



BATMAN

THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

ED BRUBAKER / DOUG MAHNKE / PATRICK ZIRCHER / AARON SOWD



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I get to the scene a little after four a.m., just as they're bringing out the first body...



Vincent and Maroni both have nearly twenty years in on the force, and they look like they just had their guts ripped out.



A paramedic nearly drops the stretcher because he can't stop himself from throwing up.




What the hell is happening to my city?




HOW MANY MORE LIKE THAT INSIDE?

EIGHT OR NINE, AT LEAST... COULDN'T SAY FOR SURE, CAPTAIN.






Three hours ago a homeless veteran stumbled into this abandoned factory, looking for shelter from the storm...




Poor soul.



Beat cop found him running down Broadway screaming his lungs out ten minutes later.

I don't blame him. I've been in combat, seen plenty of dead bodies...



...But I've never seen anything like this.

Still, I'm not all that surprised, all the changes Gotham's been through in the last year...

Like the Batman trying to wage a one-man war on crime and corruption.

Helped me take down a lot of crooked cops and got the mob's hand from around the city's throat. For a while, at least.

**O'NEIL
IN LINE**

BAT-MAN!
Fact or Fiction?

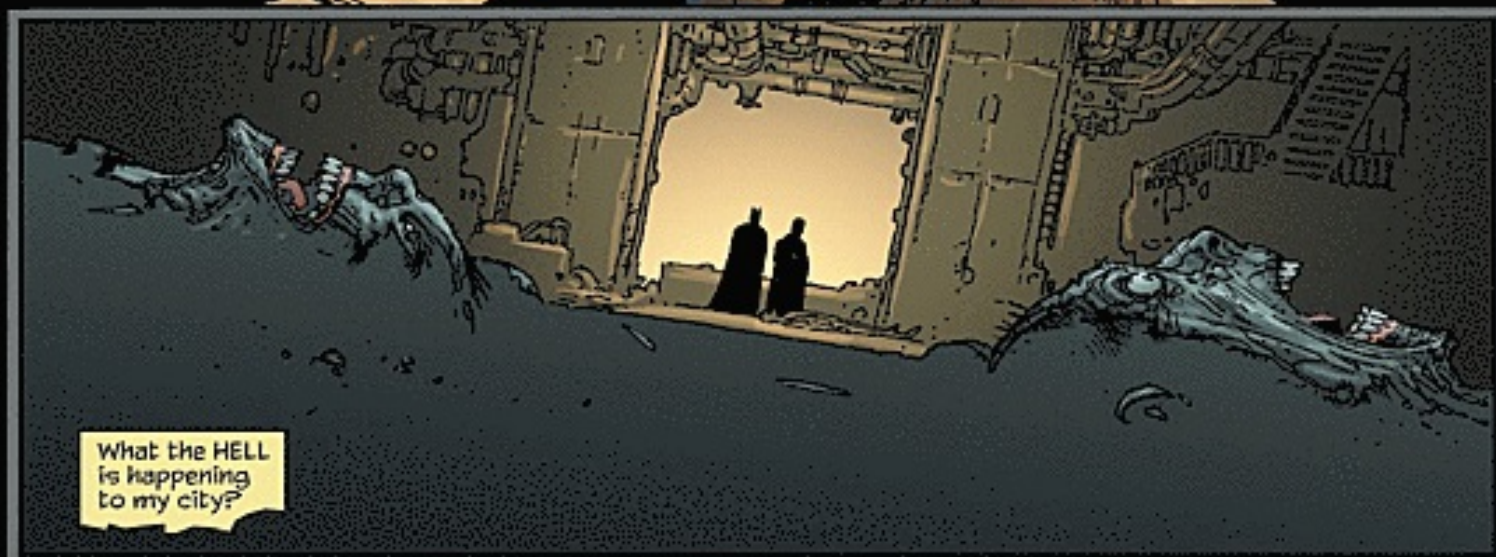
But in the end, no matter how you look at it, the landscape of the city has changed.

