

ORPHANED AS A CHILD WHEN A GUNMAN MURDERED HIS PARENTS, BRUCE WAYNE TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME. MASQUERADING BY DAY AS A MILLIONAIRE-MAN-ABOUT-TOWN, HE PROWLS THE NIGHT TO PREY ON THE VERMIN OF THE UNDERWORLD AS THE DREAD...

BATMAN

WITH THAT WHIRLING, PSYCHEDELIC LIGHT BOUNCING AROUND, HOW CAN I TELL THE REAL JOKER FROM HIS REFLECTIONS-- BEFORE HE PULLS THAT TRIGGER?

"The JOKER'S PLAYGROUND of PERIL!"

STORY: DENNY O'NEIL (ASSISTED BY: JULIE SCHWARTZ & E. NELSON BRIDWELL) ART: IRV NOVICK & BOB WIACEK

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NIGHT, DARKEST NIGHT... ON A LONELY ROAD SOMEWHERE NORTH OF GOTHAM CITY--

AS YOUR PSYCHIATRIST, JOKER, I MUST SAY I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE WAY YOU EFFECTED YOUR ESCAPE!



TAKING ME AS A HOSTAGE... AND HAVING YOUR HENCHMEN LEAVE THIS ICE CREAM WAGON AS AN ESCAPE VEHICLE! VERY AMUSING!



THEN WHY AREN'T YOU LAUGHING, DR. TUGWELL? YOU NEVER LAUGH AT MY JOKES! I EVEN TOLD YOU ALL MY PLANS-- WITHOUT GETTING A TITTER!

PULL OVER AND GET OUT-- I'M SICK OF YOUR COMPANY!



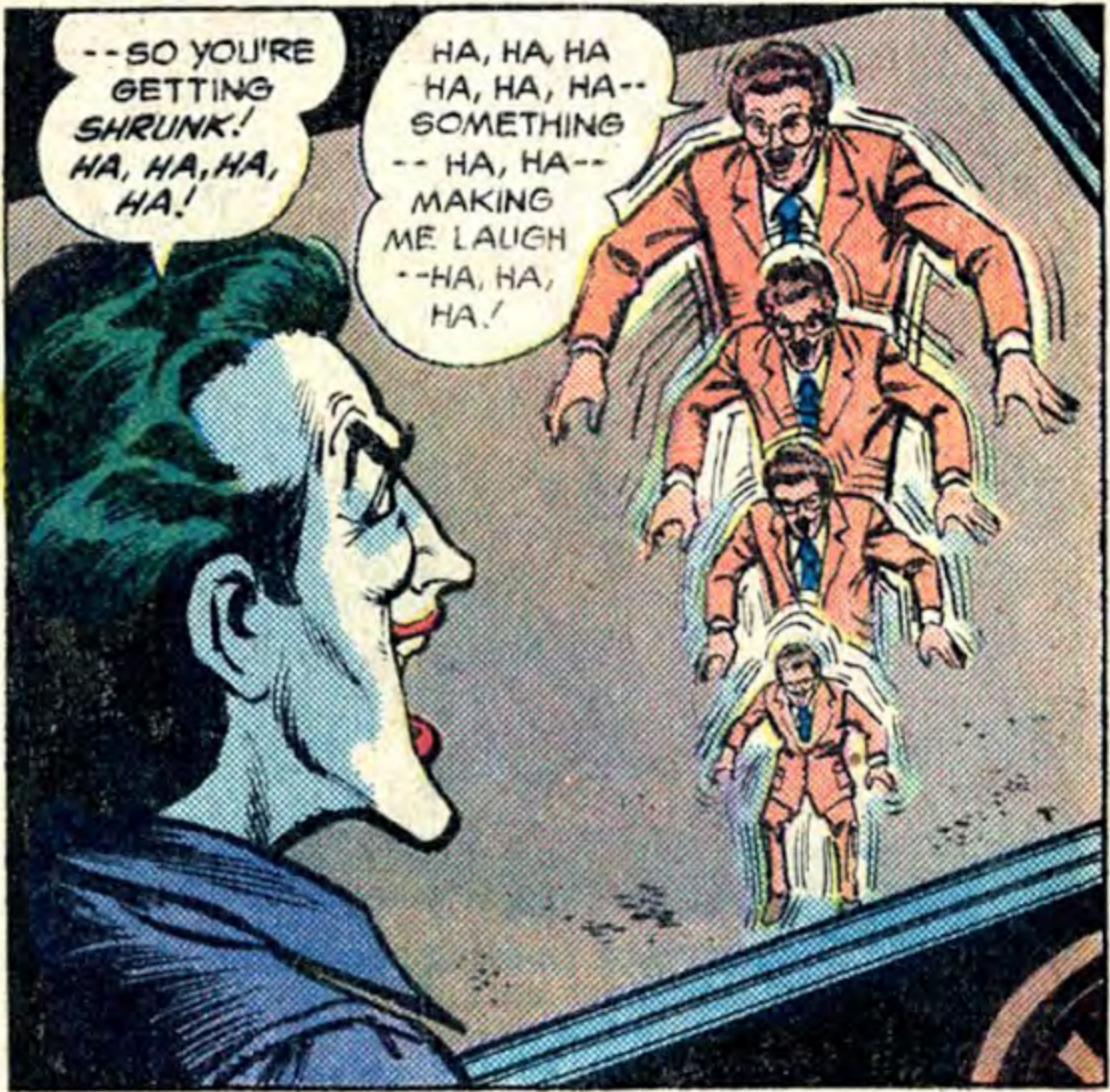
OH, THANK YOU-- I MUST GET HOME AND ULG! WHAT IS THIS--?

THIS IS A JOKE YOU'LL DEFINITELY LAUGH AT, DOC! YOU'RE A SHRINK--

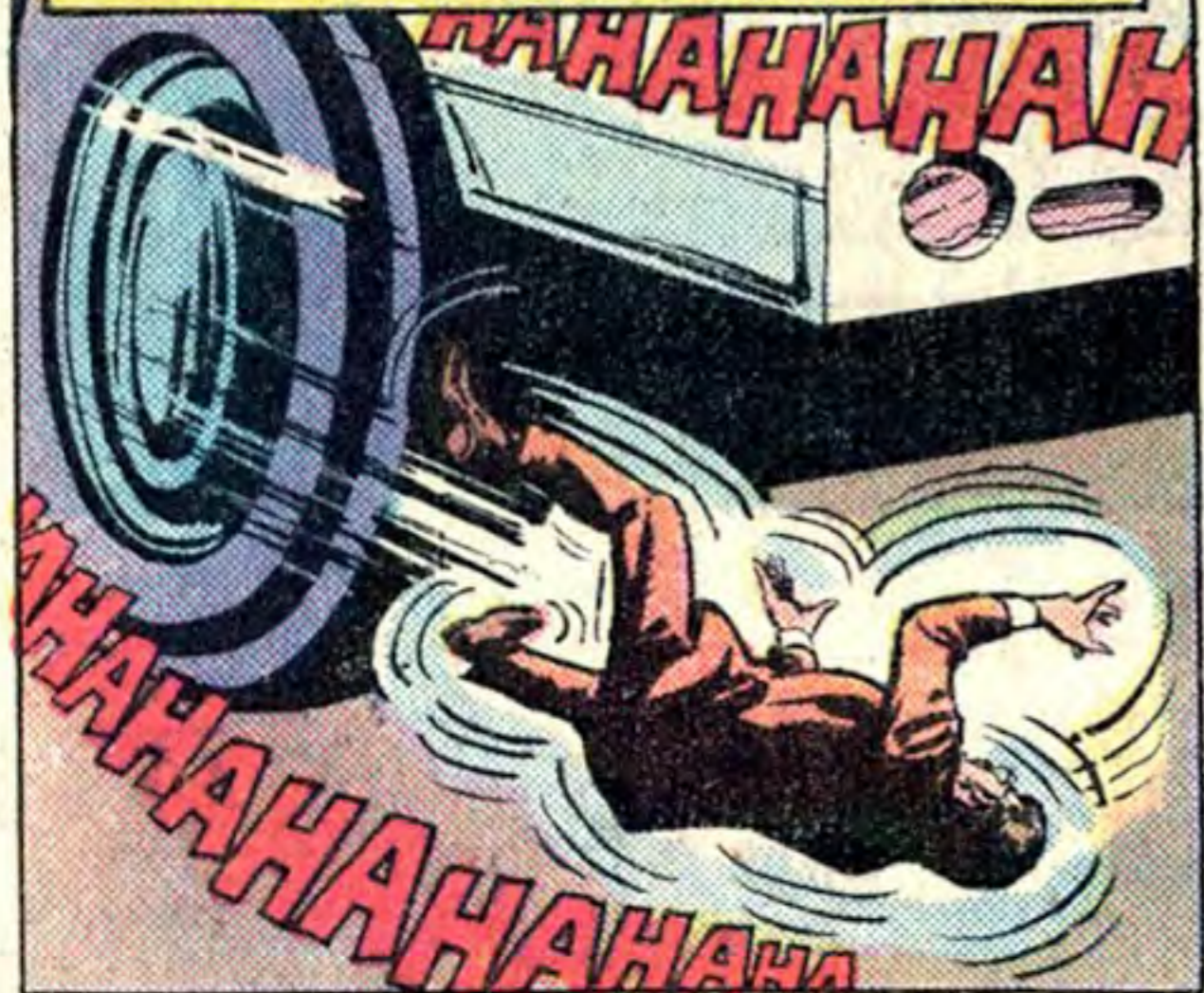


-- SO YOU'RE GETTING SHRUNK! HA, HA, HA, HA!

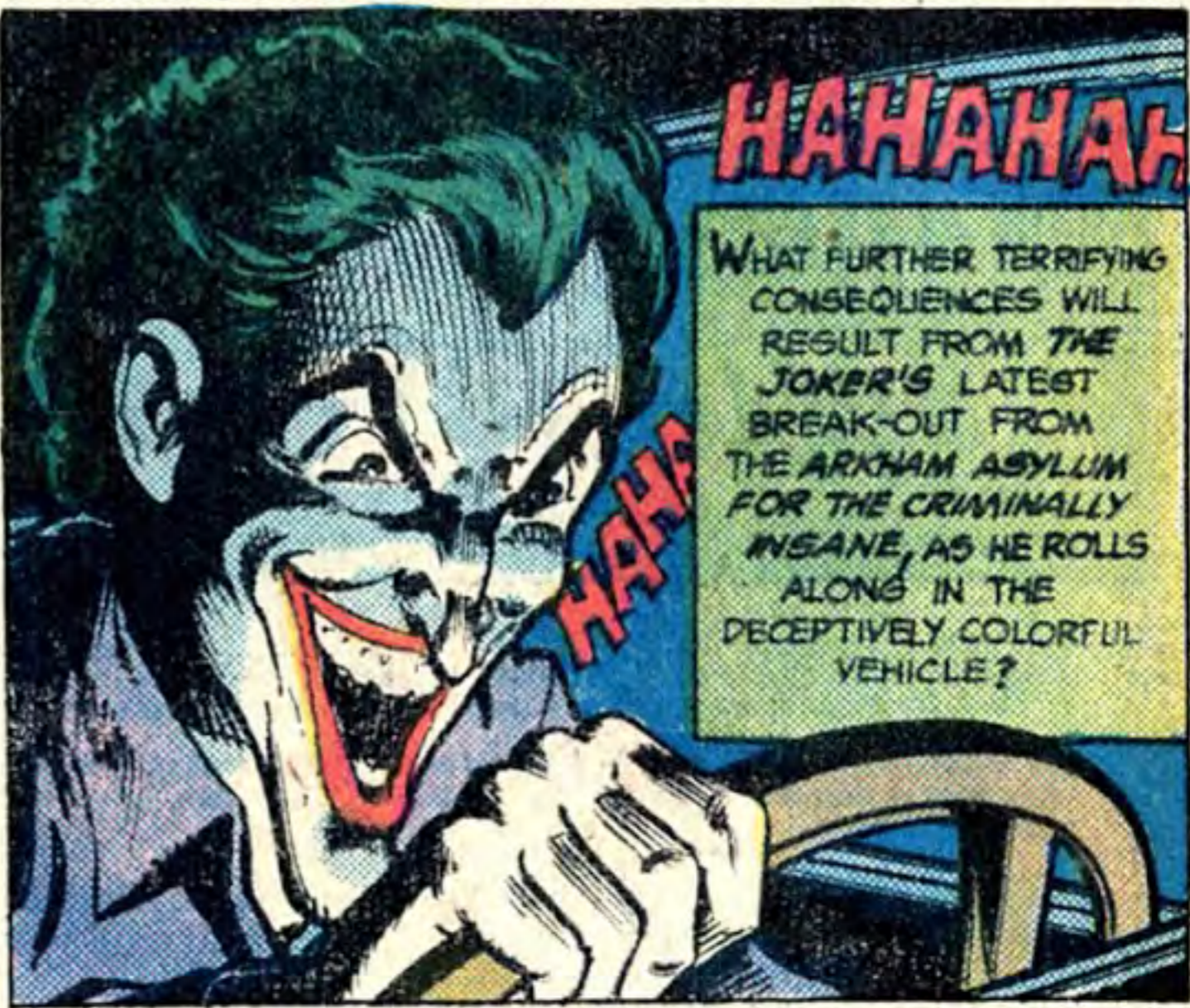
HA, HA, HA HA, HA, HA-- SOMETHING -- HA, HA-- MAKING ME LAUGH -- HA, HA, HA!



A MAN, NO LARGER THAN A CHILD'S DOLL, DOOMED TO A HORRIBLE DEATH IN THE WAKE OF THE TRUCK AS IT ROARS AWAY TO THE SOUND OF SAVAGE LAUGHTER--



--POURING FROM THE THROAT OF THE MANIACAL DRIVER!



HAHAHAHA
WHAT FURTHER TERRIFYING CONSEQUENCES WILL RESULT FROM THE JOKER'S LATEST BREAK-OUT FROM THE ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE, AS HE ROLLS ALONG IN THE DECEPTIVELY COLORFUL VEHICLE?



MEANWHILE, AT GOTHAM POLICE HEADQUARTERS, IN RESPONSE TO A FAMILIAR SUMMONS...

HOW URGENT IS IT, COMMISSIONER?

PLENTY!

ONE OF OUR MEN SPOTTED PIERRE FRAGE ENTERING THE COUNTRY!



FRAGE THE FENCE-- THE WORLD'S MOST WANTED DEALER IN STOLEN JEWELS?

THAT'S THE BOY!

