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COMICS™

38

THE NEW 52!

ENDGAME PART 4

SNYDER
CAPULLO
MIKI
PLASCENCIA

MAR 2015

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This block is called Foundry Square.

It sits in the center of the oldest section of Gotham, the Lower East Side, the neighborhood where the city began.

Where the first Dutch settlers overcame the Miagani, where the British overcame them.

It's always been a place of change. Blood and violence and fire. Torn down and built up a dozen times. Barely anything older than fifty years remains standing anymore.

Except for this block.
Foundry Square.

BATMAN: PART ENDGAME FOUR

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BATMAN
CREATED BY
BOB KANE

For some reason, through the years, the residents here banded together to protect these modest homes from the forces of the day. Every building is more than two hundred years old.

It's why Jim Gordon chose an apartment here. It's history, unchanged. Steady. Judicious...

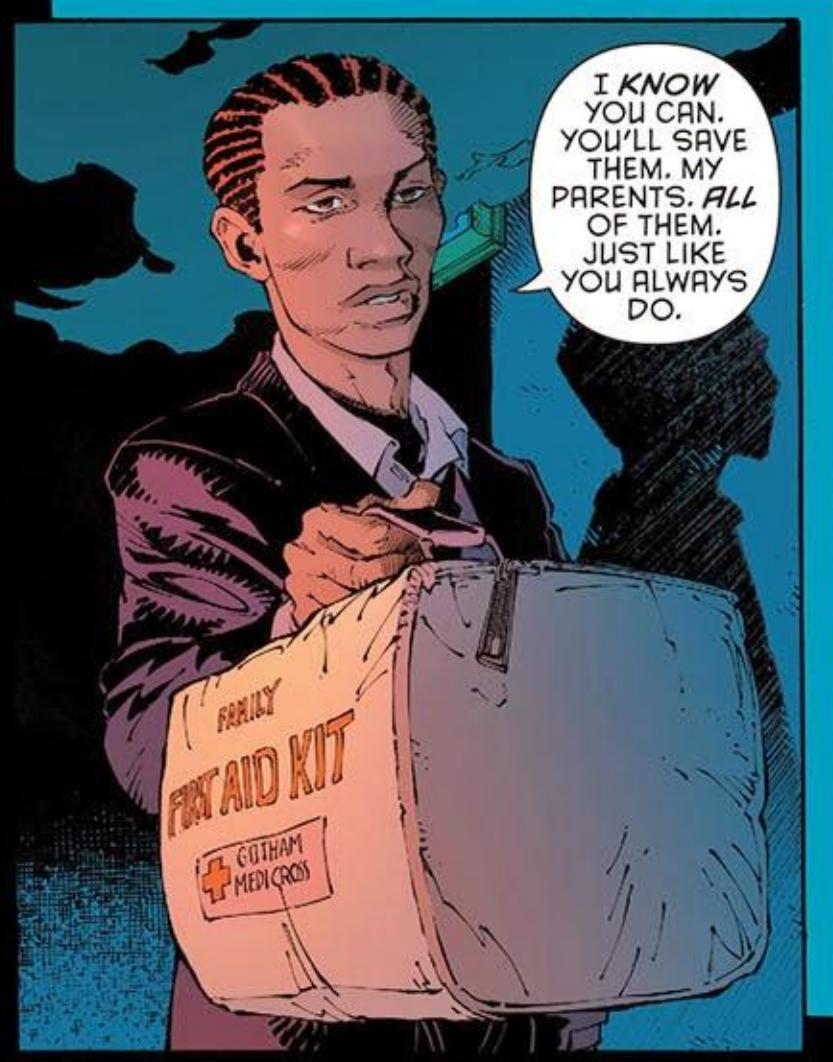
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I KNOW
YOU CAN.
YOU'LL SAVE
THEM. MY
PARENTS. ALL
OF THEM.
JUST LIKE
YOU ALWAYS
DO.



KREEEAK

TAKE DUKE TO
THE BASE. SEE
WHAT YOU CAN
FIND ABOUT
THE VIRUS'
LETHALITY. AND
STAY LOW
AND QUIET.

I'D GIVE YOU
THE GLIDER, BUT
THERE ARE SIMPLY
TOO MANY OF
THEM WITH GUNS
NOW. THEY NEARLY
SHOT US OUT OF
THE SKY.

LOW AND QUIET.
WE ARE GOTHAM
CHURCHMICE.
YOU?



I'LL
SECURE
JIM, THEN I'M
GOING AFTER
THE SOURCE
OF THIS
THING.



"...HE'D NEED
HELP."

MR. MALONE.
I LEAVE GOTHAM
FOR FIVE MINUTES
AND THIS IS WHAT
HAPPENS.

DID YOU
GET THE BLOOD
SAMPLE I SENT,
BIRDWATCHER?

I DID, AND
THERE IS SOMETHING
REGENERATIVE IN IT. AND
THERE ARE SIMILARITIES
TO LAZARUS, AS YOU
SUSPECTED, BUT IT'S
NOT LAZARUS.

FOR ONE,
I CHECKED THE
PITS GLOBALLY.
NO TAMPERING. AND
FOR TWO, THIS STUFF,
IT'S STRONGER.
LIKE SCARY
STRONG.

PLEASE,
JUST TELL ME
THE SAMPLE...
IT ISN'T FROM
HIM, IS IT?

JIM TOOK A
SHOT AT HIM, AND THE
SPRAY PATTERN, IT WAS
ARTERIAL. HE SHOULDN'T
HAVE COME BACK
FROM IT.

