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Batman: The Dark Knight Returns

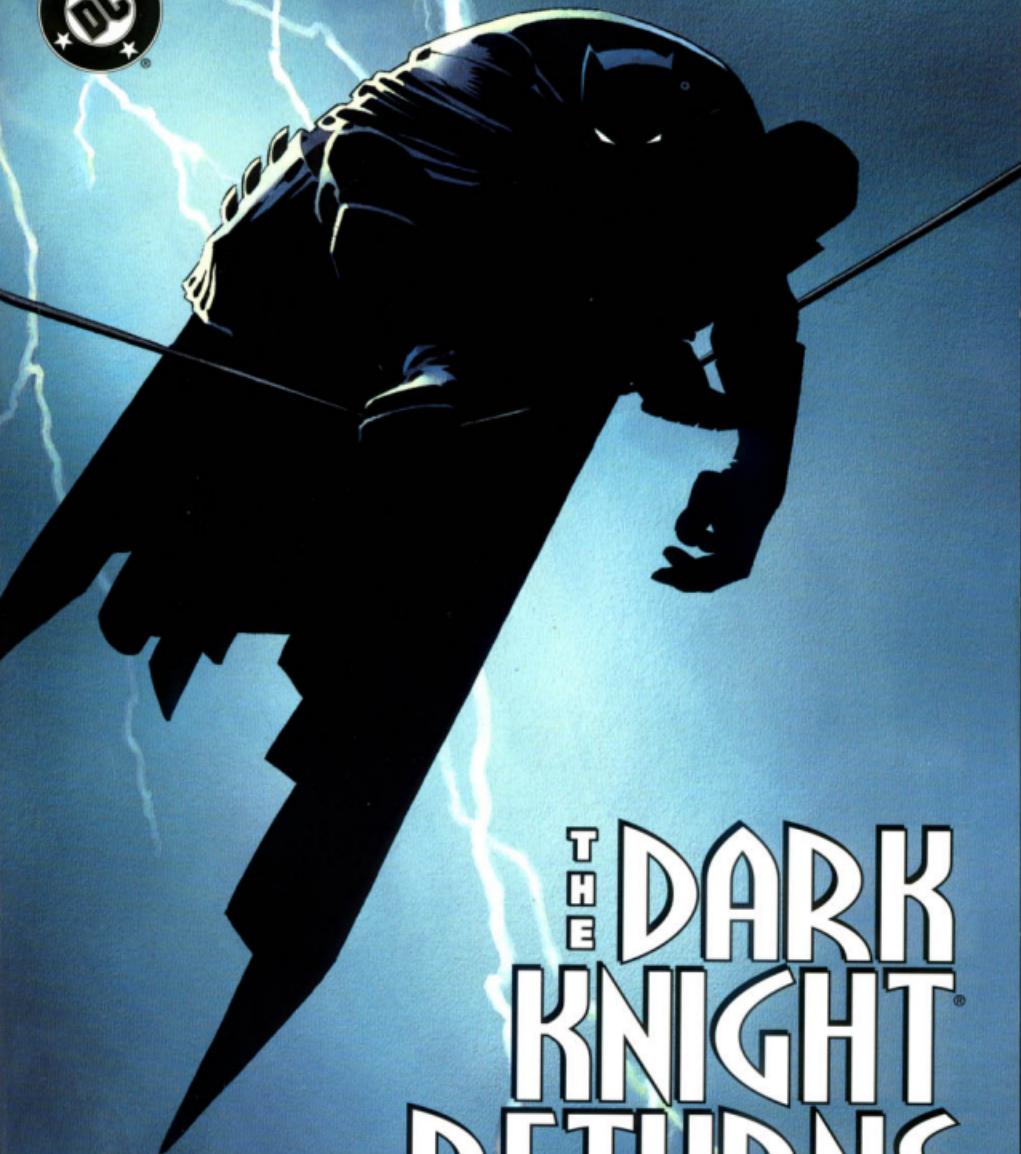


**Batman: The Dark Knight Returns 1 - 4
(1986)**

**Frank Miller (Writer)
Frank Miller, Klaus Janson (Artists)**



BATMAN®



THE DARK KNIGHT®
RETURNS

TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

FRANK MILLER
WITH KLAUS JANSON
AND LYNN VARLEY



THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS



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BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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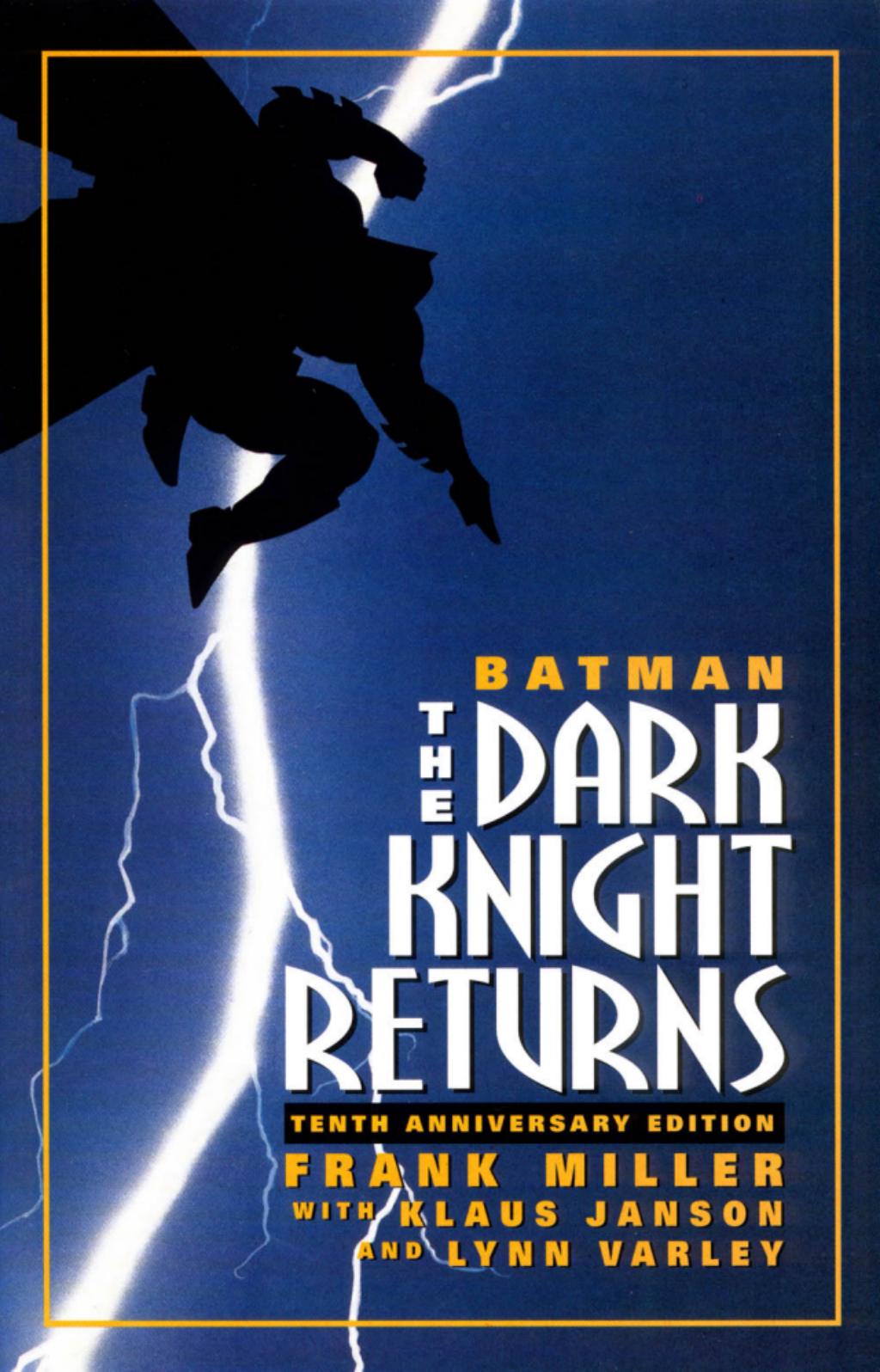
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DC Comics, 1700 Broadway,
New York, NY 10019

A division of Warner Bros. -
A Time Warner Entertainment Company
Printed in Canada. First Printing.
ISBN: 1-56389-341-X (Hardcover)
ISBN: 1-56389-342-8 (Trade Paperback)

Hardcover Anniversary Edition
cover illustration by Frank Miller.
Hardcover cover illustration
by Frank Miller and Klaus Janson.
Color art by Klaus Janson.
Trade Paperback cover illustration
by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley.

A large, dark silhouette of Batman is shown in flight, his cape billowing behind him. He is positioned against a bright, jagged lightning bolt that cuts diagonally across the page. The background is a deep blue.

BATMAN THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

FRANK MILLER
WITH KLAUS JANSON
AND LYNN VARLEY

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DARK KNIGHT DAYS

BY FRANK MILLER
16 SEPTEMBER 1996

1963. (OR IS IT '64? THE EXACT YEAR IS UNCERTAIN. BUT THE MEMORY IS VIVID.)

A department store in Vermont. I'm 6 (or 7) years old. I come across an 80-page Giant comic starring Batman. I open it. I look it over. I fall in.

I wish I'd kept a diary. But who could've known? Nobody, that's who.

Well, maybe Dick Giordano. Maybe Dick had some idea where all this might take us. He was editor-in-chief of DC Comics at the time, and he'd been pushing this Batman thing for many a month. Whether Dick saw what might come of it or not, he was relentless. He was fixated.

1984. In any number of restaurants and hotel bars. Many times. Dick Giordano says sure, Batman's sales are flat. But look at what happens any time somebody conducts one of those reader surveys in the fanzines. Batman's just about everybody's favorite character. The time is more than ripe for a high-profile, all-out relaunch of the old war horse.

But that was just it: That was exactly what came to bother me about Batman. He wasn't old, damn him. Despite nearly fifty years of continuous publication, there he was, un wrinkled, handsome, perpetually twenty-nine. Never a kink in that tree-trunk neck. Never a moment fretting the possibility that his athletic prowess would ever fade. Perpetually young, younger than Magic Johnson or Michael Jordan. Impervious to time itself.

1985. My apartment in New York City. A sudden realization, and not a pleasant one. My thirtieth birthday is right around the corner. I'm poised to turn one year older than Batman.

I've come to accept, in recent years, that Spider-Man is younger than my little brother, but Batman? Batman? My favorite childhood hero? That lantern-jawed, ever-wise father figure? I'm actually gonna be older than Batman?

This was intolerable. Something had to be done.

Later that same year. On board an airplane headed for Texas. Dick Giordano and I sip white wine and talk. Enthusiastically, if clumsily, I lay out to him the collection of ideas I've got for this Batman thing he's wanted me to do. The central notion is to simply move Batman through time, and chronicle his last case. Move him through time, and, just by happenstance, make him once again much older than I am.

I fire a barrage of scenes at Dick. He urges me on. It's a raw, rambling narrative I hit him with, not yet a story at all, a mixed bag of cool things Batman will do and say that winds up with an ending that could never work — and even, should it work, is one DC would never publish.

At this stage, *THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS* is, to use the technical term, a mess. But it's a very enthusiastic mess. I'm red-hot to get started. And a good editor knows

when to let the process begin. Dick gives it a thumbs-up, no doubt praying he'll be able to keep me from doing too much damage.

Putting the team together was the easiest part. Your basic no-brainer. A piece of cake. When it came to working with other artists, I'd already been lucky as a fool, twice over.

My longtime partner Klaus Janson had brought a crackling energy and verve to my pencil art on Marvel Comics' *Daredevil*. By the time we'd finished our *Daredevil* run, Klaus had taken on the lion's share of the drawing, so much so that he took over as sole artist when I left the title. The question was whether he'd want to collaborate again. More luck: he did.

After leaving *Daredevil*, I went to work on my first comics novel, *RONIN*, published by DC Comics. Painter Lynn Varley joined me, and, chapter by chapter, set a brand-new standard of excellence in comic-book color. Lynn actually redefined the very role of color on the comic-book page, bringing such mood and temperature and draftsmanship to my linework that the black-and-white was plainly incomplete without her artistry. Even the story itself was a colder, unfinished thing before she took her brush to it. For color artists to come, Lynn raised the bar to the stratosphere.

A less visible member of the *RONIN* team was Bob Rozakis, DC production boss, who stayed up as late as we did during grueling press checks and solved countless unforeseen problems. This was an ambitious project and a wildly transitional time, and new challenges hit almost hourly. Bob's contribution was quiet, but crucial. With him on the job, we knew we could set our sights high.

Also crucial to the final look and feel of any book is the expertise of the art director. From the late Neal Pozner to Richard Bruning and onward, DC's made sure to have somebody awfully good in that position. As this edition should demonstrate, that's a practice DC continues to this day.

1977. DC President Jenette Kahn's apartment. A party. Curious to look over Jenette's collection of mystery novels, I run into an affable, witty fellow, writer Mike W. Barr. Almost instantly, a friendship begins. It doesn't take long before we find ourselves talking about Batman. Ideas fly back and forth. They will continue to fly just about every time Mike and I chat, for all the years to come.

1979. The editorial offices of Marvel Comics. "That's a Batman idea," says writer and then-editor Jo Duffy, responding to a scene I want to write into *Daredevil*. It's hardly the first time she's had to say that. Ever encouraging and expert in her suggestions, Jo is editor, colleague, consultant and friend. Of course, over the years to come, she has a lot to say about Batman.

Nothing is created in a vacuum, and brother! is that true when you're messing with a character who's loved by generations. Ideas flutter like muses through party chatter and dinner conversations and breaks in dime-ante poker games.

Leave us say if I were to try to list every other writer out there who had something to offer about Batman, there wouldn't be room in this volume for the story you're about to read.

It was a roller coaster ride, making DARK KNIGHT was, with lurching ups and downs, countless regrettable arguments and welcome surprises. Sometimes pulling it all together, I felt less like an author than a circus ringmaster. There was so much in the air, so many of those fluttering muses.

And there was Batman himself. He was the real boss. As he was quick to assert, Batman has a personality and purpose all his own, a definable core. He's neither petty nor petulant. He's no whiner; there's not a trace of self-pity in his soul. He's smart. He's noble. And most important, he's big. His passions are grand. Even his unhappiness is not depressing, but a brooding, Wagnerian torment. And his triumphs are Olympian.

He insists.

Then, paradoxically, all the goofy stuff, the on-the-face-of-it preposterous stuff, nudges its way back in. The Batcave just isn't complete without that fifty-foot penny. When Commissioner Gordon wants to summon his favorite outlaw, he doesn't do it discreetly, like anybody with a lick of sense would. Nah. He lights up the whole sky with the Bat Signal. Given a hundred more pages of DARK KNIGHT to write and draw, I might well have brought giant typewriters and the Bat-Mite into the mix.

I'd never intended to use Robin. But then, one day, I pictured a little bundle of bright colors leaping over buildings, dwarfed by a gray-and-black giant...and there she was. Robin.

Not that my version sprang into my head full-blown.

1985. At 30,000 feet. I talk to cartoonist John Byrne about Batman. John talks to me about Robin. "Robin must be a girl," he says. He mentions a drawing by Love & Rockets artist Jaime Hernandez of a female Robin. To prove his point, John provides me with a pencil sketch of his own.

But it took Lynn Varley to give Carrie Keane Kelley her true voice. It's no exaggeration at all to say that Lynn edited and co-wrote Robin's, and the other youngsters', dialogue. This is only one paltry example of what Lynn brought to DARK KNIGHT, even beyond her palette and brush. As much as this book is mine, it is hers.

Colleagues, friends, and those fluttering muses. They were all quite generous.

I got to scratch a whopper of an itch. With one hell of a lot of help, I got to send a gift back in time to that kid in Vermont who opened a Batman comic and fell in, never entirely to emerge.



DEDICATED TO
Will Jungkuntz
1955-1985

B O O K O N E



THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

I'VE GOT THE HOME STRETCH ALL TO MYSELF WHEN THE READINGS STOP MAKING SENSE. I SWITCH TO MANUAL--

--BUT THE COMPUTER CROSSES ITS OWN CIRCUITS AND REFUSES TO LET GO. I COAX IT.

BRUCE, THIS IS CAROL. YOU'RE GOING TOO FAST!

IT ISN'T PROGRAMMED TO -- BRUCE!

BRUCE, YOU SON OF A

GRRRRR

IT SHOVES HOT NEEDLES IN MY FACE AND TRIES TO MAKE ME BLIND. I'M IN CHARGE NOW AND I LIKE IT.

THEN THE FRONT END LURCHES, ALL WRONG. I KNOW WHAT'S COMING.

I'VE GOT JUST UNDER TWO SECONDS TO SHUT THIS MESS DOWN AND FORGET THE RACE.

THE ENGINE, ANGRY, ARGUES THE POINT WITH ME. THE FINISH LINE IS CLOSE, IT ROARS, TOO CLOSE.

THE LEFT FRONT TIRE DECIDES TO TURN ALL ON ITS OWN. I LAUGH AT IT AND JERK THE STEERING WHEEL TO THE RIGHT.



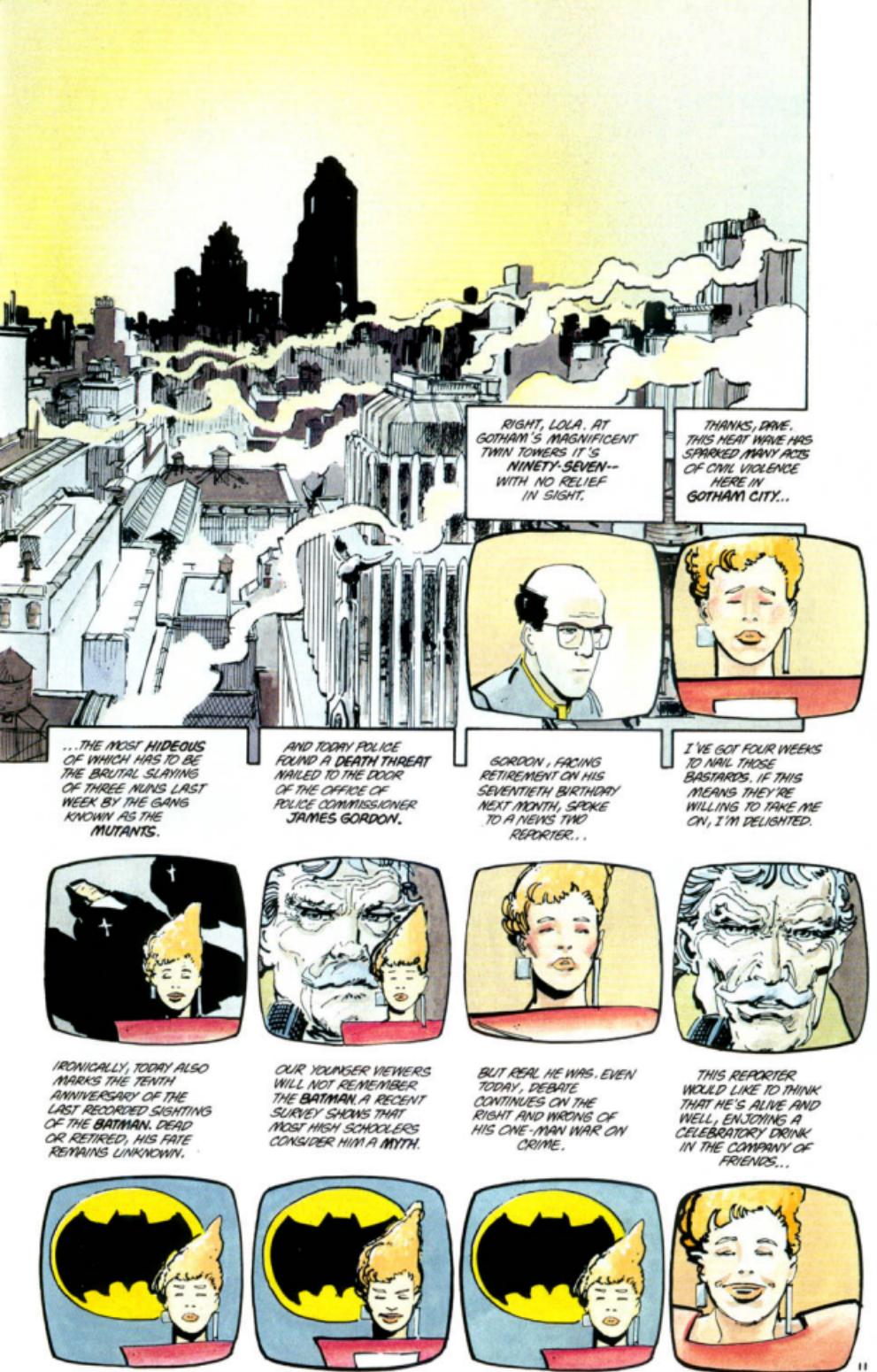
...BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

SPECTACULAR FINISH TO THE NEUMAN ELIMINATION, AS THE FERRIS GOOD PINWHEELED ACROSS THE FINISH LINE, A FLAMING COFFIN FOR BRUCE WAYNE...