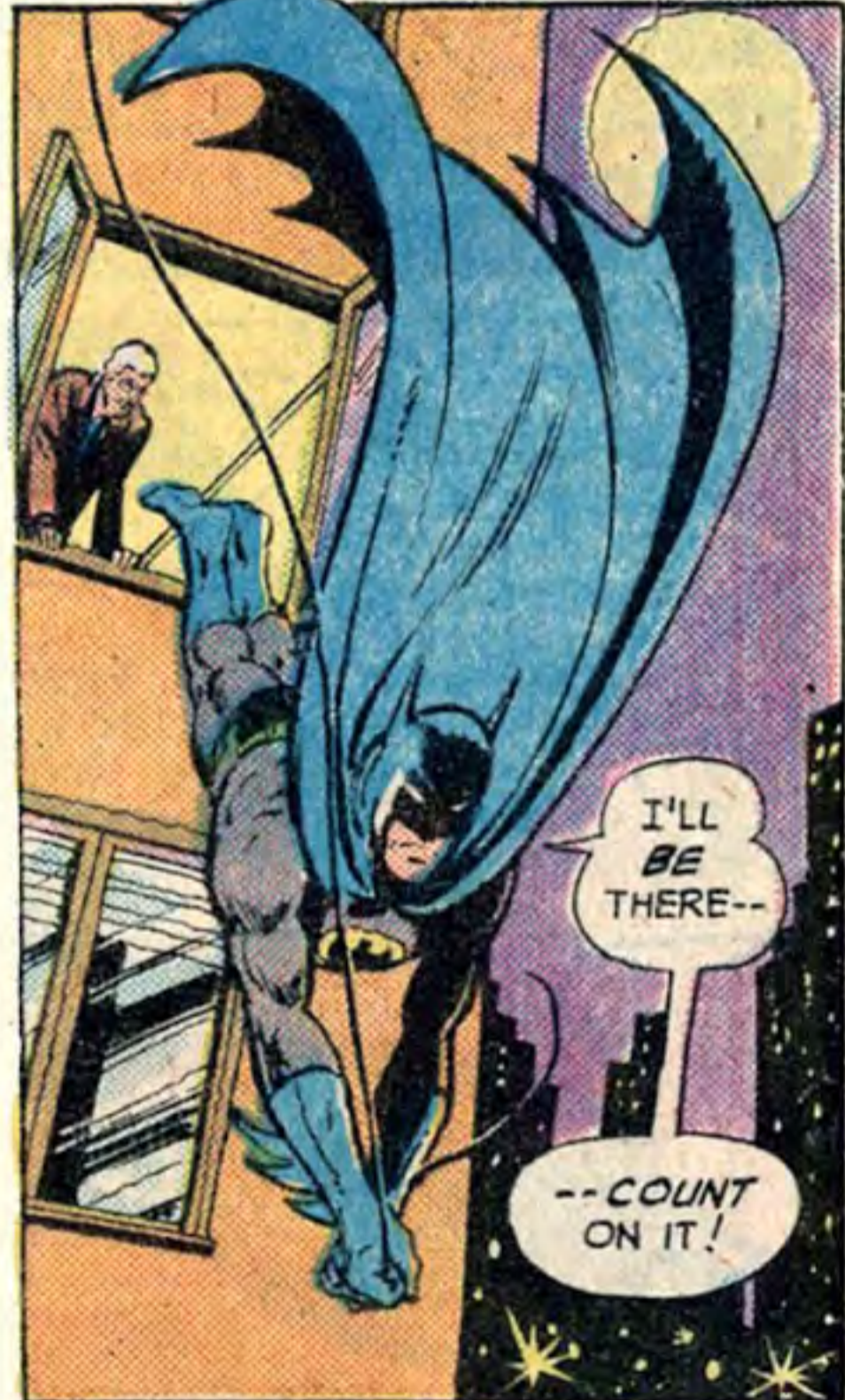
WHAT'S WORSE-- HE'S WANGLED AN INVITATION TO THE ANNUAL "REVELRY IN THE PARK" CHARITY AFFAIR TOMORROW NIGHT!



WE SUSPECT HE'LL BE THERE TO MAKE A BUY... BUT WE DON'T KNOW FROM WHOM!

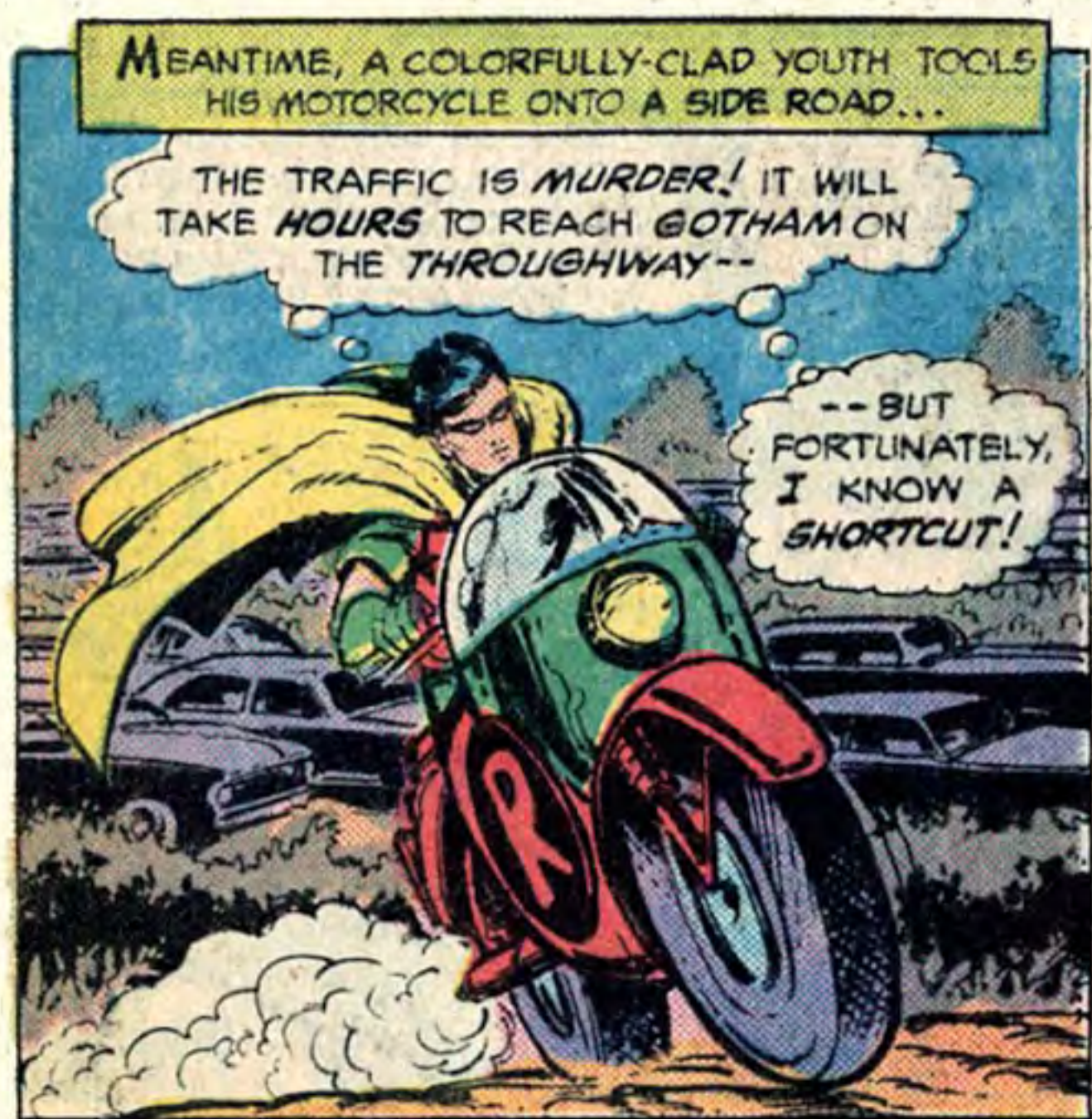
WE CAN'T ARREST HIM ON SUSPICION--

-- SO YOU'D LIKE ME TO HELP KEEP AN EYE OR TWO ON HIM, RIGHT?



I'LL BE THERE--

-- COUNT ON IT!



MEANTIME, A COLORFULLY-CLAD YOUTH TOOLS HIS MOTORCYCLE ONTO A SIDE ROAD...

THE TRAFFIC IS MURDER! IT WILL TAKE HOURS TO REACH GOTHAM ON THE THROUGHWAY--

-- BUT FORTUNATELY, I KNOW A SHORTCUT!



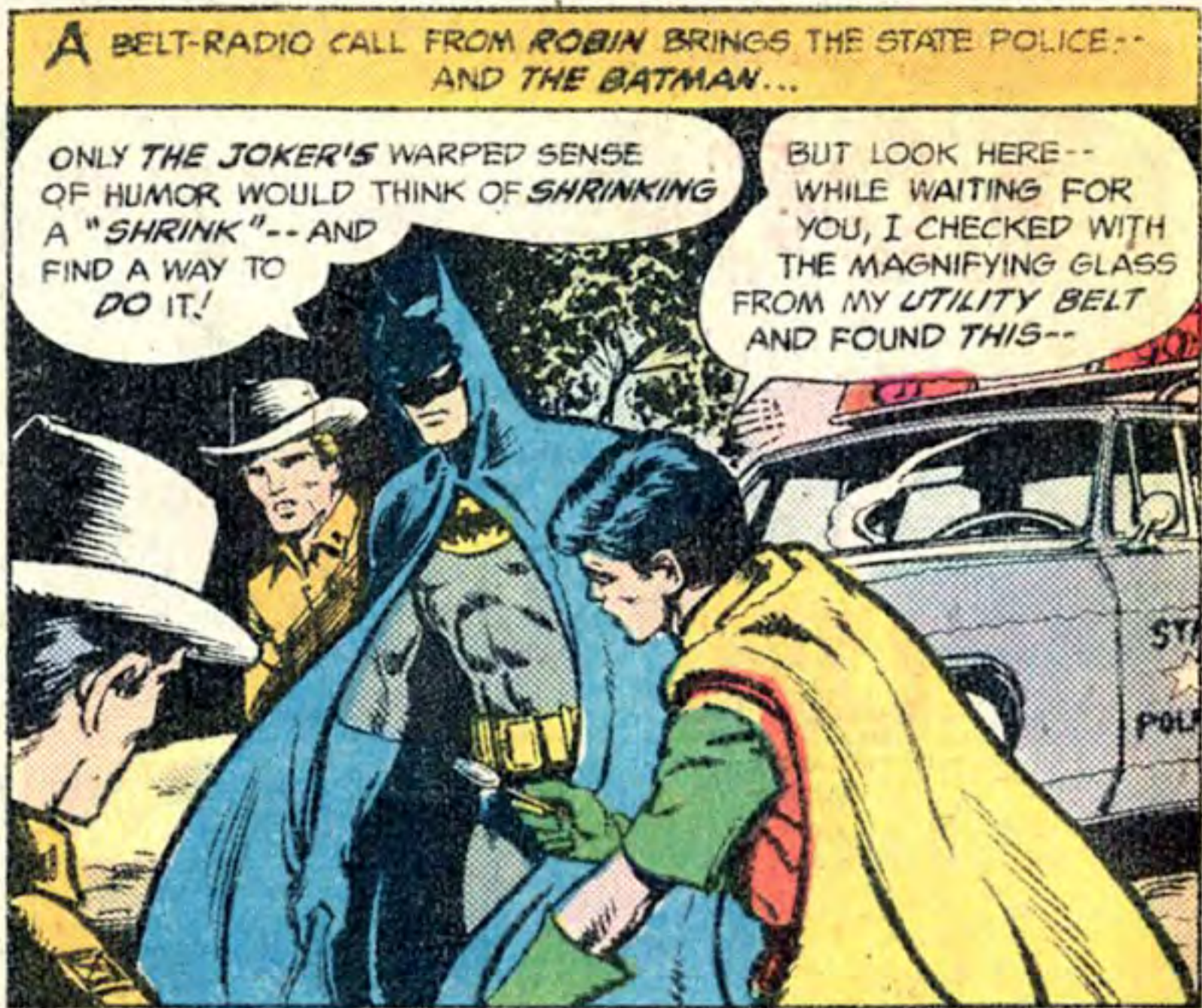
WHAT THE HECK IS THAT IN THE ROAD? A DOLL OR--?

SKREEEEEEEE



OH, MY GOD-- IT'S DR. TUGWELL, THE PSYCHIATRIST AT ARKHAM ASYLUM!

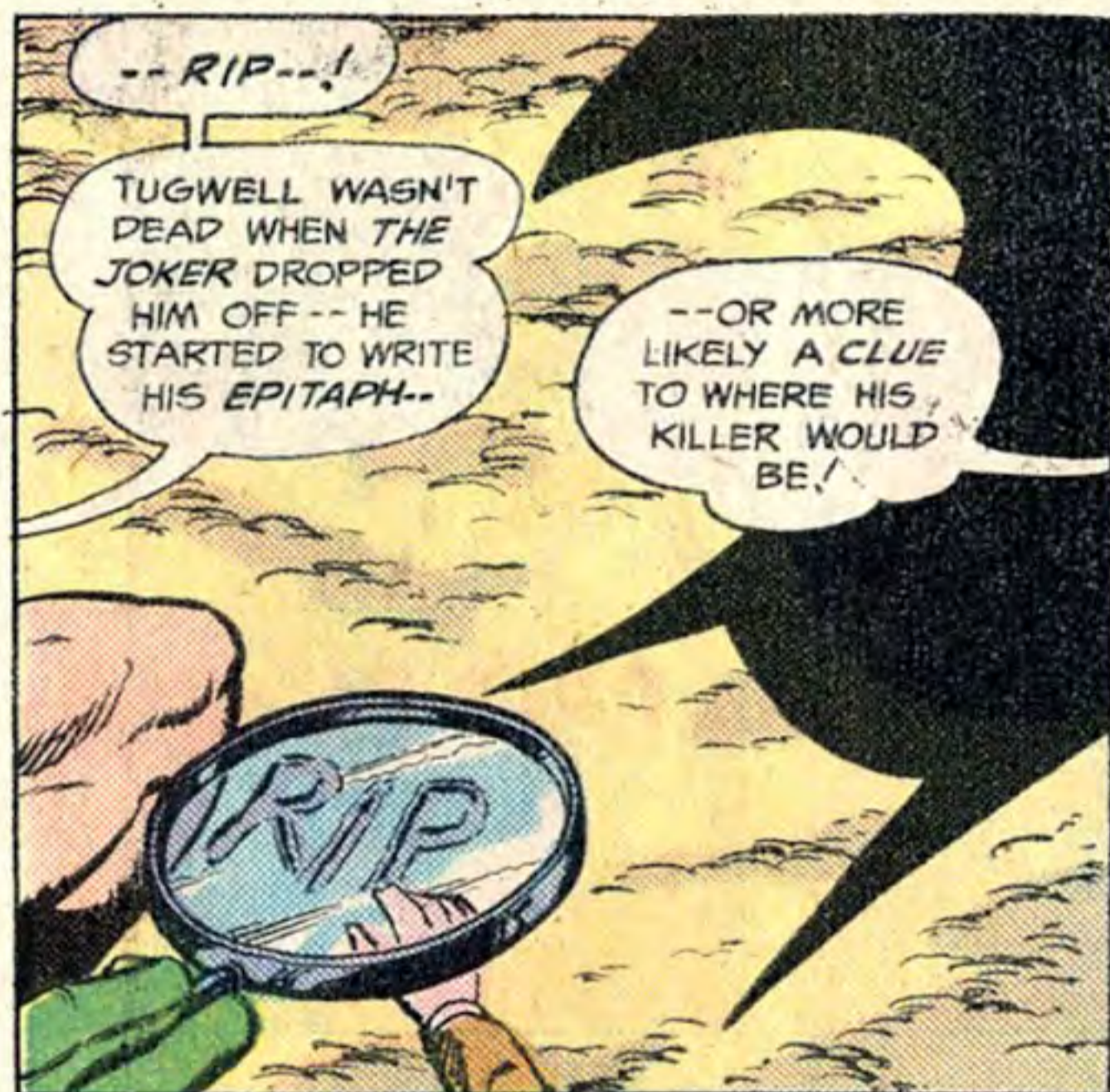
FROM THE HIDEOUS LAUGH FROZEN ON HIS FACE, I DON'T HAVE TO GUESS TWICE WHICH OF HIS PATIENTS DID HIM IN!