NONE
OF US
ARE.

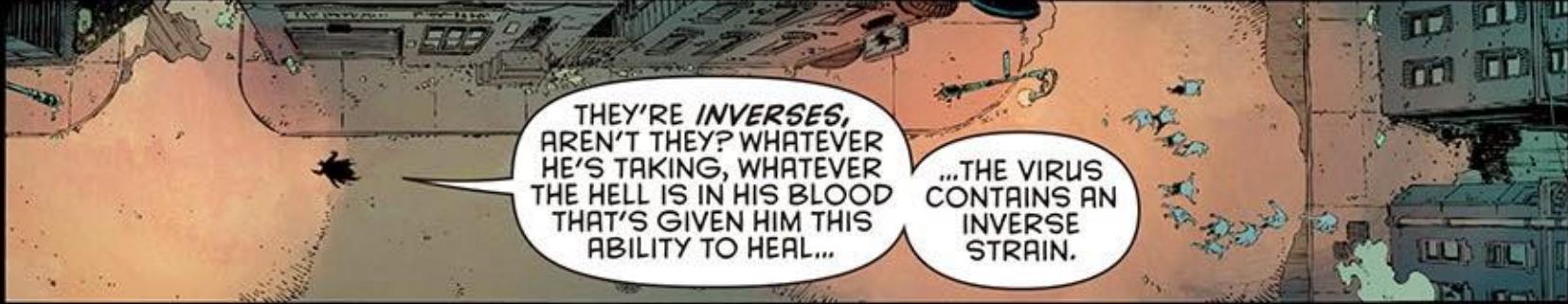
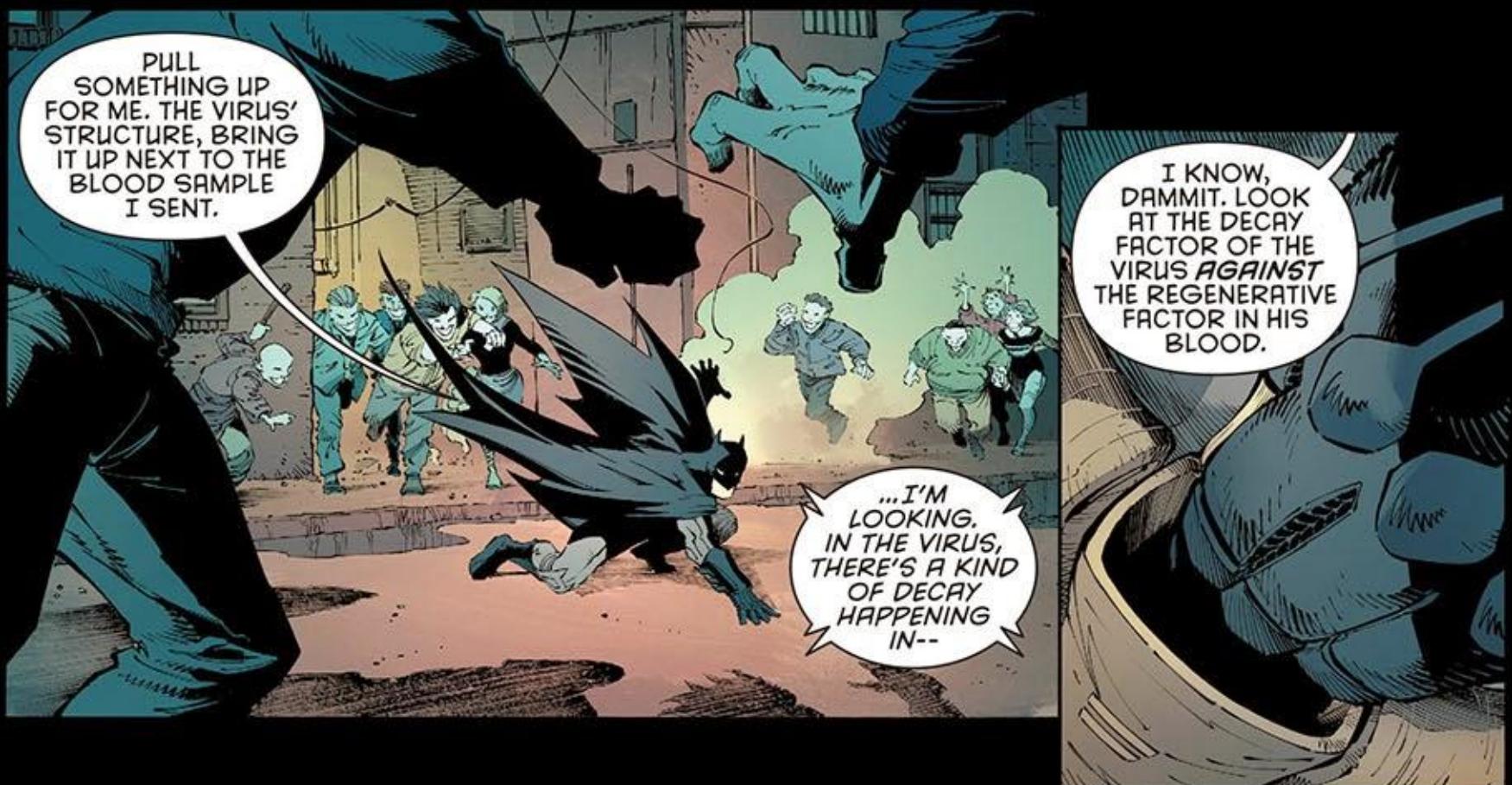
NO...

