

JEPH LOEB

JIM LEE

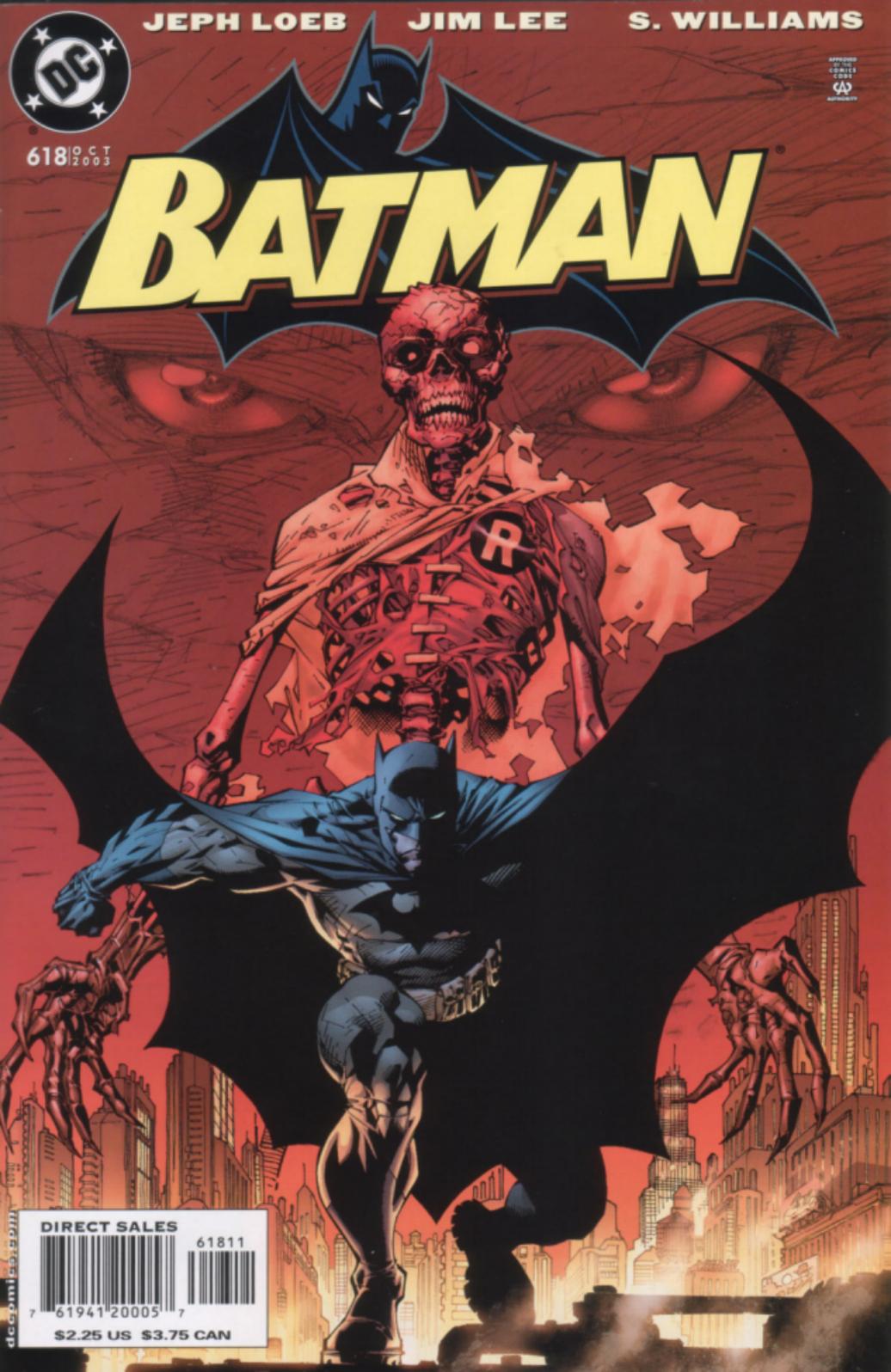
S. WILLIAMS



APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
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BATMAN



DIRECT SALES



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Jason Todd is dead.
The Joker killed him years ago.



However, it is not impossible
for the dead to come back to life.

I KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING.
YOU'RE
THINKING ABOUT
WHEN I DIED.

HOW
THERE'S BLOOD
ON YOUR HANDS
BECAUSE YOU
COULDN'T GET
THERE IN TIME TO
STOP THE JOKER
FROM KILLING
ME.



Superman died.
Green Arrow died.

And they are alive today.



Jason was buried here.
The grave is empty.
His corpse is gone.

KEEPING SILENT.
GATHERING YOUR
THOUGHTS. HOPING
TO RATTLE YOUR
OPPONENT.

I'LL
MAKE IT
SIMPLE FOR
YOU.

YOU'VE
GOT TO GET
TO ME --

--BEFORE
I SLIT THIS
PRETENDER'S
THROAT.

TELL ME,
BATMAN.
YOU LET ONE
ROBIN DIE.

WANT
TO GO FOR
TWO?



TAKE HIM.

NO!

Ra's al Ghul has something he calls a "Lazarus Pit."

The pit has certain... properties... that can restore life to the dead.



According to Ra's--who could be lying--someone took advantage of one of the pit's healing energies.

KRUSH

CATWOMAN.
I TOLD YOU TO STAY WITH THE HUNTRESS.



COULDN'T LET SOMEONE ELSE CLIP THE LITTLE BIRD'S WINGS.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU CARED.



*As with most things,
using the Lazarus Pit
comes at a price.*

*Upon emergence from the pit,
madness fuels the survivor.*



**I DON'T.
BUT IF SOMETHING
HAPPENED TO YOU,
HE'D BE HELL
TO LIVE WITH...**



BAM

*You enter dead.
You come out insane.*

The terrible irony is that when Jason died...

DID YOU THINK YOU COULD TAKE ME WITH ONE PUNCH?

BDFF

...in the madness of grief...

THIS WAS ALWAYS OUR PROBLEM.

WUP

...I actually considered ...

YOU SAW ME AS SECOND-RATE.

DOK

...putting Jason in a Lazarus Pit myself.

NOT BEING ABLE TO BE AS GOOD AS THE "OTHER" ROBIN!

THWAK



I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...

BATMAN

CREATED BY

BOB KANE

Chapter Eleven THE GAME

HOW COULD YOU LET ME DIE?

I would have done anything to save Jason's life.

Teph LOEB writes

Jim LEE pencils

*Scott WILLIAMS inks
Richard STARKINGS letters
Alex SINCLAIR colors
Bob SCHRECK edits
Michael WRIGHT*

*associate editor
special thanks to
Mark CHIARELLO*



C'MON!
FIGHT
ME!

But I came to my senses in time.

The trauma to the boy's head
was so severe, even if the Pit
could revive him --

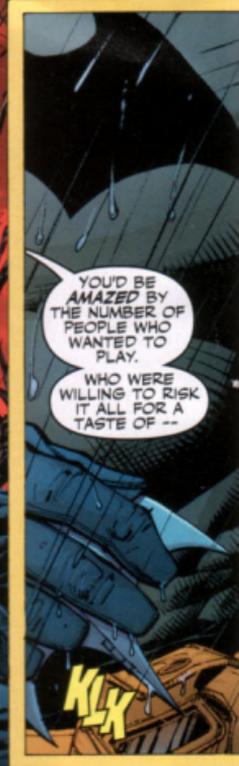
-- there was
no guarantee
he would be capable
of rational thought.



YOU OWE
ME THAT.

SHOW ME
SOME
RESPECT--

-- SO
I CAN WIN
THIS GAME,
BATMAN.



YOU'D BE
AMAZED BY
THE NUMBER OF
PEOPLE WHO
WANTED TO
PLAY.