A BELT-RADIO CALL FROM ROBIN BRINGS THE STATE POLICE-- AND THE BATMAN...

ONLY THE JOKER'S WARPED SENSE OF HUMOR WOULD THINK OF SHRINKING A "SHRINK"-- AND FIND A WAY TO DO IT!

BUT LOOK HERE-- WHILE WAITING FOR YOU, I CHECKED WITH THE MAGNIFYING GLASS FROM MY UTILITY BELT AND FOUND THIS--



-- RIP--!

TUGWELL WASN'T DEAD WHEN THE JOKER DROPPED HIM OFF-- HE STARTED TO WRITE HIS EPITAPH--

--OR MORE LIKELY A CLUE TO WHERE HIS KILLER WOULD BE!



RIP-- "REVELRY IN PARK!"

IT WOULD BE JUST LIKE THAT HOMICIDAL HARLEQUIN TO TELL HIS VICTIM HIS PLANS BEFORE KILLING HIM!

I'LL BE AT THAT R.I.P. AFFAIR TOMORROW NIGHT--



--WE'LL BE THERE, YOU MEAN!

ONLY IF YOU HAVE A LEGITIMATE REASON FOR BEING AWAY FROM HUDSON U!



WHEN I HEARD THE JOKER WAS LOOSE, I DECIDED TO GET IN ON THE ACTION!

SO DICK GRAYSON'S OFFICIALLY IN WASHINGTON, DOING SOME RESEARCH IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS! A "DYNAMITE" FRIEND IN THE CAPITAL WILL COVER FOR ME!*

ALL RIGHT-- GUESS I CAN USE SOME HELP! BUT THE MINUTE WE'RE THROUGH--

--BACK YOU GO!

*THE OTHER HALF OF THE "DYNAMITE DUO"-- BARBARA (BATC 'RL) GORDON! --JULIE

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

PARKSIDE PLAYGROUND...
 A MAN-MADE FAIRYLAND
 ON THE EDGE OF THE
 OCEAN... A GLITTERING
 STRIP THAT GLOWS
 WITH THE LIGHT OF
 A MILLION BULBS
 AND TINKLES WITH
 THE LAUGHTER OF
 MERRYMAKERS...

... A PLACE OF WILD
 RIDES, TOOTHsome
 CANDY AND CHILDlike
 GAMES... THIS NIGHT,
 THE SITE OF A
**COSTUME CHARITY
 CARNIVAL...**



I WISH THEY'D
 CHOSEN A DIFFERENT
 KIND OF AFFAIR TO
 RAISE MONEY!

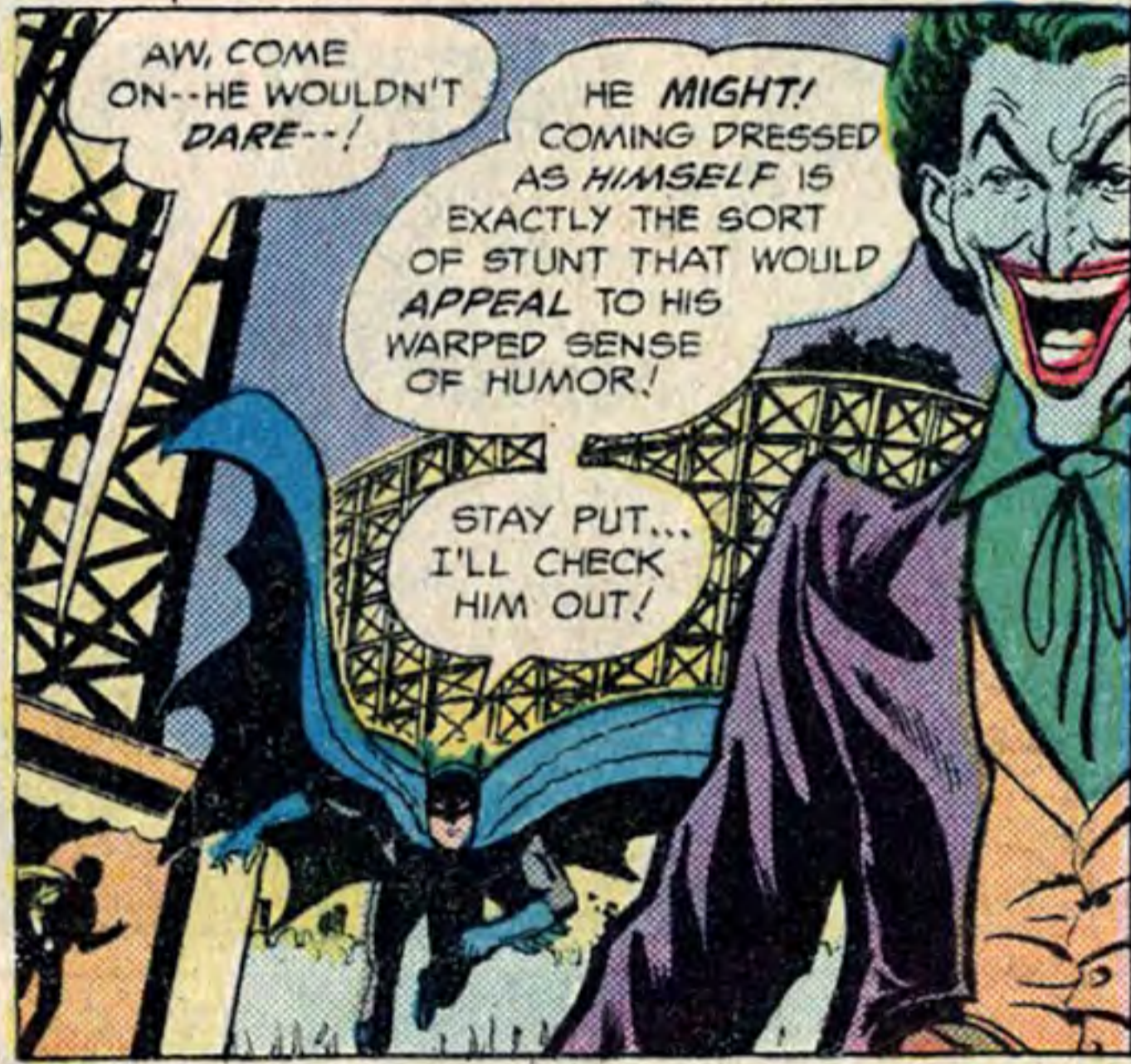
ALL THESE MASKS
 AND COSTUMES ONLY
 MAKE OUR JOB HARDER!

ROBIN!
 THAT MAN
 OVER BY THE
 TUNNEL OF
 LOVE... DRESSED
 AS THE
JOKER!
 I WONDER--?

AW, COME
 ON--HE WOULDN'T
 DARE--!

HE **MIGHT!**
 COMING DRESSED
 AS **HIMSELF** IS
 EXACTLY THE SORT
 OF STUNT THAT WOULD
 APPEAL TO HIS
 WARPED SENSE
 OF HUMOR!

STAY PUT...
 I'LL CHECK
 HIM OUT!



HE'S SPOTTED ME...
 AND HE'S RUNNING!

NO
INNOCENT
 PERSON HAS
 ANY REASON
 TO FEAR
 ME--!

EH--? SOME CHAP
 DRESSED AS **THE BATMAN**
 --CHASING A **JOKER!**
 PART OF THE **ENTERTAIN-**
MENT, NO DOUBT!

OH, I HOPE
 NOT! I'D MUCH
 RATHER THEY
 WERE **GENUINE!**
REAL LIFE IS
 SO MUCH MORE
EXCITING!

**OUTA MY
 WAY, BLAST
 YOU!**

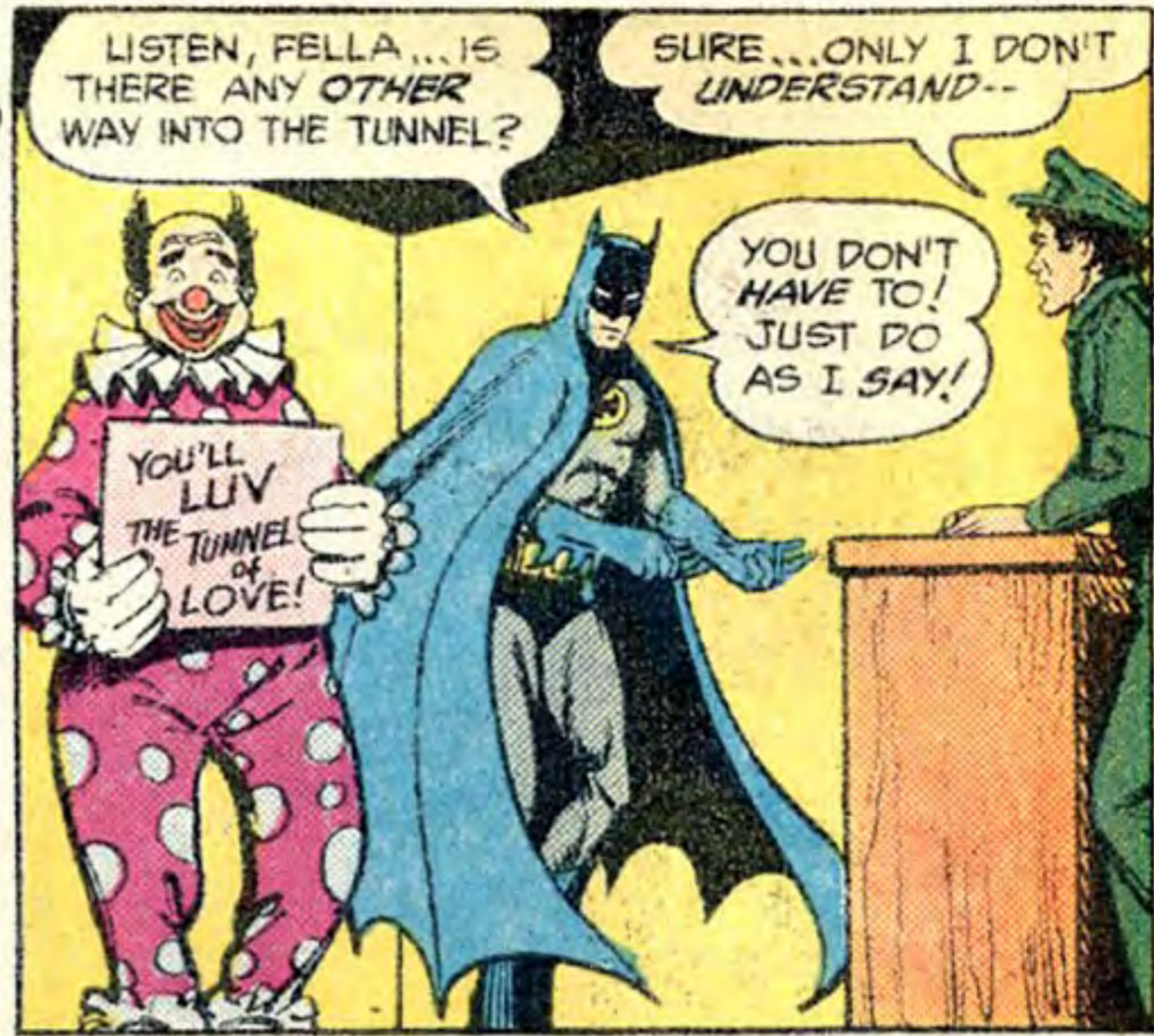
WHAT'S A
BIG IDEA...

ONCE IN THE
 TUNNEL, HE'LL
 BE IN A PERFECT
 POSITION FOR
 AN **AMBUSH!**





TOO LATE! HE'S INSIDE... AND PROBABLY SETTING A TRAP FOR ME!



LISTEN, FELLA... IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY INTO THE TUNNEL?

SURE... ONLY I DON'T UNDERSTAND--

YOU DON'T HAVE TO! JUST DO AS I SAY!

YOU'LL LUV THE TUNNEL OF LOVE!



MOMENTS LATER... A BOAT BEARING A CAPED FIGURE GLIDES FORWARD--TOWARD A WAITING GUN--!



THOUGHT YOU'D CATCH ME UNAWARE, HUH? WELL, YOU WERE WRONG!

BAM BAM BAM

BAM



I'VE LIVED IN MORTAL AGONY... AFRAID YOU'D-- EHH?

A DUMMY--?!?



YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN--

--THE BATMAN WOULDN'T BE STUPID ENOUGH TO FALL INTO YOUR TRAP--



--NOT WHEN IT'S SO SATISFYING TO FALL ON TOP OF YOU!

YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE-- EUHH!

SPLASH!



NO MISTAKE--
INNOCENT MEN
DON'T RUN
FROM THE
LAW!

I TELL
YOU, I'M
NOT THE
JOKER!



SEE--THE JOKER NEVER
WEARS A MUSTACHE!
AND THIS GREEN HAIR
IS A WIG! I'M
HARRISON
STEAKBURY--

YES... I
RECOGNIZE
YOU NOW!
YOU'RE THE
LAWYER WHO
DEFENDED
THE JOKER AT
HIS LAST TRIAL!

BUT I KNEW
YOU WEREN'T THAT
CLOWN WHEN YOU
USED AN ORDINARY
GUN! THAT'S NOT
HIS STYLE!



I'M SORRY I PANICKED...
BUT I WAS CONVINCED YOU
WERE THE JOKER!

DRESSING AS THE
BATMAN WOULD BE HIS
KIND OF TWISTED
PRANK!

AND
YOU'RE
SCARED
OF
HIM?



YOU BET I AM!
AFTER ALL, I
LOST HIS CASE...
AND HE'S NOT
THE FORGIVING
TYPE!

