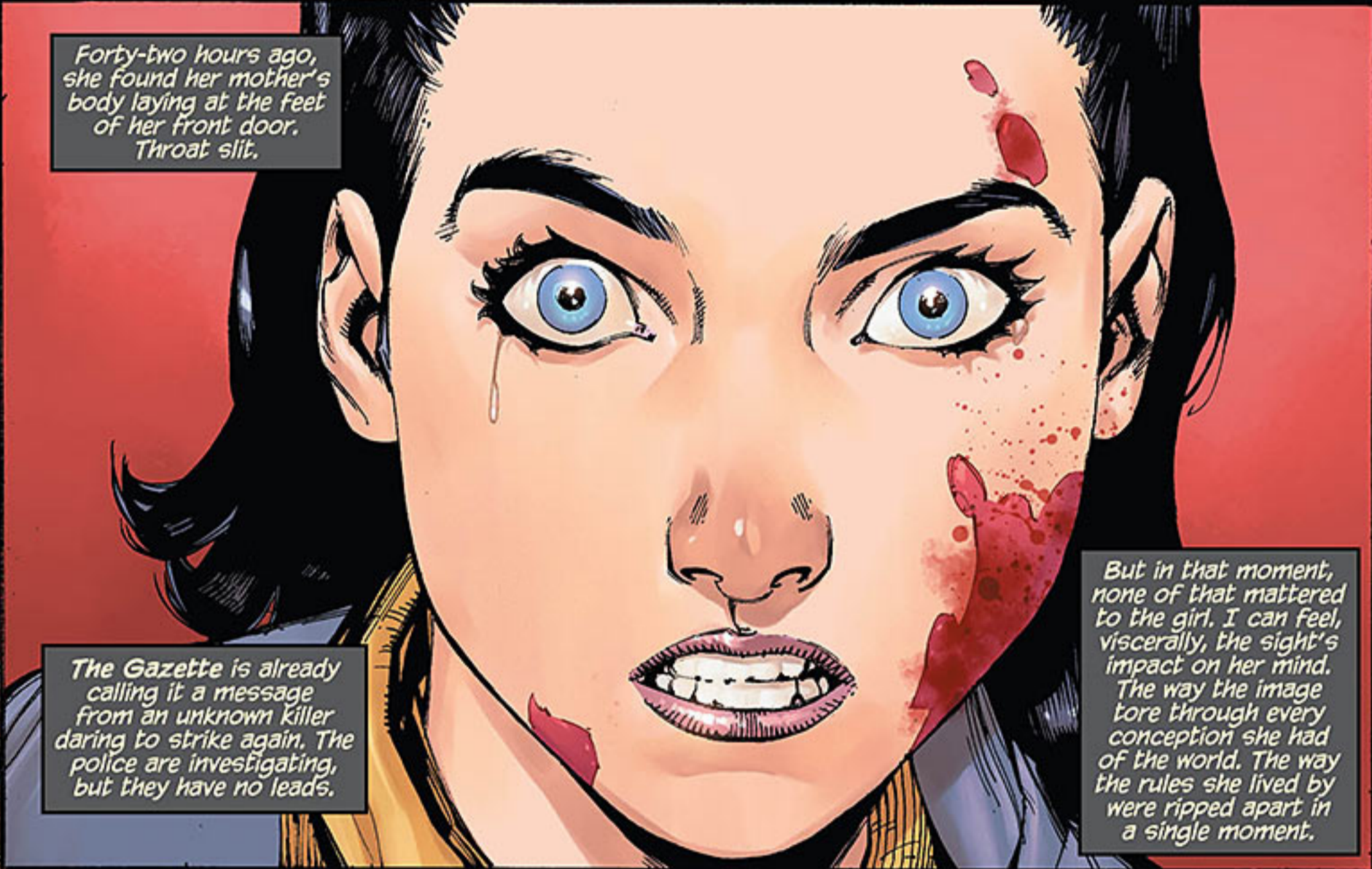


Look closely, and you can see the fire in her eyes.

Not a lack of focus, but a tightening. The world around her has changed inexorably, and she understands now that everything and everyone demands more scrutiny.

