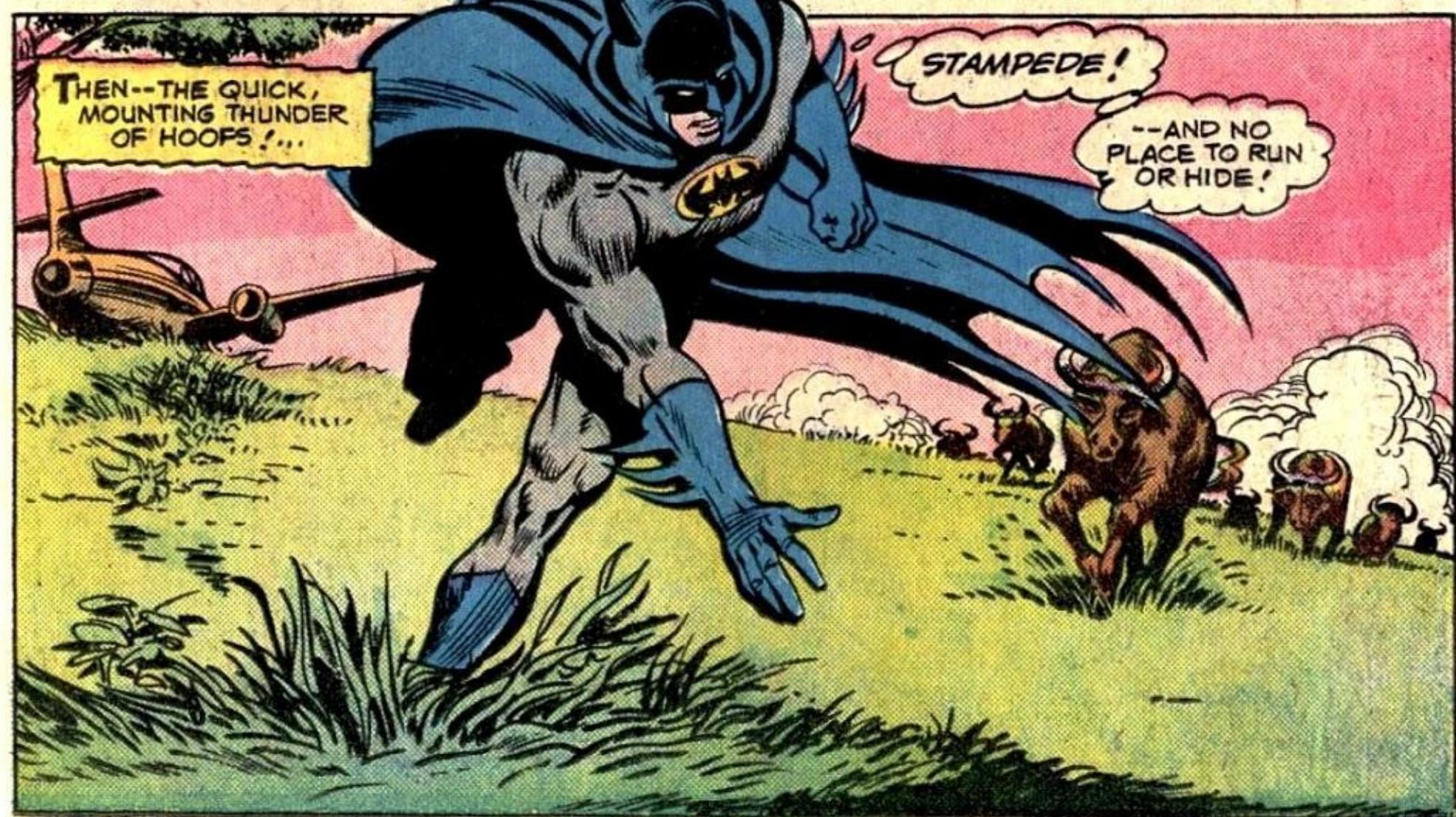
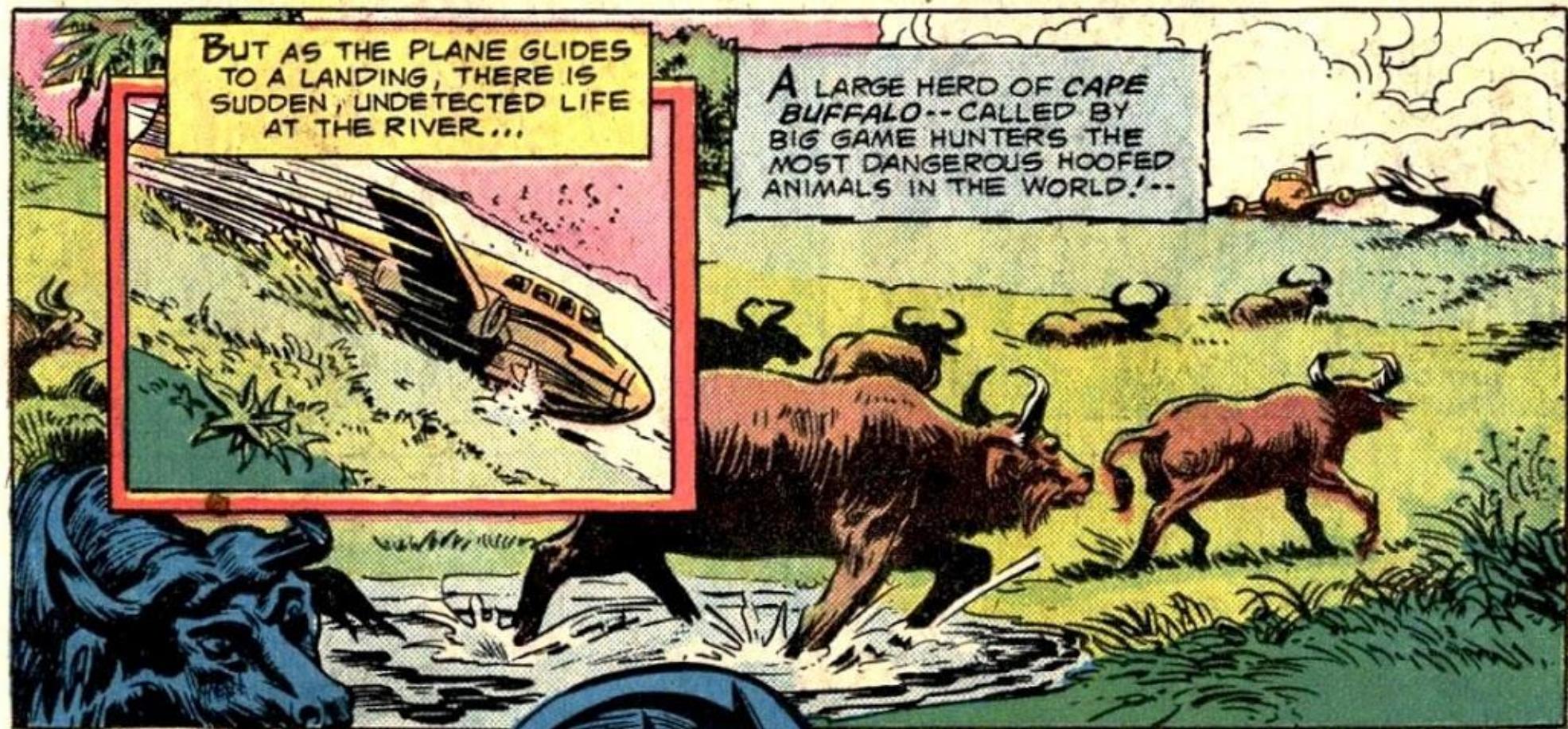
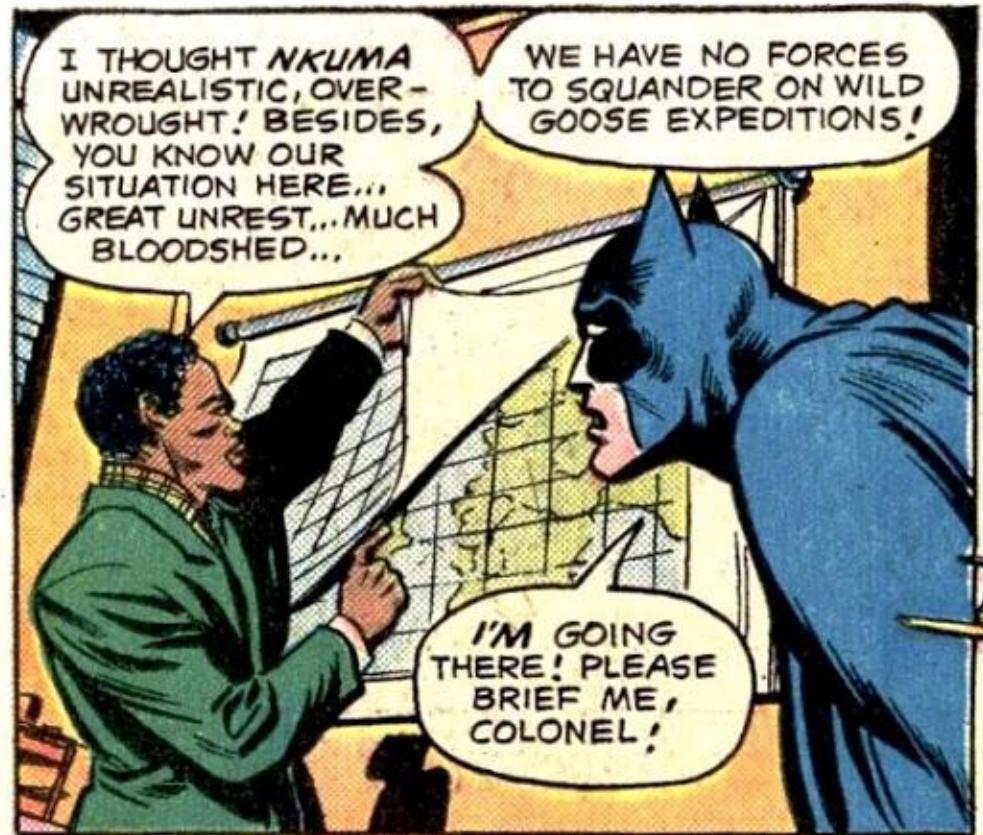
YOU DIDN'T KNOW HE'D GONE THERE?