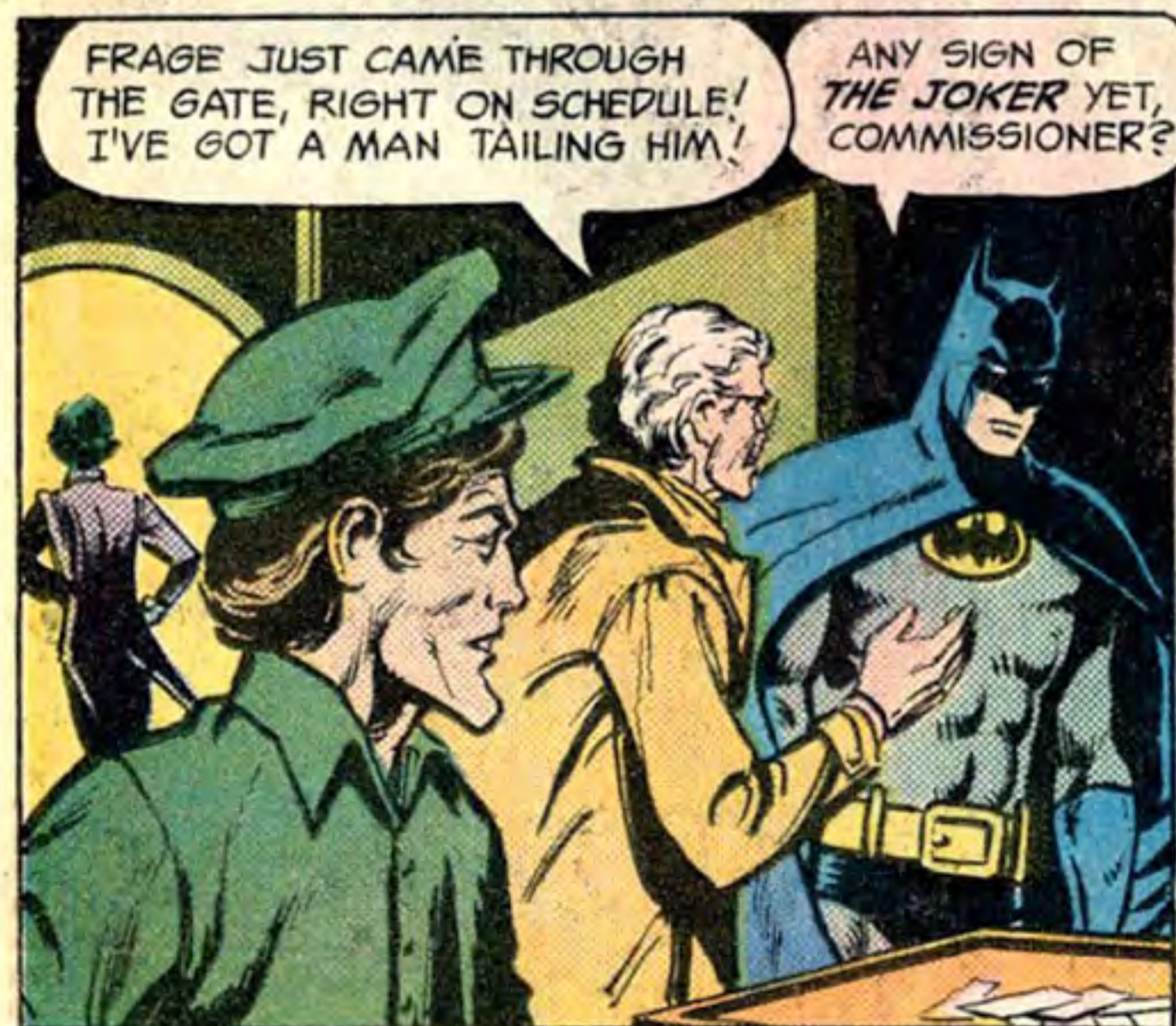
IF YOU WANT TO
BE SAFE, STAY IN
PLAIN SIGHT...
AND STAY OUT
OF DARK TUNNELS!



GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE
IN ONE PIECE, BATMAN!
I WAS AFRAID THE
JOKER'D WASTE YOU
LIKE HE DID THAT
PSYCHIATRIST, DR.
TUGWELL!

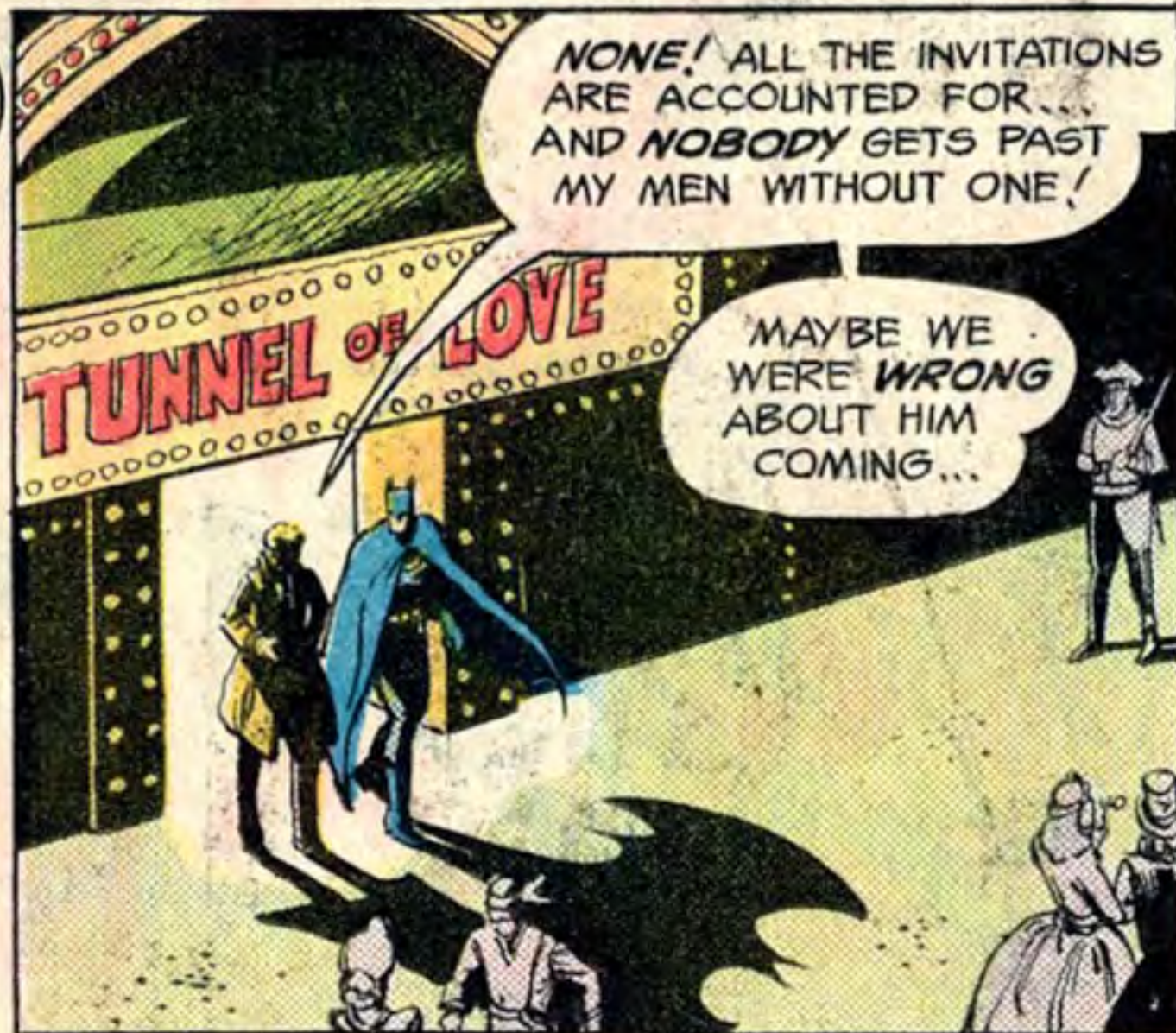
I'M SURE HE'D
LIKE TO... HE'S
CERTAINLY
TRIED OFTEN
ENOUGH!

THERE
YOU ARE,
BATMAN!



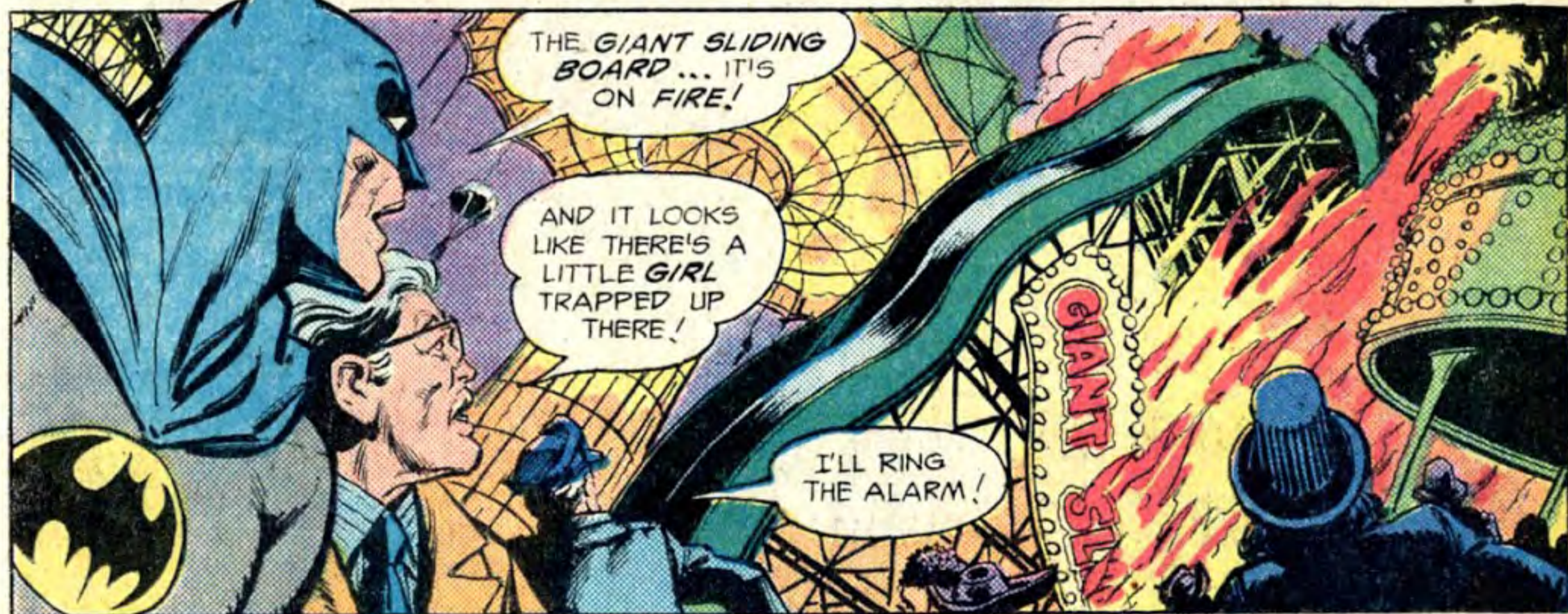
FRAGE JUST CAME THROUGH
THE GATE, RIGHT ON SCHEDULE!
I'VE GOT A MAN TAILING HIM!

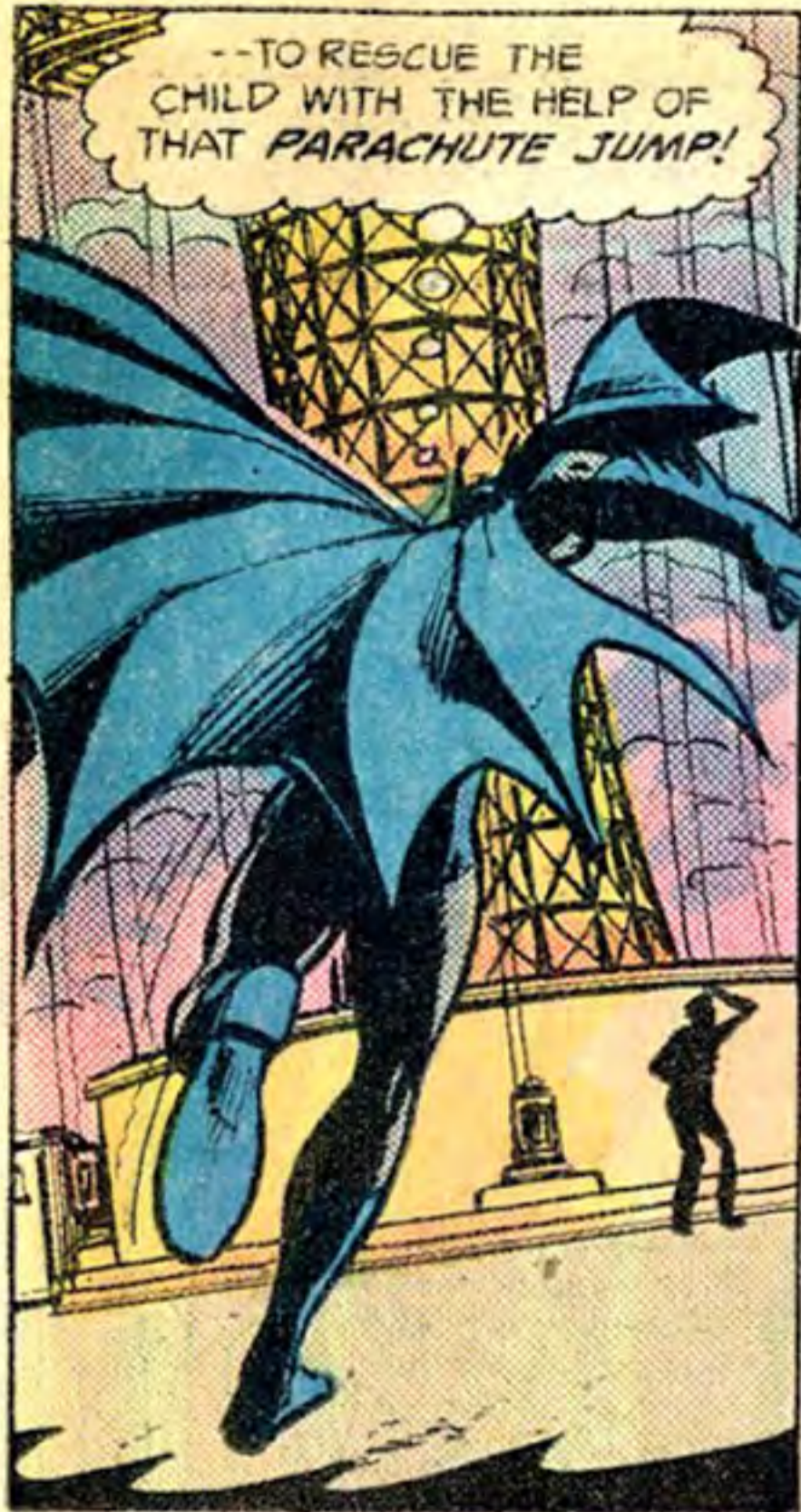
ANY SIGN OF
THE JOKER YET,
COMMISSIONER?



NONE! ALL THE INVITATIONS
ARE ACCOUNTED FOR...
AND NOBODY GETS PAST
MY MEN WITHOUT ONE!

MAYBE WE
WERE WRONG
ABOUT HIM
COMING...