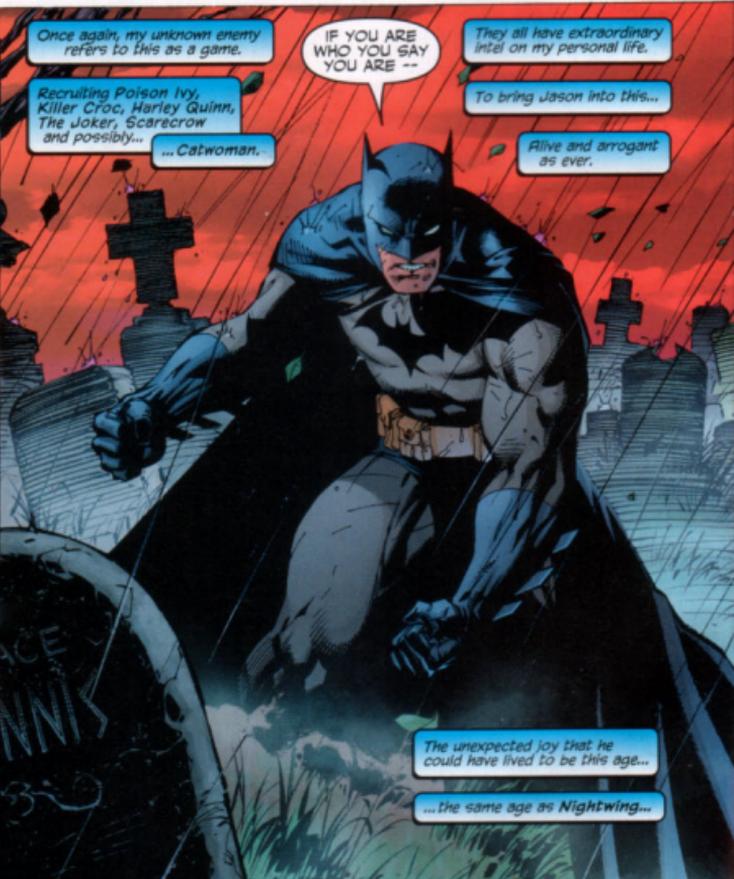
WHO WERE
WILLING TO RISK
IT ALL FOR A
TASTE OF --

KLX



CHUK

--REVENGE--
AARGH!



Once again, my unknown enemy refers to this as a game.

Recruiting Poison Ivy, Killer Croc, Harley Quinn, The Joker, Scarecrow and possibly...

... Catwoman.

IF YOU ARE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE --

They all have extraordinary intel on my personal life.

To bring Jason into this...

Alive and arrogant as ever.

The unexpected joy that he could have lived to be this age...

...the same age as Nightwing...





*His coordination. His speed.
The acrobatics.*



It's all... too familiar.



YOU HAVE TO LET HIM DO THIS ALONE.

TAKE YOUR HAND OFF OF ME.

I DON'T "HAVE" TO DO ANYTHING, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES FROM YOU.

JUST LISTEN TO ME -- PLEASE. THE ENTIRE TIME I'VE BEEN ROBIN --

-- EVERY LESSON -- EVERY MOVE THAT BATMAN HAS TAUGHT ME --

-- IS INTENDED TO KEEP WHAT HAPPENED TO JASON FROM HAPPENING TO ME.



NO MATTER WHAT HE SAYS, JASON'S DEATH STILL HAUNTS HIM.

THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE, KID --

WHY ELSE WOULD HE KEEP JASON'S COSTUME SO PROMINENTLY IN THE CAVE?

-- WHAT HE'S LIKE WHEN HE'S ANGRY.

ASK YOURSELF, BOY WONDER --

-- WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO IF HE FINDS OUT THAT IT'S NOT JASON TODD COME BACK TO HAUNT HIM?



Bottom line... Jason was never this good.



I HAVE TO ADMIT, I'M A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED.

I MEAN, I KNOW YOU WERE DISTRACTED BY GETTING A LITTLE ACTION WITH CATWOMAN.

THEN, THE DEATH OF TOMMY ELLIOT REALLY PUSHED YOUR BUTTONS.

THAK



CHOK

CHOK



GOING AFTER THE JOKER-- RA'S AL GHUL--

--EVERYBODY BUT THE RIGHT SOMEBODY.



C'MON, BATMAN -- IT WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU THE ENTIRE TIME.

JUST LIKE THE PURLOINED LETTER-- EDGAR ALLAN POE'S STORY --

THE VERY FIRST DETECTIVE STORY.

REMEMBER? SOMEONE CUT YOUR BATLINE?



The Purloined Letter -- when the answer is in plain sight.