I'LL MAKE IT SHORT AND GIVE YOU THE DETAILS LATER!

NKUMA SENGHOR
WAS MURDERED
IN GOTHAM
LAST NIGHT!

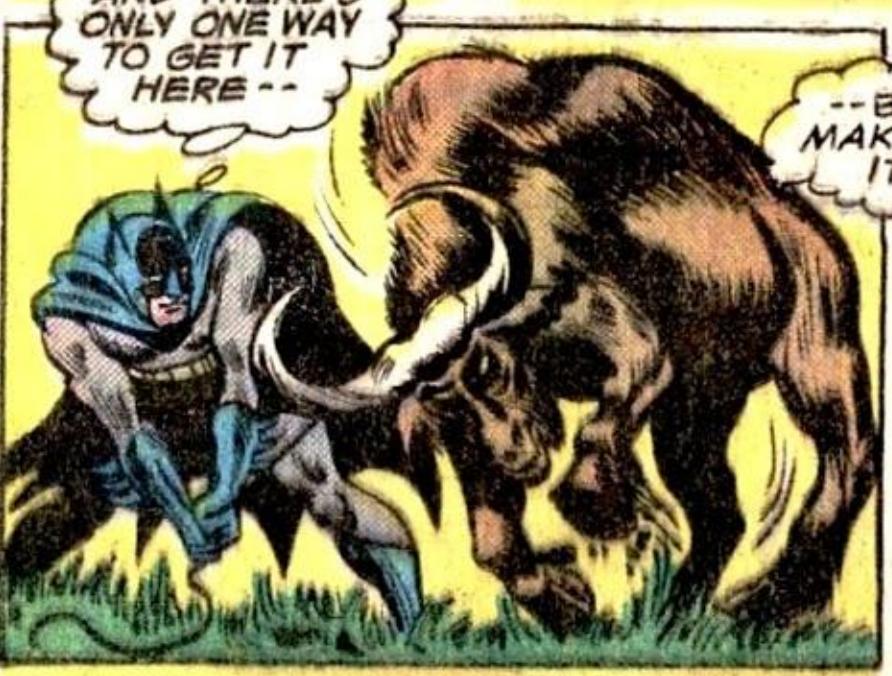
NO! HE ALWAYS WORKED ALONE!
MOREOVER, HE WAS ANGRY WITH ME!

HE HAD TOLD ME A BIZARRE STORY ABOUT AN ABANDONED CHURCH IN THE LARGELY UNMAPPED NORTH COUNTRY... BEING USED BY WHITE MEN FOR SOME MYSTERIOUS PURPOSE...





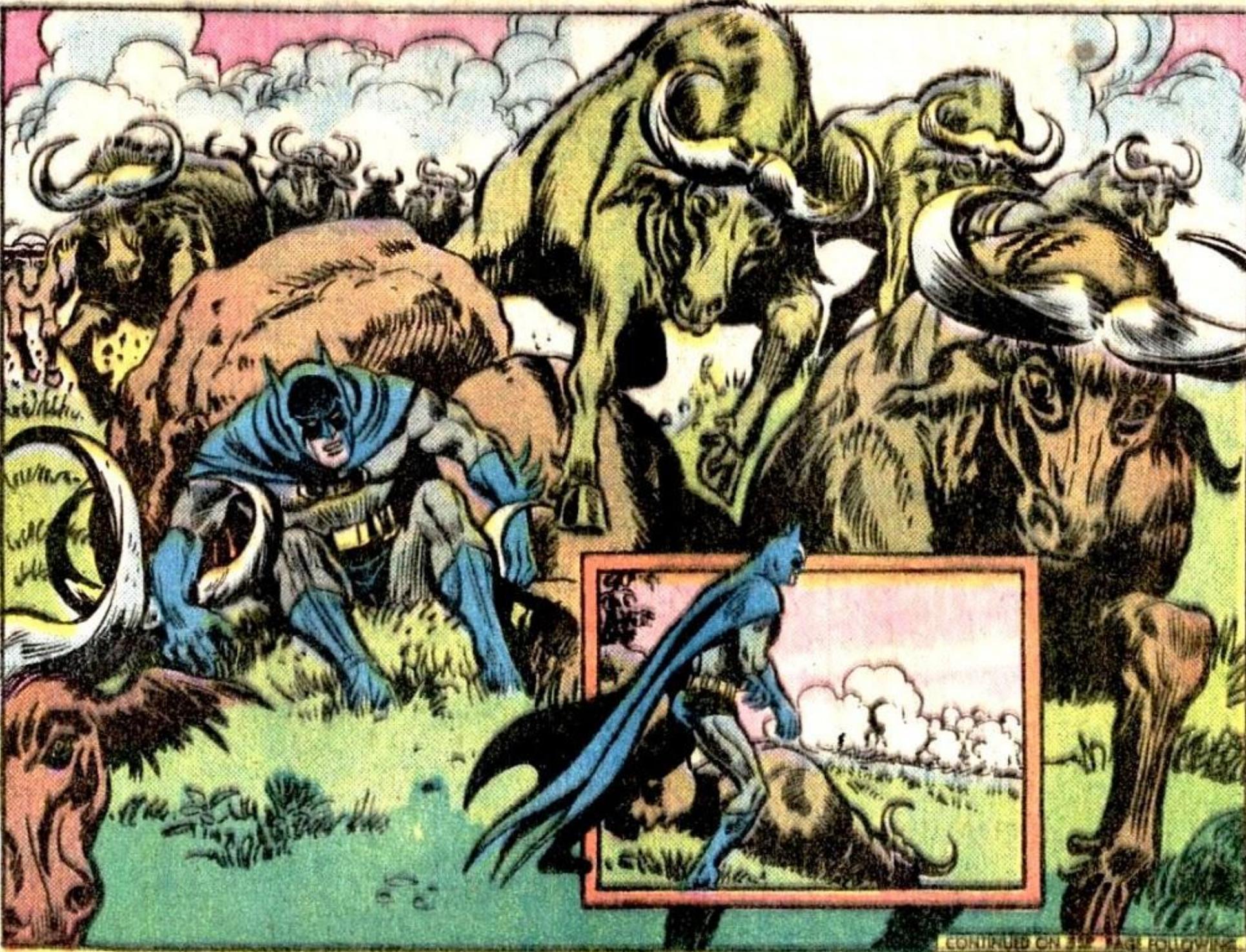
I NEED
SHELTER!



