

I THOUGHT I WAS SO *READY*. EVERY DAY AT HOME WAS A KIND OF BOOT CAMP...THE *REAL DEAL* COULDN'T BE MUCH WORSE.

BUT IT WAS.

"I THOUGHT I KNEW MYSELF. MY LIMITS. MY POTENTIAL.

"BUT EVERY DAY, *DRILL SERGEANT TATE* TOLD ME EXACTLY HOW *WRONG* I WAS. THAT I WAS *WORTHLESS*. THAT I WAS AN *IDIOT* FOR EVEN *TRYING*.

"I'D MADE THE *MISTAKE* OF TELLING HIM WHAT I WANTED. TO BE A *LEADER*, LIKE MY FATHER. *TATE* NEVER LET ME LIVE IT DOWN.

"ON OUR FIRST NIGHT OF FREEDOM, I DROVE FOR HOURS. I NEEDED TO BE BY MYSELF. ASK SOME HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT I WANTED...IF THIS LIFE WAS FOR ME.

"I FOUND A BAR WITH SOME LIVE MUSIC, AND SAT IN THE BACK, WHERE I COULD CLOSE MY EYES AND JUST FEEL THE SINGER'S VOICE CUT DEEP...

"...WHEN I HEARD *SERGEANT TATE* CLEAR HIS THROAT BEHIND ME."

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY I DID IT?

"HE SAW HOW TENSE I GOT AND HE LAUGHED TO HIMSELF. A QUIET LAUGH. *KINDER* THAN I EXPECTED."

SOMETIMES YOU *NEED* TO SHOUT UNTIL THEY CRY...BECAUSE WHEN *THEIR* LIVES AND THE LIVES OF *EVERYONE* AROUND THEM DEPEND ON IT, AND THEY JUST WANT TO BREAK...

...THEY'LL *KNOW* THEY CAN TAKE CONTROL. THEY'LL KNOW THEY CAN *LEAD*.

SOME FOLKS THINK IT'S ABOUT WHITTLING YOU *DOWN* TO FOLLOW ORDERS, BUT TO ME...

IT'S ABOUT KNOWING YOU CAN GIVE ORDERS TO *YOURSELF* AND OTHERS THROUGH THE WORST OF IT.

THROUGH THE *REAL HURT*.

RISE OF THE BATMEN

PART THREE

ARMY OF SHADOWS

WHENEVER THINGS GOT HARD IN TRAINING, I WOULD HEAR TATE'S VOICE IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. I WAS PUSHING TOWARDS WHAT I WANTED. THE FUTURE I'D ALWAYS SEEN FOR MYSELF.

BUT THE DAY I WAS DISHONORABLY DISCHARGED FOR WHO I WAS, THE LIFE I'D WANTED WAS OVER. THERE WAS NO PATH LEFT FOR ME.

KATE... WHY AM I HERE?

I DON'T KNOW, RENEE. MAYBE I'M TRYING TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT, AND I JUST THOUGHT...

YOU THOUGHT YOU'D DRAG ME INTO IT.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT I'M DOING RIGHT NOW, RENEE. I REALLY CAN'T. BUT I KNOW IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I DO IN MY LIFE.

I'M FINALLY GETTING THE CHANCE I NEVER HAD WITH THE MILITARY...

BUT IT'S NOT WORKING. I FEEL LIKE MY HANDS ARE TIED BEHIND MY BACK.

NO... SORRY, THANKS FOR THE DRINK, BUT NO.

LOOK, WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE GOING THROUGH...

...JUST TRUST YOURSELF. ALL RIGHT? YOU ALWAYS GO OUT DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS. YOU TURN TO SOMEONE ELSE TO TRY AND HELP YOU MAKE YOUR CHOICE FOR YOU.

I DON'T THINK I--

YOU PUT ON A GOOD FACE. REALLY, YOU DO. EVERYONE ELSE SEES THE HARDENED KATE KANE.

BUT YOU LET ONE OR TWO OF US IN SOMETIMES... AND THEN YOU MAKE A CALL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT SAYING YOU NEED TO TALK, AND YOU LAY DOWN SOME VAGUE RIDDLES, HOPING FOR AN ANSWER.

BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LEADER.

AND YOU MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS WHEN YOU JUST LISTEN TO YOURSELF.

EVEN IF THOSE DECISIONS ARE WHY WE'RE NOT TOGETHER ANYMORE.

I'M NEEDED BACK AT THE PRECINCT.

HOW DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER?

THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. I NEED YOU IN THE BELFRY, NOW.

HOW BAD IS IT?

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 RAUL FERNANDEZ Inks BRAD ANDERSON Colors MARILYN PATRIZIO Letters
 ALVARO MARTINEZ, RAUL FERNANDEZ & TOMER MOREY Cover
 RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE Variant Cover
 DAVE WIELGOSZ Asst. Editor CHRIS CONROY Editor
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PRETTY DAMN BAD.

MY GOD...

THEY BEAT BATMAN.