LORD...
YOU'RE
NOT SAFE
THERE.

...I MEAN NOW,
BENEATH YOU.
MOVE!

THIS IS ABOUT
THE VIRUS.
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT ME.

YEAH, WELL.
APOLOGIES.
OLD HABITS.





HEEEHEE!
S66666SPIT ON
THE GRAVE NOW.

MR.
MALONE!
THEY'RE
GOING
TO--

SHUT UP.
JUST LISTEN.
->UNH<-

ARKHAM.
IT HAS TO BE THE
KEY. IT'S PART OF
WHY HE WAS THERE.
SOMEONE IN THERE
HELPED HIM.

"I CAN ONLY THINK OF THREE
SCIENTISTS CAPABLE OF
CREATING SOMETHING AS
POWERFULLY REGENERATIVE AS
WHATEVER JOKER'S TAKING."

"ALL THREE WERE PART OF THE
SAME BIO INITIATIVE SET UP
BY MY UNCLE WHEN HE RAN
WAYNE ENTERPRISES. HEADED
BY DR. KARL HELFERN."

HAHAHA!
SPIT!

THERE!
COME ON!

HELFERN.
DR. DEATH.

->UNH<-

BLAST FROM
THE PAST.
I KNOW.

"HELFERN WORKED IN BONE. HUGO STRANGE IN REGENERATING NEURAL MATTER. AND THERE WAS ALSO DR. PAUL DEKKER, WHO WORKED IN SOFT TISSUE."

"BONE, BRAIN AND BODY. PHILLIP CALLED THEM THE DOCTORS THREE."

"HUH.
PAUL DEKKER?
AKA--"

"YES. HELFERN IS DEAD. STRANGE HASN'T BEEN IN GOTHAM FOR YEARS. WHICH LEAVES DEKKER."

"AAAND LISTEN TO THIS. PAUL DEKKER. CONFINED TO ARKHAM UNTIL JUST A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. RELEASED TO A REHABILITATIVE FACILITY ON ORDERS BY--"



"ERIC BORDER."



"...WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE KNOWS WHO YOU--"

"HE KNOWS."

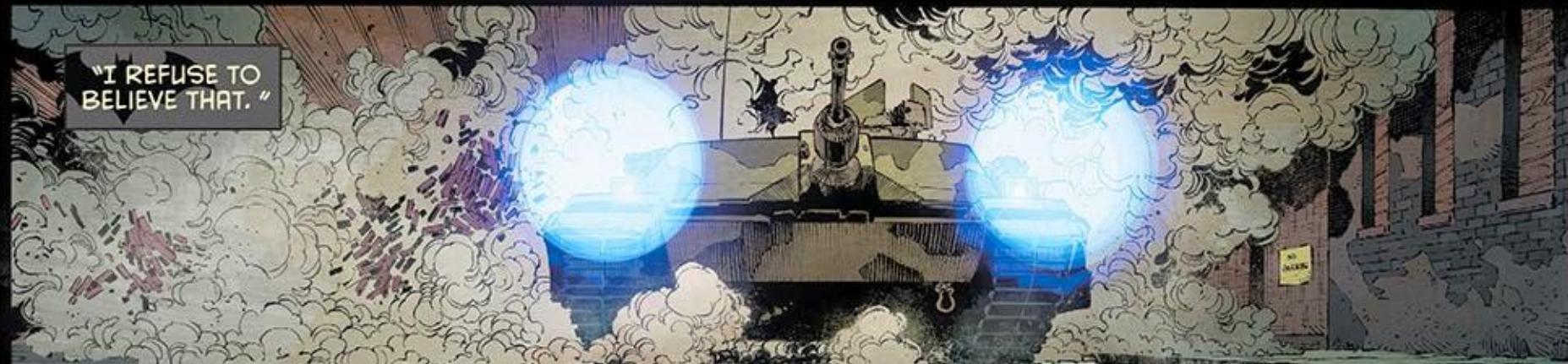
"IT'S OVER, THEN."

HA HA AHA
HA AHA!



"I MEAN...OVER.
THERE'S NO
STAVING IT OFF.
NO BARRIER TO IT."

"I REFUSE TO
BELIEVE THAT."



"...I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TO DO."

"THESE ARE
UNCHARTED
WATERS."



A medical thread coated in a cellular matrix that would cause cells in contact with it to become omnipotent, to revert to a kind of embryonic, undifferentiated state.