Forty-two hours ago, she found her mother's body laying at the feet of her front door. Throat slit.

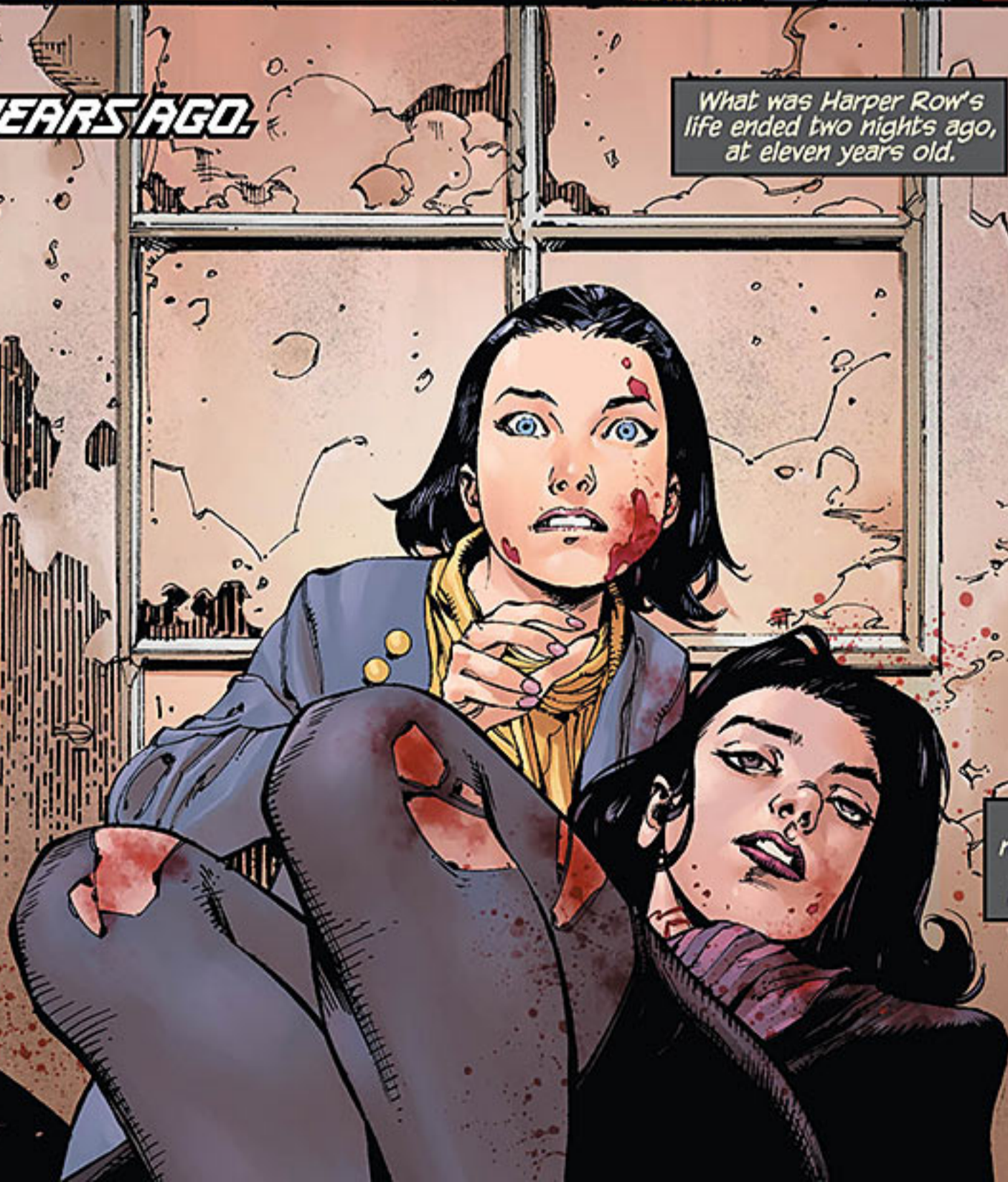


The Gazette is already calling it a message from an unknown killer daring to strike again. The police are investigating, but they have no leads.

But in that moment, none of that mattered to the girl. I can feel, viscerally, the sight's impact on her mind. The way the image tore through every conception she had of the world. The way the rules she lived by were ripped apart in a single moment.