...OR SO EVERYONE THOUGHT. TURNS OUT THE MILLIONAIRE BAILED OUT AT THE LAST SECOND. SUFFERED ONLY SUPERFICIAL BURNS, LOLA?

THANKS, BILL. I'M SURPRISED ANYONE CAN EVEN THINK OF SPORTS IN THIS WEATHER, RIGHT, DAVE?





RIGHT, LOLA. AT GOTHAM'S MAGNIFICENT TWIN TOWERS IT'S NINETY-SEVEN-- WITH NO RELIEF IN SIGHT.

THANKS, DAVE. THIS HEAT WAVE HAS SPARKED MANY ACTS OF CIVIL VIOLENCE HERE IN GOTHAM CITY...

...THE MOST HIDEOUS OF WHICH HAS TO BE THE BRUTAL SLAYING OF THREE NUNS LAST WEEK BY THE GANG KNOWN AS THE MUTANTS.

AND TODAY POLICE FOUND A DEATH THREAT NAILED TO THE DOOR OF THE OFFICE OF POLICE COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON.

GORDON, FACING RETIREMENT ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY NEXT MONTH, SPOKE TO A NEWS TWO REPORTER...

I'VE GOT FOUR WEEKS TO NAIL THOSE BASTARDS. IF THIS MEANS THEY'RE WILLING TO TAKE ME ON, I'M DELIGHTED.



IRONICALLY, TODAY ALSO MARKS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAST RECORDED SIGHTING OF THE BATMAN. DEAD OR RETIRED, HIS FATE REMAINS UNKNOWN.

OUR YOUNGER VIEWERS WILL NOT REMEMBER THE BATMAN. A RECENT SURVEY SHOWS THAT MOST HIGH SCHOOLERS CONSIDER HIM A MYTH.

BUT REAL HE WAS. EVEN TODAY, DEBATE CONTINUES ON THE RIGHT AND WRONGS OF HIS ONE-MAN WAR ON CRIME.

THIS REPORTER WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT HE'S ALIVE AND WELL, ENJOYING A CELEBRATORY DRINK IN THE COMPANY OF FRIENDS...





I'LL FEEL BETTER IN THE MORNING. AT LEAST, I'LL FEEL IT LESS...

IT'S THE NIGHT--WHEN THE CITY'S SMELLS CALL OUT TO HIM, THOUGH I LIE BETWEEN SILK SHEERS IN A MILLION-DOLLAR MANSION MILES AWAY...

...WHEN A POLICE SIREN WAKES ME, AND, FOR A MOMENT, I FORGET THAT IT'S ALL OVER...

BUT BATMAN WAS A YOUNG MAN. IF IT WAS REVENGE HE WAS AFTER, HE'S TAKEN IT. IT'S BEEN FORTY YEARS SINCE HE WAS BORN...



...BORN HERE.

ONCE AGAIN,
HE'S BROUGHT
ME BACK--
TO SHOW
ME HOW
LITTLE IT
HAD CHANGED.
IT'S OLDER,
DIRTIER,
BUT--

--IT COULD
HAVE HAPPENED
YESTERDAY.

IT COULD
BE HAPPENING
RIGHT NOW.

THEY
COULD BE
LYING AT
YOUR FEET,
TWITCHING,
BLEEDING...

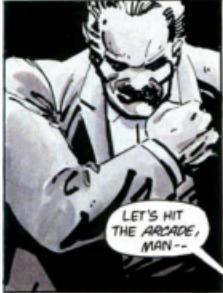


NOT HIM. HE FLINCHED WHEN HE PULLED THE TRIGGER. HE WAS SICK AND GUILTY OVER WHAT HE DID.

ALL HE WANTED WAS MONEY. I WAS NAIVE ENOUGH TO THINK HIM THE LOWEST SORT OF MAN.

THESE -- THESE ARE HIS CHILDREN. A PURER BREED...

...AND THIS WORLD IS THEIRS.

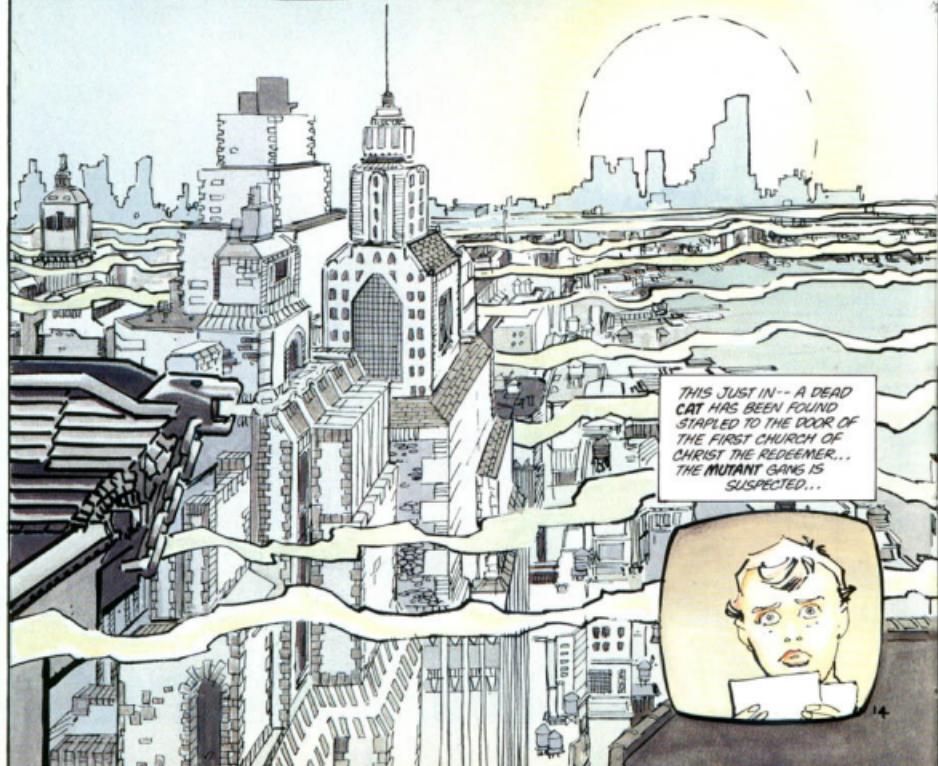


...BUTCHERY OF EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. THE MILITANT ORGANIZATION IS BELIEVED TO HAVE COMMITTED THIS ATROCITY FOR MONEY THE FAMILY HAD...

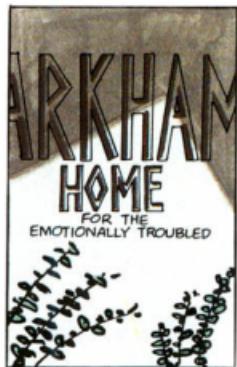
...SOMETHING UNDER TWELVE DOLLARS. THIS IS CONSIDERED A DRUG-RELATED CRIME AT PRESENT, BUT SURELY THIS MEAT WAVE IS A FACTOR, RIGHT, DOC?

ABSOLUTELY, BILL. ROUGH MONTH IN THE BIG TOWN. RIGHT NOW THE MERCURY IS CLIMBING TO AN UNSEASONAL ONE HUNDRED AND THREE...

...AND IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER...



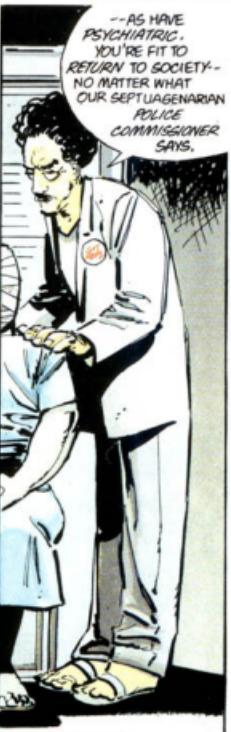
THIS JUST IN-- A DEAD CAT HAS BEEN FOUND STAPLED TO THE DOOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST THE REDEEMER... THE MUTANT GANG IS SUSPECTED...



INTENSIVE TREATMENT WARD



NINETY-NINE
DEGREES AND
THE AIR
CONDITIONER
BLOWS...
NO VISITORS





WHAT CAN I SAY?

...THANK YOU, TOM.
A NEW LIFE BEGINS TODAY
FOR HARVEY DENT.

DENT, A FORMER DISTRICT ATTORNEY, BECAME OBSESSED WITH THE NUMBER TWO WHEN HALF HIS FACE WAS SCARRED BY ACID.

DENT BELIEVED HIS DISFIGURATION REVEALED A HIDDEN, EVIL SIDE TO HIS NATURE. HE ADOPTED AS HIS PERSONAL SYMBOL A DOLLAR COIN...



...ONE SIDE OF WHICH WAS DEFACED, TO REPRESENT THE WARRING SIDES OF HIS SPLIT-PERSONALITY. A FLIP OF THE COIN COULD MEAN LIFE OR DEATH FOR HIS VICTIMS.

DENT'S CRIMES WERE BRILLIANTLY PATHOLOGICAL, THE MOST HORRENDOUS OF WHICH WAS HIS LAST--

--THE KIDNAPPING AND RANSOMING OF SIAMESE TWINS, ONE OF WHOM HE ATTEMPTED TO MURDER EVEN AFTER THE RANSOM WAS PAID.

HE WAS APPREHENDED IN THE ACT BY GOTHAM'S FAMOUS VIGILANTE, THE BATMAN, AND COMMITTED TO ARKHAM ASYLUM TWELVE YEARS AGO.



FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS DENT HAS BEEN TREATED BY DR. BARTHOLOMEW HOLPER FOR HIS PSYCHOSIS...



...WHILE NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING PLASTIC SURGEON DR. HERBERT WILLING DEDICATED HIMSELF TO RESTORING THE FACE OF HARVEY DENT.



SPEAKING TODAY, BOTH DOCTORS WERE JUBILANT.



HARVEY'S READY TO LOOK AT THE WORLD AND SAY, "HEY-I'M OKAY."



AND HE LOOKS GREAT.



DENT READ A BRIEF STATEMENT TO THE MEDIA...



I DO NOT ASK GOTHAM CITY TO FORGIVE MY CRIMES. I MUST EARN THAT, BY DEDICATING MYSELF TO PUBLIC SERVICE.



FOR ME, THIS IS THE END OF A LONG NIGHTMARE... AND THE FIRST STEP ON THE LONG ROAD TO ABSOLUTION.



NEXT, DENT DREW FOND APPLAUSE BY PRODUCING A NEWLY-MINTED DOLLAR COIN.

IT WAS, OF COURSE, UNMARRIED.

BUT POLICE COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON'S REACTION TO DENT'S RELEASE WAS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC...

NO, I AM NOT SATISFIED. DR. WOLPER'S REPORT SEEMS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC--NOT TO MENTION SLOPPY.



WHILE MILLIONAIRE BRUCE WAYNE, WHO SPONSORED DENT'S TREATMENT, HAD THIS TO SAY...

GORDON'S REMARKS SEEM OVERLY PESSIMISTIC-- NOT TO MENTION RUDE.

THE COMMISSIONER IS AN EXCELLENT COP--BUT, I THINK, A POOR JUDGE OF CHARACTER. WE MUST BELIEVE IN HARVEY DENT.

WE MUST BELIEVE THAT OUR PRIVATE DEMONS CAN BE DEFEATED...



SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE



SKREE SKREE
SKREE SKREE

OOF!
OWW!



THEN...

SOMETHING
SHUFFLES.
OUT OF SIGHT...

SOMETHING
SUCKS THE
STALE AIR...

...AND
HISSES.

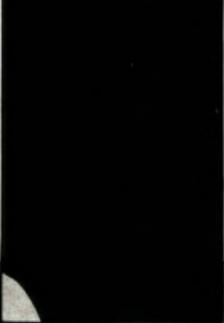
GLIDING WITH ANCIENT GRACE... UNWILLING TO RETREAT AS HIS BROTHERS DID... EYES GLEAMING, UNTouched BY LOVE OR JOY OR SORROW... BREATH HOT WITH THE TASTE OF



SURELY THE FIERCEST SURVIVOR--THE PUREST WARRIOR...

GLARING, HATING...

...CLAIMING ME AS HIS OWN.



I WAS ONLY SIX YEARS OLD WHEN THAT HAPPENED. WHEN I FIRST SAW THE CAVE...

...HUGE, EMPTY, SILENT AS A CHURCH, WAITING, AS THE BAT WAS WAITING.

AND NOW THE COBWEBS GROW AND THE DUST THICKENS IN HERE AS IT DOES IN ME--

--AND HE LAUGHS AT ME, CURSES ME, CALLS ME A FOOL, HE FILLS MY SLEEP, HE TRICKS ME, BRINGS ME HERE WHEN THE NIGHT IS LONG AND MY WILL IS WEAK, HE STRUGGLES RELENTLESSLY, HATEFULLY, TO BE FREE--

I WILL NOT LET HIM. I GAVE MY WORD.

FOR JASON.

NEVER.
NEVER AGAIN.





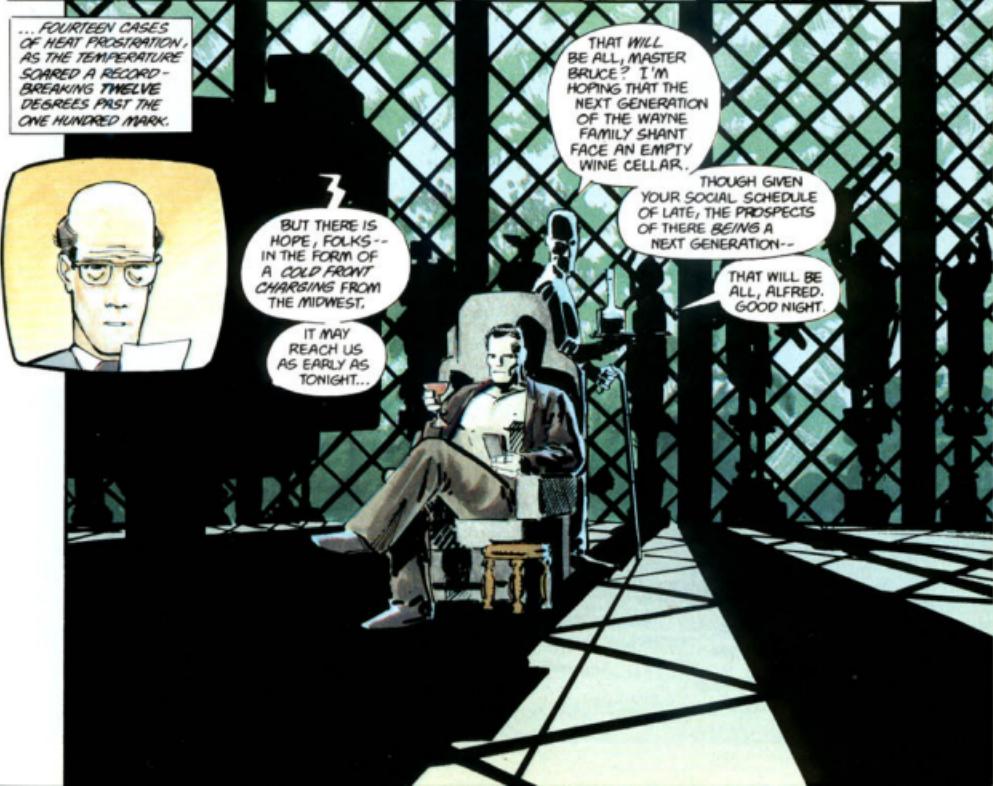
FOR ME, THIS IS THE
END OF A LONG NIGHT-
MARE... AND THE FIRST
STEP ON THE LONG ROAD
TO ABSOLUTION.

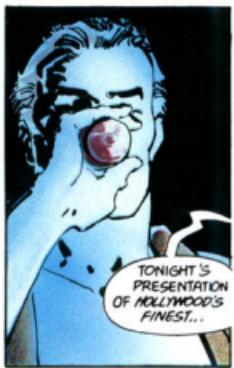
... THOSE WERE THE LAST WORDS SPOKEN IN PUBLIC BY HARVEY DENT BEFORE HIS DISAPPEARANCE THIS MORNING.

WHILE POLICE COMMISSIONER GORDON ISSUED AN ALL POINTS BULLETIN FOR DENT, ONE VOICE WAS RAISED IN PROTEST..

... THAT OF
DR. BARTHOLOMEW
WOLPER, DENT'S
PSYCHIATRIST...

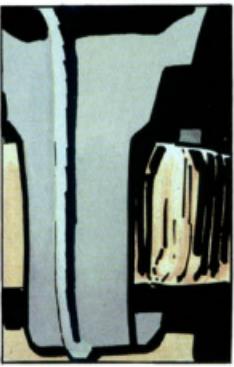


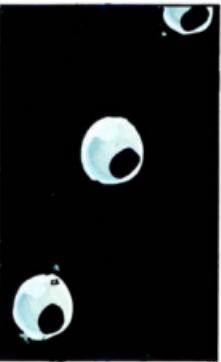




YOU LOVED IT SO MUCH... YOU JUMPED AND DANCED LIKE A FOOL... YOU REMEMBER...



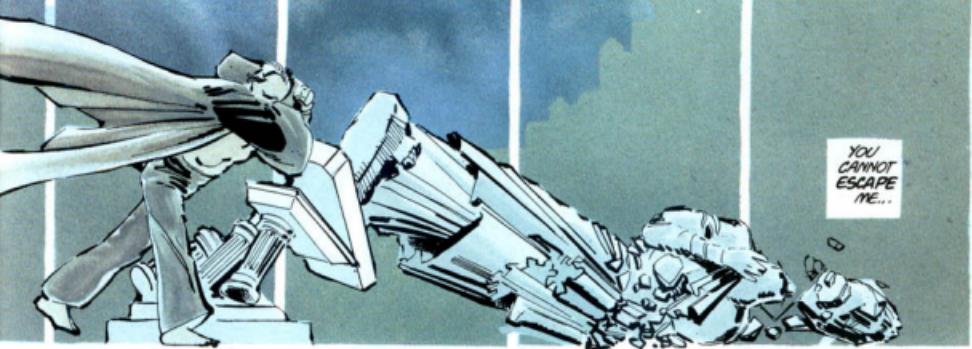




THE
TIME
HAS
COME.