AND THERE'S
ONLY ONE WAY
TO GET IT
HERE --



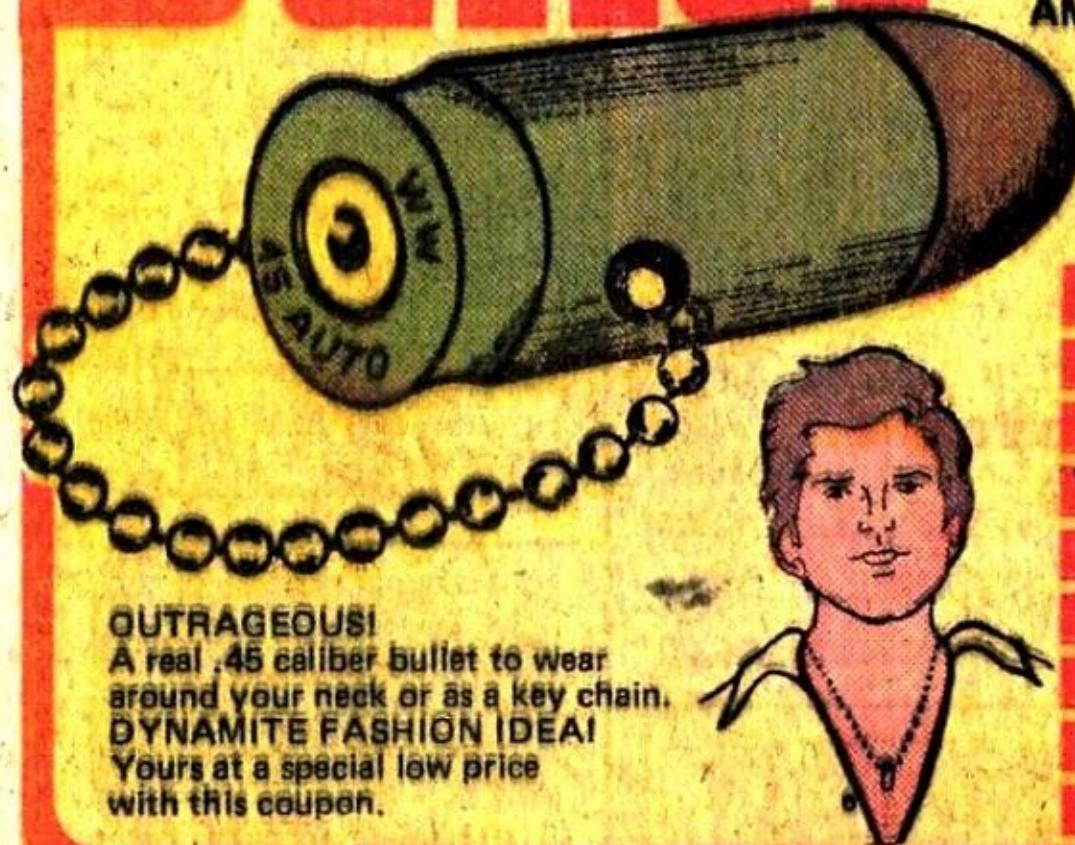
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MAKING
IT!



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SOON AFTERWARD, THE BATMAN--
IN A NEW AND WELL-CALCULATED
INCOGNITO--HURRIEDLY RESUMES
HIS COURSE...

ONE MORE
DISGUISE AND
I MAY FORGET
WHO I AM!

THERE'S THE VILLAGE... AND
PASTOR GOODWIN, THE
MISSIONARY KOFI SAID MIGHT
CONCEIVABLY KNOW SOME-
THING.

VISITORS ARE FEW IN
THESE REGIONS, AND
FRIARS RARE INDEED.
YOU ARE MOST WELCOME,
BROTHER, WHATEVER
YOUR PILGRIMAGE
HERE...

I AM A MAPMAKER
AND HISTORIAN, PASTOR.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR
HOSPITALITY, BUT I
MUST PRESS ON--

--I SEEK A
LONG ABANDONED
CHURCH HERE-
ABOUTS...

THE OLD CHURCH? YES,
IT'S NOT FAR OFF--

--BUT I MUST WARN YOU
IT IS GUARDED DAY AND
NIGHT BY MERCENARY
TROOPS!

WHOSE
MERCENARY
TROOPS?

NO ONE KNOWS...
BUT UNTIL RECENTLY,
THERE WERE WHITE
MEN ABOUT--

--USING THE CHURCH
FOR SOMETHING TO DO
WITH MINING OPERATIONS
IN A NEARBY HILL.

I QUESTIONED
THEM, BUT ALL
THEY SAID WAS
THAT THEY WERE
DIGGING "SHINING
BLACK EARTH".

NOW, EVEN THOUGH
MOST OF THE WHITES
HAVE LEFT, THE
MERCENARIES STILL
WILL LET NO ONE
APPROACH THAT
CHURCH!

YOU MUST NOT
VENTURE THERE!
THOSE MEN ARE
EXTREMELY
DANGEROUS!

I HAVE DEALT
WITH DANGEROUS
MEN BEFORE,
PASTOR!

AS THE BATMAN MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE LENGTHENING SHADOWS OF ROLLING HILLS, THE COUNTRYSIDE LIES SERENE AND STRANGELY HUSHED...

BUT HIS MIND IS IN TURMOIL...

IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO CONTROL MY REACTIONS WHEN HE DROPPED THOSE REMARKS! ... MERCENARIES! ... MINING OPERATIONS!

THE MORE I GET INTO THIS, THE WILDER AND WEIRDER IT GETS!

PRESENTLY --

QUITE A CHURCH! THOSE EARLY SETTLERS REALLY BUILT THEM IN THOSE DAYS!

NOTHING STIRRING... LIKE AN ARMY OUTPOST IN A QUIET SECTOR... CONFIDENT EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL.

THE NEXT MOMENT--



BREAD, CHEESE, A WATER FLASK, A TELESCOPE AND A FEW MAPS!

A HARMLESS MONK--WHY BOTHER WITH HIM?

OUR ORDERS ARE THAT ANYONE IN THIS ZONE MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE COMMANDANT FOR QUESTIONING!

WHEN THE BATMAN'S EYES OPEN, HE SEES FOUR SHAFTS OF MOONLIGHT POURING IN THROUGH ANCIENT ROSE WINDOWS...

I'M IN THE CHURCH!

THIS GRITTY, ROCKY SUBSTANCE ALL AROUND ME... FEELS AND LOOKS LIKE COAL... HUGE CHUNKS OF IT, VEINED WITH SOME LUSTROUS, GLASSY MATERIAL --

IT'S THE SHINING BLACK EARTH THE VILLAGERS WERE MINING!

PITCHBLEND!