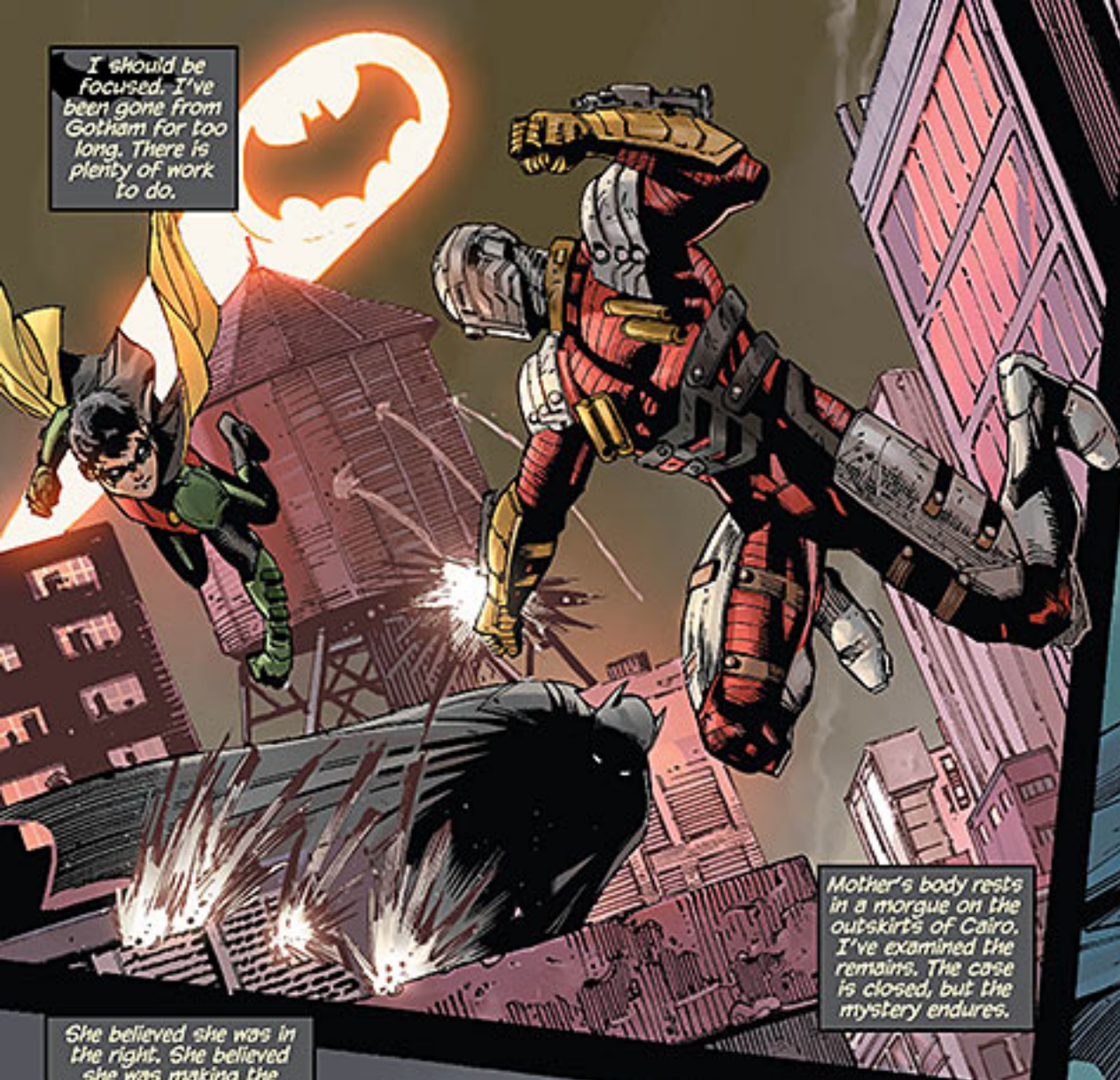
**GOTHAM SEVERAL YEARS AGO.**

What was Harper Row's life ended two nights ago, at eleven years old.