It was a batarang.

I cannot always collect them at a crime scene.



It was by design that I landed in Crime Alley.



Where we first met.

Where Jason was stealing...



...the left front tire of the Batmobile.

The same one that blew out chasing Killer Croc.



PUTTING ALL THE CLUES TOGETHER, HUH?

CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T GIVE YOU A SPORTING CHANCE.



YOU MAY HAVE A LOT OF FACTS.

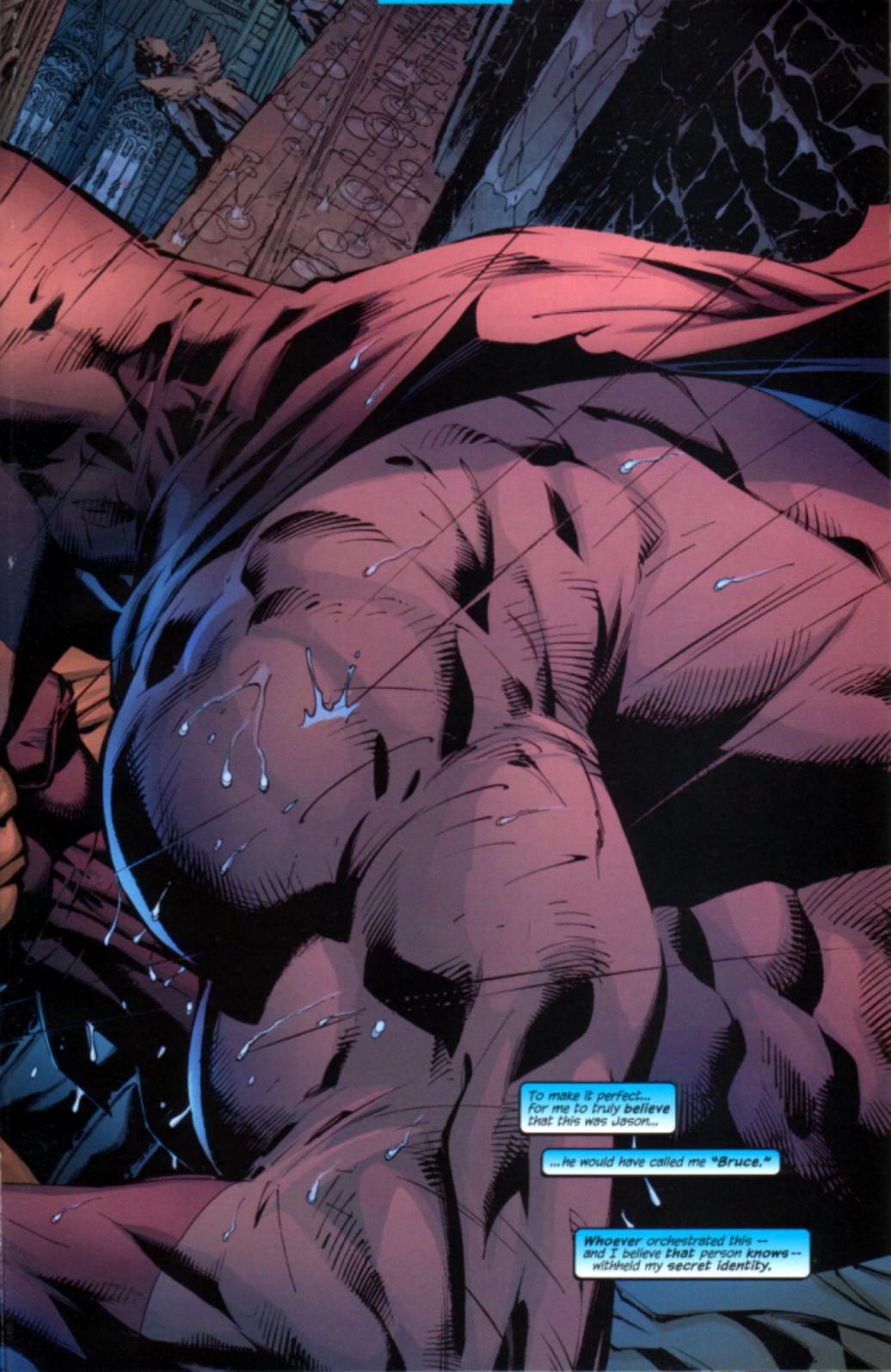
PERSONAL HISTORY ANECDOTES.