GOOD LORD, THEN THIS MUST MEAN--

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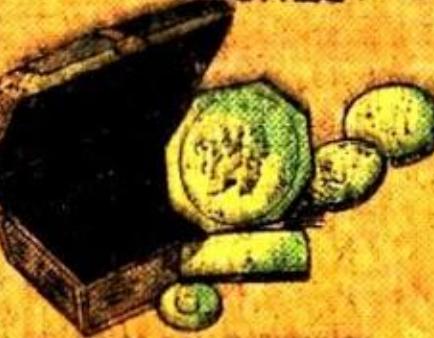
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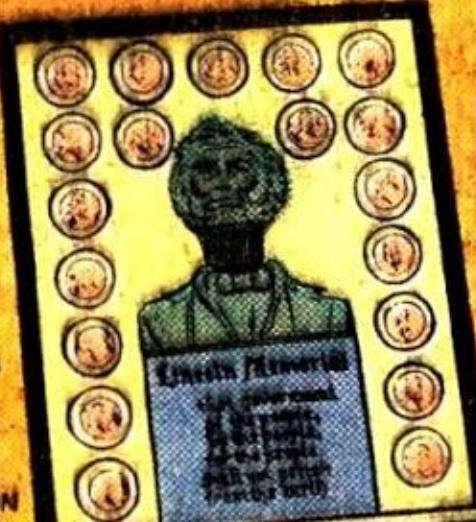
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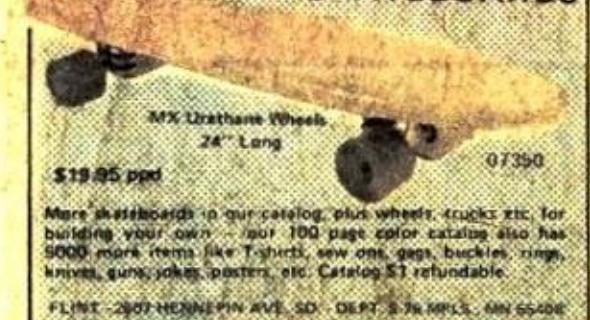
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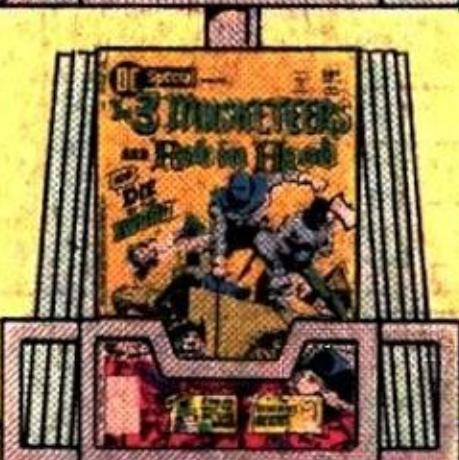
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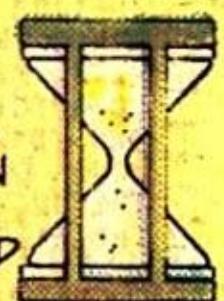
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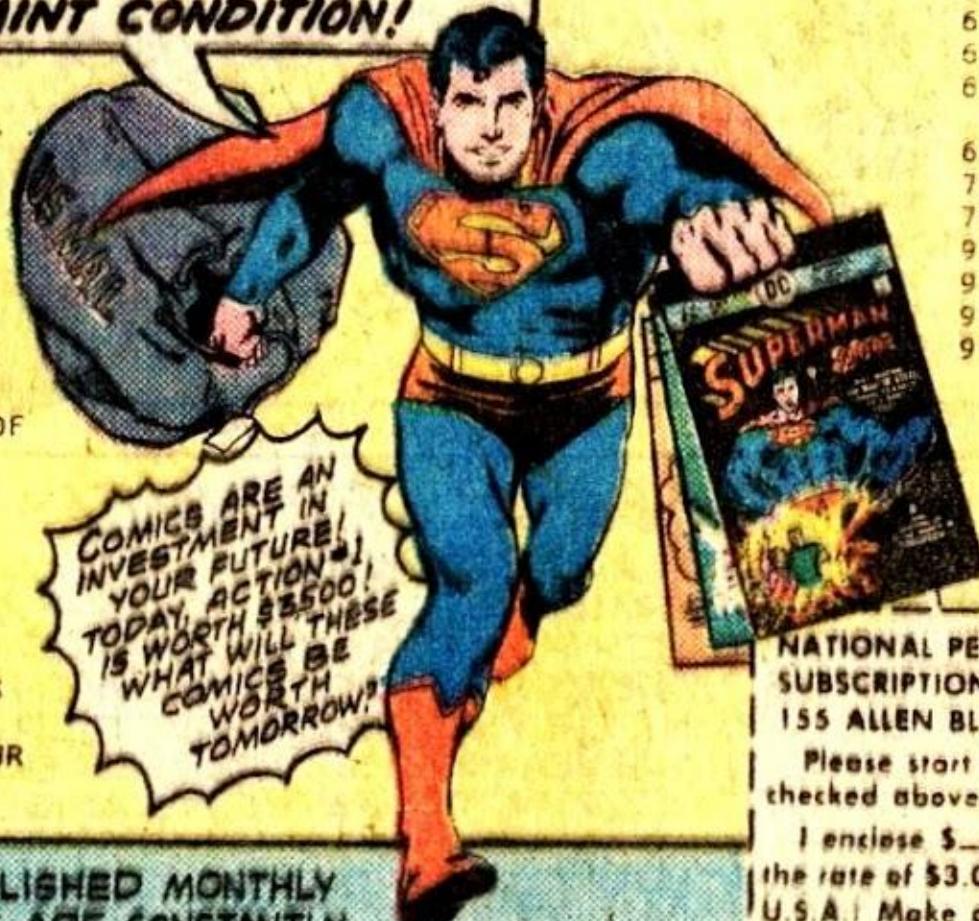