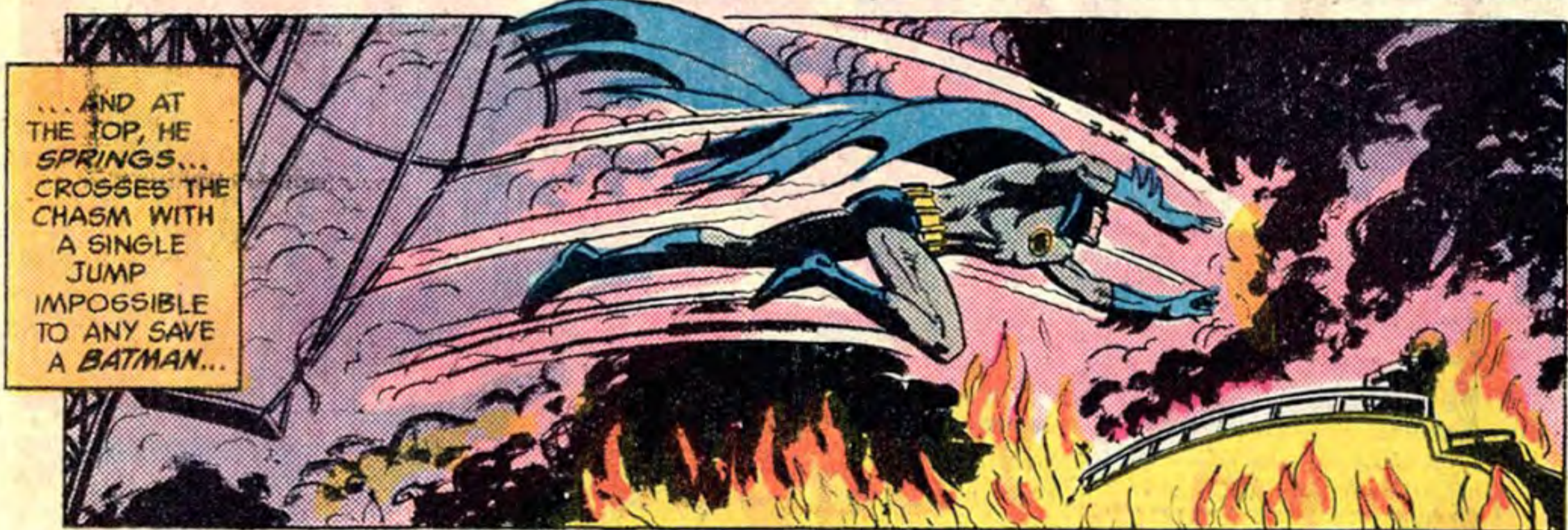
--TO RESCUE THE CHILD WITH THE HELP OF THAT PARACHUTE JUMP!



DON'T ASK QUESTIONS -- JUST GET ME TO THE TOP OF THIS CONTRAPTION... FAST!



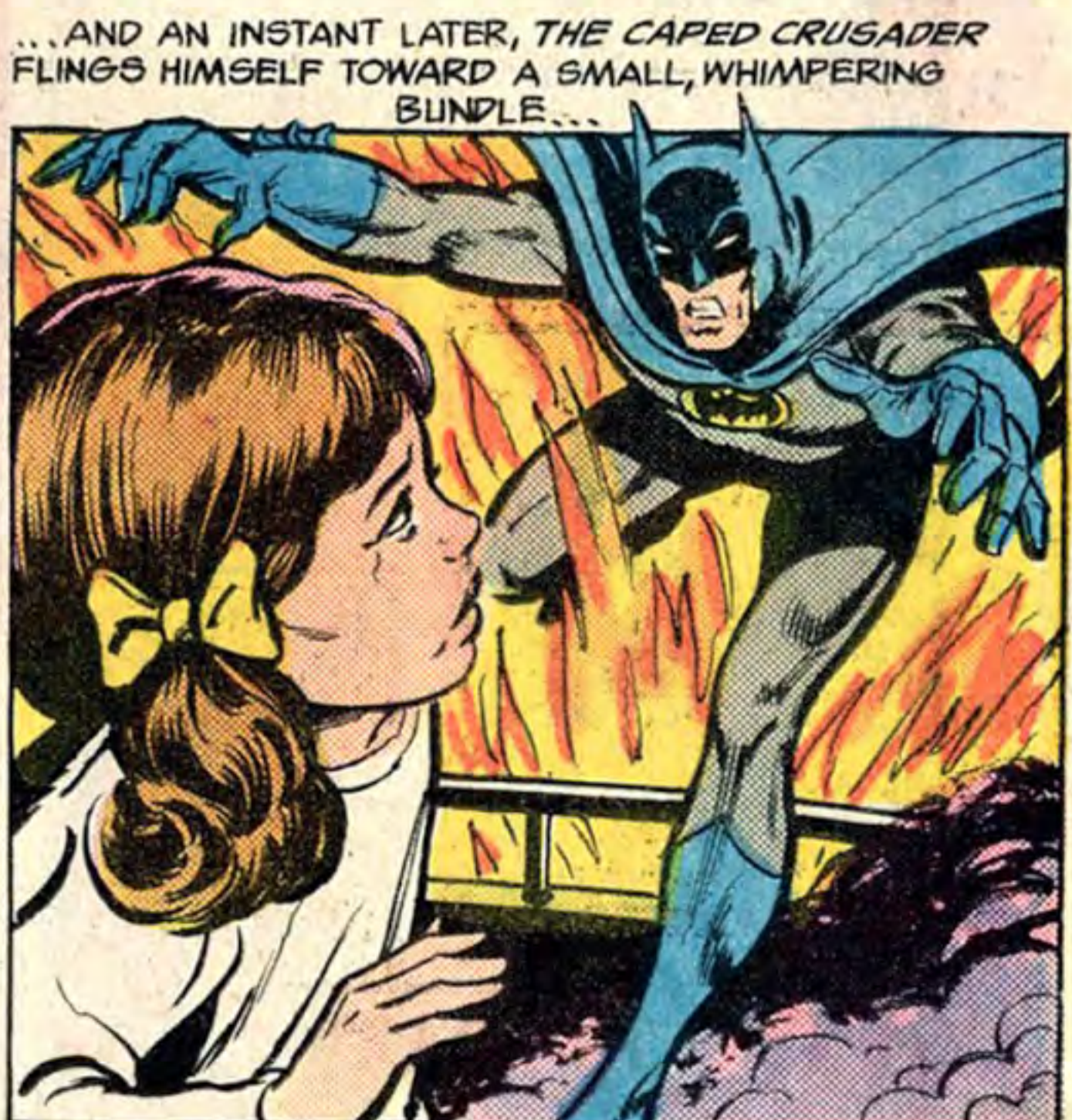
HIGH INTO THE DENSE, SMOKY AIR THE CAPED FIGURE ASCENDS, BUNCHING HIS MUSCLES AS HE GOES ...



... AND AT THE TOP, HE SPRINGS... CROSSES THE CHASM WITH A SINGLE JUMP IMPOSSIBLE TO ANY SAVE A BATMAN...



... STEEL-TAUT FINGERS CLAMP ONTO A HOT RAILING ...



... AND AN INSTANT LATER, THE CAPED CRUSADER FLINGS HIMSELF TOWARD A SMALL, WHIMPERING BUNDLE...



MOMMY...
MOMMY...
I WANT MY
MAMA!

I'LL TAKE
YOU TO HER,
HONEY... DON'T
BE SCARED!
WE'RE GOING
ON A LITTLE
TRIP...

I WON'T LET ANYTHING
BAD HAPPEN TO YOU!

I CAN'T CHANCE
JUMPING BACK TO THE
PARACHUTE TOWER WITH
HER WEIGHT IN MY
ARMS...



... BUT LUCKILY MY
CLOAK'S STILL DAMP
FROM THE DUNKING
IN THE TUNNEL...

... AND THAT
GIVES US ANOTHER
WAY TO GO--



-- STRAIGHT DOWN
THROUGH THE BLAZE!

THE WET CAPE
WILL PROTECT US--
I HOPE!



AND A TENSE FEW SECONDS LATER...

MOMMY!

THANK HEAVENS,
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!

BATMAN--

-- I'VE
GOT TO
TELL YOU--

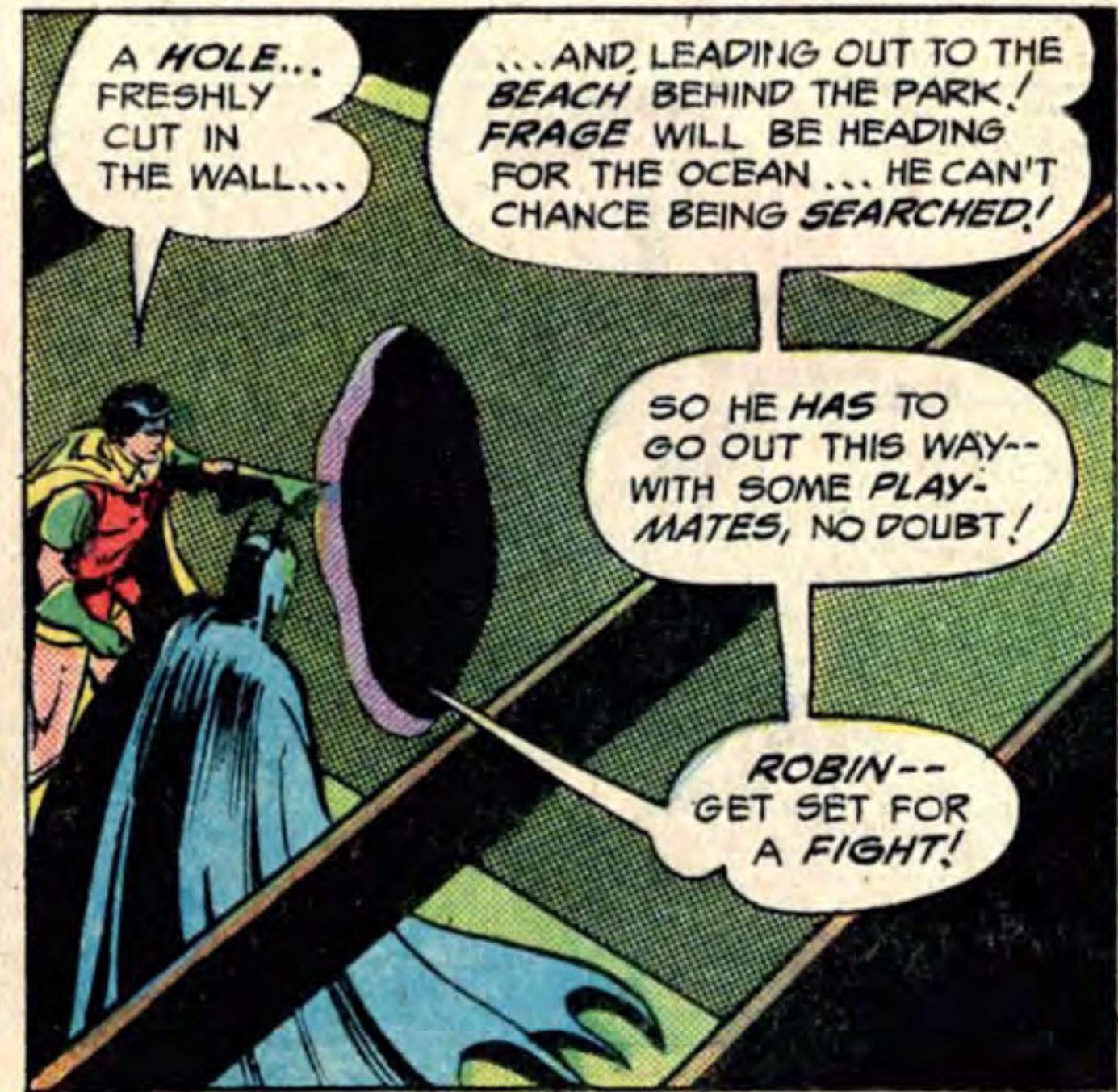


HOLD IT, COMMISSIONER...
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S
BEEN HAPPENING! FRAGE
REAPPEARED TO WATCH
THE FIRE... HE STOOD
NEAR THE MAN IN
THE JOKER COSTUME...

... THEN HE
WANDERED OFF
TOWARD THE
FUN HOUSE
AGAIN! THAT'S
WHERE HE IS AT
THIS MOMENT...

YES... AND
ROBIN'S KEEPING
AN EYE ON HIM!
BUT HOW THE
DEVIL DID YOU
KNOW?

YOU
COULDN'T
HAVE SEEN
IT ALL!



THEN, THE DUO IS OUTSIDE, POUNDING ACROSS THE SAND...

THERE THEY ARE...
RUNNING FOR THAT
BOAT!

TAKE 'EM...
TAKE 'EM
HARD!



IT HAPPENS AS IT HAS HAPPENED SO OFTEN IN THE PAST...



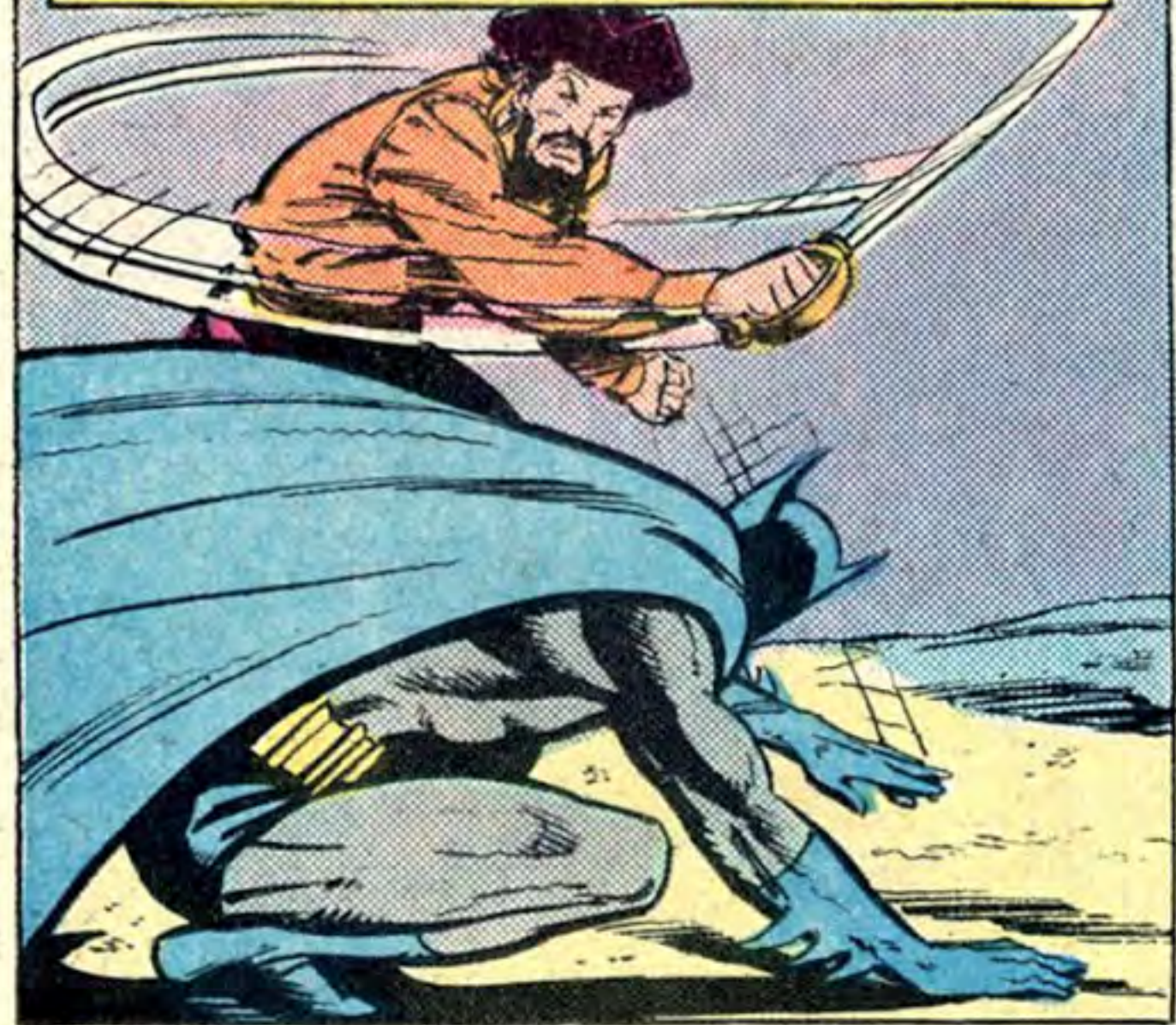
... WITH ONLY THE COLD MOON AS WITNESS, THIS DEDICATED
TWOsome PITS TRAINING AND DETERMINATION AGAINST EVIL...