YOU
KNOW
IT IN
YOUR
SOUL.

FOR I
AM YOUR
SOUL...



YOU
CANNOT
ESCAPE
ME...



YOU ARE PUNY,
YOU ARE SMALL--



YOU ARE NOTHING--A HOLLOW
SHELL, A RUSTY TRAP THAT
CANNOT HOLD ME--



SMOLDERING, I BURN YOU--
BURNING YOU, I FLARE, HOT
AND BRIGHT AND FIERCE
AND BEAUTIFUL--



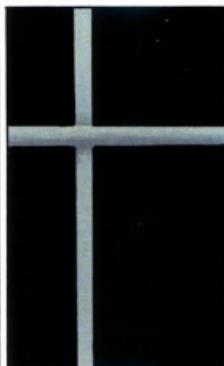
YOU CANNOT STOP ME--NOT
WITH WINE OR VOWS OR
THE WEIGHT OF AGE--



YOU CANNOT STOP ME BUT
STILL YOU TRY-- STILL
YOU RUN--

YOU TRY TO DROWN ME OUT...

...BUT YOUR
VOICE IS
WEAK...



RRRRRRMMMMBBLLLL



KRE SS SHH



KRE SSS SHH



R R M B L I K K K R R A K K K K



YOU LEF US ONE CIV-
PLEAS'D CUSTOMUM
BACK THERE,
JOANNIE...

LISSEN,
SILK--

...THAT BASTARD
WANTED ME TO
AAAAA...

YOU SMILE A LITTLE
HIDER NOW, JOANNIE...

...DOG
EAT DOG
WORLD...

CHAR
CHAR

?...JUST
HAD THIS
BABY TUNED...

CHAR
CHAR
CHAR

DON STICK US.
THAT WAS ON
TH ROOF.

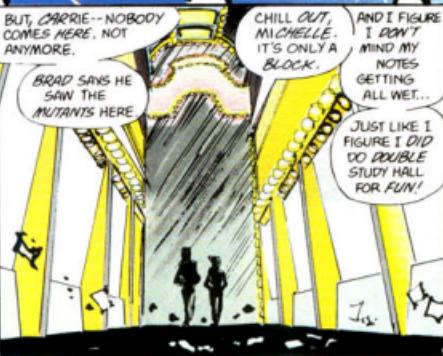
THE
ROOF?

THAS RIGHT.
TH ROOF AN IF
SOMEONE
MESSIN' WIF ME...

WHUMP

WHAT J) EASE UP BACK
THE... THERE, MAN. I'M
STILL PAYIN' FOR
THESE WHEELS.







THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNKK





--BREAKTHROUGH IN HAIR REPLACEMENT TECHNIQUES, AND THAT'S THE-- EXCUSE ME...

I'VE JUST BEEN HANDED THIS BULLETIN-- A LARGE, BAT-LIKE CREATURE HAS BEEN SIGHTED ON GOTHAM'S SOUTH SIDE.



IT IS SAID TO HAVE ATTACKED AND SERIOUSLY INJURED THREE CAT-BURGLARS WHO HAVE PLAGUED THAT NEIGHBORHOOD

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE...



THIS JUST IN-- TWO YOUNG CHILDREN WHO DISAPPEARED THIS MORNING HAVE BEEN FOUND UNHARMED IN A RIVERSIDE WAREHOUSE.

AN ANONYMOUS TIP LED POLICE TO THE WAREHOUSE, WHERE THEY FOUND THE CHILDREN WITH SIX MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG.

ALL SIX ARE SUFFERING FROM MULTIPLE CUTS, CONCUSSIONS, AND BROKEN BONES. THEY WERE RUSHED TO GOTHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL.

THE CHILDREN DESCRIBED AN ATTACK ON THE GANG MEMBERS BY A GIANT DRESSED LIKE DRACULA...





POLICE PHONE LINES ARE JAMMED WITH CITIZENS DESCRIBING WHAT SEEMS TO BE A SIEGE ON GOTHAM'S UNDERWORLD...

...BY THE BATMAN.

ALTHOUGH SEVERAL RESCUED VICTIMS-TO-BE HAVE DESCRIBED THE VIGILANTE TO NEWS TWELVE REPORTERS...

...COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT ON WHETHER OR NOT THIS MIGHT MEAN THE RETURN OF THE BATMAN...



THIS SHOULD BE AGONY.

I SHOULD BE A MASS OF
ACHING MUSCLE--BROKEN,
SPENT, UNABLE TO MOVE.

AND, WERE I
AN OLDER
MAN, I SURELY
WOULD...

...WILD ANIMAL.
GROWLS. SNARLS.
WEREWOLF.
SURELY.



...MONSTER! LIKE
WITH FANGS AND
WINGS AND IT
CAN FLY...



... BUT I'M A MAN
OF THIRTY-- OF
TWENTY AGAIN.

THE RAIN ON
MY CHEST IS A
BAPTISM--

I'M
BORN
AGAIN...

REALITY CHECK,
MICHELLE. TALK ABOUT
COMPOSURE. TOTAL LACK OF.
HE'S A MAN-- ABOUT--
TWELVE FEET TALL--



I SMELL THEIR
FEAR--AND IT
IS SWEET.

--WHAT THE
HELL IS--

--CAN'T
SEE--

--JESUS
SLOW
DOWN--

--STOP
THE
CAR--

--BUT WHAT
IS THAT--

--IT'LL
GET US--

--HIT THE
BRAKES--

SSSSSKYKREEEEEE

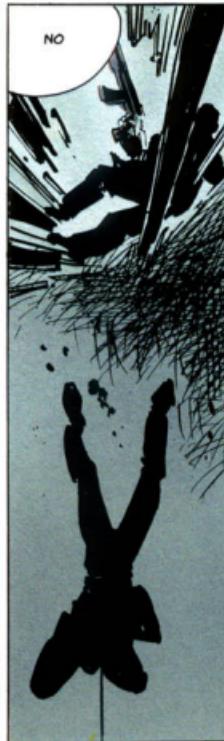
EECHHHHKKREEEEEE

EEEEEEECHHHHKKREEEEEE

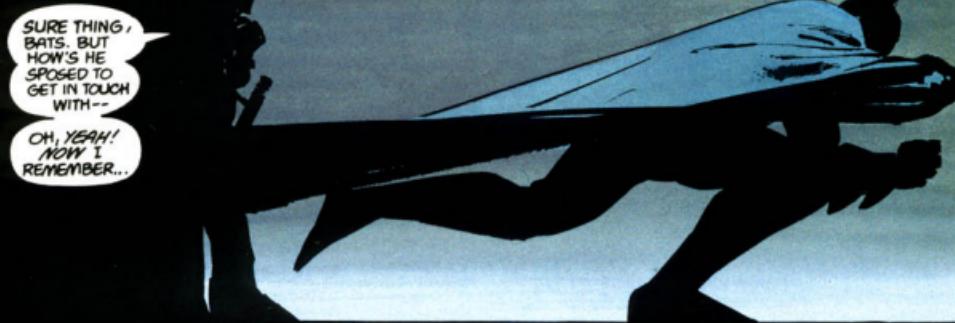
EEF EEECHHHH











...ONE ALMOST EXPECTS
TO SEE THE BAT-SIGNAL
STRIKING THE SIDE OF
ONE OF GOTHAM'S TWIN
TOWERS. YES, HE GAVE
US QUITE A NIGHT...



SURE KEPT
THE HOSPITALS
BUSY.

YES,
MORRIE.
BUT I THINK
IT'S A
MISTAKE...

...TO THINK
OF THIS IN
PURELY
POLITICAL
TERMS...

RATHER, I
REGARD IT AS A
SYMBOLIC
RESURGENCE
OF THE COMMON
MAN'S WILL
TO RESIST...

BBAT...
A REBIRTH
OF THE
AMERICAN
FIGHTING
SPIRIT.



...BUT HE'S HARDLY AS DANGEROUS AS HIS ENEMIES, IS HE? TAKE HARVEY DENT, JUST TO PICK A NAME...

THAT'S CUTE, LANA, BUT HARDLY APPROPRIATE. AND HARDLY FAIR TO AS TROUBLED A SOUL AS HARVEY DENT'S.

HE CERTAINLY IS TROUBLE FOR HIS VICTIMS.

WAS, LANA, WAS, IF HARVEY DENT IS RETURNING TO CRIME -- AND PLEASE NOTE THAT I SAID IF -- IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT HE'S NOT IN CONTROL OF HIMSELF.



AND BATMAN IS?



CERTAINLY, HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT HE'S DOING. HIS KIND OF SOCIAL FASCIST ALWAYS DOES.



THEN WHY DO YOU CALL HIM PSYCHOTIC? BECAUSE YOU LIKE TO USE THAT WORD FOR ANY MOTIVE THAT'S TOO BIG FOR YOUR LITTLE MIND? BECAUSE HE FIGHTS CRIME INSTEAD OF PERPETRATING IT?



YOU DON'T CALL EXCESSIVE FORCE A CRIME? HOW ABOUT ASSAULT, FAT LADY? OR BREAKING AND ENTERING? HUH? TRY RECKLESS ENDING

DING



SORRY, MORRIE, BUT WE'RE OUT OF TIME -- THOUGH I'M SURE THIS DEBATE IS FAR FROM OVER FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO CAME IN LATE, TODAY'S POINT VERSUS POINT...



...WAS CONCERNED WITH LAST NIGHT'S ATTACK ON DOZENS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN CRIMINALS BY A PARTY OR PARTIES WHO MAY HAVE BEEN THE BATMAN.



ALSO OF CONCERN IS THIS MORNING'S ANNOUNCEMENT BY POLICE MEDIA RELATIONS DIRECTOR LOUIS GALLAGHER THAT A DEFACED DOLLAR COIN, WAS FOUND ON ONE OF THE SUSPECTS...



...IN LAST NIGHT'S PAYROLL ROBBERY. THOSE WHO REMEMBER THE CRIMES OF HARVEY DENT WILL RECOGNIZE THIS AS HIS TRADEMARK.



POLICE COMMISSIONER GORDON HAS REFUSED TO CONFIRM THAT HE HAS ISSUED AN ARREST ORDER...

SCREW THE PRESS!



STILL HOT ON THE HEELS OF BATMAN'S APPARENT RETURN...

NO MORE LEAKS, GALLAGHER -- OR I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD ON A STICK!



SON OF A... THIS DOES GIVE ONE A SENSE OF DEJA VU...

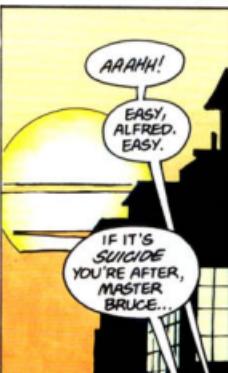
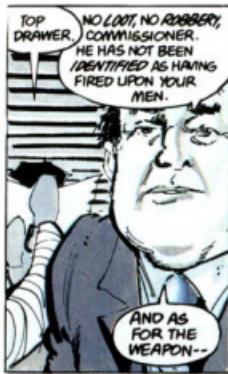


TURN THAT GOD DAMNED THING OFF, MERKEL...

A SAD, STRANGE CRIMINAL WAS HARVEY DENT.



COMMISSIONER, IF YOU PLEASE...



WE WILL KILL THE OLD MAN GORDON. HIS WOMEN WILL WEEP FOR HIM. WE WILL CHOP HIM. WE WILL GRIND HIM. WE WILL BATHE IN HIS BLOOD.

I MYSELF WILL KILL THE FOOL BATMAN, I WILL RIP THE MEAT FROM HIS BONES AND SUCK THEM DRY. I WILL EAT HIS HEART AND DRAG HIS BODY THROUGH THE STREET.

DON'T CALL US A GANG. DON'T CALL US CRIMINALS. WE ARE THE LAW. WE ARE THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE MUTANTS. SOON THE WORLD WILL BE OURS.

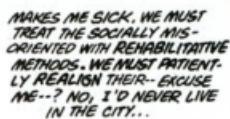
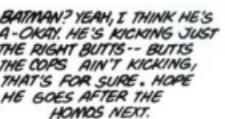
WITH THAT VIDEO TAPED MESSAGE, THE MUTANT LEADER -- WHOSE NAME AND FACE REMAIN A SECRET -- HAS DECLARED WAR ON THE CITY OF GOTHAM... AND ON ITS MOST FAMOUS CHAMPION...



THE ROOM IS SPLIT BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK, CLEAN AND DIRTY. BUT THE SPLIT ISN'T EVEN IT FAVERS THE DIRTY.

IT'S AS IF THE DARK SIDE IS CLAIMING THE ROOM... AS IT CLAIMED THE COIN...







-SO IT'S JUST A MATTER OF FIGURING OUT WHAT HE'S AFTER.

THE PAYROLL ROBBERY WAS COMMITTED TO SPONSOR IT?

SPONSOR IT? THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

TWO HELICOPTERS WERE STOLEN TODAY. ONE, A STATE-OF-THE-ART MILITARY FIGHTER-- THE OTHER, AN OLD ARMY SURPLUS JOB. THAT'S GOT TO BE DENT'S WORK.

THEN IT'S GOING TO BE A CRIME BY AIR-- USING SOMETHING ELSE MORE COSTLY.

HE'S NOT CAREFUL, WHOEVER HE IS.

YOU STILL DON'T THINK IT'S DENT?

I HOPE NOT. HARVEY WRESTLED LONG AND HARD WITH HIS OTHER SIDE. TO HAVE IT DEVOUR HIM NOW...

BUT IF IT IS...

"TWICE AS BIG AS YOU CAN IMAGINE"--THAT'S ALL HE HAD TO SAY?

THAT'S ALL HE KNEW, JIM.

BUT TOMORROW IS THE SECOND-- AND A TUESDAY--

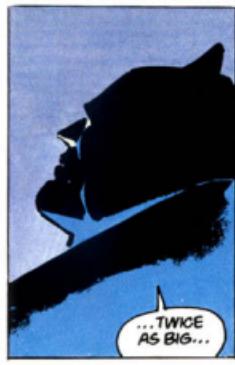
IF IT'S HARVEY, WE'LL CATCH HIM... THE TRICK WILL BE TO KEEP HIM ALIVE. HE'S POSSESSED, JIM. OUT OF CONTROL.

I THINK HE WANTS TO DIE.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT HARVEY DENT...

IT SHOULDN'T BE DIFFICULT TO FIND HIS TARGET. ACCESSIBLE BY HELICOPTER AND TWICE AS BIG AS...

...TWICE AS BIG...

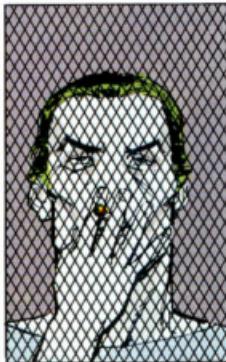
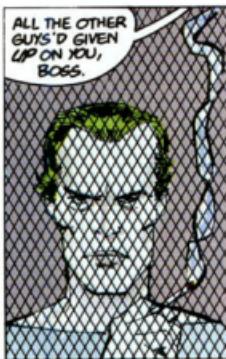


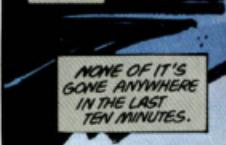
YES, MERV. I AM
CONVINCED OF
HARVEY'S INNOCENCE.
ABSOLUTELY. HOWEVER, I
WON'T GO SO FAR AS TO
SAY I'M SURE HE HASN'T
RETURNED TO CRIME.

I KNOW THAT SOUNDS
CONFUSING. THESE THINGS
OFTEN DO TO THE LAYMAN.
BUT I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN
WITHOUT GETTING OVERLY
TECHNICAL. YOU SEE, IT
ALL GETS DOWN TO
THIS BATMAN FELLOW.

BATMAN'S PSYCHOTIC
SUBLIMATIVE / PSYCHO-
EROTIC BEHAVIOR PATTERN
IS LIKE A NET. WEAK-EGOED
NEUROTICS, LIKE HARVEY,
ARE DRAWN INTO CORRESPOND-
ING INTERSTICING PATTERNS.

YOU MIGHT SAY BATMAN
COMMITTS THE CRIMES...
USING HIS SO-CALLED
VILLAINS AS NARCISSIS-
TIC PROXIES...





THEN I HEAR IT.

HUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

DENT--OR WHOEVER IS SURE TO BE IN THE NEARER COPTER. I'M HOING HE'LL LAND ON THE TOWER I PICKED...

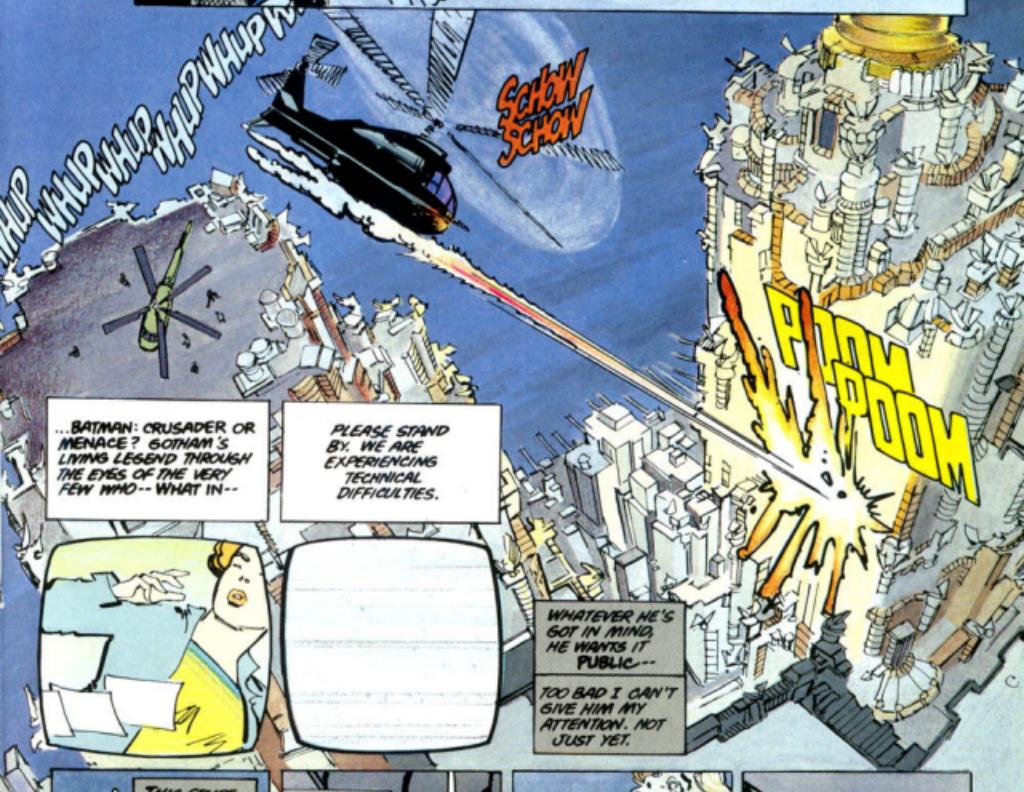
BUT I'M NOT COUNTING ON IT.