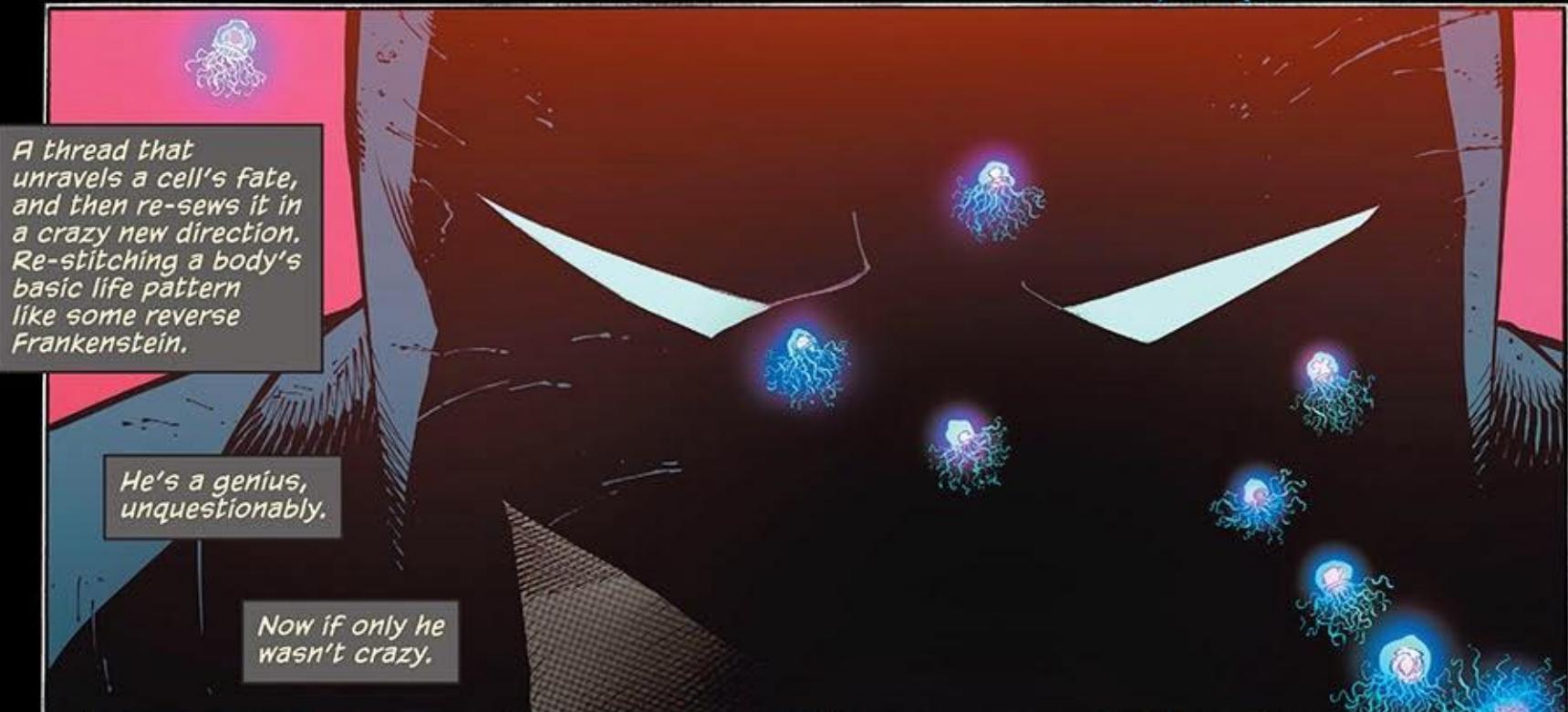
A thread that erases a cell's past, making it new, able to become...anything.

"Immortal creatures." A few are said to exist in nature. The hydra. Certain lobsters grow bigger in their shells, but their cells don't age past their prime.

No one knows this better than Dr. Paul Dekker. Born to a family of artists in the Narrows. Father, mother, sister, all died when a gas pipe broke in the building.

He devoted himself to regenerative science. In black labs funded by my uncle, he invented something called "the healing stitch."

In conjunction with a bit of gene therapy, cascade signals, the "de-aged" cell is reborn with a new life, a new purpose.



A thread that unravels a cell's fate, and then re-sews it in a crazy new direction. Re-stitching a body's basic life pattern like some reverse Frankenstein.

He's a genius, unquestionably.

Now if only he wasn't crazy.

CLK

YOU LIKE
MY JELLYFISH,
BATMAN?

TURRITOPSIS DOHRNII.
ONE OF THE ONLY ANIMALS
BACKWARDS WHEN IT SO
DESires, REVERT FROM
MEDUSA TO POLYP.

IT EXISTS
OUTSIDE THE
NATURAL LIFE
CYCLE.

JUST LIKE
HIM.

I'M ONLY
HERE ABOUT THE
VIRUS, DEKKER.
I KNOW YOU HELPED
HIM MAKE IT. NOW
WHAT THE HELL DID
YOU CONCOCT
TO--

CONCOCT?!

THE MATERIAL
AT THE CORE OF
THAT VIRUS
ISN'T ANYTHING
I COULD MAKE
IN A LAB.

IT'S SOMETHING
MUCH OLDER,
SOMETHING I'VE
BEEN LOOKING FOR
ALL MY LIFE.
SOMETHING JOKER
SHOWED ME...

THE CITY IS TEARING ITSELF APART!
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WILL DIE IF YOU
DON'T TELL ME THE TRUTH! WHATEVER
STORY HE TOLD YOU ABOUT HIMSELF,
ABOUT HIS PAST--

AH!
STORIES
ABOUT THE
PAST!

SEE, BATMAN,
RESEARCHERS IN MY
FIELD, WE JUST LOVE
STORIES FROM THE PAST!
AFTER ALL, IN ANCIENT
TIMES, SO MANY TALES
FEATURE HUMAN BODIES
DOING PRETTY MUCH
EXACTLY WHAT *WE'RE*
TRYING TO GET
THEM TO DO!

HEAL
MIRACULOUSLY.
ENDURE FOR
CENTURIES.
WITHSTAND
DEATH...

...FUNNY THING, THE MECHANISM
IN THE OLD STORIES IS ALMOST
ALWAYS THE SAME. SAID BODY
ENCOUNTERS SOMETHING IN THE
NATURAL WORLD, SOME SPECIAL
SUBSTANCE IN THE SOIL OR
VEGETATION OR WATER,
AND IS...*TRANSFORMED*.