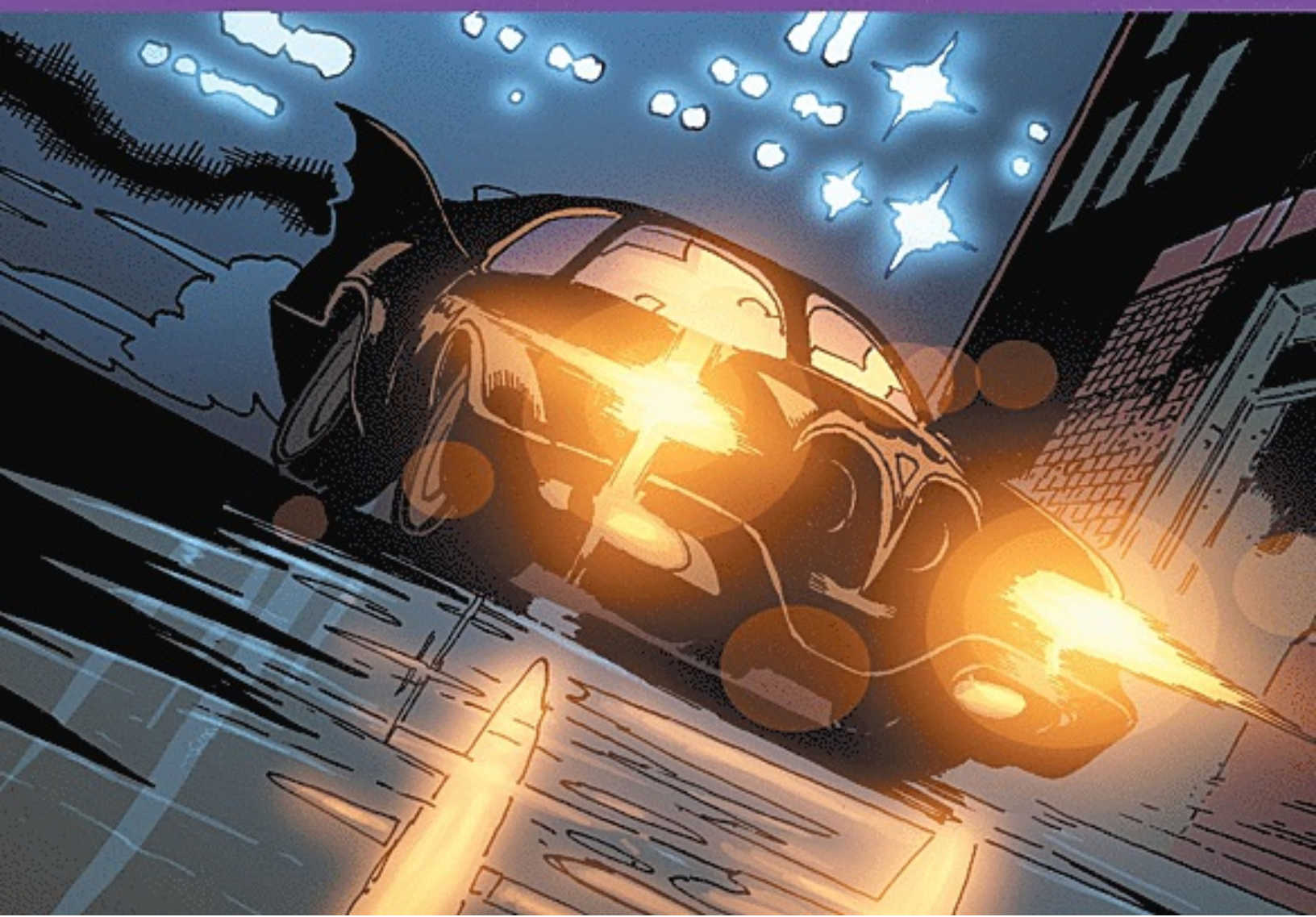
That Red Hood character a few months back was the first sign.

Fool running around in a costume taking down scores. Disappeared the first time he got a look at Batman, though.

But since then, it's just been a waiting game. Waiting for more of these freaks to start crawling out of the woodwork.









Stop it, you're killing me!

Even at the very beginning of his crime-fighting career, the Batman has already seen plenty of humanity's dark side — but it's nothing compared to what is about to emerge, giggling, from the shadows: a grinning, chalk-faced figure whose madness threatens to overwhelm everything that stands in its way.

For Gotham City's new defender, this first encounter with the creature called the Joker will be the ultimate trial by fire — a battle that will define his long struggle against the forces of chaos and insanity.

Years later, those same forces will erupt again from a wholly unexpected direction — and ghosts of the past, both good and evil, will have to face the harsh light of inquiry before they can finally rest.

Eisner and Harvey Award-winning writer **Ed Brubaker** (*GOTHAM CENTRAL*, *Captain America*) returns to Gotham's mean streets for two riveting tales of the World's Greatest Detective, accompanied by acclaimed artists **Doug Mahnke** (*JLA*, *The Mask*), **Patrick Zircher** (*NIGHTWING*, *Iron Man*) and **Aaron Sowd** (*THE BATMAN CHRONICLES*, *The Uncanny X-Men*).