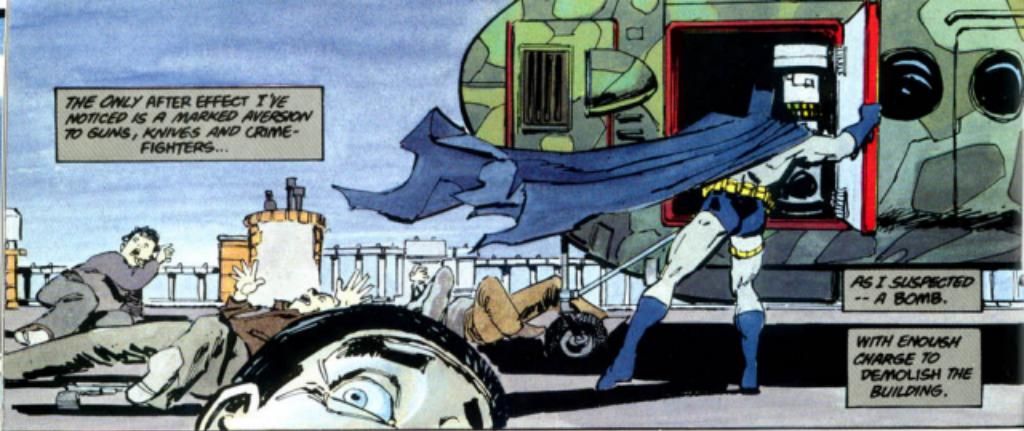
GOOD EVENING. I'M LOLA CHONG. TONIGHT WE'RE PLEASED TO BRING YOU A SPECIAL REPORT...



PAIN THAT'S
THREE DAYS
OLD CRACKS
ACROSS MY
BACK. I
KICK THE
DUST FROM
MY JOINTS
AND CLIMB.
IT USED
TO BE
EASIER.



THE ONLY AFTER EFFECT I'VE
NOTICED IS A MARKED AVersion
TO GUNS, KNIVES AND CRIME-
FIGHTERS...



AS I SUSPECTED
-- A BOMB.

WITH ENOUGH
CHARGE TO
DEMOLISH THE
BUILDING.

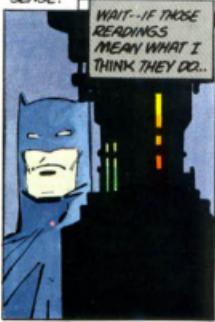
APPARENTLY A DETONATOR
JOB. THAT WOULD MAKE
SENSE.

WAIT--IF THOSE
READINGS
MEAN WHAT I
THINK THEY DO...

AM I ON?

THE IGNITION PROCESS HAS
ALREADY STARTED. IT COULD
BLOW ANY SECOND.

PEOPLE OF GOTHAM--LET
ME APOLOGIZE RIGHT OFF
THE BAT FOR THE INTERRUPT-
TION OF YOUR VIEWING
PLEASURE. THIS IS
HARVEY DENT SPEAKING.



BRILLIANT DESIGN--WORTHY
OF THE JOKER.



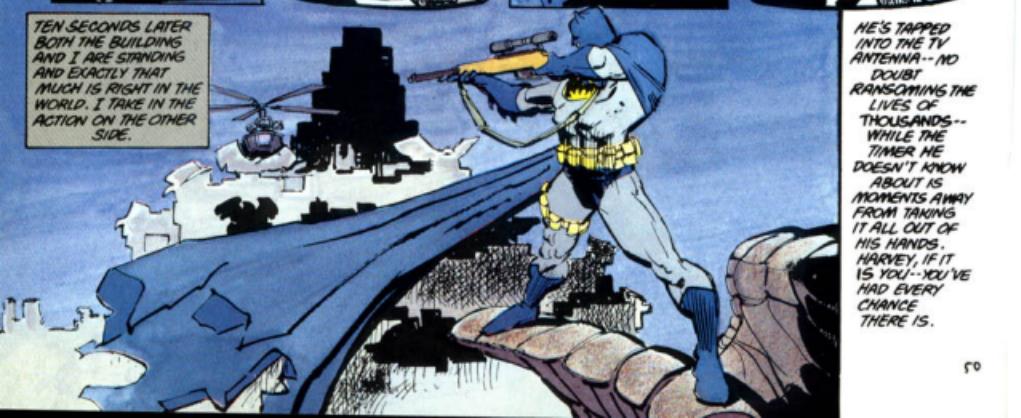
I STAND HERE ATOP
GOTHAM'S BEAUTIFUL TWIN
TOWERS, WITH TWO
BOMBS CAPABLE OF
MAKING THEM RUBBLE.
YOU HAVE TWENTY MINUTES
TO SAVE THEM.

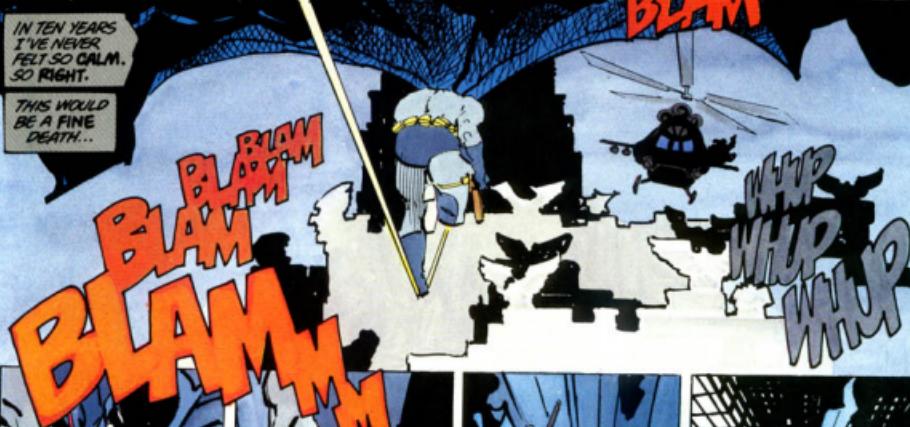


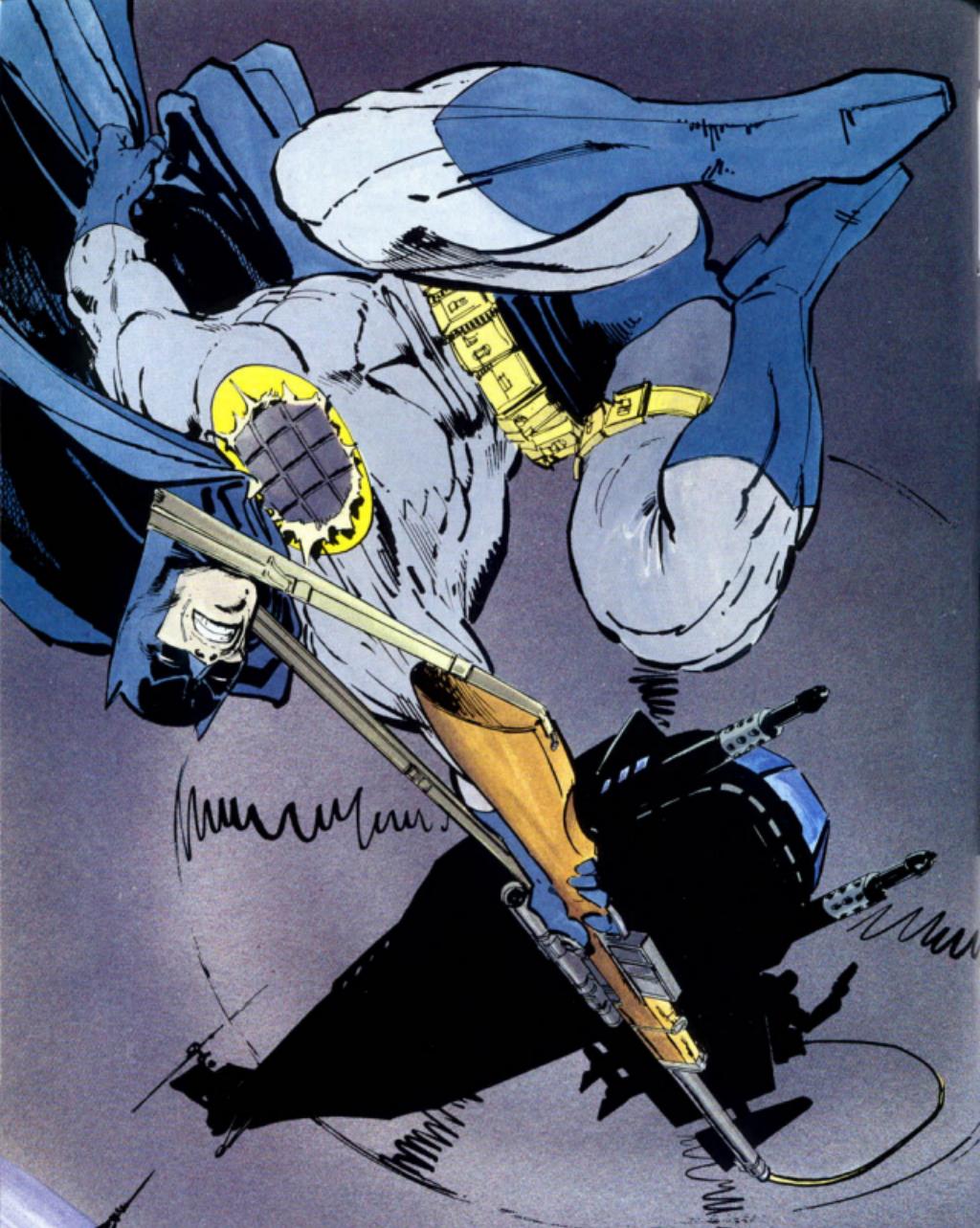
-- I'D SAY A PRAYER.
THE PRICE IS FIVE
MILLION DOLLARS. I
WOULD HAVE MADE IT
TWO--BUT I'VE GOT
BILLS TO PAY...



TEN SECONDS LATER
BOTH THE BUILDING
AND I ARE STANDING
AND EXACTLY THAT
MUCH IS RIGHT IN THE
WORLD. I TAKE IN THE
ACTION ON THE OTHER
SIDE.







HE'S GOT YOUR STYLE,
HARVEY, AND YOUR GLITS.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM,
HE'S GOT NO MORE SENSE
OF SELF-PRESERVATION
THAN YOU DID...

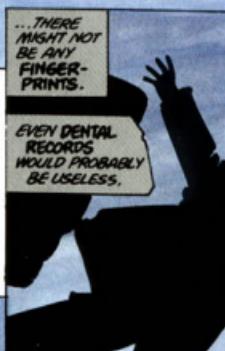
...AND INSPIRES THE
SAME LEVEL OF LOYALTY
FROM HIS MEN.



IT TAKES NEARLY A MINUTE TO FALL FROM THIS HEIGHT. AND DESPITE
WHAT YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, YOU'RE LIKELY TO STAY CONSCIOUS
ALL THE WAY DOWN.



THOUGHTS LIKE
THAT KEEP ME
WARM AT NIGHT.

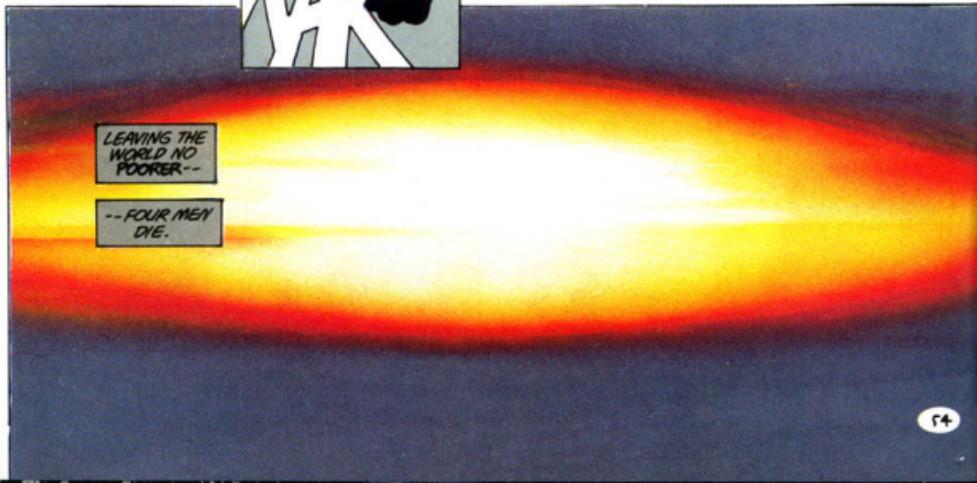


WEEES



LEAVING THE
WORLD NO
POORER--

--FOUR MEN
DIE.



...HARVEY...

...WHAT ARE YOU SO MAD
ABOUT, BATS? I'VE...
BEEN A SPORT...

YOU HAVE TO ADMIT
THAT--I PLAYED
ALONG.

AND YOU...YOU
TOOK YOUR JOKE
ABOUT AS FAR AS
IT COULD GO...

... GOT THE WHOLE
WORLD TO SMILE AT ME...
GOT THEM ALL TO KEEP
THEIR LUNCHES DOWN
WHEN THEY SAW MY...
MY FACE...SAYING
I WAS CURED...
SAVING
I WAS
FIXED...

THE SCARS
GO DEEP
TOO DEEP...

TAKE A LOOK...
HAVE YOUR LAUGH.
I'M FIXED ALL RIGHT.

AT LEAST...
BOTH SIDES
MATCH...

I CLOSE MY
EYES AND
LISTEN.

NOT FOOLED
BY SIGHT, I
SEE HIM...

HAVE YOUR
LAUGH,
BATMAN--
TAKE A
LOOK!

...TAKE
A LOOK...

...AS
HE IS.

I SEE HIM.
I SEE...

...I SEE...A
REFLECTION,
HARVEY.

A
REFLECTION.





B O O K T W O



THE DARK KNIGHT TRIUMPHANT

PROBLEM WITH CRIME IS
THE MORE YOU KNOW, THE
MORE NERVOUS IT MAKES
YOU.



I PASS A LIQUOR STORE,
RUN MY EYES OVER THE RIGID
FEATURES OF THE HUNK OF
METAL THAT USED TO BE A
FRIENDLY MERCHANT.

ME, I CAN'T LOOK AT THAT
DOORMAT OVER THERE
WITHOUT THINKING OF THE
SEVENTY-TWO CORPSES I'VE
FOUND IN SPOTS LIKE THAT...



...SHOT OR STABBED OR
JUST BEATEN TO DEATH
BECAUSE THEY WERE TOO
STUPID TO KEEP THEIR
DISTANCE.



TOO STUPID, OR TOO
CIVILIZED. ONE'S THE
SAME AS THE OTHER IN
GOTHAM CITY.



I SEE A HIGH-PRICED CAR,
GLEAMING LIKE NEW IN
THE STREETLIGHT, ONCE A
SYMBOL OF WEALTH AND
POWER, NOW JUST ANOTHER
TARGET IN A CITY OF
VICTIMS.



A YOUNG BOY DASHES PAST
ME, HEALTHY, DIRTY, AND
BEAUTIFUL. YOU DON'T
WANT TO KNOW
WHAT HE MAKES
ME THINK OF.



I CURSE SARAH, NOT
MEANING IT, FOR HER
HIPPIE VEGETARIAN
RECIPES AND THE BEAN
SPROUTS SHE FORGOT
TO PICK UP.



THEN I SUCK IT AGAIN.



THEN MY CIGAR DOES ITS
USUAL AND I COUGH UP
A LOAD OF THE BROWN
STUFF.



I'M AMAZED--AS MY HEAD
GOES LIGHT AND THE SPOTS
DANCE IN FRONT OF ME--
THAT SHE CONVINCED ME
NOT TO SMOKE IN MY OWN
HOME.



DYING NEVER SEEMED
REAL TO ME WHEN I WAS
YOUNG...

FOR SOME REASON I WANT
TO SEE BRUCE--NOT TO
TALK...I MEAN SURE, TO
TALK, AND MAYBE TO
DRINK, EVEN THOUGH HE
SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN
THAT UP.



SUDDENLY THE HAIR
BRISTLES ON THE BACK OF
MY NECK.



I HEAR A GIRLISH GIGGLE
AND THE COLD OILED
SOUND OF A GUN BEING
COCKED BEHIND ME.

I SEE THE FACE OF A KILLER WHO
ISN'T YET OLD ENOUGH TO SHAVE.

I THINK OF SARAH.

THE REST IS EASY.



...THE COUNCIL OF MOTHERS TODAY PETITIONED THE MAYOR TO ISSUE A WARRANT FOR THE IMMEDIATE ARREST OF THE BATMAN, CITING HIM AS A HARMFUL INFLUENCE ON THE CHILDREN OF GOTHAM.

ANOTHER PETITION ON THE MAYOR'S DESK CAME FROM THE VICTIMS' RIGHTS TASK FORCE, DEMANDING AN OFFICIAL SANCTION OF THE VIGILANTE'S ACTIVITIES...



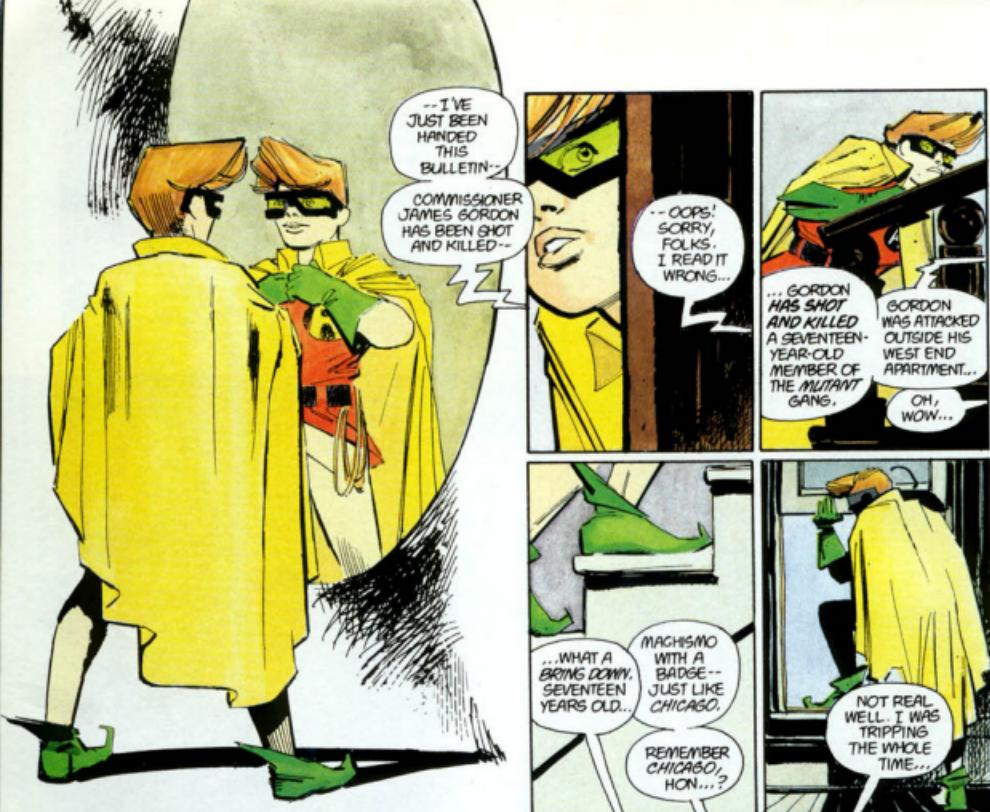
THE MAYOR SPOKE TO REPORTERS THIS AFTERNOON ...

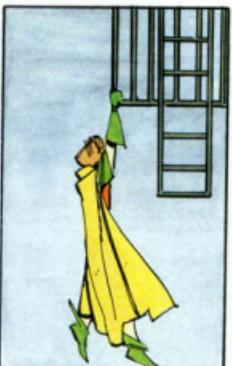
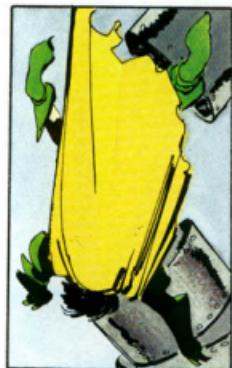
STILL IN CONSULTATION. IT'S STILL IN CONSULTATION.