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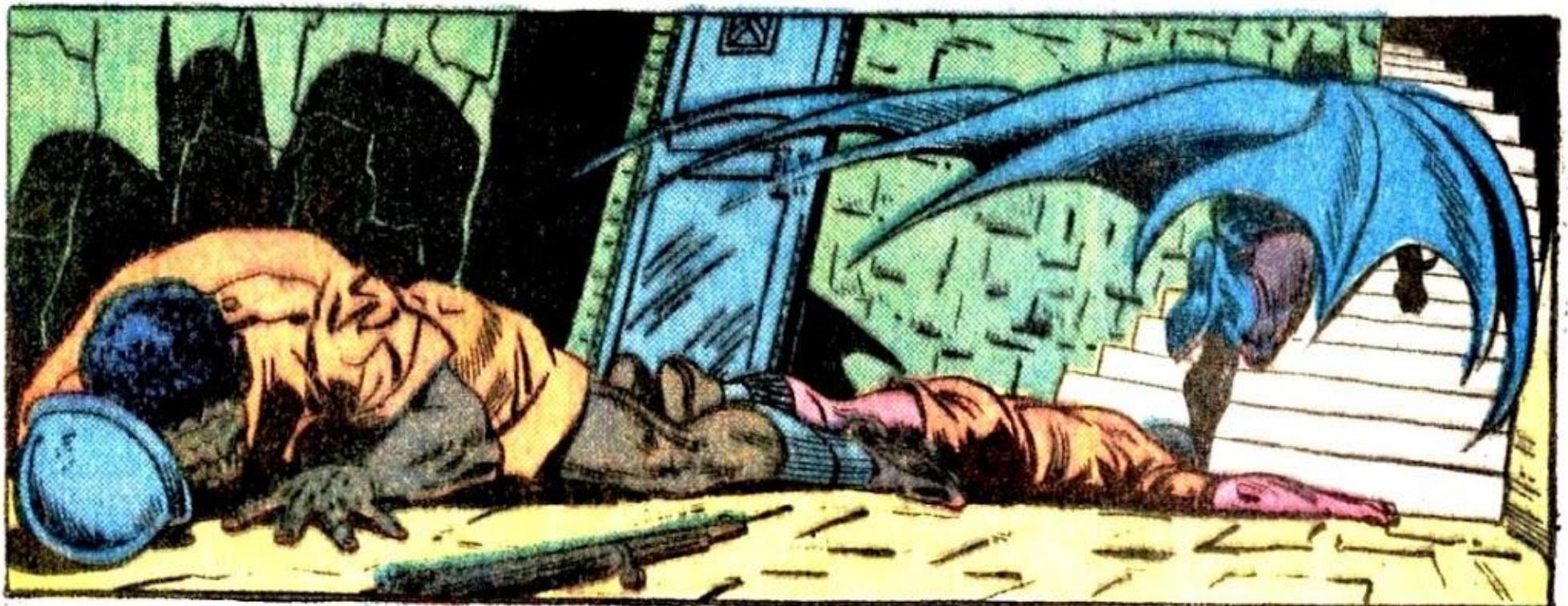
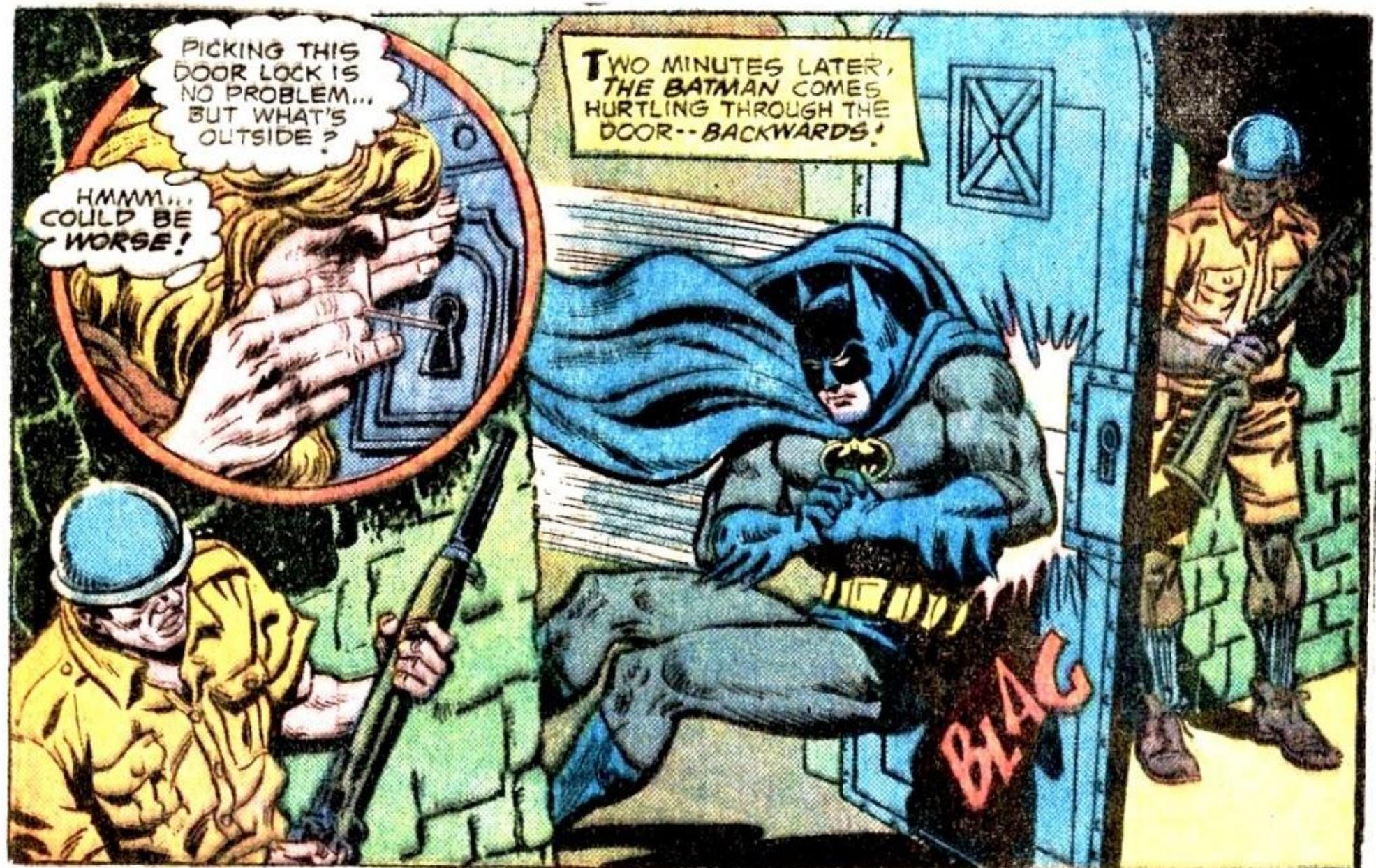
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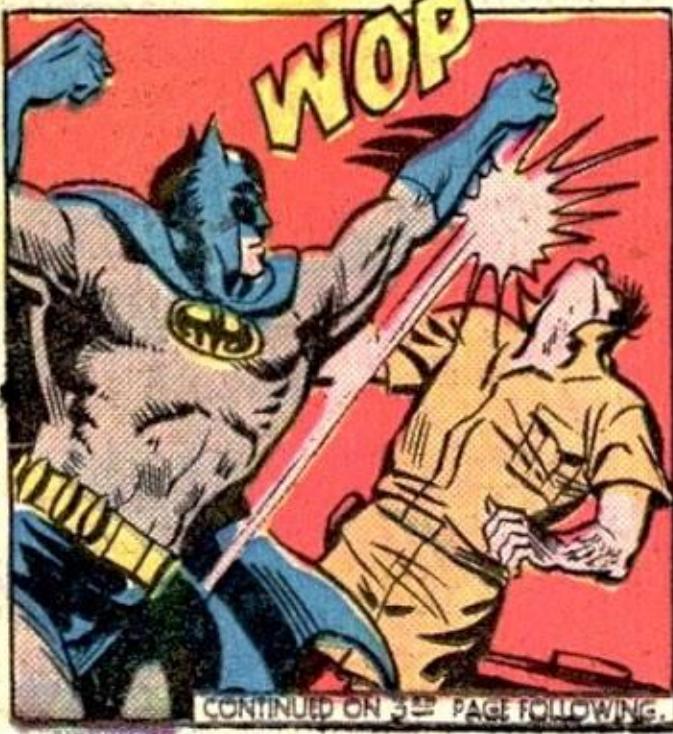
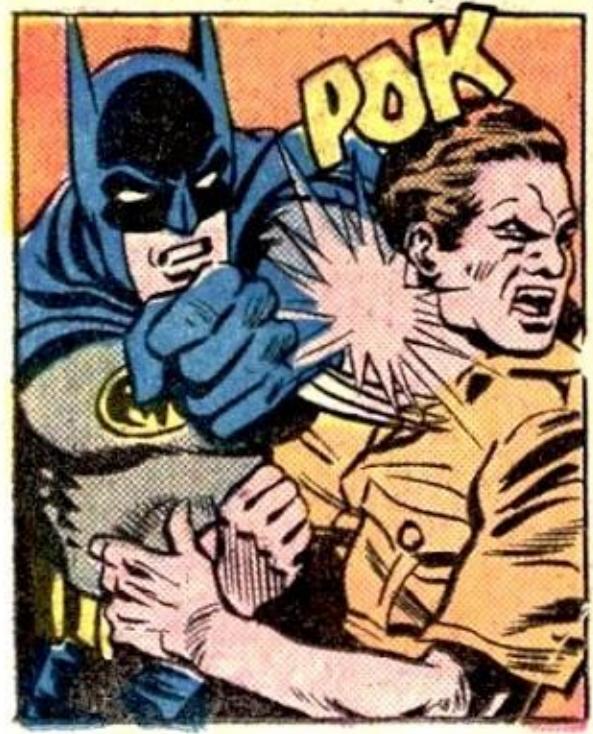
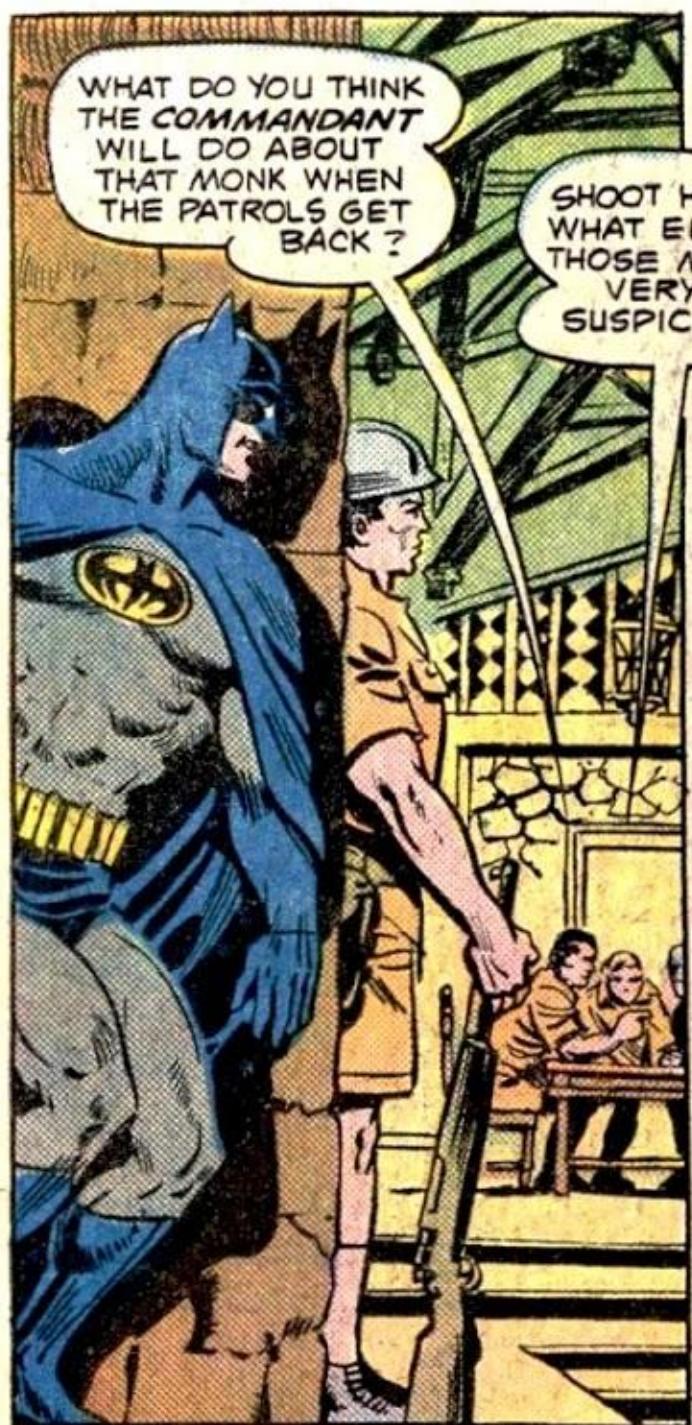
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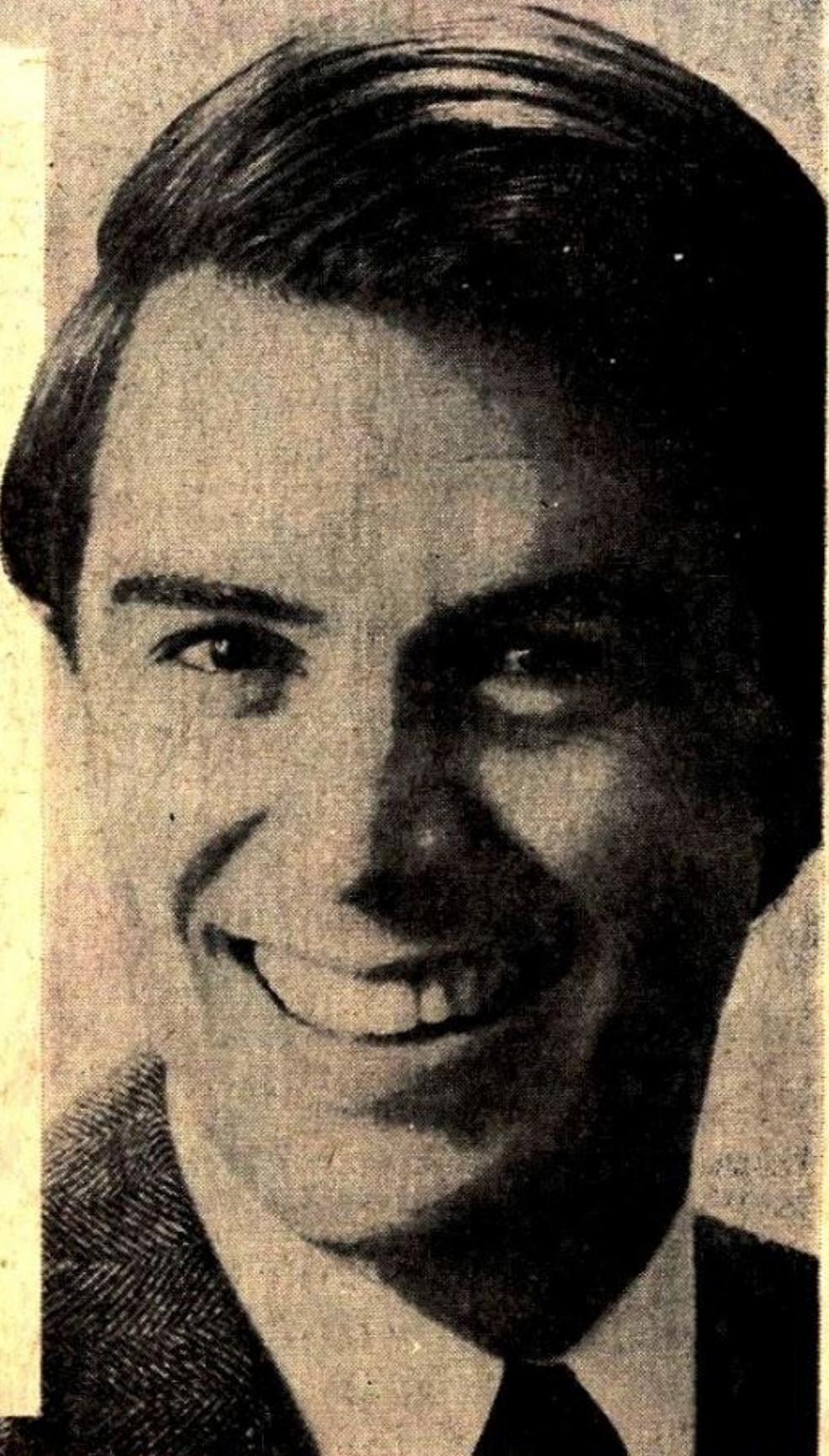
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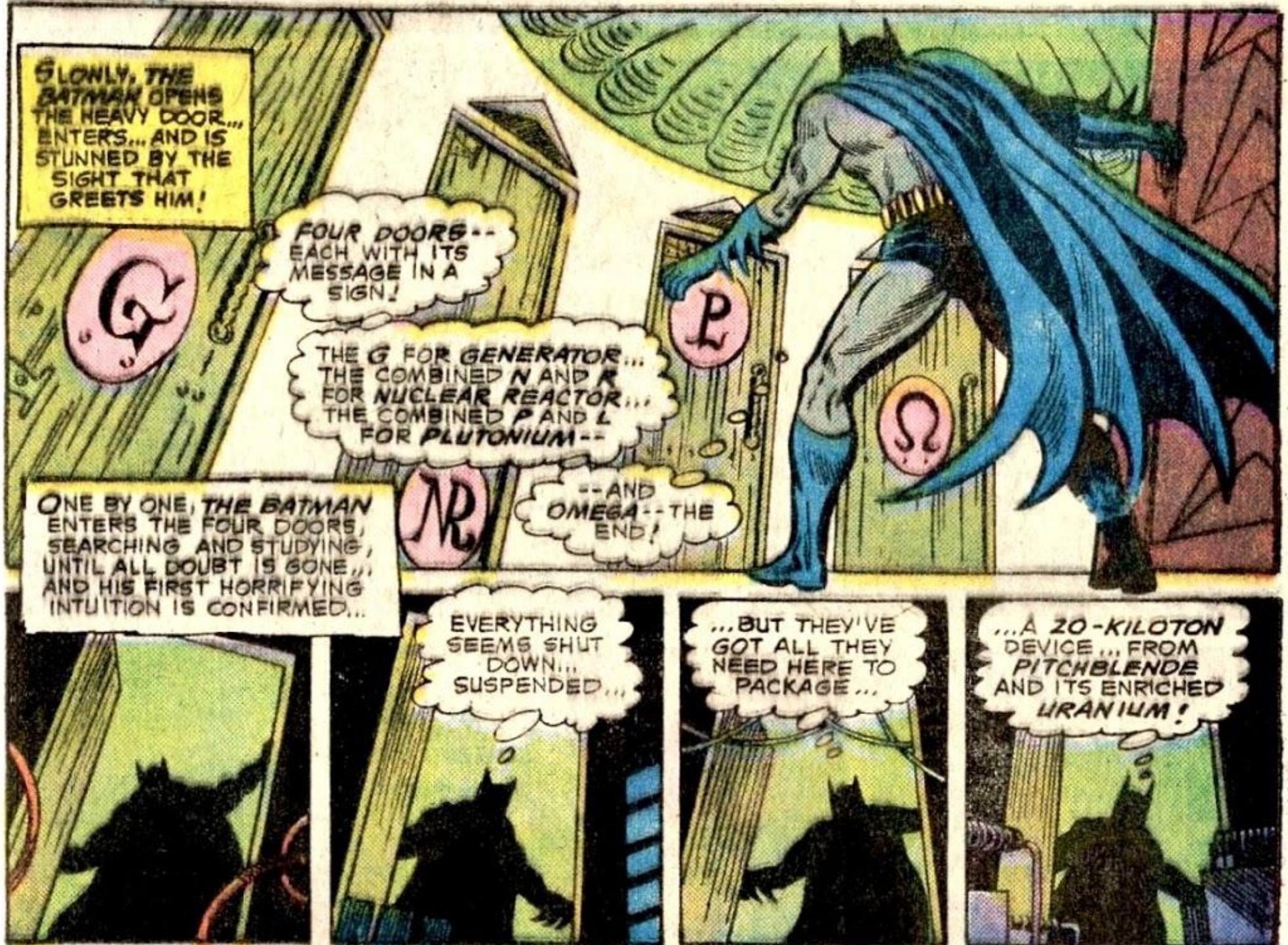
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THE AFRICAN MOON HANGS LOW ON THE HORIZON AS THE BATMAN RUSHES FROM THE NOW DARK AND QUIET CHURCH --