HERODOTUS WROTE OF
MACROBIA IN 400 BC, A
TOWN WHERE A HIDDEN
SPRING OFFERED
ETERNAL HEALTH.

SO MANY
STORIES ACROSS
SO MANY CULTURES,
BATMAN. TOO MANY
TO IGNORE.

DEKKER.
OUTSIDE THAT
WINDOW, PEOPLE
ARE DYING! YOU'RE
TALKING TO ME ABOUT
DAMN LEGENDS
AND--

NOT
LEGENDS,
BATMAN!
CLUES TO
SOMETHING
REAL!

A CHEMICAL COMPOUND
THAT EXISTED IN NATURE
LONG AGO, SOMETHING
VERY RARE, BUT PRESENT
IN CERTAIN PLACES.
SOMETHING THAT COULD
ACTIVATE JUST THE
RIGHT GENES...

...THE SAME
ONES WE TINKER
WITH ENDLESSLY. LIN28.
AMPK...THE MATRIX
THAT CONTROLS HOW
OUR BODIES REPAIR
THEMSELVES.

I NAMED IT,
BATMAN. I CALL IT
DIONESIUM. A LITTLE
SCIENTIST HUMOR,
SEE? AFTER DIONYSUS,
THE GREEK GOD
ASSOCIATED WITH
REBIRTH. HEARTS
SEWN INTO
THIGHS.

BUT I THINK IT'S
INDIGENOUS TO
OUR PLANET.

Heh.
DOESN'T FEEL
LIKE A BATMAN
STORY ANYMORE,
DOES IT?

HELFERN AND
STRANGE THOUGHT
IT CAME FROM
METEORS.

"THAT'S BECAUSE IT ISN'T. IT'S ABOUT THEM. THE CARRIERS. AND GOTHAM."

"PEOPLE WHO ENCONTRIED THE CHEMICAL LONG AGO AND STILL WALK AMONG US. HERE IN GOTHAM, I'VE HEARD STORIES OF A FEW."

"THERE'S THE SAVAGE WHO WAS AMONG THE OLDEST MEN ALIVE. HE ENCOUNTERED IT IN ITS RAWEST FORM."

"AND THERE'S THE MAN LIKE A DEMON WHO KEEPS POOLS OF THE CHEMICAL IN SECRET PITS AROUND THE WORLD. A CORRUPTED VERSION, BUT EFFECTIVE IN ITS WAY."

"AND HIM. THE LINK BACK TO GOTHAM. THE PALE MAN. THE ONE WHO LAUGHS AT US. WHO ENCOUNTERED IT SOME-TIME BEFORE GOTHAM ROSE."

YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET, BATMAN?

FOR A LONG TIME, I THOUGHT YOU WERE ONE. OLDER THAN GOTHAM, A BARBATOS. IT'S WHY I DID THE TERRIBLE THINGS I DID. QUILTING LIFE ABNORMALLY...JUST TO MEET YOU!

BUT THEN I DID MEET YOU, AND I REALIZED...YOU WERE JUST... FLESH AND BLOOD!

**BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA**

Huh?
WHERE--



THERE'S NO
STOPPING IT! BUT
AT LEAST YOU HAVE A
FRONT ROW SEAT,
RIGHT? HAHA!

BATMAN?

STICK
AROUND.

BATMAN?
HEY!

PENNY-TWO.
WHAT DID
YOU FIND?

IT'S BAD,
BATMAN.
THE VIRUS. THE
STRAIN IN IT IS
MORE POWERFUL
THAN THEY
THOUGHT.

HOW
LONG?

...
HOW
LONG?!

TWENTY-FOUR
HOURS. MAYBE
LESS. IT'S NOT A
MATTER OF DAYS.
IT'S A MATTER
OF HOURS.

ALSO...
I DID A FACIAL
RECOG FOR JOKER
THROUGHOUT GOTHAM
HISTORY. TRAGEDIES.
JUST TO DEBUNK HIS
CHARADE. BUT... HE'S
ALL OVER.





THIS CAN'T BE
REAL. IT CAN'T
END THIS WAY.
IT CAN'T.

WHAT ARE
YOU GOING
TO DO?

...

SOMETHING
I NEVER THOUGHT
I WOULD.





ALL RIGHT.
LET'S
TALK ABOUT
HISTORY.



WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV
ART BY SAM KIETH
COLOR BY RONDA PATTISON
LETTERS BY TRAVIS LANHAM
BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE

"IT'S THE VEINS...THAT'S WHAT IT IS."

"THE VEINS, THEY LEAD TO THE HEART... THE HEART OF THE CITY. WHAT MAKES IT WHAT IT IS. WHAT MAKES IT ALIVE."

"IF YOU LISTEN YOU CAN HEAR IT BEATING. THUMP THUMP...THUMP THUMP..."

"THE HEART OF EVERYTHING. I ALWAYS KNEW IT WAS DOWN HERE..."

...AND NOW HE'S GOING TO SHOW IT TO ME.

CASSIDY, THOSE ARE CARS DRIVING ABOVE US...SUBWAYS EVEN FURTHER DOWN... THERE'S NO HEART UNDER GOTHAM.

THIS ISN'T A VEIN. THIS IS A SEWER. IT'S JUST THE FILTH OF THE CITY, WASHING AWAY.