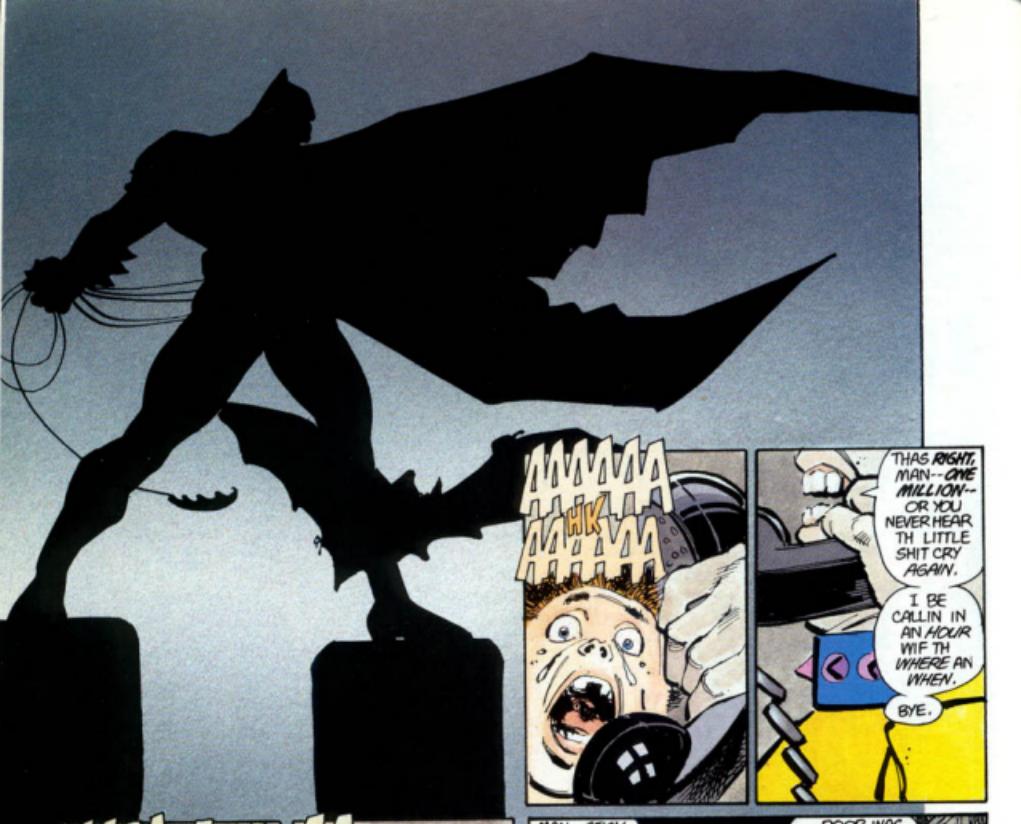
INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE TO CRIMINALS CONTINUE TO ABOUND IN GOTHAM. WE CANNOT BE SURE WHICH ARE THE WORK OF THE BATMAN--

--AND WHICH HE HAS INSPIRED.
EXCUSE ME --





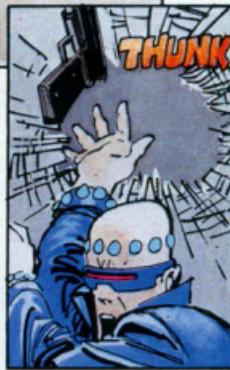




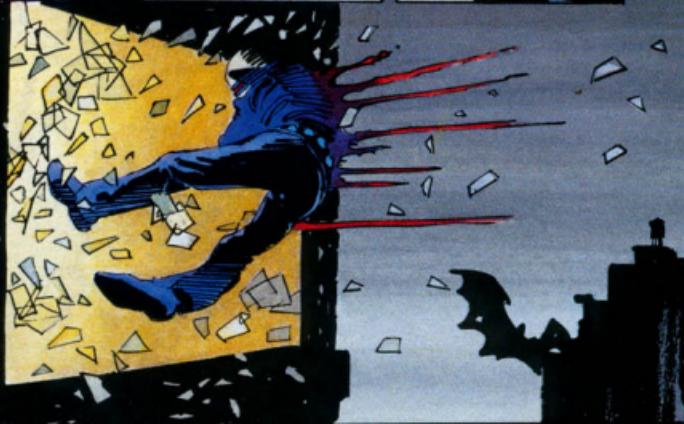


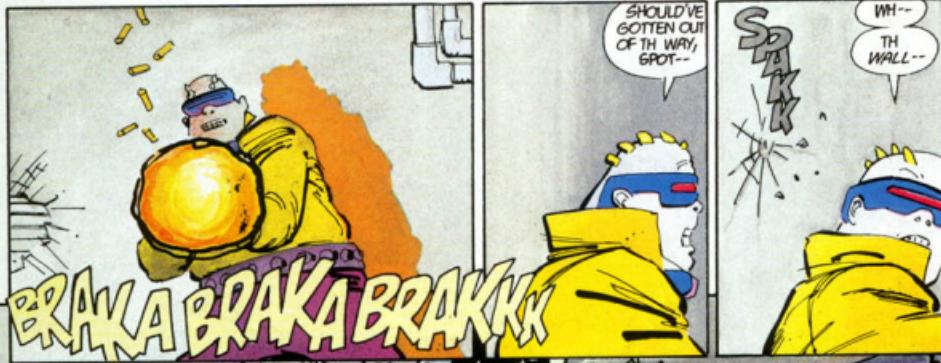
CHILL, MAN--
IT'S JUST A
GOD DAMN--
-- BAT...--

SKREEEE SKREEEE



BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA







I BELIEVE YOU.



... A RUTHLESS, MONSTROUS VIGILANTE, STRIKING AT THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR DEMOCRACY - MALICIOUSLY OPPOSED TO THE PRINCIPLES THAT MAKE OURS THE MOST NOBLE NATION IN THE WORLD - AND THE KINDEST...

... FRANKLY, I'M SURPRISED THERE AREN'T A HUNDRED LIKE HIM OUT THERE -- A THOUSAND PEOPLE ARE FED UP WITH TERROR - WITH STUPID LAWS AND SOCIAL COWARDICE. HE'S ONLY TAKING BACK WHAT'S OURS...

THESE - AND MANY, MANY OTHERS - ARE THE REACTIONS TO A PHENOMENON THAT HAS STRUCK A NERVE CENTER IN OUR SOCIETY - THE RETURN OF THE BATMAN.

TONIGHT, WE WILL EXAMINE HIS IMPACT ON OUR CONSCIOUSNESS. FROM METROPOLIS - WE HAVE LANA LANG, MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DAILY PLANET...

... JOINING US FROM GOTHAM CITY - DR. BARTHOLEMW WOLPER, POPULAR PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIAL SCIENTIST, AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING "HEY - I'M OKAY..."

... WITH US TONIGHT FROM HIS OFFICE IN WASHINGTON -- PRESIDENTIAL MEDIA ADVISOR CHUCK BRICK.



DR. WOLPER - YOU HAVE CLAIMED THAT THE BATMAN IS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRIMES HE FIGHTS. STILL, CRIME RATES HAVE SHOWN A STEADY DROP IN THE WEEKS SINCE HIS RETURN. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED ME THAT QUESTION, TED. IT IS TRUE THAT THIS BATMAN HAS TERRORIZED THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED AND SOCIALLY MISALIGNDED - BUT HIS EFFECTS ARE FAR FROM POSITIVE.

PICTURE THE PUBLIC PSYCHE AS A VAST, MOIST MEMBRANE - THROUGH THE MEDIA, BATMAN HAS STRUCK THIS MEMBRANE A VIOLENT BLOW, AND IT HAS RECOILED. HENCE YOUR MISLEADING STATISTICS.

BUT YOU SEE, TED, THE MEMBRANE IS FLEXIBLE - AND PERMEABLE. HERE THE MORE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF THE BLOW BECOME CALCULABLE; EVEN PREDICTABLE. TO WIT --



EVERY ANTI-SOCIAL ACT CAN BE TRACED TO IRRESPONSIBLE MEDIA INPUT. GIVEN THIS, THE PRESENCE OF SUCH AN ABERANT, VIOLENT FORCE IN THE MEDIA CAN ONLY LEAD TO ANTI-SOCIAL PROGRAMMING.

JUST AS HARVEY DENT -- WHO'S RECOVERING STEADILY, THANKS FOR ASKING -- ASSUMED THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGICAL DOPPELGANGER TO THE BATMAN, SO A WHOLE NEW GENERATION CONFUSED AND ANGRY --

-- WILL BE BENT TO THE MATRIX OF BATMAN'S PATHOLOGICAL SELF-DELUSION. BATMAN IS, IN THIS CONTEXT -- AND PARDON THE TERM -- A SOCIAL DISEASE...

THAT'S THE DUMBEST LOAD OF...

LANA -- PLEASE -- THE NETWORK --



MR. BRICK -- THE PRESIDENT HAS REMAINED SILENT ON THIS ISSUE. DON'T YOU -- AND HE -- FEEL THAT THE NATIONAL UPROAR OVER THE BATMAN WARRANTS, IF NOT ACTION, A STATEMENT OF POSITION?

HECK, TED. HE'LL GET AROUND TO A PRESS CONFERENCE SOONER OR LATER. BUT THE PRESIDENT'S GOT TO KEEP HIS EYE ON THE BIG PICTURE, Y'KNOW? AND THIS BATMAN FLAPTRAP, WELL...

...IT'S NOISY, ALL RIGHT. THAT BIG CAPE AND POINTY EARS -- IT'S GREAT SHOW BITZ. AND YOU KNOW THE PRESIDENT KNOWS HIS SHOW BITZ. YOU JUST KEEP YOUR SHORTS ON, TED...

...PRETTY SOON NOW THE RATINGS WILL DROP ON THIS ONE AND IT'LL BLOW OVER. BESIDES, I THINK THE WHOLE THING'S JUST AS LIKELY A HOAX. NETWORKS'VE DONE WORSE.



I MEAN, BATBOY'D BE PUSHING SIXTY BY NOW -- IF HE EVER WAS REAL. FUNNY NOBODY'S EVER TAKEN A PICTURE OF HIM... MIGHTY FUNNY, I SAY...

MISS LANS, YOU ARE THE BATMAN'S MOST VOCAL SUPPORTER. HOW CAN YOU CONDONE BEHAVIOR THAT'S SO BLATANTLY ILLEGAL? WHAT ABOUT DUE PROCESS -- CIVIL RIGHTS?

WE LIVE IN THE SHADOW OF CRIME, TED, WITH THE UNspoken UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE VICTIMS -- OF FEAR, OF VIOLENCE, OF SOCIAL IMPOTENCE.

A MAN HAS Risen TO SHOW US THAT THE POWER IS, AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN, IN OUR HANDS. WE ARE UNDER SIEGE -- HE'S SHOWING US THAT WE CAN RESIST.



LANA -- YOU HAVEN'T EXACTLY ANSWERED MY QUESTION...



NEXT UP-- FIGHTING CRIMES.

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM, PUNK?

WH...

I'M THE WORST NIGHTMARE YOU EVER HAD. KIND THAT MADE YOU WAKE UP SCREAMING FOR YOUR MOTHER.

WH... WHERE AM I...

YOU'VE GOT A MOTHER, DON'T YOU? EVERY PUNK SHOULD HAVE A MOTHER...

C...CAN'T SEE, MAN...

WHAT'S...ON MY FACE...

QUITE AN ARSENAL YOU AND YOUR BUDDIES HAD...

THE .45 WAS NOTHING SPECIAL, OF COURSE...

...I THINK I'M BLEEDING, MAN... I NEED A DOCTOR...

...BUT THAT SMITH & WESSON 44 YOUR PAL WAS CARRYING...

--YOU KNOW WHICH PAL, THE ONE YOU PERFORATED--

--THAT PISTOL WAS ODD.

MAN...

ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS ADAPTED FOR A SILENCER. YOU JUST DON'T RUN ACROSS THAT-- NOT OUTSIDE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE,

BUT THAT M60 OF YOURS -- THAT'S COMBAT WEAPONRY.

SAME KIND ANOTHER MEMBER OF YOUR GANG TRIED TO USE ON JIM GORDON.

SO FILL ME IN, PUNK-- THE MUTANTS HAVE A WHOLESALE DEAL WITH THE ARMY?

YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF TEETH LEFT, AND I HAVEN'T EVEN TOUCHED YOUR TONGUE...

S...SOLID, MAN... I'LL TELL YOU...

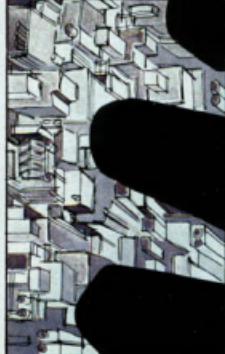
...DEAL IS...

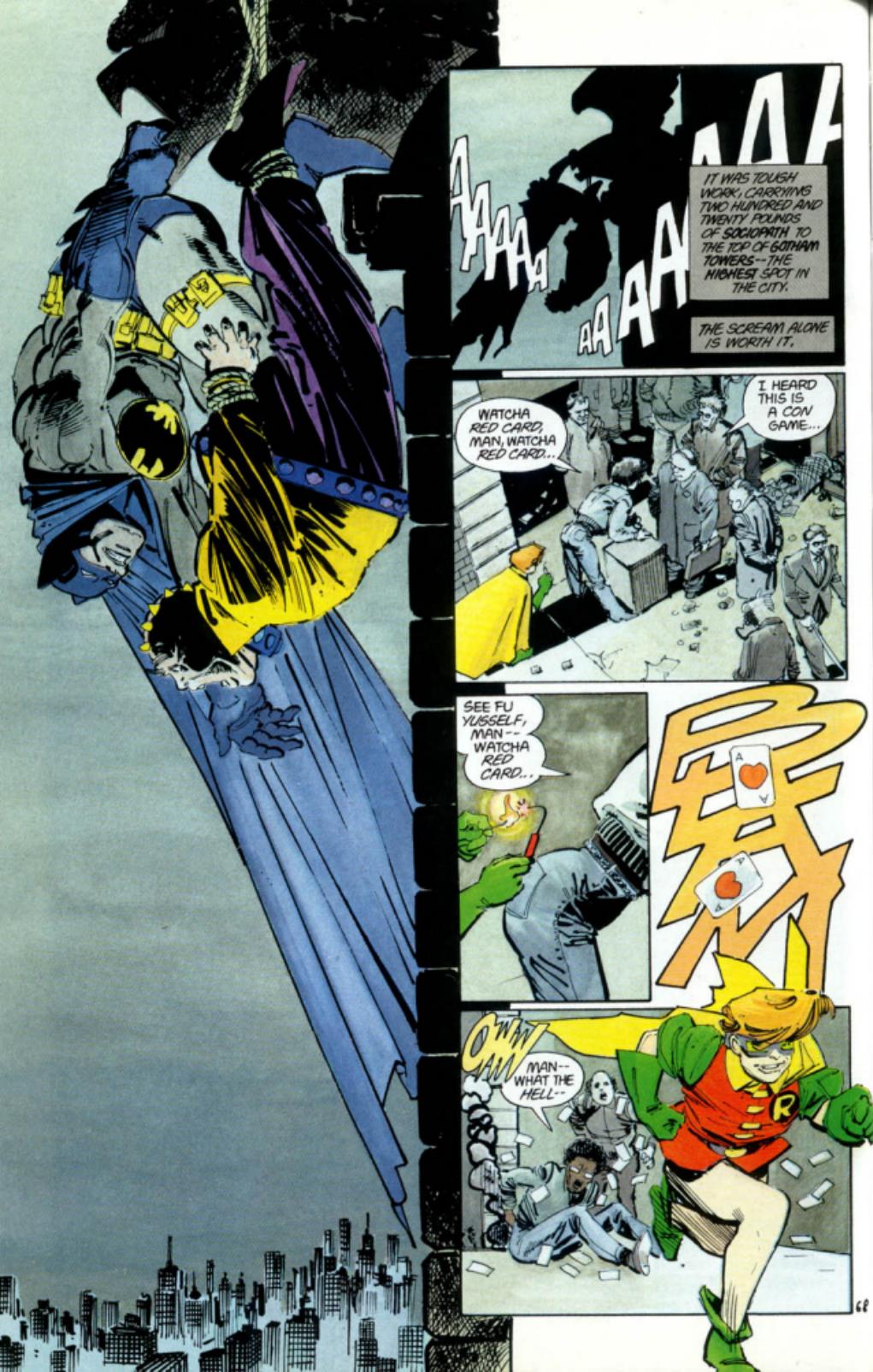
...NO COPS, MAN... I WALK...

...WHAT DO YOU SAY, MAN?

I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION. YOU'RE NOT IN A POSITION TO NEGOTIATE.

LET ME SHOW YOU...





IT WAS TOUGH
WORK, CARRYING
TWO HUNDRED AND
TWENTY POUNDS
OF SOCIOPATH TO
THE TOP OF GOTHAM
TOWERS--THE
HIGHEST SPOT IN
THE CITY.

THE SCREAM ALONE
IS WORTH IT.



I HEARD
THIS IS
A CON GAME...



SEE FU
YUSSSELF,
MAN --
WATCHA
RED CARD...



MAN --
WHAT THE
HELL --

IT'S THE TRAIN, THINKS MARGARET CORCORAN. MY LEGS NEVER HURT LIKE THIS WHEN I WAIT THE TABLES.

THE TRAIN-- IT WON'T LET THE PAIN LIE IN MY CALVES WHERE I'M USED TO IT.

SHE FEELS THE METAL SQUARE INSIDE HER PURSE AND SMILES.

ALMOST NOBODY TIPS ANYMORE. BUT AN UPDOWN DRUNK LEFT TEN DOLLARS ON THE TABLE TONIGHT. WHAT WITH THE TURN-OFF NOTICE IT WAS WRONG TO SPEND THE TIP ON THE PAIN.

VARICOSE VEINS, THE DOCTOR SAID. EASY FOR HIM TO TELL HER TO QUIT HER JOB. EASY FOR HIM TO TALK ABOUT SURGERY.

SURGERY WITH NO INSURANCE AND TWO PAYMENTS LEFT ON JAMIE'S BRACES AND THE TURN-OFF NOTICE FROM THE ELECTRIC COMPANY COMING WITH WINTER ON ITS WAY.

SHE PICTURES ROBERT'S ABLE LITTLE HANDS, HIS EAGER SMILE...



HER PURSE STRAP BITES INTO HER SHOULDER...

...AND MARGARET CORCORAN, WHO HAD NOT PLEDGED WITH BLUE CROSS WHEN THEY CANCELLED HER INSURANCE OR WITH CITICORP WHEN THEY REPOSSESSED HER CAR...



SHE LANDS HARD ON THE CEMENT, BUT IT ONLY HURTS.

SHE FEELS THE SQUARE OF METAL AND THANKS GOD AND CAN'T HELP BUT CRY.

THEN SHE FEELS SOMETHING HEAVY AND ROUND LIKE AN APPLE IN HER PURSE...