... A LAD WHO SEES IN EACH CRIMINAL THE ANIMAL
GREED WHICH CAUSED THE DEATH OF HIS PARENTS...



... AND A MAN WHOSE SINGLE PURPOSE IS TO
SEEK OUT AND VANQUISH THE CORRUPTION WHICH
DEBASES AND DESTROYS...



THERE IS THE SOUND OF HARSH BREATH... THE LAP
OF THE GENTLE WAVES... A DREADFUL MEETING OF
FIST AND FLESH...



... AND IT IS OVER...



AS I FIGURED... \$70,000 IN THIS BUNDLE-- THE AMOUNT OF LOOT NEVER RECOVERED FROM THE JOKER'S LAST ROBBERY!

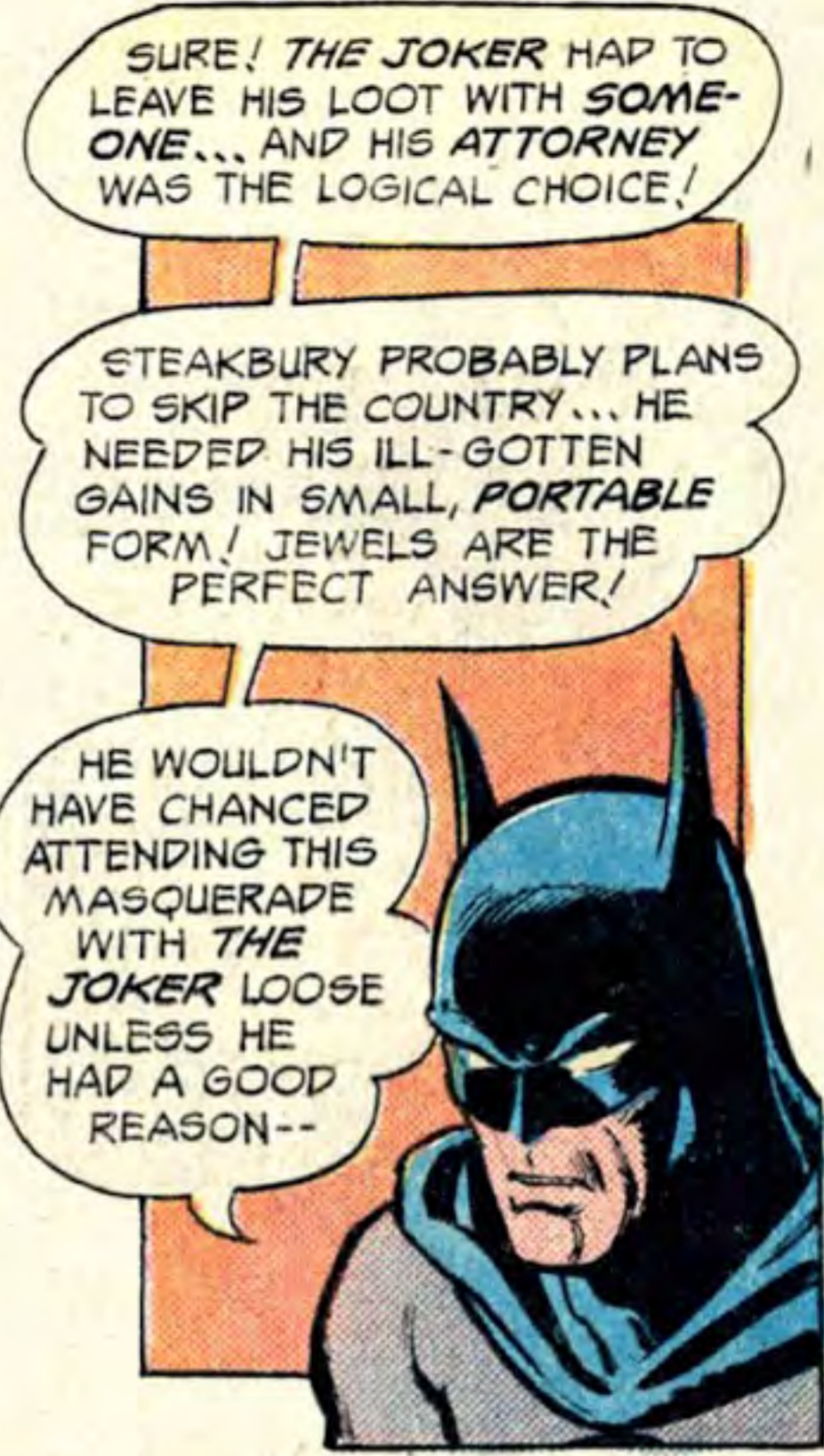
HOW'D FRAGE GET IT?



STEAKBURY GAVE IT TO HIM... PROBABLY IN EXCHANGE FOR SOME RARE GEMS! IT'S PLAIN THAT FRAGE SET THE FIRE TO DISTRACT ATTENTION...

... AND IN THE EXCITEMENT, TRADED JEWELS FOR CASH WITH THE LAWYER!

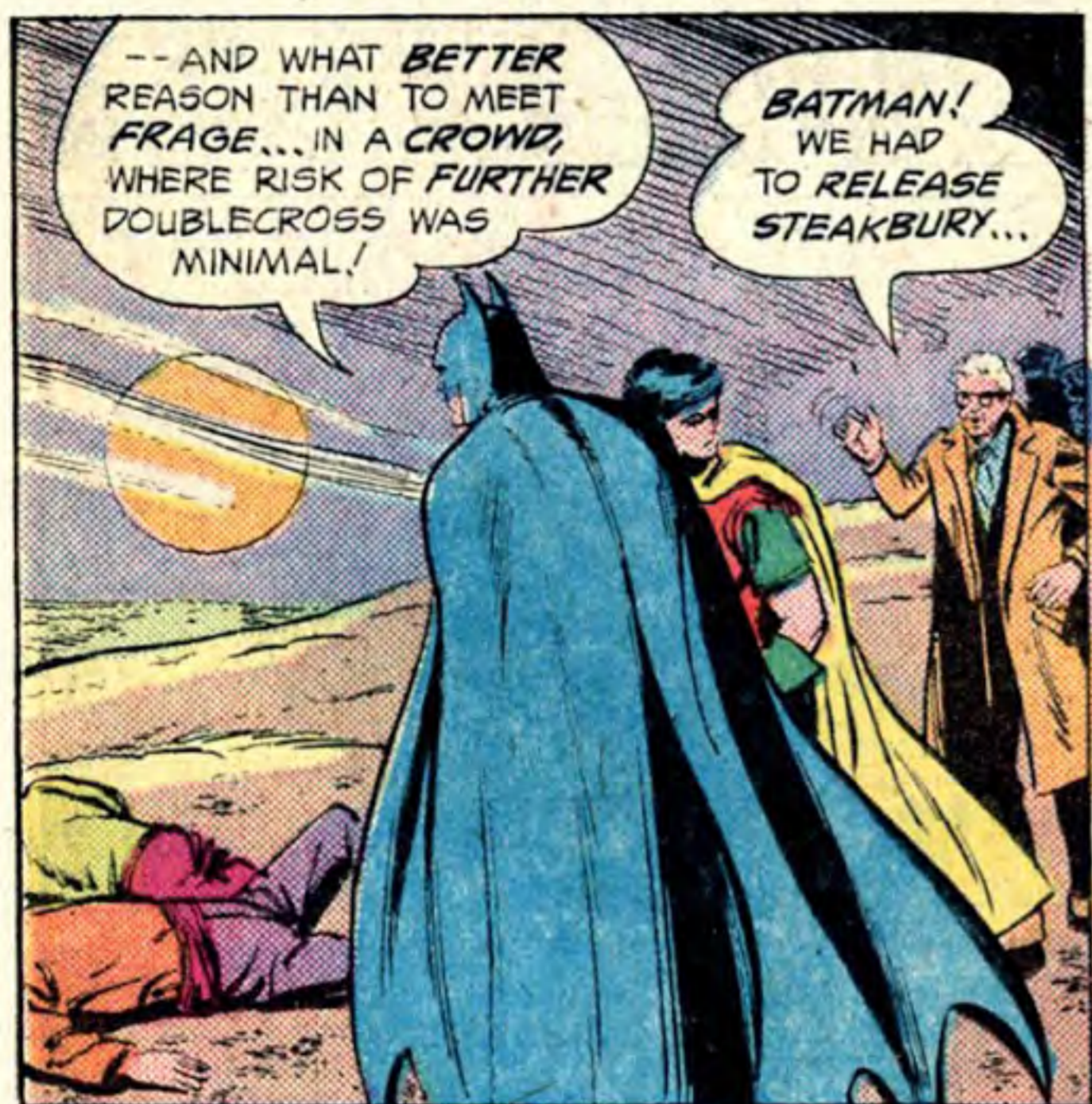
STEAKBURY WAS DOUBLECROSSING THE JOKER--?



SURE! THE JOKER HAD TO LEAVE HIS LOOT WITH SOMEONE... AND HIS ATTORNEY WAS THE LOGICAL CHOICE!

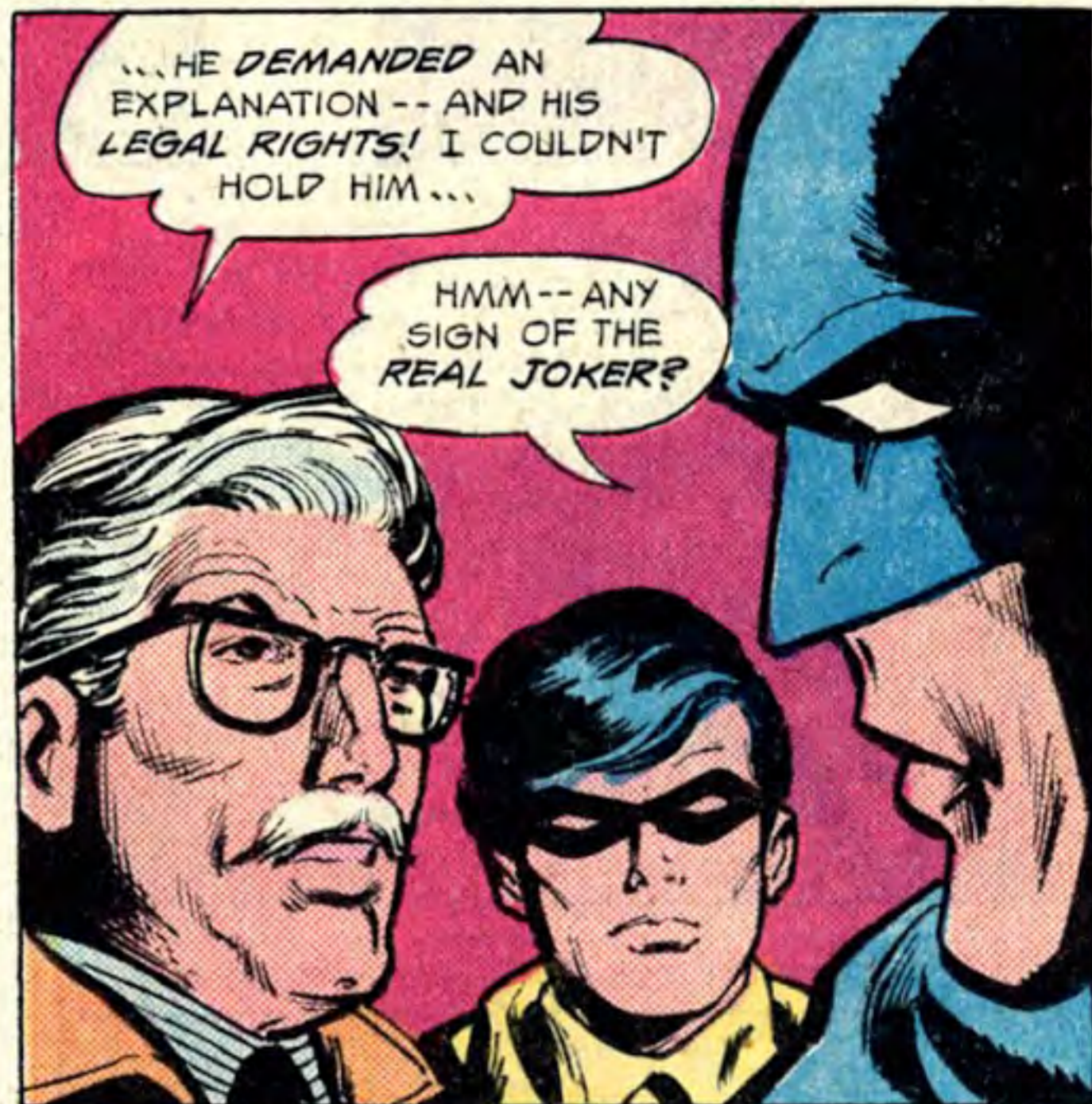
STEAKBURY PROBABLY PLANS TO SKIP THE COUNTRY... HE NEEDED HIS ILL-GOTTEN GAINS IN SMALL, PORTABLE FORM! JEWELS ARE THE PERFECT ANSWER!

HE WOULDN'T HAVE CHANCED ATTENDING THIS MASQUERADE WITH THE JOKER LOOSE UNLESS HE HAD A GOOD REASON--



-- AND WHAT BETTER REASON THAN TO MEET FRAGE... IN A CROWD, WHERE RISK OF FURTHER DOUBLECROSS WAS MINIMAL!

BATMAN! WE HAD TO RELEASE STEAKBURY...



... HE DEMANDED AN EXPLANATION -- AND HIS LEGAL RIGHTS! I COULDN'T HOLD HIM...

HMM-- ANY SIGN OF THE REAL JOKER?



ABSOLUTELY NONE! YOU COULD'VE BEEN WRONG ABOUT HIM SHOWING UP HERE, BATMAN!