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SWIFTLY, HE CHECKS THE ROW OF TRUCKS UNTIL --

UH-HUH! -- AN AUTHORIZATION TO CROSS THE BORDER INTO TANZANIA!

AND A PERMIT TO THE PORT AREA OF DAR ES SALAAM -- BOTH OF THEM DATED TWO WEEKS AGO!

I'VE GOT SOME OF THE PIECES TOGETHER NOW -- AND WITH ANY LUCK --

WHAT'S THAT SOUND I HEAR?

THE PATROLS!

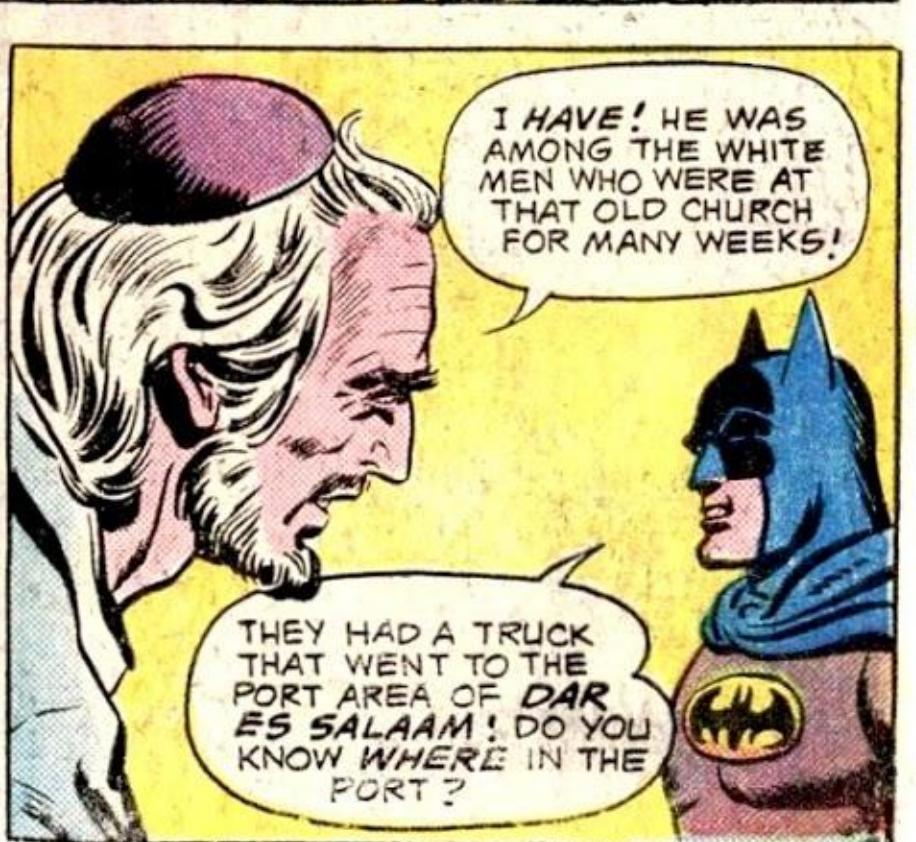
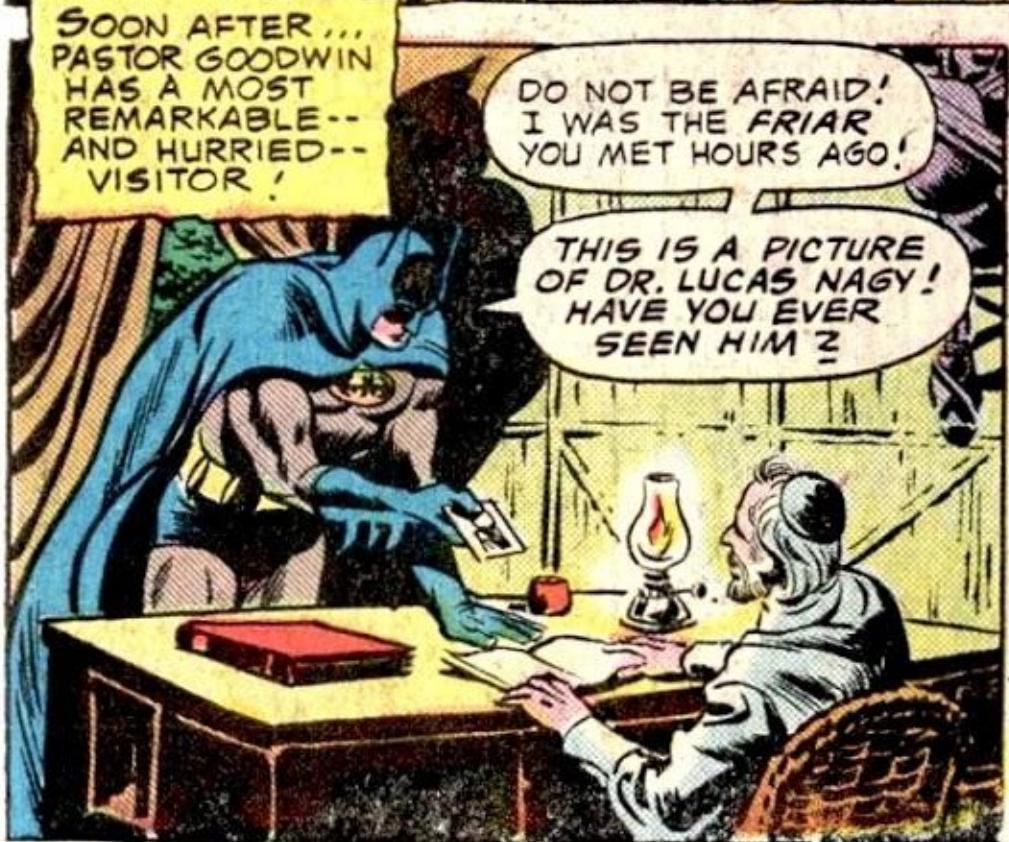
ARMORED CARRIERS! MACHINE GUNS AND A LIGHT CANNON!