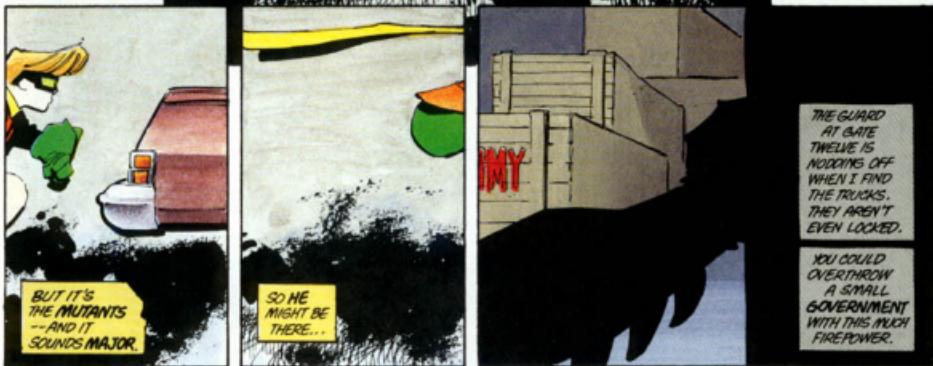
WOMAN EXPLODES IN SUBWAY STATION-- FILM AT ELEVEN.

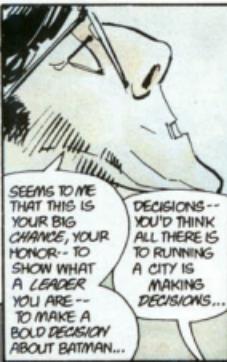


THE GENERAL'S RECORD
IS AN ANTHEM OF
ORDERS BARKED
BETWEEN DEAFENING
EXPLOSIONS... OF A
STEELY, REASSURING
VOICE ABOVE THE
CRIES OF WOUNDED
MEN...

...AN ANTHEM,
SHATTERED INTO
DISORDERS IN ITS
LAST FEW NOTES--
BY MISAPPROPRIATED
WEAPONS, SOLD
TO THE MUTANTS.

I ALMOST
ASKED
HIM WHY...





THE DUMP STRETCHES OUT OF SIGHT FROM THE FAR BANK OF THE WEST RIVER. I'M TOLD IT ENDS SOMEWHERE BEFORE THE FARMLANDS.

IT SMELLS OF ROT AND RUST-- IT'S A BREEDING GROUND FOR INSECTS AND ROVENTS.

I CUT THE ENGINE AND LISTEN TO ONE OF THE RODENTS.



THEY CALL US A GANG. THEY CALL US A MOB. THEY THINK WE JUST NOISY KIDS.



ONLY WHEN THEY DIE BY OUR HANDS AND SEE THEIR WOMEN RAPED WILL THEY KNOW...

--WE HAVE THE STRENGTH-- WE HAVE THE WILL-- AND NOW WE HAVE THE GUNS.

GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE MUTANTS!



TAKE THE GUNS. TAKE THE BOMBS. STORM POLICE HEADQUARTERS.



KILL AND KILL.

BRING ME THE HEAD OF THE OLD MAN GORDON.



MY TRUNCHEON WILL CARRY IT THROUGH THE STREETS.



I LISTEN FOR AS LONG AS I CAN STOMACH IT...



...THEN I LET THEM KNOW I'M HERE.

I SHALL CRUSH THE FOOL--

CHIK



**MUTANTS!
SURRENDER
NOW-- OR BE
DESTROYED!**

THE BATMOBILE -- THAT'S
WHAT YOU CALLED IT, DICK.

KIND OF NAME A
KID WOULD COME
UP WITH...



BLAM BLAM BLAM
BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA
BLAM

PWING PWING PWING

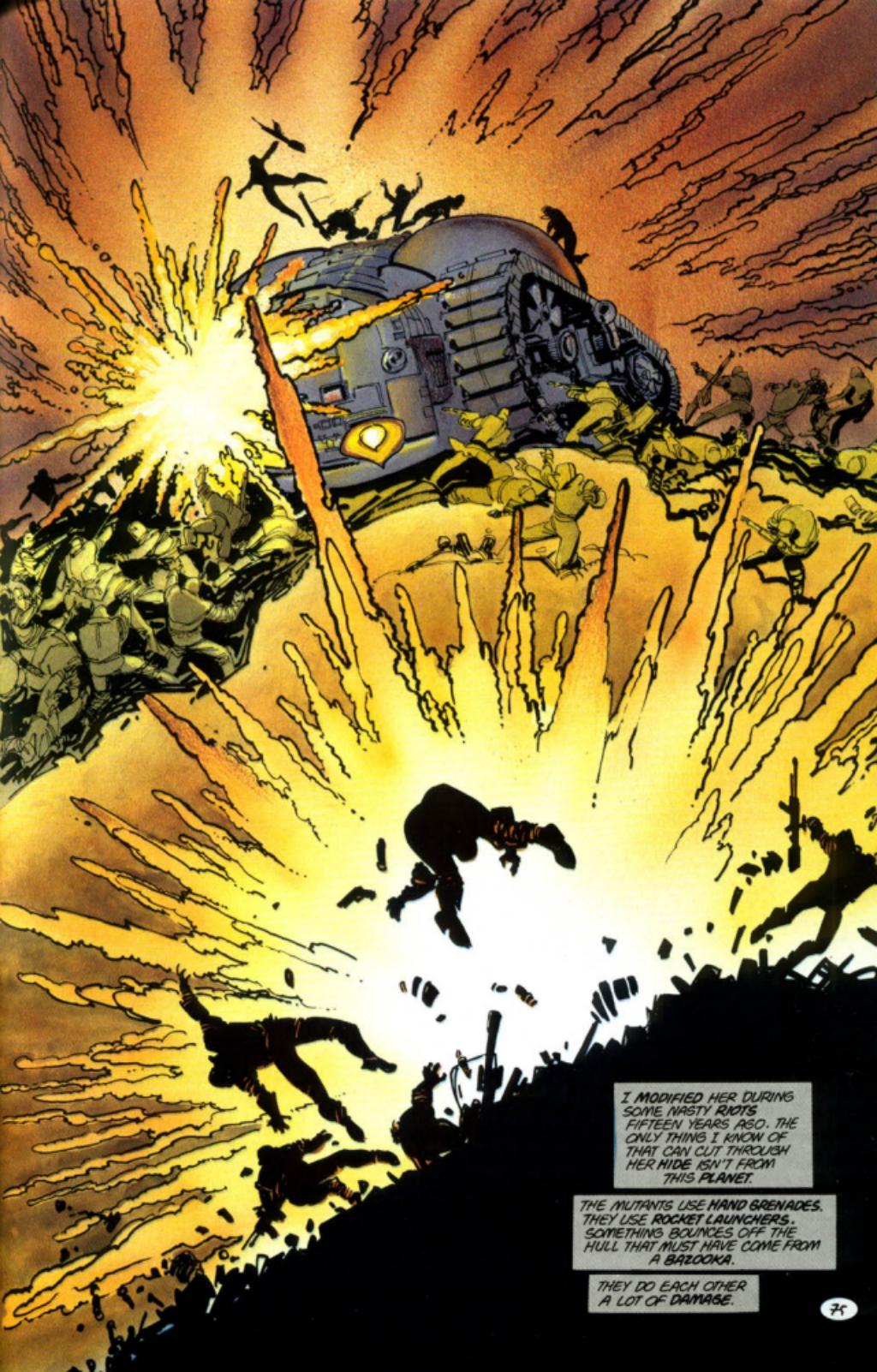
POOMIN'
POOMIN'

THEY DON'T
EVEN WAIT
FOR THE
ORDER.

YOUNG PEOPLE
THESE DAYS...

...NO RESPECT
FOR HISTORY.

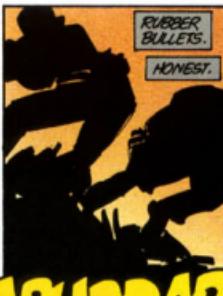




I MODIFIED HER DURING
SOME NASTY RIOTS.
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. THE
ONLY THING I KNOW OF
THAT CAN CUT THROUGH
HER HIDE ISN'T FROM
THIS PLANET.

THE MUTANTS USE HAND GRENADES.
THEY USE ROCKET LAUNCHERS.
SOMETHING BOUNCES OFF THE
HULL THAT MUST HAVE COME FROM
A BAZOOKA.

THEY DO EACH OTHER
A LOT OF DAMAGE.

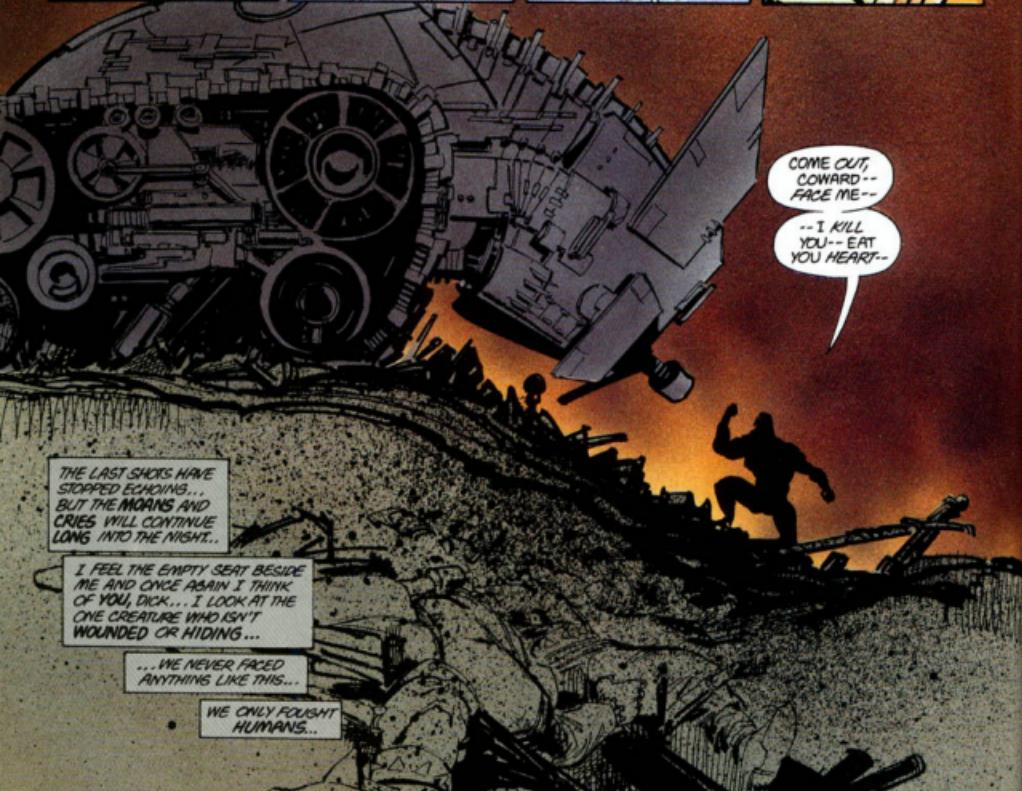


GREAT
DINNER,
HON.

THANKS,
BABE.

HEY...
...DIDN'T
WE HAVE
A KID?...

I CALL
YOU
COWARD!



MASTER
BRUCE--COME
IN, PLEASE
--MASTER
BRUCE...

...BUT THERE
HE IS, DICK
--THE
MUTANT
LEADER...

...A KIND
OF EVIL WE
NEVER
DREAMED
OF...

...THERE
HE IS--
SQUARE
IN MY
SIGHTS.

AND THERE'S
ONLY ONE
THING TO
DO ABOUT
HIM THAT
MAKES ANY
SENSE
TO ME--

--JUST PRESS
THE TRIGGER
AND BLAST
HIM FROM
THE FACE OF
THE EARTH.

THOUGH THAT MEANS
CROSSING A LINE I
DREW FOR MYSELF,
THIRTY YEARS AGO...

...I CAN'T THINK
OF A SINGLE
REASON TO LET
HIM LIVE.

EXCEPT...

...EXCEPT HE'S GOT
EXACTLY THE KIND
OF BODY I WISH HE
DIDN'T HAVE...

...POWERFUL, WITHOUT
ENOUGH BULK TO SLOW
HIM DOWN...

...EVERY MUSCLE
A STEEL SPRING--
READY TO
LASH OUT--

--AND HE'S
YOUNG...

...IN HIS
PHYSICAL
PRIME...

...AND I
HONESTLY
DON'T KNOW
IF I COULD
BEAT HIM.

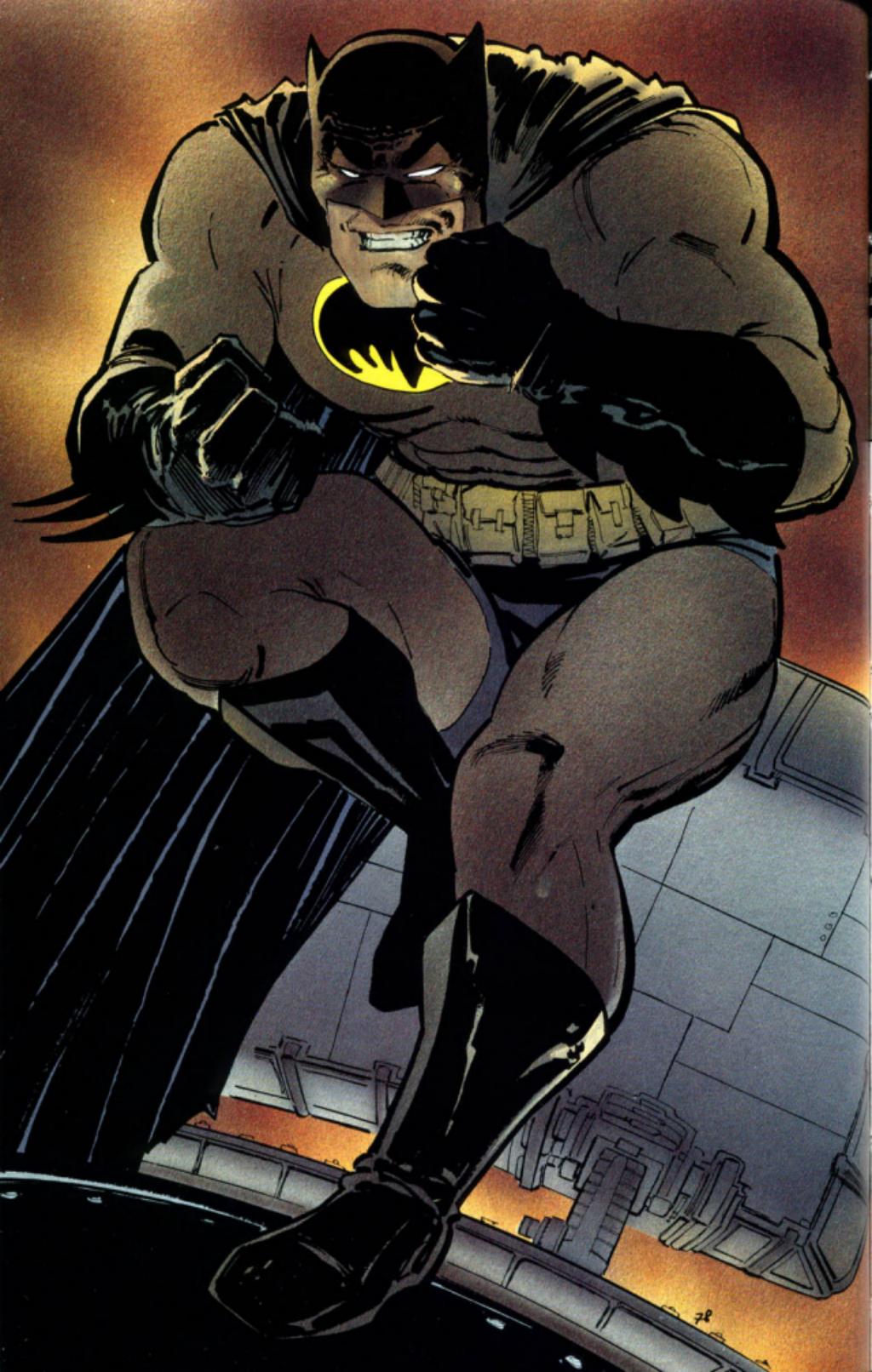
MASTER
BRUCE--
YOU'VE SHUT
DOWN
THE
WEAPONS!

CAN'T HAVE
A BACK
DOOR, ALFRED.
MIGHT BE
TEMPTED TO
USE IT.

SIR...
YOU
CAN'T BE
SERIOUS--

SIR...
HE'LL
KILL
YOU--

COME ON,
MAN--
BORIN'
ME--





--HE SHOWS ME
WHAT A FAST
KICK IS--



--SOMETHING
EXPLODES IN
MY MIDSECTION--



--SUNLIGHT
BEHIND MY
EYES AS THE
PAIN RISES--



--A MOMENT OF
BLACKNESS--
TOO SOON
FOR THAT--

--TOO SOON--
WHAT'S WRONG
WITH ME--



NO--



--RIBS
INTACT--
--NO
INTERNAL
BLEEDING--



--LET IT
LOOK
WORSE
THAN IT
IS--



--LET HIM--
GET CLOSE--
--NOT YET--
--NOT YET--



--GIVE HIM--
EVERYTHING
I'VE GOT--

--HIS NECK
HOLDS--

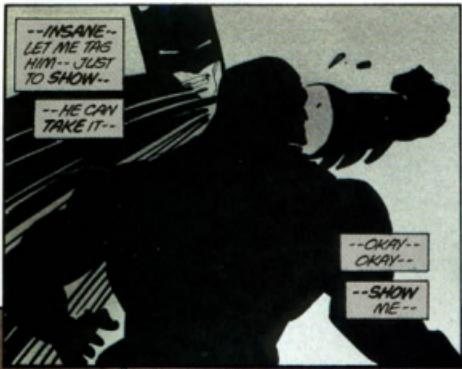
--HIS NOSE--
SHATTERS--

--BONE BITES
INTO MY
KNUCKLES--



--THE
IDIOT--

--STARTS
LAUGHING--







PORN STAR HOT GATES TODAY SIGNED A TWELVE-MILLION-DOLLAR CONTRACT WITH LANDMARK FILMS TO STAR IN A SCREEN VERSION OF SNOW WHITE. "I'M DOING IT FOR THE KIDS," SAYS GATES...

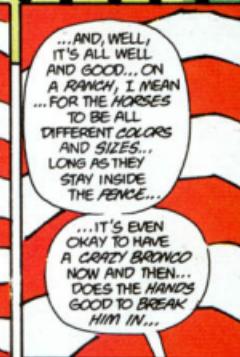
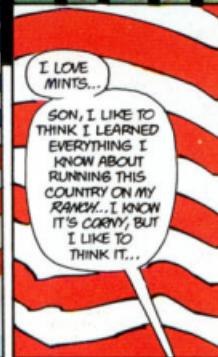
IN OTHER NEWS, GALAXY BROADCASTING PRESIDENT JAMES OLSEN ASSURED VIEWERS THAT THE TELEVISION WRITERS STRIKE, NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR, WILL NOT AFFECT THE YEAR'S PROGRAMMING...



THE POLITICAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION HAS AWARDED THE PRESIDENT AN UNPRECEDENTED FIVE CREDIBILITY POINTS FOR HIS HANDLING OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS...

THIS JUST IN--EYEWITNESSES REPORT EXPLOSIONS RIPPING ACROSS THE GOTHAM DUMP. A NEWS FOUR HELICOPTER IS ON ITS WAY, FOLKS...





...A SCENE OF TOTAL WARFARE! EIGHTY-THREE MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG HAVE BEEN FOUND, SUFFERING FROM BULLET AND SHRAPNEL WOUNDS. AMONG THOSE CAPTURED BY POLICE IS THE MUTANT LEADER, WHO CLAIMS THE BATMAN USED MILITARY WEAPONS IN THE ATTACK--AND ALSO CLAIMS TO HAVE DEFEATED THE BATMAN IN PERSONAL COMBAT...