YOU MAY EVEN HAVE SET UP ALL THOSE INCIDENTS TO ECHO WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST.

BUT...

A dramatic comic book panel. In the center, a man with long, spiky blonde hair is shown in profile, his face covered in blood and sweat. He has a pained, grimacing expression. A speech bubble above him contains the text: "YOU ARE NOT THE ROBIN WHO DIED." To the right, a close-up of another man's face is shown, wearing a red mask with a pointed top and glowing white eyes. He has a menacing, wide grin and is also covered in blood and sweat. The background is a dark, gothic-style building with intricate architectural details. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, greys, and reds, creating a somber and intense atmosphere.

YOU ARE NOT
THE ROBIN WHO
DIED.



To make it perfect...
For me to truly believe
that this was Jason...

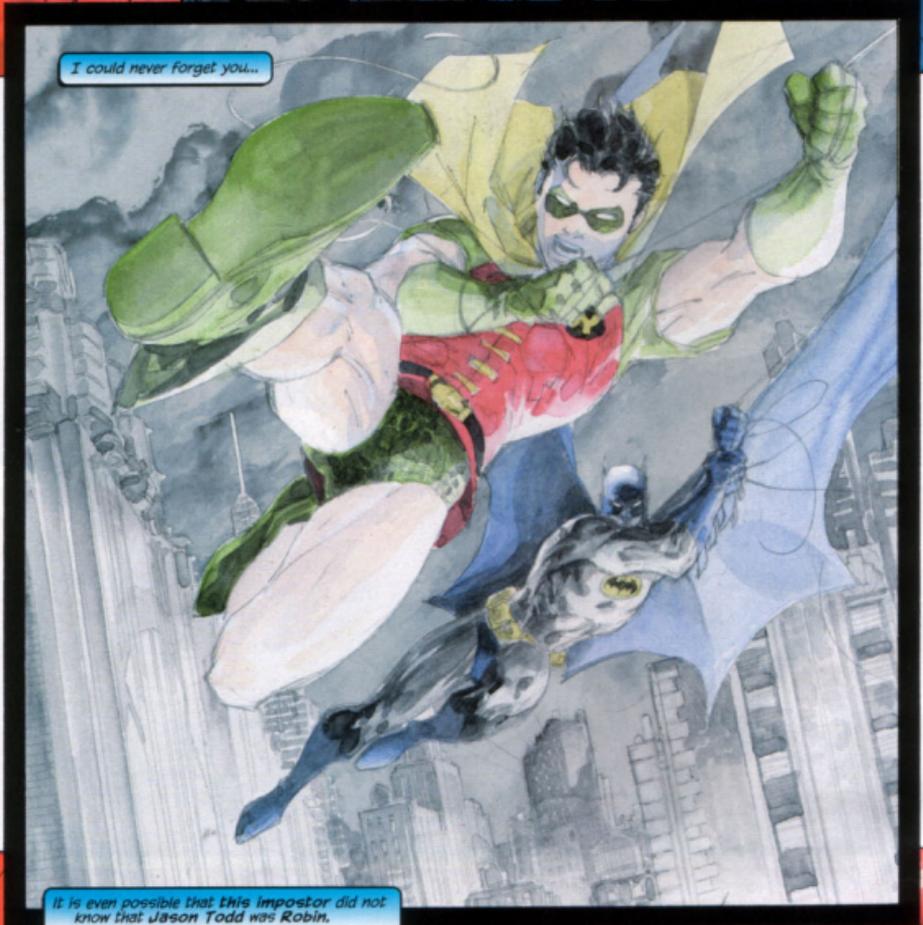
...he would have called me "Bruce."

Whoever orchestrated this --
and I believe that person knows --
withheld my secret identity.



A dramatic scene featuring Batman and Jason Todd. Batman is on the right, looking towards Jason on the left. Jason is wearing a brown, hooded outfit and has a blue mask. The background is a dark, red-hued sky with some smoke or debris.