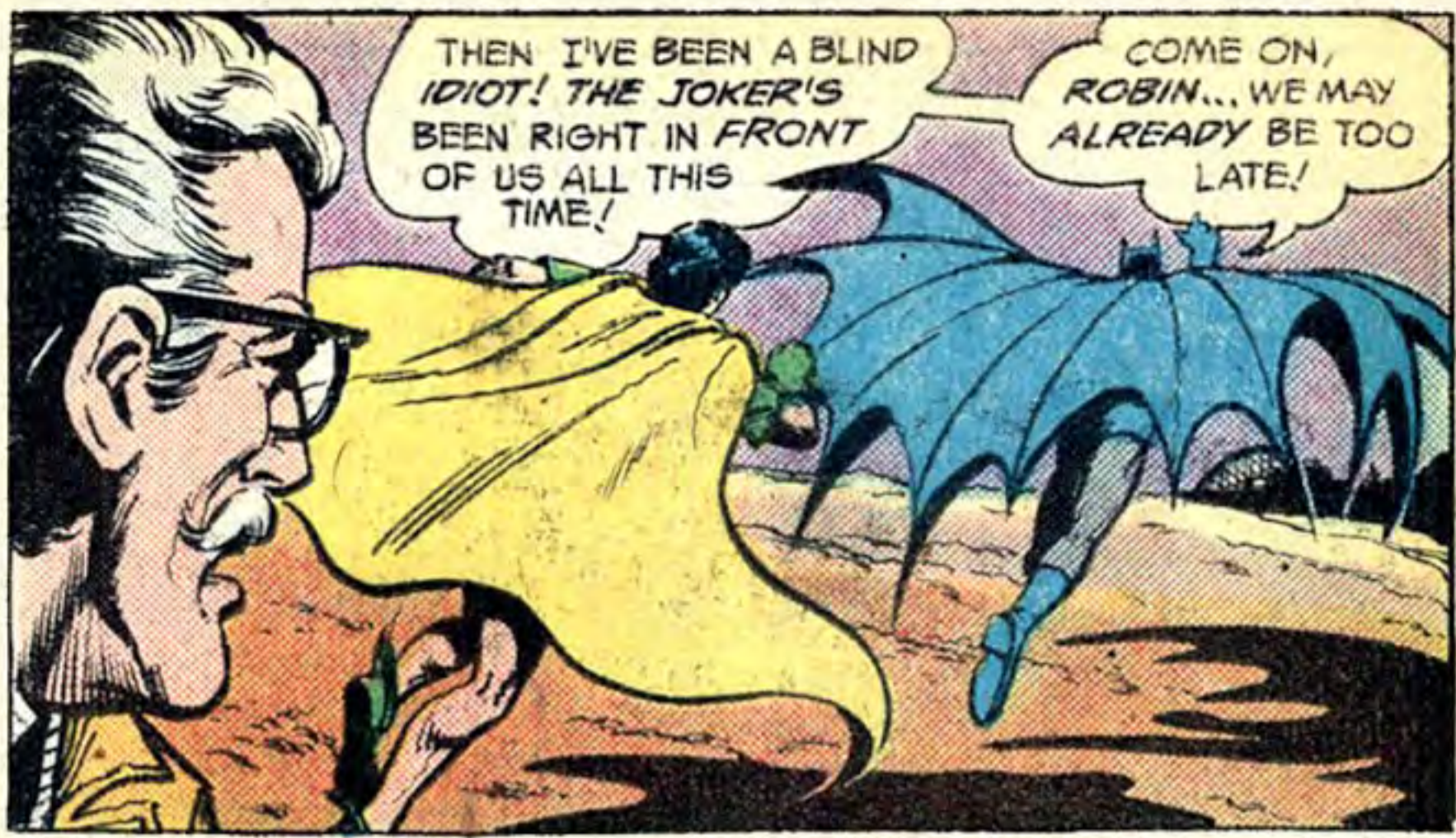
I WISH I COULD BE CERTAIN OF THAT! SOMETHING'S GNAWING AT THE BACK OF MY MIND...



COMMISSIONER... WAS THERE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT OF DR. TUGWELL'S DEATH?

WHY... NO! I CONSULTED WITH THE STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL! IT WAS DECIDED TO HUSH IT UP, TILL THE JOKER WAS RECAPTURED...

...THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE SO BIZARRE...



THEN I'VE BEEN A BLIND IDIOT! THE JOKER'S BEEN RIGHT IN FRONT OF US ALL THIS TIME!

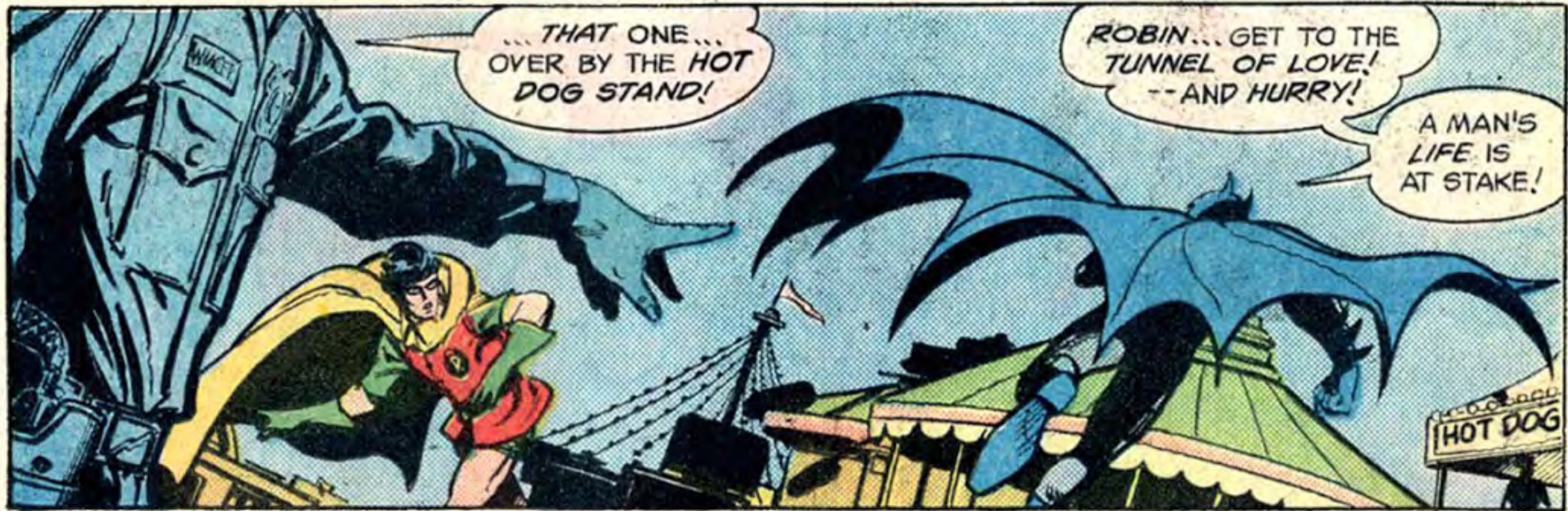
COME ON, ROBIN... WE MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE!



THE HOUR IS LATE! ONLY A FEW SCATTERED CELEBRANTS REMAIN IN THE PLAYGROUND AS THE BATMAN AND ROBIN RUSH TO A UNIFORMED OFFICER...

HAS STEAKBURY GONE YET?

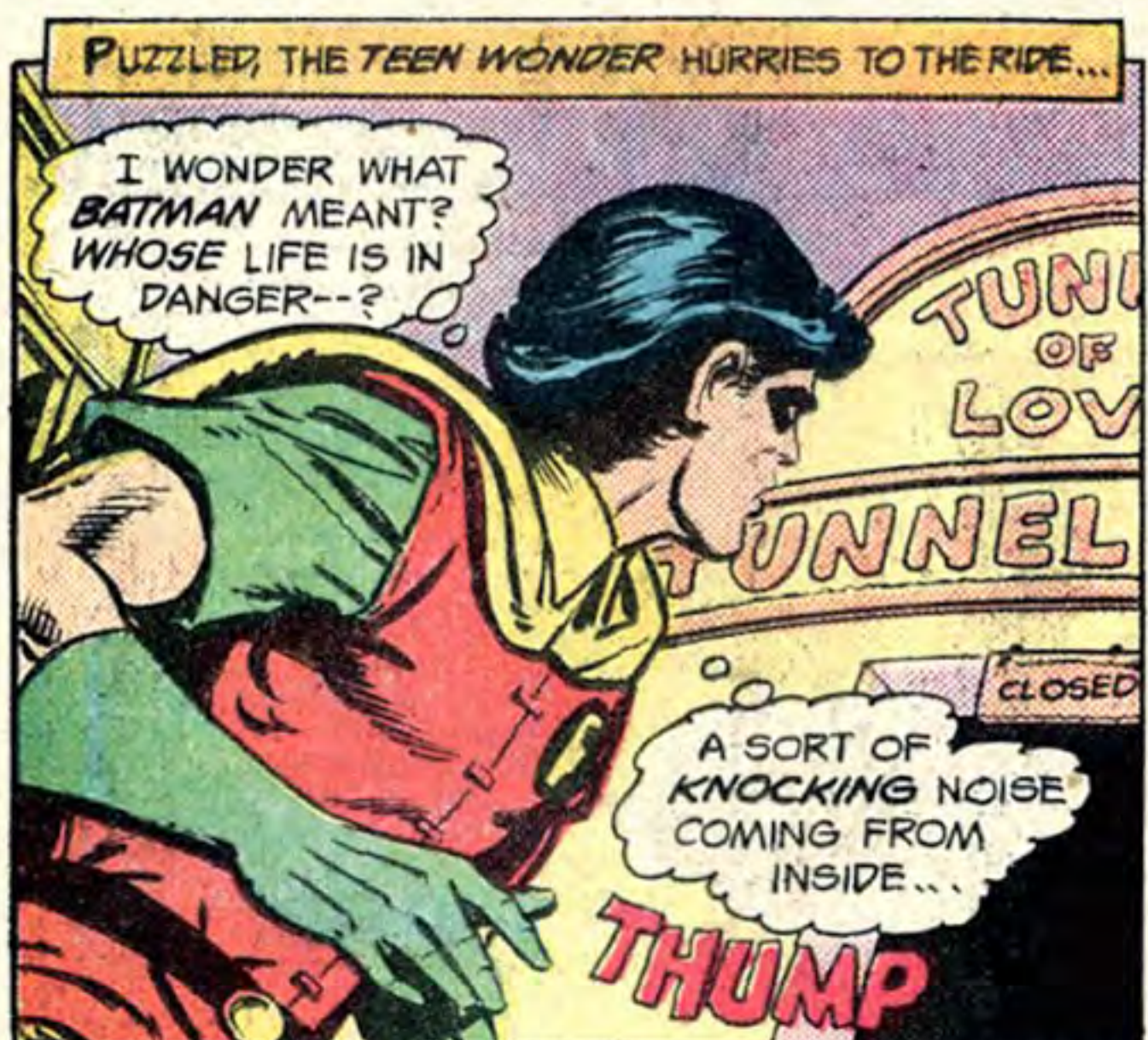
DON'T THINK SO... HE WAS CALLED TO THE PHONE BY ONE OF THE ATTENDANTS...



... THAT ONE ... OVER BY THE HOT DOG STAND!

ROBIN... GET TO THE TUNNEL OF LOVE! -- AND HURRY!

A MAN'S LIFE IS AT STAKE!



PUZZLED, THE TEEN WONDER HURRIES TO THE RIDE...

I WONDER WHAT BATMAN MEANT? WHOSE LIFE IS IN DANGER--?

A SORT OF KNOCKING NOISE COMING FROM INSIDE...

THUMP



HARD TO MAKE ANYTHING OUT IN THIS DARK!

HMM-- I CAN SEE ONE OF THE BOATS--!

IT LOOKS HALF-SUNKEN...

... AND THERE'S SOMEONE IN IT--



-- BOUND AND GAGGED!

STEADY, MISTER... I'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE IN A MOMENT!



WE'LL TAKE THIS GAG FROM YOUR MOUTH AND REMOVE THOSE BONDS!

THANK GOD YOU ARRIVED--! IT WAS HORRIBLE!



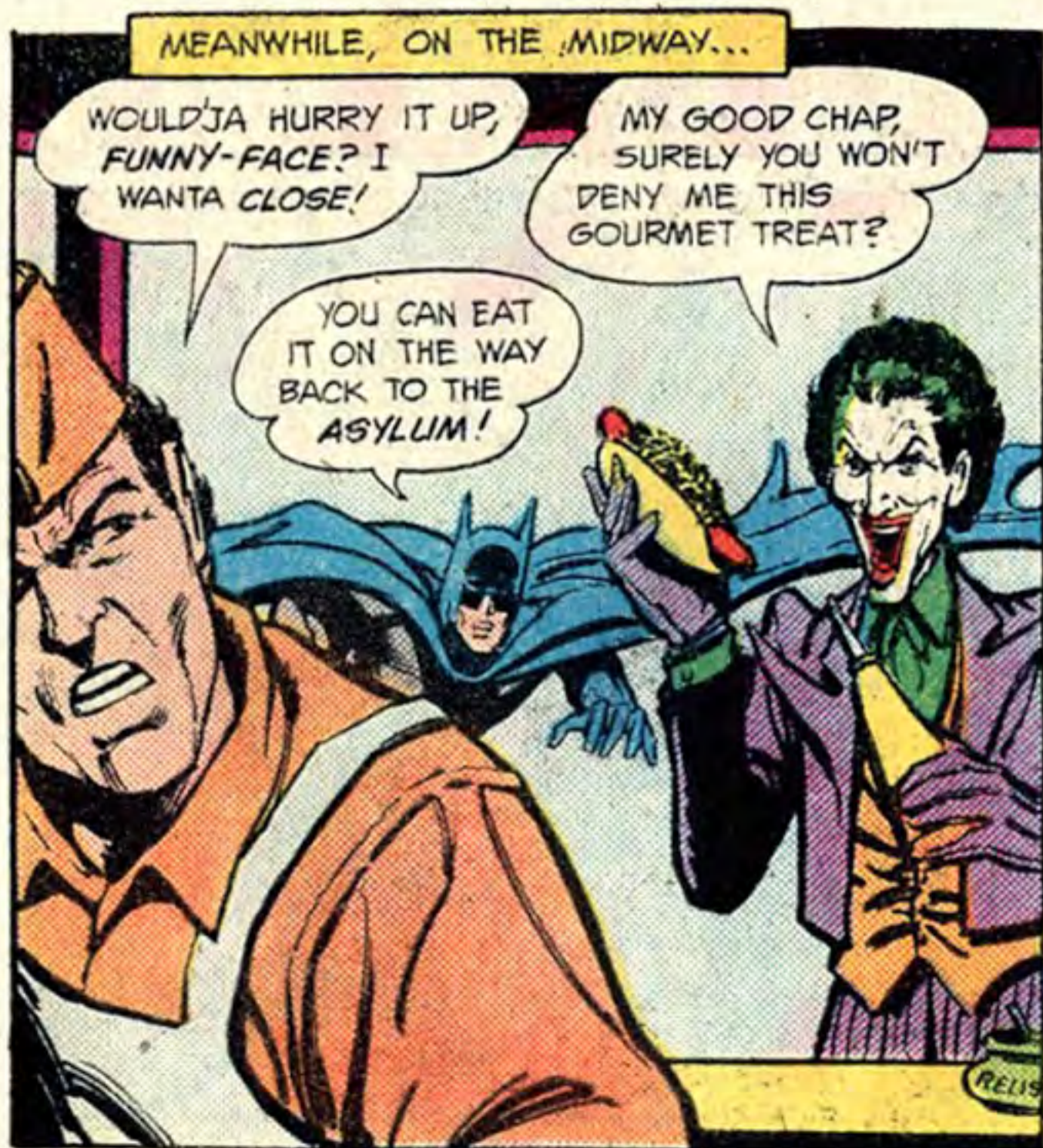
HE... HE... TOLD ME I HAD A CALL... AND WHEN WE WERE OUT OF SIGHT, HE HIT ME... SAID HE'D HEARD ABOUT MY DEAL WITH FRAGE...



... PUT ME IN THE BOAT... BORED HOLES IN THE BOTTOM... LEFT ME TO DROWN...



... AND ALL THE WHILE, HE WAS LAUGHING... LAUGHING...