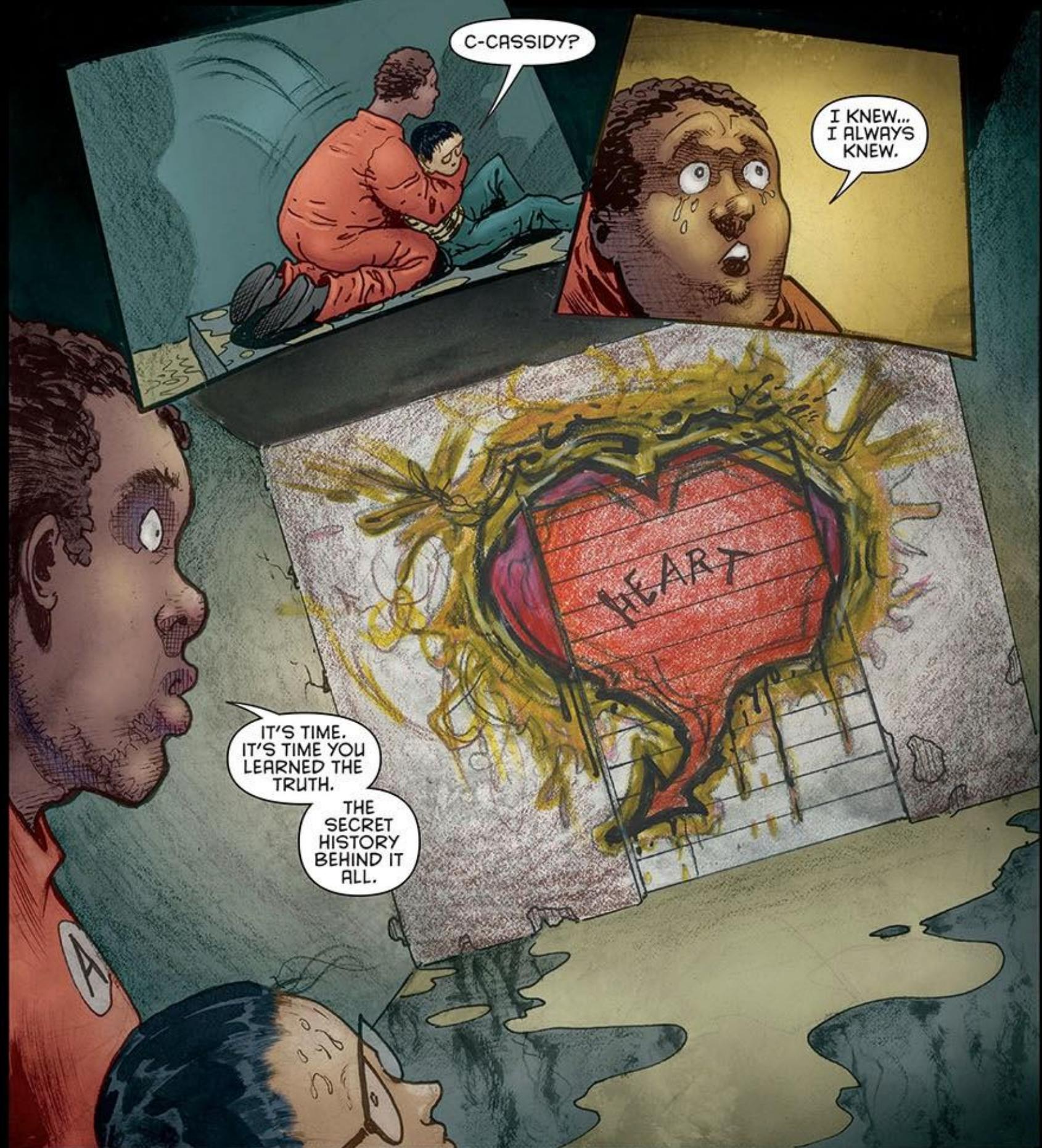
HUSH HUSH... CAN'T LET YOU TALK.

HEEE!
SHUSHABYE...

GOING TO TRY AND GET AWAY AGAIN. BEFORE THE CLOWN MAN GETS TO SEE US. BEFORE HE TELLS US WHICH STORY IS RIGHT. BEFORE HE SAYS WHAT HE REALLY IS.

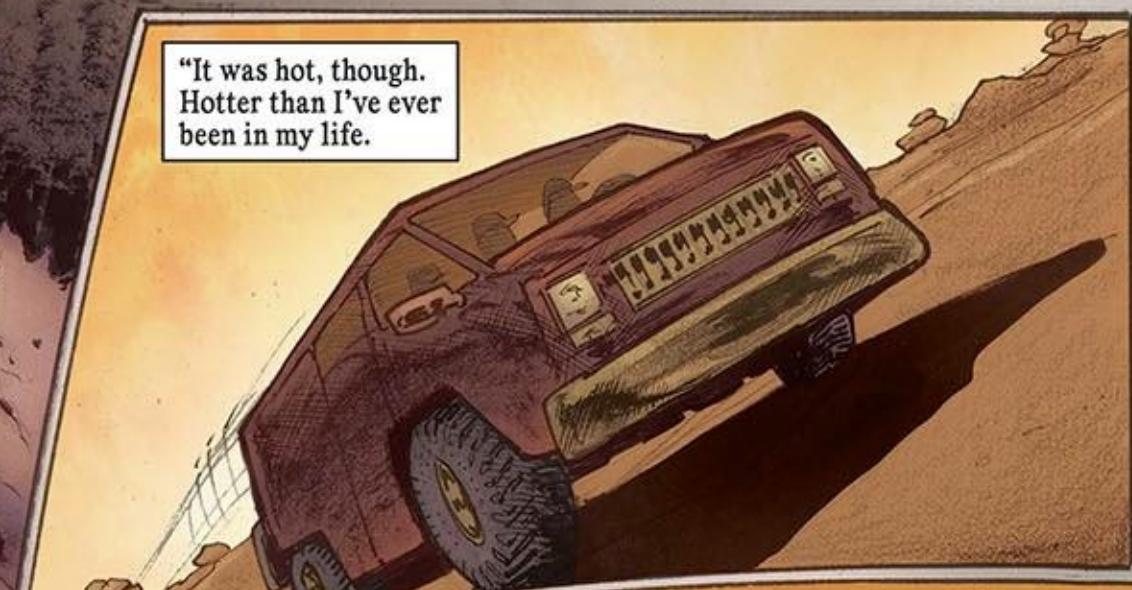
HE'LL BE SO CROSS IF YOU'RE NOT THERE.