EVEN
IN THE END...
JASON KNEW HOW
MUCH I LOVED
HIM.

A large panel showing Robin flying over Gotham City. He is in his classic red, green, and yellow costume, with a yellow cape. He is looking down with a determined expression. Below him, Batman is also flying, in his blue and grey suit with a yellow bat emblem on his chest. The city buildings are visible in the background, rendered in a grey, sketchy style.

I could never forget you...

It is even possible that this impostor did not know that Jason Todd was Robin.

He could have been told to put on a costume and come to this open grave. Given what to say... up to a point.

He never referred to himself as "Jason"... and I never called him that either.

A close-up of Batman's face and upper body. He is wearing his blue mask and cowl. He is holding a handgun in his right hand, looking down at it with a serious expression. The background is a dark, red-hued sky with some smoke or debris.

CLAY.

WHEN DID YOU KNOW?



THAT IT WASN'T JASON?

I DIDN'T AT FIRST. THE CLUES LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT A LAZARUS PIT HAD BEEN USED AND JASON COULD HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE.

BUT, ON THE GROUND... IN THE MUD...

CLAY.



IT WAS CLAYFACE MIMICKING THE ROLE.

BUT... WHY MAKE JASON OLDER? A CORPSE DOESN'T AGE.



TO HIDE THE FLAWS. THEY COULDN'T BE SURE EXACTLY HOW JASON'S VOICE SOUNDED OR HOW HE MOVED AND FOUGHT --

--HE'D BEEN DEAD TOO LONG--

-- BUT CLAYFACE COULD MIMIC NIGHTWING. THAT'S WHY HIS ACROBATICS SEEMED SO FAMILIAR.

AND COPYING ME--?

-- WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST THAT. IF THE ILLUSION WAS GOING TO WORK, I HAD TO BE UNSURE.



YOUR MOVEMENTS ARE TOO RECENT -- TOO VIBRANT IN MY MIND.

I AM KIND OF UNIQUE, AREN'T I?

YOUR NECK...?



I'LL NEED STITCHES. BUT CATWOMAN GOT THE BLEEDING STOPPED.

SHE PROBABLY SAVED MY LIFE, YOU KNOW.

GO TO THE CAVE. HAVE ALFRED TEND TO YOUR WOUND.

THEN GET TO WORK ON THAT COSTUME.

SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING ON IT OTHER THAN CLAY THAT WILL HELP US FIND OUT WHO IS BEHIND ALL THIS.



HUNTRESS IS GONE. SHE TOOK MY -- YOUR -- MOTORCYCLE.

I THOUGHT THAT SLEEPING JUICE YOU HAD ME STICK HER WITH WOULD KEEP HER OUT.

SHE'S BETTER THAN YOU THINK.

BETTER THAN EVERYONE THINKS, INCLUDING HERSELF.



IN HER RANTING, IT SOUNDED LIKE SHE MADE A DEAL WITH SOMEONE WHO BETRAYED HER.

YES, AND SHE MAY HAVE BETRAYED ME --

-- BUT WE CAN'T BE CERTAIN BECAUSE...

I KNOW.



AND I DON'T LIKE BEING FOLLOWED. IF YOU DON'T TRUST ME...



I DIDN'T STAY WITH HER.

I DON'T LIKE TAKING ORDERS FROM YOU.



I TRUST YOU.



FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.

I'M GLAD IT WASN'T JASON.

I'M NOT.

OH...?



BECAUSE THE PERSON OR PERSONS RESPONSIBLE ARE STILL OUT THERE.



Coming here --
to Oracle's Clock Tower
is closer than the Cave.

Catwoman will keep
Jonathan Crane --
Scarecrow bound
until the police arrive.

Clayface could be anywhere --
mixed with the water and the mud,
the clay could travel down
into the ground and re-form on
the other side of Gotham.



I NEED TO FIND
HUNTRESS.

-EEP-

DID MY
DAD EVER GET
USED TO YOUR
SUDDEN
APPEARING
ACT?



SHE
IS RIDING
ONE OF THE
BATBIKES.

WAS.



SHE DITCHED IT ABOUT
TWO BLOCKS FROM
WHERE YOU WERE.