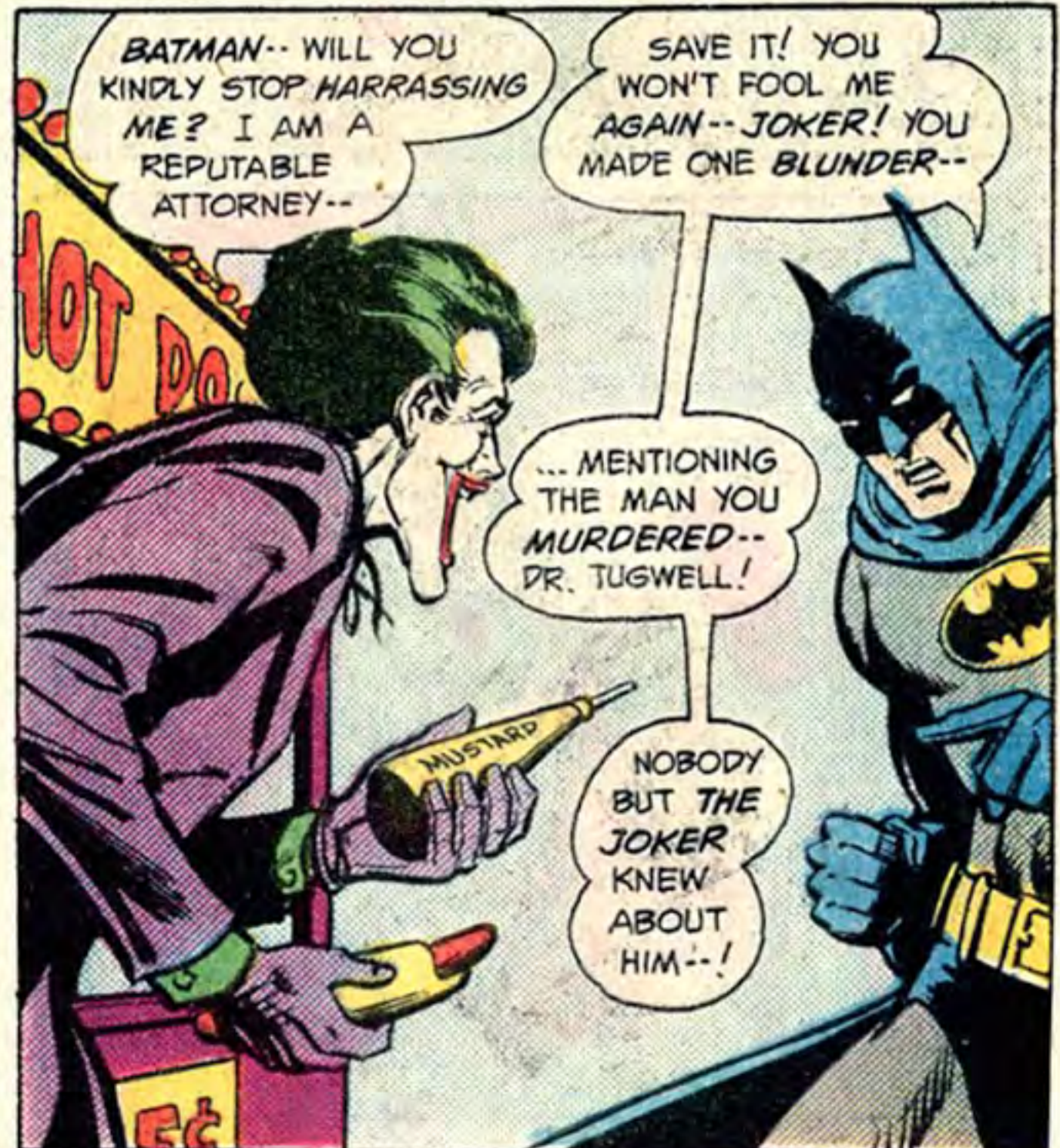


MEANWHILE, ON THE MIDWAY...

WOULD'JA HURRY IT UP, FUNNY-FACE? I WANTA CLOSE!

MY GOOD CHAP, SURELY YOU WON'T DENY ME THIS GOURMET TREAT?

YOU CAN EAT IT ON THE WAY BACK TO THE ASYLUM!

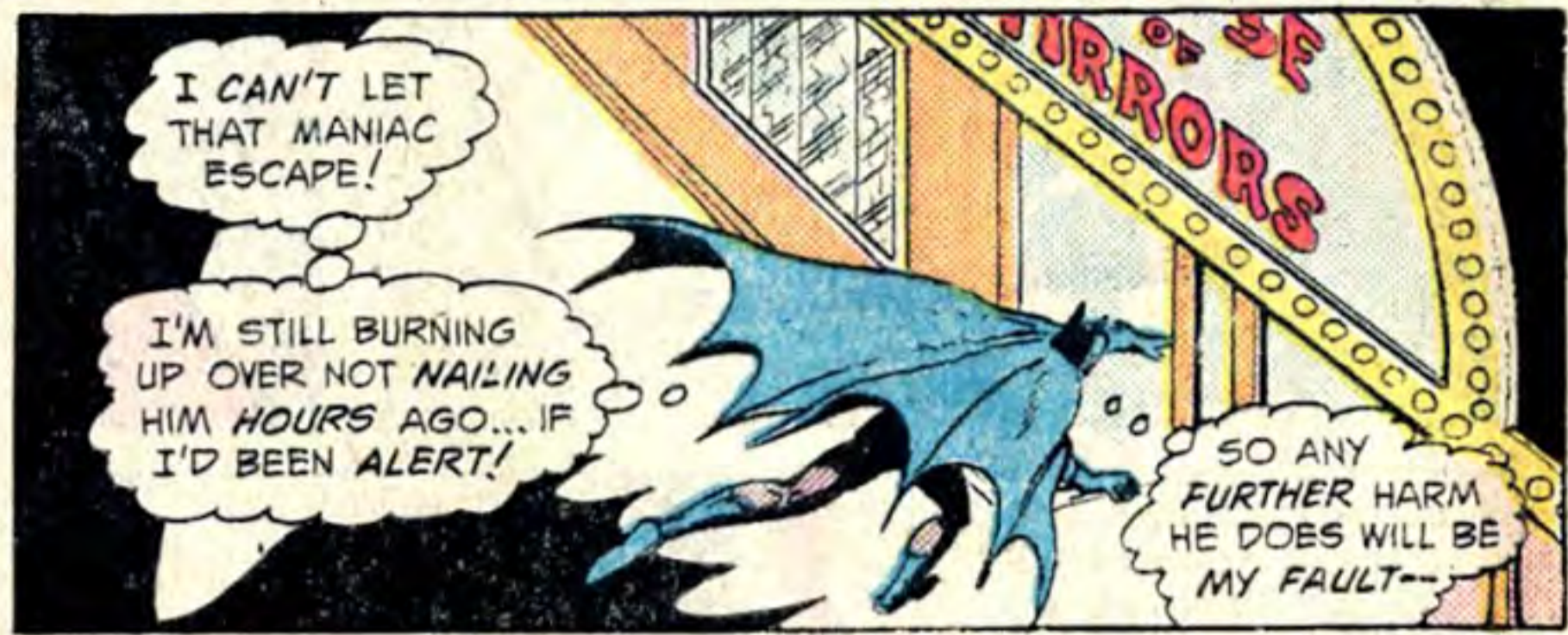


BATMAN-- WILL YOU KINDLY STOP HARRASSING ME? I AM A REPUTABLE ATTORNEY--

SAVE IT! YOU WON'T FOOL ME AGAIN-- JOKER! YOU MADE ONE BLUNDER--

... MENTIONING THE MAN YOU MURDERED-- DR. TUGWELL!

NOBODY BUT THE JOKER KNEW ABOUT HIM--!





WHEN THE WHIRLING LIGHT POINTS IN THIS DIRECTION... ALL THE JOKERS BLINK! WHICH GIVES ME--



--THE CLUE I NEED TO THE REAL CLOWN!

CONFOUND YOU--!



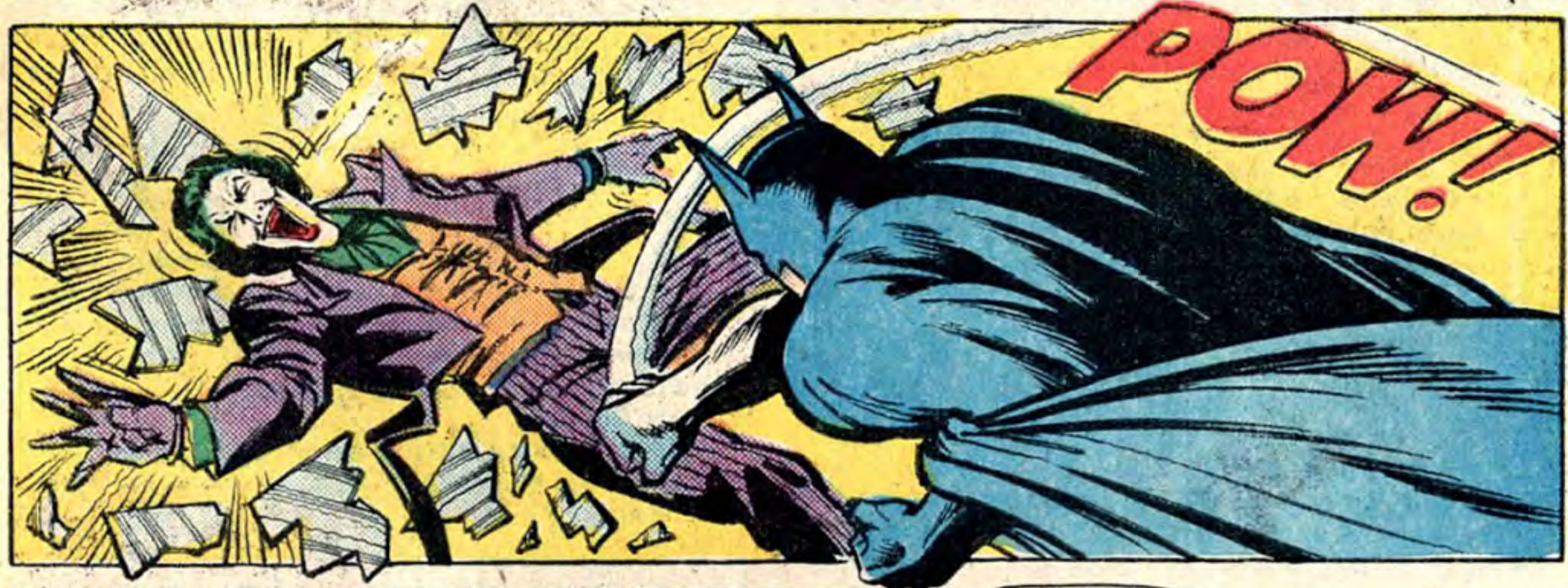
I'LL NOT RETURN TO THAT PADDED CELL!



I'LL SQUEEZE THE BREATH FROM YOU FIRST--MUCH AS I LOATHE SUCH UNIMAGINATIVE MURDER METHODS!



ZAP!



POW!

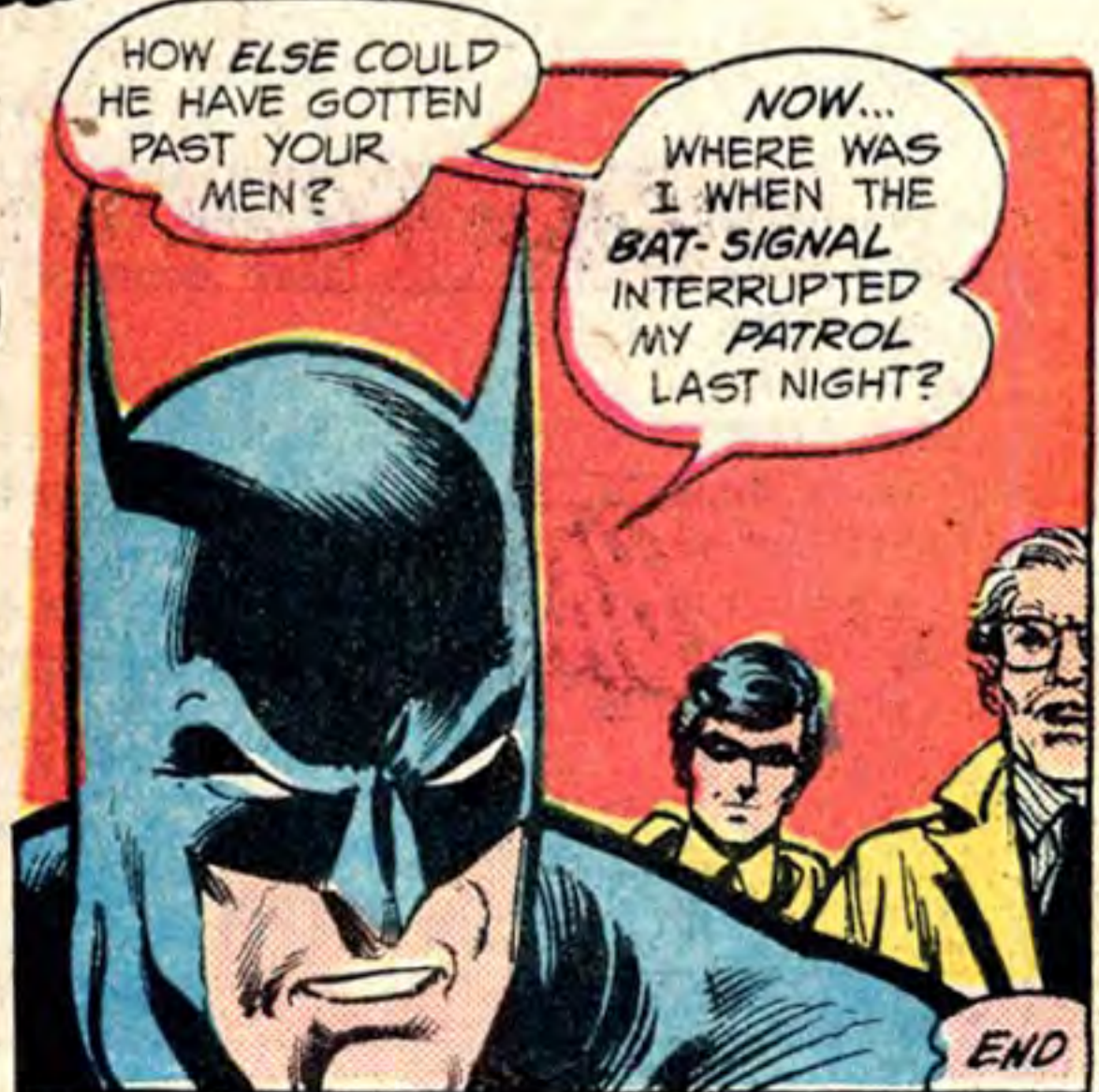


BEAUTIFUL, BATMAN! THE NEATEST PUNCH YOU'VE EVER THROWN!

AND, AS USUAL, YOU'VE PROVEN YOURSELF A BRILLIANT DETECTIVE!

NOT REALLY, COMMISSIONER! I SHOULD'VE KNOWN THE JOKER WAS DISGUISED AS AN ATTENDANT...

...AS SOON AS YOU SAID THE INVITATIONS WERE ALL ACCOUNTED FOR!



HOW ELSE COULD HE HAVE GOTTEN PAST YOUR MEN?

NOW... WHERE WAS I WHEN THE BAT-SIGNAL INTERRUPTED MY PATROL LAST NIGHT?

END