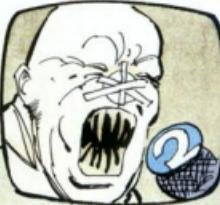


BATMAN IS A COWARD.
I BROKE HIS BONES. I
CONQUERED THE FOOL. I
MADE HIM BEG FOR MERCY.
ONLY BY CHEATING DID
HE ESCAPE ALIVE.

LET HIM GO TO HIS
WOMEN. LET HIM LICK
HIS WOUNDS. HIS DAY
IS DONE. GOTHAM
CITY BELONGS TO THE
MUTANTS.

CAREFUL,
MAN -- YOU'RE
BOUNCING AROUND
TOO --

NO...
NOT...
BOUNCING
ME... DON'T
WORRY...



THE REST OF
THE MUTANT LEADER'S
STATEMENT IS
UNFIT FOR
BROADCAST.



--BUT I'M NOT
TALKING ABOUT
A RELEASE. THIS
WILL BE A
CONTROLLED
ENVIRONMENT--
AND IT WOULD
BE SO GOOD
FOR HIM.

DR. GLEN F.
CHIEF ADMIN.



COME NOW, GLEN!
HE'S BEEN
NEARLY COMATOSE
FOR MORE THAN
A DECADE. IF
YOU'D JUST
TALK WITH HIM...
FOR FIVE
MINUTES,
GLEN...

I DON'T
KNOW.
THERE'S
SOMETHING
...WELL...
SOMETHING
SUPERNATURAL
ABOUT
THAT ONE.



NOW THAT'S A FINE WAY TO
SPEAK IN A HOUSE OF MEDICINE,
ISN'T IT? LISTEN-- PUT ALL
THE GUARDS YOU WANT IN THE
STUDIO, IF IT WILL MAKE YOU
FEEL BETTER.

LEN FORB
ADMINISTRATOR

OKAY. ALL
RIGHT...
FIVE
MINUTES.



'SCUSE ME, WE'RE
HEADING STRAIGHT
FOR A BRICK
WALL.

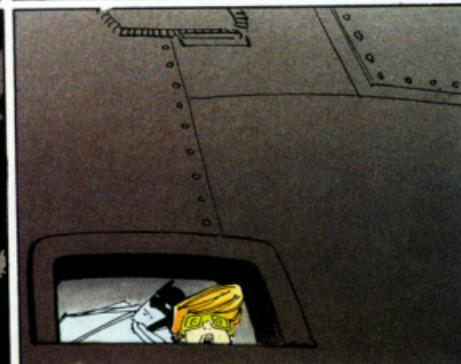


SIR--I URGE YOU TO REJECT
DR. WOLPER'S SUGGESTION.
I DON'T DESERVE THIS
CHARITY... MY CRIMES... WERE
HORRIBLE BEYOND
ALL WORDS... I AM
BEYOND
REDEMPTION.

PLEASE-- JUST
LOCK ME AWAY--
FROM HUMAN
MEMORY...



...IT'S JUST
...A
HOLOGRAM...







WE WILL COME FOR OUR LEADER. WE WILL RAPE GOTHAM. WE WILL RAPE GOTHAM. WE WILL TASTE GOTHAM'S BLOOD.

ON HEARING THIS MESSAGE FROM THE MUTANTS, COMMISSIONER GORDON PUT HIMSELF AND HIS MEN ON TWENTY-FOUR HOUR ALERT-- WHILE THE MAYOR WAS QUICK TO SPEAK OUT...

THIS WHOLE SITUATION IS THE RESULT OF GORDON'S INCOMPETENCE-- AND OF THE TERRORIST ACTIONS OF THE BATMAN. I WISH TO SIT DOWN WITH THE MUTANT LEADER... TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT...

WHAT DO YOU THINK, TRISH? HIS HONOR GONE NUTS?



NOT AT ALL, BILL. FRANKLY I EXPECT THE MAYOR'S CREDIBILITY RATING TO GO THROUGH THE ROOF, ESPECIALLY IF HE'S SUCCESSFUL IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.

THIS, COMBINED WITH HIS STRONG STAND ON BATMAN-- AND MAKING A WOMAN THE NEXT POLICE COMMISSIONER-- WELL, I THINK WE'VE GOT A WHOLE NEW MAYOR ON OUR HANDS--

-- PUBLIC PERCEPTION-WISE, THAT IS.



ARNOLD CRIMP FINGERS THE COLD STEEL THING IN HIS POCKET AND STARES AT THE MOVIE MARQUEE AND DOES NOT THROW UP.



ARNOLD CRIMP TOOK THE ALBUM FROM THE RECORD STORE WHERE HE WORKED UNTIL THEY FIRED HIM THIS AFTERNOON AND TRANSFERRED "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN" TO TAPE.

THEN HE PLAYED THE TAPE BACKWARDS.

HE PLAYED IT FORTY-SEVEN TIMES UNTIL HE WAS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT FATHER DON WAS RIGHT.

HE LOST HIS TEMPER AND BROKE THE RECORD INTO FOUR PIECES THAT WERE EXACTLY THE SAME SIZE.



ROW ON ROW ON ROW OF PICTURES OF WOMEN AND WORDS AND WORDS AND WORDS. HE STOPPED AT THIS ONE, THE ONE HE IS IN RIGHT NOW AND READ THE TITLE THAT DID NOT MAKE HIM THROW UP.

THE TITLE IS "MY SWEET SATAN," WHICH WHAT ARNOLD CRIMP IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN HE HEARD WHEN HE PLAYED "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN" BACKWARDS.



HE THINKS ABOUT LED ZEPPELIN AND HOW THEY ARE TRYING TO KILL HIM.



HE HAD NOT KNOWN ABOUT LED ZEPPELIN UNTIL FATHER DON ON TV HAD EXPLAINED IT LAST NIGHT.

FATHER DON SAID THAT LED ZEPPELIN HID A PRAYER TO SATAN IN THEIR SONG "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN."

THEY HID IT VERY WELL. THEY RECORDED IT BACKWARDS.

BUT THE YOUNG GIRL WHO WAS PAINTED LIKE A WHORE DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM.



THAT WAS THIS AFTERNOON, IN THE STORE.



ON THE SCREEN A NUN A NUN IS DOING SOMETHING AND SHE'S PAINTED EXACTLY LIKE A WHORE--



THAT WAS THIS AFTERNOON, IN THE STORE. HE EXPLAINED IT TO HER VERY CAREFULLY. SHE SAID AWFUL WORDS.



EVERY MORNING AND EVENING UNTIL TONIGHT OF COURSE HE HAD WALKED SIX BLOCKS OUT OF HIS WAY TO AVOID THIS NEIGHBORHOOD.



IT'S WORSE THAN HE IMAGINED.
THREE SLAIN IN BATMAN-INSPIRED PORN THEATER SHOOT-OUT. DETAILS TO FOLLOW...





HE PUSHES THROUGH THE COTTON IN HIS HEAD AND REMEMBERS THE LAST TIME HE FELT SOMETHING.

IT WAS IN THE FIRST AND ONLY ROUND OF HIS LAST FIGHT. HIS LAST FIGHT WHEN CAPTAIN WARRIOR HIT HIM ACROSS THE NOSE.



BROKEN NOSE VASQUEZ, BIGGERS HAD CALLED HIM. JUST LAUGHED WHEN IRON MAN CRIED LIKE A BABY AND BEGGED FOR ANOTHER FIGHT.

THEN BIGGERS PUT HIS FAT ARM AROUND IRON MAN'S SHOULDER AND TOLD HIM THE ONLY WAY HE COULD MAKE MONEY NOW.

SUDDENLY HIS EYES STING AND IRON MAN HURTS ALL OVER AND REALEASES HE'S READING ABOUT A MAN.

A MAN WHO DRESSES UP LIKE A MONSTER AND MAKES THINGS RIGHT.



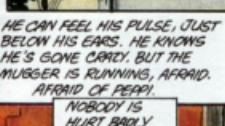
THE NEXT TIME IRON MAN VASQUEZ FEELS SOMETHING, HE'S STANDING IN A RESTAURANT WITH SOMETHING ON HIS FACE AND A GUN IN HIS HAND.

HE HEARS A TRUCK BACKFIRE --



AND WHEN HE HEARS THE WOMAN SCREAM DOWN THE STREET, HE KNOWS HE SHOULD BE AFRAID.

INSTEAD HE'S LOOKING AT THE ALARM SYSTEM THAT COST HIM TWO MONTHS PROFITS AND THE IRON BARS OVER HIS WINDOWS THAT MAKE HIS BEAUTIFUL SHOP LOOK LIKE A PRISON...



...AN UPDATE--THE MAYOR IS THIS MINUTE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MUTANT LEADER, WHO HAS AGREED TO MEET HIM ALONE. MEANWHILE, THE MAYOR'S LEADERSHIP QUOTIENT HAS SOARED-- EXCUSE ME...



I'D EXPECTED THEM TO BE SCREAMING AND FIGHTING. BUT THEY STAND LIKE A CAPTIVE ARMY. I'D LIKE TO THINK THEY'RE CRAZY-- BUT HERE I AM, WALKING THE MAYOR TO MEET THEIR LEADER--



--WITH ALL THE CEREMONY OF A MILITARY CONFERENCE.

THE CELL DOOR OPENS. THE AIR GOES THICK. I FEEL THE MAYOR SHUDDER, IN TIME WITH ME.

I ASK HIM ONE MORE TIME IF HE IS SURE HE WANTS TO GO IT ALONE. HE GURGLES, AND NODS.

I DON'T KNOW IF I'D CALL IT COURAGE.



I HEAR A NERVOUS GIGGLE AND AN ANIMAL GROWL.

I HEAR HANDCUFF LINKS SNAP.

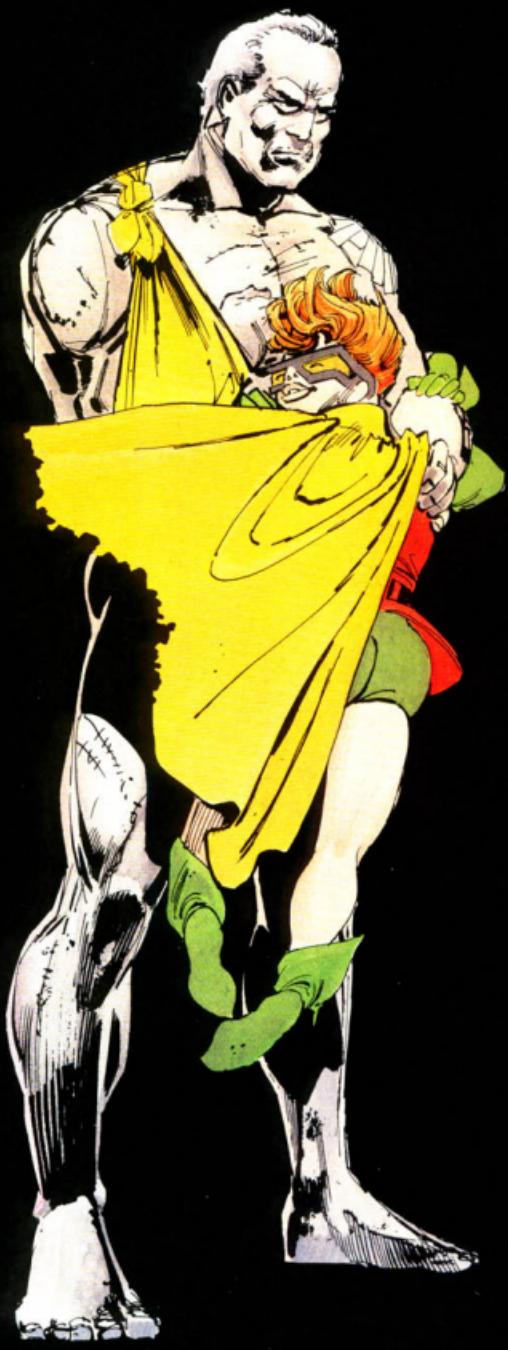


...THE MAYOR IS DEAD.



THE MUTANT LEADER RIPPED THE MAYOR'S THROAT OUT WITH HIS TEETH. THE MUTANT HAS BEEN RETURNED TO HIS CELL. MORE ON THIS AS WE GET IT.





THAT'S RIGHT--WE'VE GOT
POLICE VIDEOTAPE OF
THE MAYOR'S MURDER!
ONLY ON CHANNEL TWO!
NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH.
STAY TUNED.

SOVIET DESTROYERS HAVE
BEEN SIGHTED IN THE
WATERS OFF CORTO MALTESE...

AND, IN GOTHAM CITY,
IT ALSO LOOKS LIKE
IMMINENT WAR-- AS
THE CITY GIRD'S ITSELF
FOR THE MUTANT ATTACK...

CHECK WHAT'S
COMIN', MAN--
SOME PIECE--

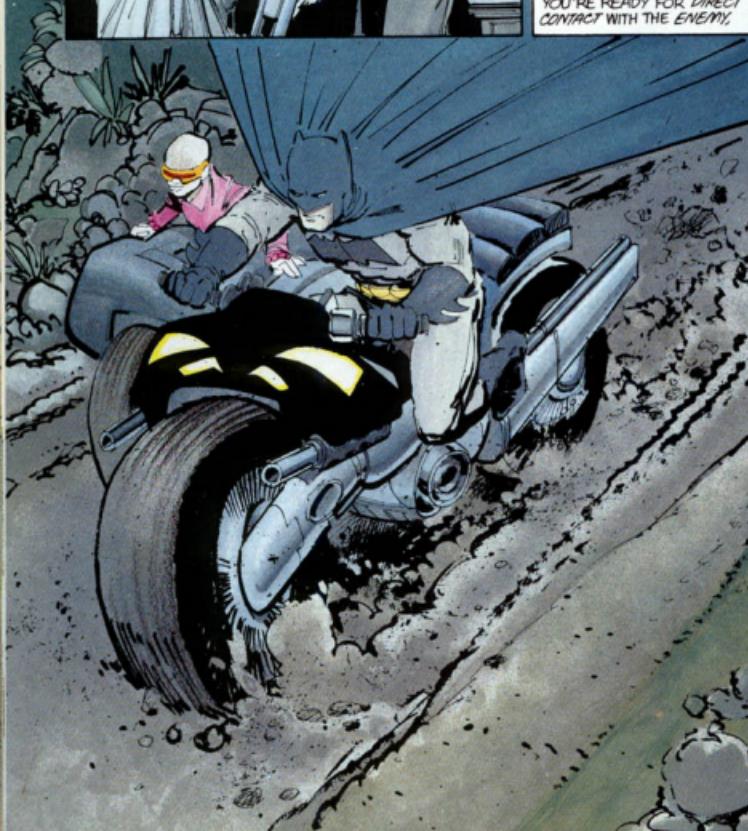
TASTY-- HE--
IS THAT WHO
I THINK--
IT IS--

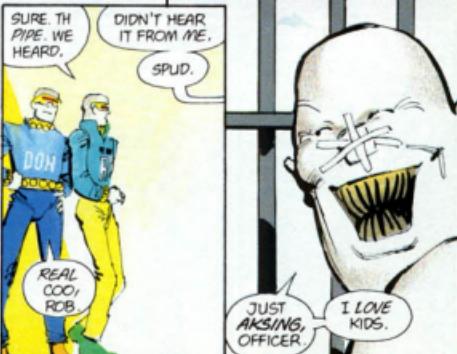
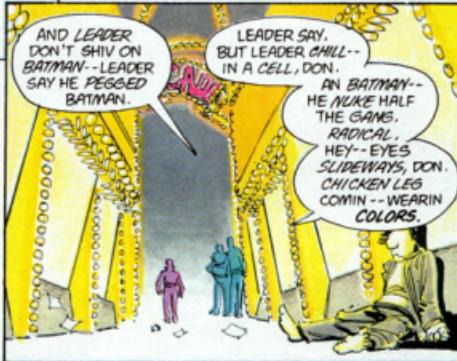
HEY, SWEET
PIECE--WE
GOT PLANS
F YOU--

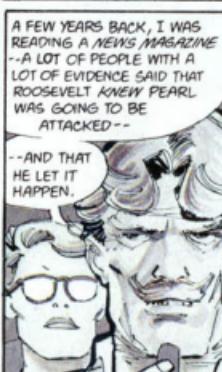
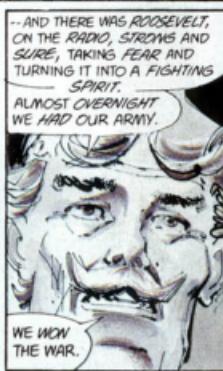
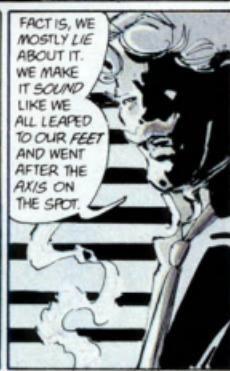
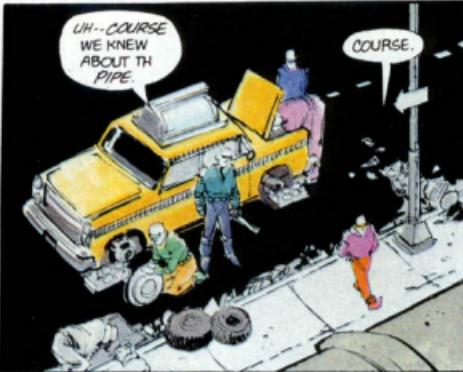
NIZE
PLANS.

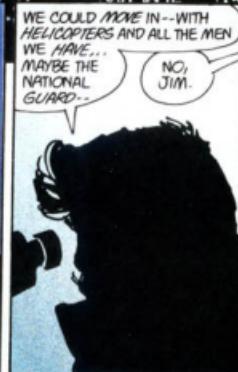


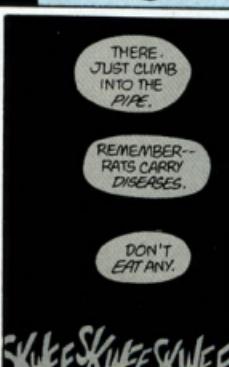
...PLEASE...