What her life will be rests in my hands. The parting gift from an unparalleled monster.

I should be focused. I've been gone from Gotham for too long. There is plenty of work to do.



Mother's body rests in a morgue on the outskirts of Cairo. I've examined the remains. The case is closed, but the mystery endures.

She believed she was in the right. She believed she was making the next generation stronger under her influence. She believed she could engineer perfection.



And that I, unwittingly, supported her goals.

That Robin is no different than her own Children, molded in my image instead of hers. There's an uncomfortable truth to it, right at the heart.



With the girl, three words keep rattling through my mind. "Mother chose well." I've read Harper's transcripts, teacher evaluations, notes from meetings with counselors.

If I were to choose a canvas on which to build a perfect partner, it would look like Harper Row. Every time my mind goes to that dark place, I feel sick, deep in my soul.

And I ask myself the bigger question, the one I can't begin to wrap my mind around.



How could a person do something like this? How could she build an empire of trauma?

And why?



# BATMAN & ROBIN ETERNAL A MOTHER'S STORY

**JAMES TYNION IV & SCOTT SNYDER** Story  
**JAMES TYNION IV** Script **TONY S. DANIEL** Pencils  
**SANDU FLOREA** Inks **TOMEU MOREY** Colors  
**DAVE SHARPE** Letters  
**TONY DANIEL & TOMEU MOREY** Cover  
**DAVE WIELGOSZ** Asst. Editor **CHRIS CONROY** Editor  
**MARK DOYLE** Group Editor  
BATMAN created by **BOB KANE** with **BILL FINGER**



UH, BRUCE... SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND? YOU'VE GOT A BIT OF AN EDGE TO YOU TONIGHT, I'VE GOTTA SAY.

YES, ACTUALLY.



I NEED TO GO BACK TO EUROPE. TIE UP SOME LOOSE ENDS.

LOOSE ENDS? CRANE IS LOCKED UP IN ARKHAM... SCARECROW'S NOT GOING TO HURT ANYBODY ELSE. WHAT'S LEFT TO TIE UP? WE LITERALLY TIED UP THE BAD GUY.

LIKE, WITH A ROPE.



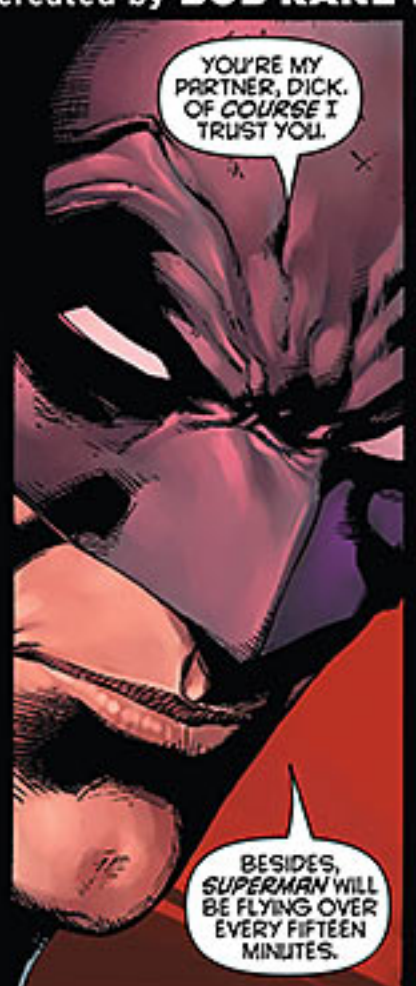
JUST A SUSPICION THAT I WANT TO SCRATCH.

WANT ME TO TAG ALONG?

NO. I NEED YOU HERE.



YOU'RE TRUSTING ME WITH THE CITY?



YOU'RE MY PARTNER, DICK. OF COURSE I TRUST YOU.

BESIDES, SUPERMAN WILL BE FLYING OVER EVERY FIFTEEN MINUTES.



THIS IS HOW BATMAN TAKES A VACATION, ISN'T IT? LEAVE THE KID IN CHARGE, AND DUCK OUT TO SOME FANCY MANSION IN THE FOOTHILLS OF SOME BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN FOR SOME RER.

THAT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT I HAVE IN MIND.