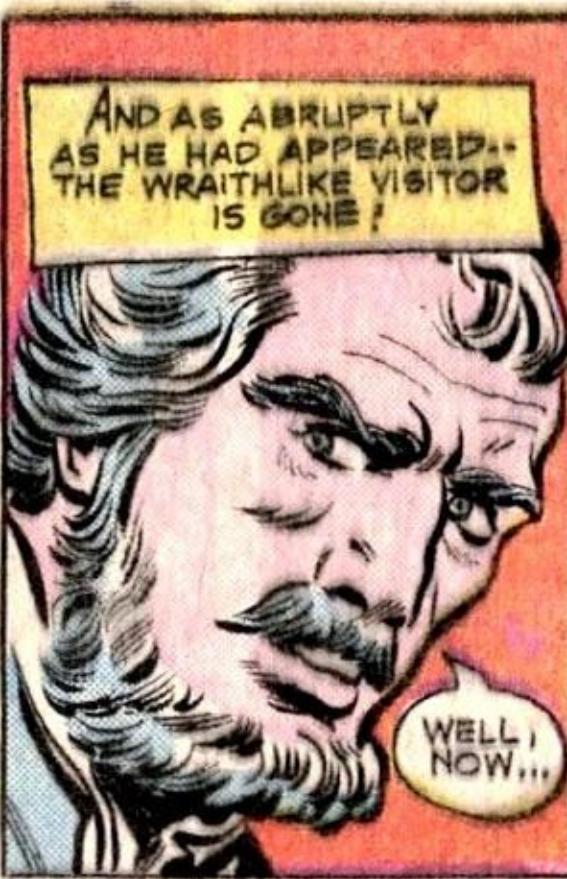
I CAN'T POSSIBLY OUTRUN THEM -- BUT IF I MAKE IT TO THAT COVERED BRIDGE --

THREE MIRACULOUS MINUTES LATER --

MADE IT!

NOW -- LIGHTS OFF!





CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

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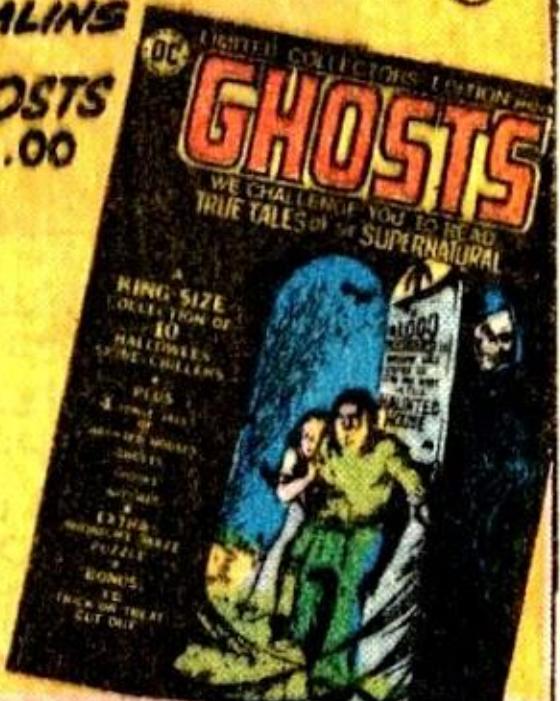


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BATMAN, COMMISSIONER GORDON CALLING BACK--HERE'S YOUR ANSWER!

THE MIRAMAR SAILED FROM DARES SALAAM TWELVE DAYS AGO FOR PANAMA!

WHERE ARE YOU?

ON MY WAY TO PANAMA!--OVER AND OUT!

IT HAD TO BE PANAMA! THAT'S WHERE JORGE ZAMORA CAME FROM TO TRY CONTACTING ME!

HE MUST HAVE A PART IN THIS WHOLE DIABOLICAL PICTURE COMING INTO FOCUS!

THERE ARE STILL UNANSWERED QUESTIONS... BUT WHAT ELSE CAN IT BE EXCEPT AN INSANE TERRORIST CONSPIRACY TO BLOW UP-- PULVERIZE! --THE PANAMA CANAL?

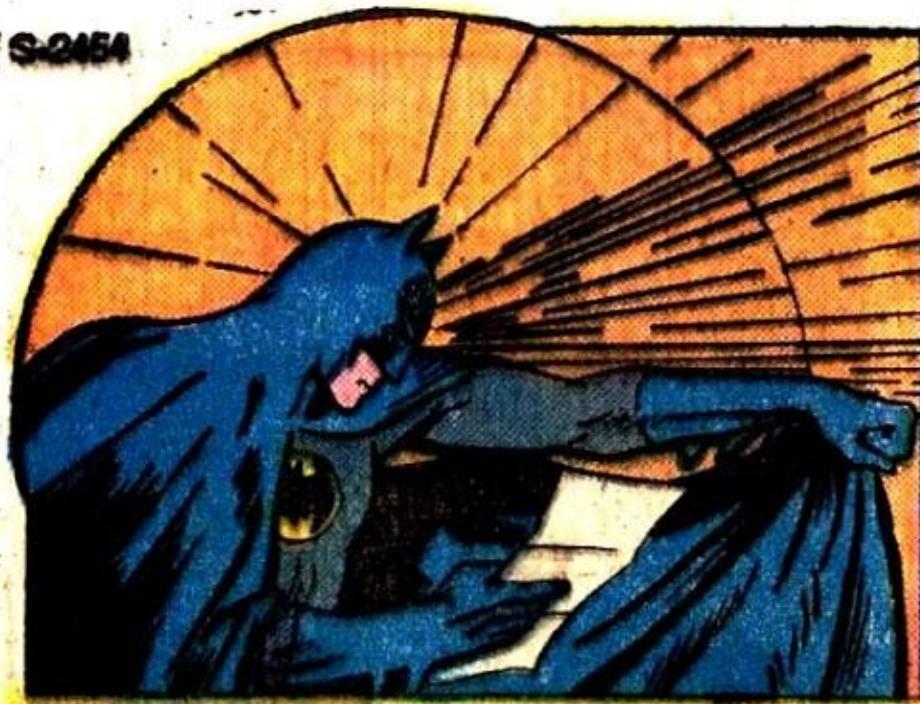
BANG!
BANG!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! WE'RE GOING INTO A DIVE!

DOWN... DOWN... DOWN... THE PLANE PLUNGES EARTHWARD WITH INCREASING VELOCITY--BUT NO PARACHUTES ARE SEEN!

WORN OUT? HAD ENOUGH? FOR THE SPINE-CHILLING CONCLUSION TO THIS TRILOGY-- SEE THE NEXT ISSUE OF BATMAN!

ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN OCTOBER



Dear Mr. Schwartz,

David V. Reed has finally done it! He's written a mystery story that was a mystery until the very last page. "Stop Me Before I Kill" in **BATMAN #278** had an exciting plot, a mystifying mystery and an answer that seemed simple when revealed. I followed the story closely, trying to see if I could outwit Batman by coming up with the solution first. By page 11, I thought I had it completely figured out. And when Kittridge disclosed his theory to Bruce Wayne, I thought he'd outsmarted Batman as well because we had almost the same thoughts.

Of course, Batman knew the real answer all along, proving that any man who can best a Scotland Yard inspector deserves the title "World's Greatest Detective"!