MUSTN'T MAKE THE CLOWN MAN CROSS.

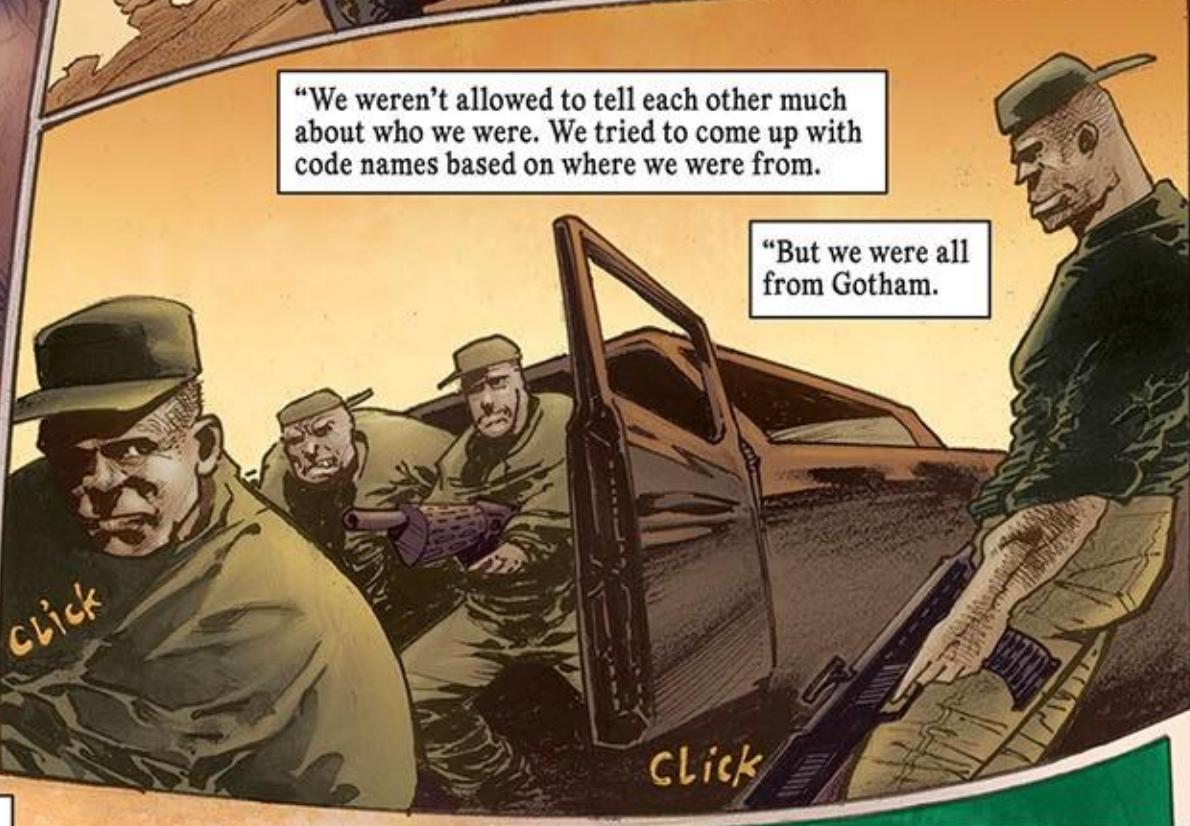




"It was hot, though. Hotter than I've ever been in my life."

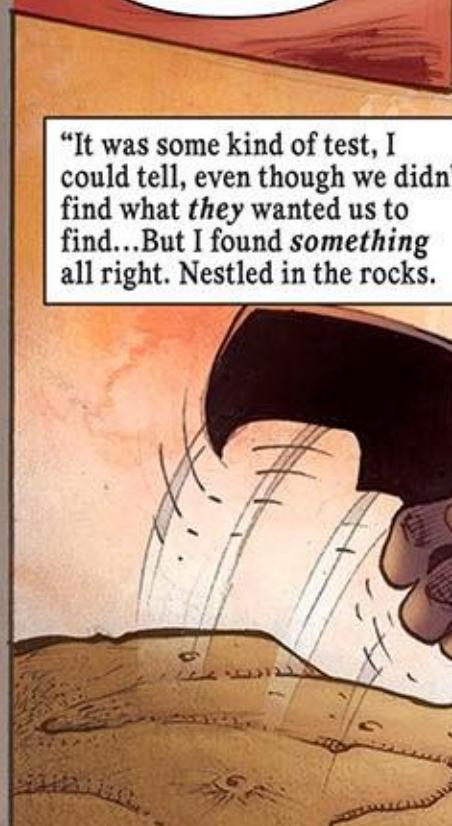


THEY WOULDN'T SAY WHAT THE MISSION WAS. NONE OF US KNEW. COULDN'T EVEN TELL YOU WHERE WE WERE. THAT'S HOW THEY WANTED IT.