SHE'S ALSO
NOT WEARING A
COMMUNICATOR,
OR ANY OTHER
KIND OF
ELECTRONIC
DEVICE I CAN
TRACE.



LET ME
KNOW WHEN YOU
FIND HER.

SHE'S A
LOOSE END...

...AND
WHOEVER IT IS
WE'RE DEALING
WITH ISN'T GOING
TO LET HER
STAY OUT THERE
FOR LONG.



BRUCE...

...AFTER YOUR FALL
WHEN THE BATLINE WAS CUT.
BACK IN THE BATCAVE...

...YOU
WERE BARELY
CONSCIOUS,
SO MUCH SO
YOU HAD TO USE
MORSE CODE.

WHAT MADE
YOU THINK OF
TOMMY ELLIOT?

WHY?





I WAS JUST...
CURIOS.

HE WAS
THE BEST SURGEON
IN THE COUNTRY.

AS GOOD,
IF NOT BETTER,
THAN MY FATHER.

AND A
CHILDHOOD FRIEND
WHO IS NOW DEAD
BECAUSE HE CAME BACK
INTO MY LIFE.

THIS GOES
BEYOND
"CURIOS."

YOU ASKED ME
TO LOOK INTO THAT
ELECTRONIC RELAY
YOU FOUND HIDDEN
UNDERNEATH YOUR
COMPUTER IN
THE CAVE.

THE DESIGN WORK
WAS FLAWLESS.

ANY IDEA
WHOSE WORK
IT IS?

I THINK I DO.
I THINK YOU DO
TOO OR YOU
WOULDN'T HAVE
ASKED ME.

I ROUTED THE
DEVICE THROUGH
THIS COMPUTER.

AT FIRST
I THOUGHT IT WAS
A LISTENING DEVICE --
STANDARD C.I.A. OP
KIND OF STUFF.

TURNS OUT IT
WAS MADE TO LOOK
LIKE THAT.



...AND
LOOK WHAT
IT CAN DO...





It takes a few nights, but Oracle manages to arrange a meeting.

She has redirected the traffic. The Gotham City Bridge will be closed until six a.m.

It will not take that long for this to end.



I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD COME. THAT SORT OF THING REQUIRES COURAGE.



WHY?

WHY BETRAY ME?

I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU ANYTHING YOU NEEDED.

I HAD GIVEN YOU ANYTHING YOU NEEDED. A HOME. A PURPOSE.



WHAT THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER WAS PROMISED TO YOU?

HAROLD.

HAPPINESS.

When I first met Harold he was all alone. Friendless. Homeless. But gifted when it came to the repair of machines and electronics.

For a long time he worked in The Cave. Access to the cars, the computers. Always silent... in many ways, as alone as when I found him.

YOU CAN... SPEAK.

Through the years, I used all my resources to find a way to repair Harold's body.

But... medical science is not like crime. There is not always an answer.

THIS WAS SOMETHING FOR ME.

YOU HAD GIVEN ME SO MUCH.

I DIDN'T WANT TO ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE.

HE SAID HE COULD HEAL ME.

MAKE IT SO I WASN'T MUTE.

SO I COULD STAND UP LIKE A MAN.

I THOUGHT THAT EVEN IF I HAD BEEN TRUCKED...

YOU ARE MY HERO.

YOU WOULD ALWAYS WIN...

FORGIVE ME...

HAROLD... I CAN FORGIVE YOU...

HE KNEW WHO YOU WERE WITHOUT THE MASK.

HE KNEW ABOUT THE CAVE AND WHAT MY JOB WAS.

ALL HE ASKED WAS THAT I ADD THE CIRCUIT RELAY TO THE COMPUTER. I BUILT IT TO HIS SPECIFICATIONS, BUT I MADE SURE IT COULDN'T HURT YOU.

WHO APPROACHED YOU?

IT WAS --

THE DESIRE TO BE HAPPY CAN BE VERY POWERFUL WHEN EXPLOITED.

BLAM

BLAM



WHAT IS
A FRIEND?

A SINGLE SOUL
DWELLING IN TWO
BODIES.



To Be
CONCLUDED!