Speaking of Inspector Kittridge, I'd like to compliment David on the creation of this character. It probably took a lot of restraint to leave out such phrases as "Blimey" and "Good show, old chap!" However, he did so and I'm glad because it kept Kittridge from becoming another stereotyped foreigner in an American comic book.

MIKE WHITE, Mackinaw, Ill.

(David V. Reed has finally done it, all right! He's inspired three different correspondents to open their letters with the same sentence—though each has a different opinion about just what Dave has done!—BR)

Dear Bob,

David V. Reed has finally done it! He's brought Batman down to the quality of the mid-'50's with his tale in **BATMAN #278**. Dave gave us a bad plot, worse dialogue, no characterization, dumb-looking villains, uninteresting plot twists, and illogical clues—all of which add up to one lousy story!

The most obvious pitfall was the clues which were supposedly given to the reader. Those clues could have been taken from a Batman TV episode. As on the show, when Batman heard about a robbery, he immediately connected it with a single crook. Here, he interprets a walking doll as referring to Mr. Walker. It wasn't even a boy doll—so why wasn't the clue pointing to Mrs. Walker?

DAVE WILLCOX, Arlington Hts., Ill.

Dear Editor,

David V. Reed has finally done it! He has come up with a super-villain all his own and proved that his stories are not to be ignored.

This is one insane villain who fits Batman's skills to a T! The Wringer is such a maniac that he made the story spooky, unlike the comparatively corny crooks like The Joker, Riddler and Penguin. Too bad The Wringer's caper seems to be a one-shot!

LETTERS to the **BATMAN**

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Inspector Kittridge was an interesting and well-defined character and I hope he becomes a regular part of the Bat-cast.

By the way, Dave seems to be cutting down on the corny comments; the ones he did put in "Stop Me Before I Kill" didn't bother the story at all.

PHIL GLADSTONE, Belgrade Lakes, Me.

(And now, the ongoing quest for the identity of the ever-present, ever-mysterious David V. Reed!—BR)

Dear Editor:

I would actually swear that I have deciphered David V. Reed's true identity . . . but unfortunately, Sir Noel Coward is dead. No matter . . . his drawing room attack lives on in **BATMAN**. How long it will survive there is anyone's guess. But in past stories, Reed has also given us stories in the style of Damon Runyon, Shirley Jackson and, if you look closely, Kurt Vonnegut. That's fine with me, but when he gets to Mickey Spillane, I quit!

BOB RODI, Oak Brook, Ill.

. . . David V. Reed is, in reality, Isaac Asimov!

JOHN J. PAINE, Edgewater Park, N.J.

. . . I have finally figured out who David V. Reed is. You once said that the letters in his name were part of his real name. Well, I think the RE in Reed stands for the initials of Rico Estrada!

CARY KILLINGBACK, Turrington, Conn.

. . . I'm not sure but I think I may have cracked this "Who is David V. Reed" mystery. I recently read an article in a magazine and the biographical note afterwards. It stated that the author was an advertising copywriter who also "ghosted for comics". Now there aren't that many people who write comics to begin with, especially under an assumed name. So my guess is that David V. Reed is really copywriter Roger Dumas!

WILLIAM B. MADDOCKS, Long Beach, Ind.

. . . In regard to the past year-and-a-half fan hunt for the identity of David Reed, I present the following evidence.

A copy of **THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS: 1956** was given to me by two friends who were moving and planned to throw it out. And while curiously noting the titles of stories by sf writer A.E. van Vogt, I by sheer chance came upon the solution to comedom's most present mystery: David V. Reed is a pseudonym for David Vern!

JERRY A. GRAEBER, Tampa, Fla.

(Right, Jerry! You're the second one to discover the truth—and as we said a few issues ago when it was first revealed, that's Dave's legal name . . . so you still don't know who he really is! We've one—and only one—clue to help you with that mystery. Dave's real name was once used for a character in a Schwartz-edited issue of **STRANGE SPORTS STORIES** some years ago!)

And while we're on the subject, don't miss the special **STRANGE SPORTS STORIES** issues of DC **SUPER STARS** (#10, on sale in late September) which features Batman, Robin and seven other heroes in a baseball game against nine of our nastiest villains. You've never seen anything like it!—BOB ROZAKIS)

JUSTICE FOR ALL INCLUDES CHILDREN, 8



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(Mr. Nailon has been training several years!)

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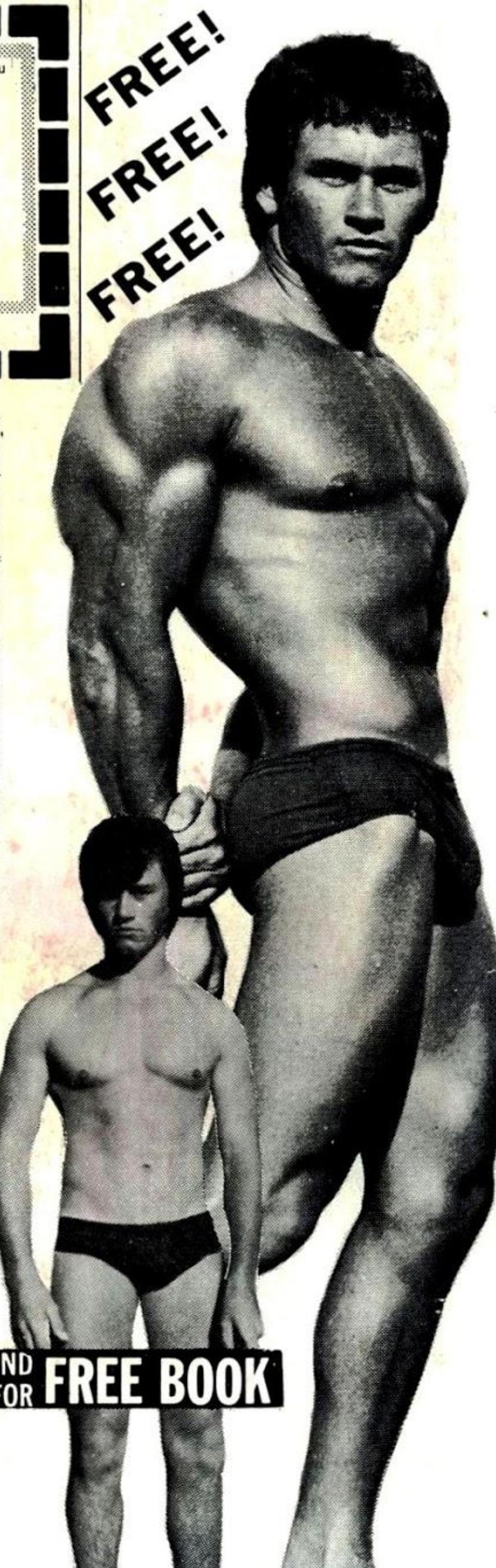
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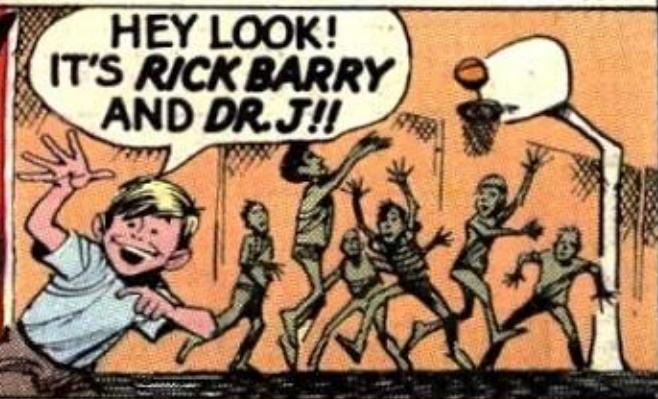
SPALDING.

PRESENTS

STREET BALL!

WITH
RICK BARRY
AND
DR. J!

HEY LOOK!
IT'S RICK BARRY
AND DR. J!!



GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE
PLAYING WITH A
SPALDING
RUBBER BALL
LIKE I GREW UP
WITH.

YEAH,
THOSE
VINYL
BALLS ARE
JUST TOO
SLICK!

AW, WHAT
DIFFERENCE
CAN THE
BALL MAKE?

MY MAN, FOR REAL
BALL HANDLING,
YOU NEED THAT

...SPALDING
TOUCH!!!

SLAM DUNK!!



NOW IT'S MY TURN,
JULIUS!

A
30-
FOOTER!!

WHAT
A MAGIC
TOUCH!

YOU
DON'T NEED
MAGIC - JUST
PRACTICE WITH
A SPALDING
AUTOGRAPH
BALL. IT'S GOT A
RUBBER COVER
SO YOU CAN
REALLY GET
A GRIP ON
IT.

WHAT
MOVES!

HE
PLAYS
UP IN THE
LIGHTS!



"IF YOU WANT THE BALL
WITH THE SURE-HANDED
FEEL, LOOK FOR OUR
SIGNATURES AT YOUR
SPORTING GOODS DEALER.
OTHER AUTOGRAPH BALLS ARE
SIGNED BY WILT CHAMBERLAIN,
'PISTOL PETE' AND 'ERNIE D.'"

I
BELIEVE
IT! I
BELIEVE
IT!!