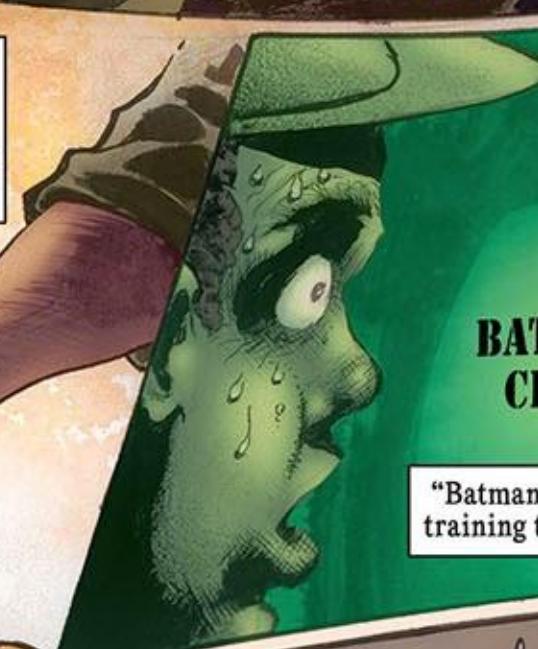
"We weren't allowed to tell each other much about who we were. We tried to come up with code names based on where we were from."

"But we were all from Gotham."



"It was some kind of test, I could tell, even though we didn't find what *they* wanted us to find...But I found *something* all right. Nestled in the rocks.

"That's when I understood what they were training us for."



"When we got back to base, I snuck into the database... I went searching...And there it was. It was locked but I didn't need to read it. It proved everything."

BATMAN--FILE CLASSIFIED



"Batman. We were training to be Batman."

"I told them what I'd learned, and they pretended to laugh at me. Said of course they had files on Batman."

"But they knew I knew, and they kicked me to the curb."



"When he came...All of your lies...All of you telling me that none of this was real...It all went away."

"I'd wondered, of course...Wondered what the Joker's role in all of this was..."

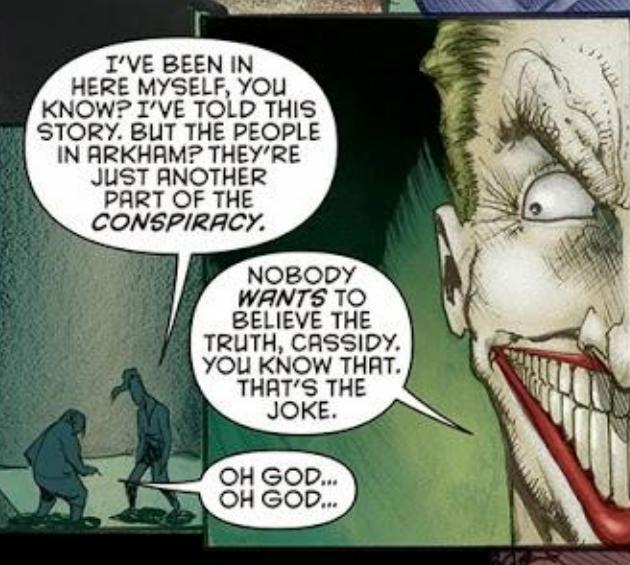


"I HELPED THEM BUILD THEIR CITY. I THOUGHT THEY WERE TRYING TO INSTILL ORDER. TRYING TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT...BUT IT KEPT GETTING WORSE. MORE INTENSE."

"THEY WERE PUTTING SOMETHING IN THE WATER...MAKING PEOPLE MORE PLIABLE. THEY WANTED TO CONTROL EVERYTHING. DULL OUT EMOTIONS SO THEY COULDN'T THINK ANYMORE. SO THEY'D ALL BE THEIR DRONES."



"I BARELY ESCAPED... BUT I HEARD...I HEARD YOU FOUND MY LAST BATARANG. THAT'S HOW I KNEW YOU'D BELIEVE ME. NOBODY ELSE DOES. THEY JUST SEE ME AS THE VILLAIN. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS STORY EVER WAS."



IT'S NOT REAL... WHY CAN'T ANY OF YOU SEE THAT NONE OF THESE STORIES ARE REAL? HE JUST WANTS YOU TO THINK THEY ARE.

HE'S USING YOU!

THERE'S NOTHING BEHIND THAT DOOR! IT'S JUST A SERVICE PATH, BACK UP TO THE SURFACE!

THERE'S NO SECRET MILITARY BASE! THERE'S NO CONSPIRACY OF BATMEN!

YOU HAVE YOUR STORY, DOCTOR...
...WE HAVE OURS.

DID... DID YOU HEAR THAT?
IT SOUNDED LIKE A LAUGH...

HEEE... HIM...

READY TO MAKE US HAPPY... FINALLY HAPPY...

READY TO REPLACE US WITH SOMETHING BETTER...

ARE YOU READY, DOCTOR?

ARE YOU READY TO LEARN THE TRUTH?

END
FOR NOW.