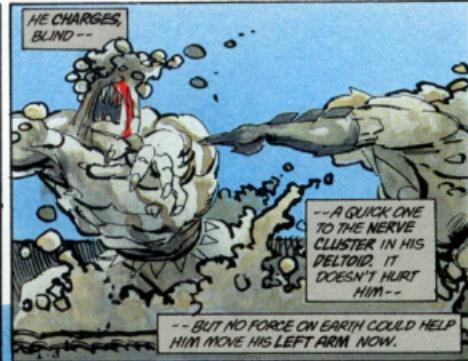








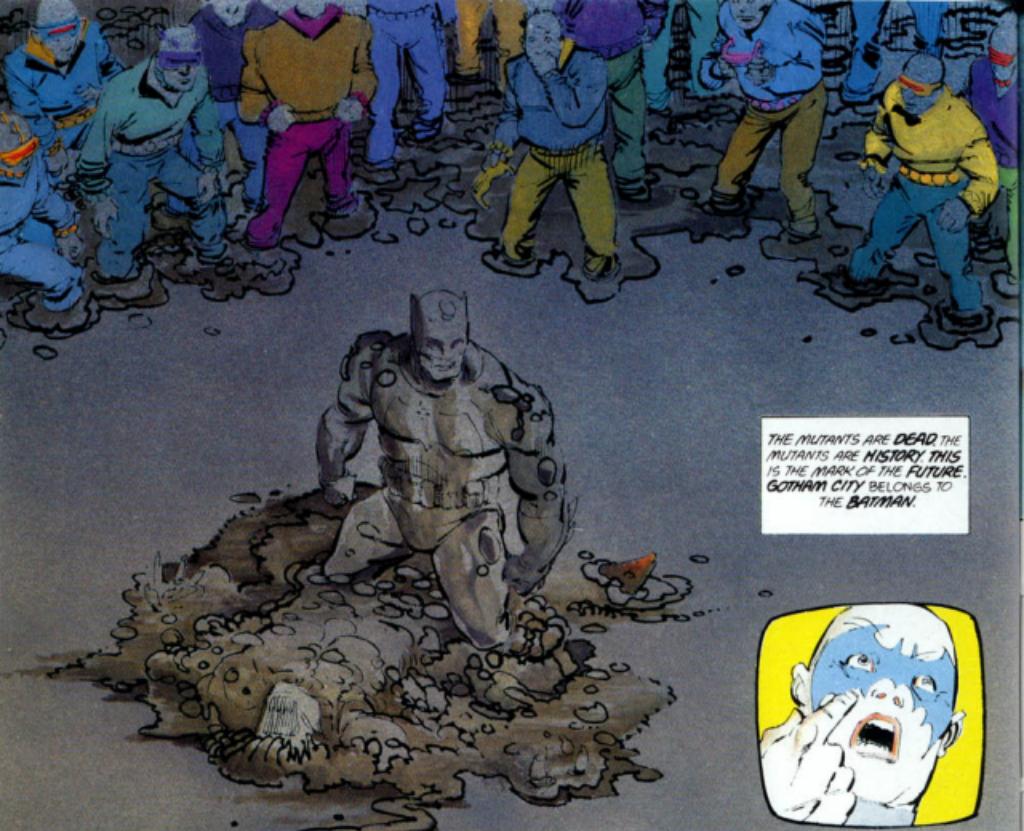






RAAAARR





THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD. THE
MUTANTS ARE HISTORY THIS
IS THE MARK OF THE FUTURE.
GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO
THE BATMAN.

JUST AS I PREDICTED--THE
BATMAN HAS INFECTED
THE YOUTH OF GOTHAM--
POISONED THEM WITH AN
INSIDIOUS EXCUSE FOR
THE MOST VIOLENTLY ANTI-
SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.

WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT
LETTING THE MUTANT LEADER
GO. ONCE HE IS MOBILE
HE WILL BE ARRAIGNED--
TO SEE IF HE IS FIT TO
STAND TRIAL, OR THE
VICTIM OF MENTAL ILLNESS.

BATMAN? I'M PLAIN TIRED
OF HEARING ABOUT HIM,
HIM AND HOW HE DOESN'T
LET THINGS STOP HIM OR
JUST LET THINGS GO THE
WAY US HUMANS DO. WE
COUNT TOO.

THOUGH SURROUNDED
BY SINFULNESS AND
TERROR, WE MUST NOT
BECOME SO EMBITTERED
THAT WE TAKE SATAN'S
METHODS AS OUR OWN.



DO NOT EXPECT ANY
FURTHER STATEMENTS. THE
SONS OF THE BATMAN DO
NOT TALK. WE ACT. LET
GOTHAM'S CRIMINALS
BEWARE. THEY ARE ABOUT
TO ENTER HELL.



SO A BUNCH OF
PSYCHOPATHS TURN ON
CRIMINALS, INSTEAD OF
INNOCENTS. FOR THIS
YOU WANT TO BLAME
BATMAN?



THE PRESIDENT IS CONCERNED,
YOU CAN BANK ON THAT, PAL.
BUT DON'T EXPECT HIM TO GO
JUMPING IN ON GOTHAM'S
OWN FINE MAYOR AND
GOVERNOR. NO, SIR. THIS IS
AMERICA.



I SAID
NO
COMMENT.



LET ME TELL YOU MY SECRET.

SEEMS EVERYBODY
WANTS TO KNOW
WHAT IT IS.

...THEY TELL ME I'M HANDLING
IT WELL-- MY RETIREMENT.
THAT IS-- THEY SMILE AND
STARE AT ME, A LITTLE TOO
OBVIOUS ABOUT HOW CURIOUS
THEY ARE.



LIFE WILL BE EASIER NOW I
WON'T FEEL LIKE DAD TO AN
ENTIRE CITY OF SOULS. I
WON'T BLEED WITH EVERY
SINGLE ONE OF MY CHILDREN.

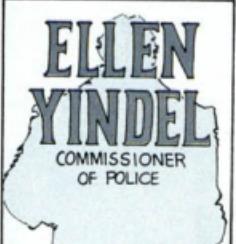


I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU MY
SECRET. THE ONE I'LL TELL
NOBODY AT THE BANQUET--



--GOD, WHAT WILL
I SAY AT THE
BANQUET?--

--IT'S A
SIMPLE
SECRET.



WHEN I THINK OF BRUCE--AND
WHAT HE'S IN FOR... I DON'T
THINK HE CAN POSSIBLY KNOW
HOW MUCH I BENT AND
BROKE THE RULES FOR HIM,
ALL THESE YEARS...



I THINK OF
SARAH.
THE REST IS EASY.

THEY WONDER HOW I CAN
LEAVE IT BEHIND WITHOUT AT
LEAST A MONTH OR TWO OF
FEELING USELESS.



...WHEN I THINK OF BRUCE--
THEN, I WISH THEY HADN'T
RETIRED ME. HE'S FINISHED.
AND THERE'S NO WAY TO
TELL HIM THAT.



AND NO
POINT,
I GUESS.

FIFTY YEARS OF THIS AND
THEY WONDER.



I WON'T BE SEEING HIM
AGAIN. I MEAN, SURE, I'LL
SEE HIM--HE'S THAT CLOSE
TO POLITE, BUT I'M OUT OF
THE PICTURE NOW, OUT OF
HIS PICTURE.



FROGS CROAK
LIKE A CARTOON
CAR ALARM.
CRICKETS PICK
UP THE CHORUS.



A
WOLF
HOWLS.



I KNOW
HOW HE FEELS.

B O O K T H R E E



HUNT THE DARK KNIGHT







BOYS, BOYS, BOYS...
ONE AT A TIME NOW...
NOW HOW ABOUT
THAT SMARTLY DRESSED
YOUNGSTER IN THE
FRONT ROW
THERE...

MISTER PRESIDENT - WE'RE ALL
ANXIOUS TO HEAR YOUR
PLANS FOR THE CORTO
MALTESE CRISIS. BUT FIRST,
ANOTHER QUESTION MUCH ON
THE MINDS OF AMERICA. WHAT
IS YOUR POSITION ON THE
BATMAN CONTROVERSY?



WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT'S
MY BULL TO -- MY ROW TO HOE,
BOYS...HEH...YOU SEE, THAT'S
A RIGHT BIG STATE, ALL ITS
OWN...AND IT'S GOT ITS OWN
SOLID, CLEAR-HEADED
GOVERNOR, YES, IT DOES...

SORRY, GUYS, I'M THE
GOVERNOR. GOT A WHOLE
STATE TO LOOK AFTER. I
TRUST THE JUDGMENT
OF THE MAYOR OF GOTHAM
CITY IMPLICITLY.

AS MAYOR, IT IS MY
DUTY TO ADMINISTRATE --
NOT TO RENDER MORAL
JUDGMENTS. DON'T ASK
ME TO INTERFERE WITH
THE DECISION-MAKING
POWER OF OUR NEW
POLICE COMMISSIONER.



CHANNEL TWO WILL BROADCAST
THE BANQUET LIVE, GORDON
IS SCHEDULED TO INTRODUCE
YINDEL -- A GRACEFUL GESTURE,
CONSIDERING THEIR
DIFFERENCES. WE MAY
SEE SOME SPARKS FLY, TOM?

THAT WE MAY, LOLA.
WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK,
AS JULIE PARKS
BRINGS US A STORY
WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO
CLASSIFY AS AN ATMOSPHERE
ANOMALY--OR
A LIFO SIGHTING.





TOM, SUNFLOWER STANDISH HAS OPERATED HIS CORNER NEWSSTAND FOR FIFTEEN YEARS. HE'S NEVER SEEN THE LIKE OF WHAT STRUCK SEVENTH AVENUE THIS EVENING. HAVE YOU, MR. STANDISH?

NOT WITHOUT ACID. I MEAN, NO -- I DON'T SEE IT. MY MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS -- THEM I SAW, BLOWING LIKE LEAVES. BUT I DIDN'T SEE IT. IT WAS TOO FAST -- IT WAS FASTER THAN ANYTHING.



FASTER THAN A SPEEDING--
CAREFUL NOW, LOLA.



MUST HAVE
GONE THROUGH
THAT DOOR!

WAHHH
BRAKK



IF YOU'RE
LUCKY,
BRUNO--
--YOU'LL
GO TO
JAIL
TONIGHT.



BUT FIRST
YOU'LL TELL
ME WHAT
YOUR BOSS
HAS
PLANNED.

ON HIS TV
APPEARANCE.

KAKKREEEK



YAAA
AAAAA
KKKK



DON'T
TAKE THE
STARS.

THEY
AREN'T
SAFE.



ANOTHER BIZARRE
INCIDENT--THIS ONE IN THE
SOUTH STREET SUBWAY
STATION. ADVERTISING AGENT
BYRON BRASSBALLS TOLD
REPORTERS...

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING
HARMFUL. I WAS JUST TRYING
TO PROTECT MYSELF. THE
SUBWAYS ARE DANGEROUS.
YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TELL
YOU THAT SO THERE I WAS,
ALONE IN THE STATION EXCEPT
FOR THIS "BEGGAR"--I WANT
THAT IN QUOTES--



--WHAT?... HOW WAS I TO KNOW
HE DIDN'T HAVE A GUN? THEY
NEVER SHOW YOU THAT UNTIL
THEY'RE READY TO KILL YOU--
WHAT?... OH, SURE. THE
CRUTCHES. A LOT OF THEM
USE CRUTCHES. YOU KNOW
WHAT I MEAN.





--HAVEN'T SEEN A DOCTOR YET,
BUT I'M SURE I SLIPPED A
DISC LANDING ON THE TRACKS...
NO, I COULDN'T SEE. NOT A
FRIGGING THING. THAT WIND
KICKED UP TOO MUCH SOOT.
SPENT A SECOND LISTENING TO
THAT BEGGAR PRAY LIKE AN IDIOT...

...YES, I AM RELIGIOUS. BUT I'VE
GOT THE DECENCY TO KEEP IT IN
CHURCH. THEN I HEARD THE
SCREAM OF TWISTING METAL--
SHOUTS FROM INSIDE THE TRAIN,
PEOPLE BITCHING. FINALLY THE
SOOT SETTLED...



...AND THERE IT WAS--
THE TRAIN, I MEAN--ITS
FRONT END CRUSHED INWARD,
LIKE IT RAN INTO SOMETHING...
WELL, SOMETHING...



SOMETHING MORE
POWERFUL THAN A
LOCOMOTIVE,
RIGHT, TOM?

LOLA--THE
LAST THING WE
NEED IS
TROUBLE WITH
THE F.C.C...

SOFTENING
UP--SHELL
START
TALKING
SOON--

--WHAT'S
THAT
SOUND--

--THE FLOOR--
--IT'S SHAKING--



RRRRRRRRMMMBBBBBBB





...SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES STORMED OUT OF THE HALL. REPEATING THIS LATE-BREAKING STORY--U.S./SOVIET TALKS ON THE CORTO MALTESE CRISIS HAVE BROKEN DOWN.

TERMING U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT OF THE REGIME OF GENERAL MONTALBAN AS "FASCIST AGGRESSION," THE SOVIETS PLEDGED A "TOTAL MILITARY COMMITMENT." THIS HAS BEEN A NEWS SIX SPECIAL REPORT.

...BODIES OF A PUSHER AND JUNKIE FOUND HACKED TO PIECES IN A WEST END TENEMENT. MEMBERS OF THE DISBANDED MUTANT GANG ARE CARRYING OUT THEIR THREAT TO GOTHAM'S UNDERWORLD.

THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD. THE MUTANTS ARE HISTORY. THIS IS THE MARK OF THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE BATMAN.



DO NOT EXPECT ANY FURTHER STATEMENTS. THE SONS OF THE BATMAN DO NOT TALK. WE ACT. LET GOTHAM'S CRIMINALS BEWARE. THEY ARE ABOUT TO ENTER HELL.

BATMAN'S CULPABILITY FOR THIS ATROCITY IS OUR SUBJECT TONIGHT. WITH US IS THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPERT ON THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE BATMAN-- DR. BARTHolemew Wolper.

BATMAN IS A MENACE TO SOCIETY.

NOW, I KNOW THAT'S SOMETHING OF AN OUTDATED TERM. SURE SOUNDS STRANGE COMING OUT OF MY MOUTH. Nonetheless, IT APPLIES. DESPITE MY ALERTING THE CITY TO THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES--



-NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO STOP THIS PSYCHOSOCIAL INFECTIOn. BATMAN SHOULD BE CONSIDERED PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY HUMAN BEING MURDERED BY THIS GANG.

MY ORDERS WERE SPECIFIC--
WATCH IT--
YEAH, BUT...





--STILL, YOU MADE YOURSELF VISIBLE
TO BRUNO. I WILL NOT TOLERATE
INSUBORDINATION--

--CAREFUL...

...BUT BACK
THERE-- WAS
THAT HIM?

...THE HALL IS SILENT,
AS THE MAN WHO HAS
BEEN POLICE COMMISSIONER
OF GOTHAM CITY FOR
TWENTY-SIX YEARS
STEPS TO THE PODIUM...

NICE
WATCH.

...JAMES GORDON
DRAWS A FOND
CHUCKLE FROM
THE AUDIENCE...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
IT IS MY PLEASURE TO
INTRODUCE YOU TO YOUR
NEW POLICE COMMISSIONER.
I DO NOT ENVY HER THE NEXT
FEW YEARS. THE JOB HAS
FEW REWARDS.

THE BEST YOU CAN HOPE FOR
IS THAT WHEN YOU'RE
FINISHED WITH IT, THINGS
AREN'T AS LOUSY AS THEY
WOULD'VE BEEN WITHOUT
YOU. ELLEN YINDEL IS
EMINENTLY QUALIFIED FOR
THIS JOB...



TO ATTEMPT TO QUOTE HER
OUTSTANDING RECORD IN THE
MINUTES I'M ALLOWED
WOULD BE A DISRESPECT TO
HER. RATHER, I OFFER MY
SINCERITY IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF
WHAT SHE FACES.



IF YOU
DISOBEDI,
EVER
AGAIN--

--YOU'RE
FIRED.

SHE FACES A CITY OF THIEVES
AND INTRUDERS AND HONEST
PEOPLE TOO FRIGHTENED TO
HOPE. SHE FACES LIFE-AND-
DEATH DECISIONS, EVERY
HOUR TO COME. SOME WILL
TORTURE HER.



WE GOING
SOMEWHERE
OR WHAT?

TO THE ONLY
SOLID LEAD I'VE
GOT LEFT, ROBIN.
A MAN NAMED
ABNER.



SHE WILL FACE A MAN WHO IS THE LIVING SPIRIT OF... SOMETHING WE NEED. SHE MAY BE HIS ENEMY. SHE MAY LEARN FROM HIM. I WISH HER WELL. THANK YOU-- AND GOOD-BYE.

... THERE IS STRAINED APPRAISE FOR JAMES GORDON...

FIGURE WE'VE BEEN DOING THE SPIDER HERE FOR LESS THAN THREE YEARS...

PATIENCE, ROBIN. IT'LL KEEP YOU ALIVE. ABNER ISN'T HOME.



... AND YES-- A STANDING OVATION FOR POLICE COMMISSIONER YINDEL!

THANK YOU... I AM HONORED TO SHARE THE STAGE WITH JAMES GORDON. HE SPOKE OF DECISIONS. NOW I MUST MAKE MY OWN.



DESPITE GOTHAM'S PLAGUE OF CRIME, I BELIEVE OUR ONLY COURSE IS LAW ENFORCEMENT. I WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF A VIGILANTE. THEREFORE, AS YOUR POLICE COMMISSIONER--

--I ISSUE THIS ARREST ORDER FOR THE BATMAN ON CHARGES OF BREAKING AND ENTERING, ASSAULT AND BATTERY, CREATING A PUBLIC MENACE--



I'LL SEND
ROBIN HOME.

I'LL HELP THE
EMERGENCY TEAMS
AS BEST I CAN.

I'LL COUNT
THE DEAD,
ONE BY
ONE.

I'LL ADD
THEM TO
THE LIST.
JOKER.

THE LIST OF
ALL THE
PEOPLE I'VE
MURDERED...

-- BY
LETTING
YOU
LIVE.

JUST
CAN'T
SLEEP



...TWELVE KILLED IN A
MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION
THAT LEVELED A BAY
RIDGE APARTMENT BUILDING
...THE RESCUE TEAM
SIGHTED BATMAN AT THE
SCENE...

...FOLLOWING HER ARREST
ORDER FOR THE BATMAN,
COMMISSIONER YINDEL
FILED A FORMAL PROTEST
WITH THE MEDIA COUNCIL
AGAINST THE JOKER'S
APPEARANCE ON THE DAVID
ENDOCRINE SHOW...

THE COUNCIL DENIED HER
PROTEST... THE BODY OF
THREE-TIME LOSER
HECTOR MENDEZ WAS
FOUND IN AN EAST SIDE
ALLEY. HE HAD BEEN
LITERALLY SKINNED
ALIVE...

...THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES
GUILD HAS DECLARED A
GENERAL STRIKE, IN
RESPONSE TO TREATMENT
OF THEIR MEMBERS IN THE
RECENT LIBYAN INCIDENT...



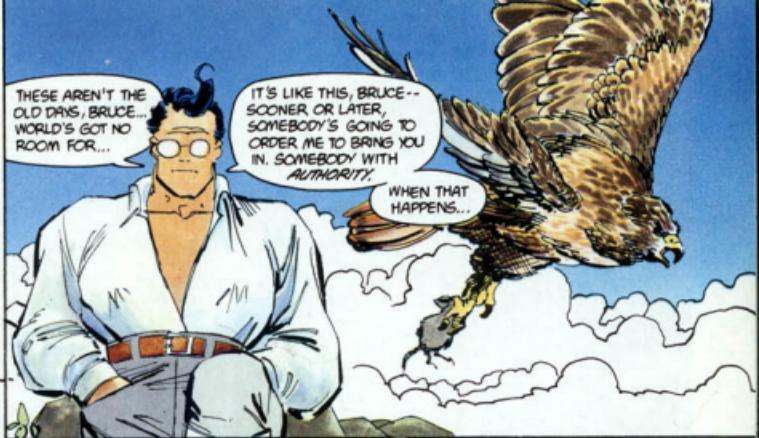
...DESPITE MASSIVE SOVIET ARMS BUILDUP IN THE WATERS SURROUNDING CORO MALTESE, THE PRESIDENT PROMISES THAT AMERICA WILL NOT BE THE FIRST TO DEPLOY NUCLEAR WEAPONS...

GOOD MORNING, GOTHAM!

THERE'S JUST THE SUN AND THE SKY AND HIM, LIKE HE'S THE ONLY REASON IT'S ALL HERE.

THEN HE RUINS EVERYTHING BY TALKING.







THE REST
OF US LEARNED
TO DANCE.

THE REST OF US
RECOGNIZED THE
DANGER - OF
THE ENDLESS
ENVY OF THOSE
NOT BLESSED.



DIANA WENT
BACK TO HER
PEOPLE.

HAL WENT TO
THE STARS.

AND I HAVE
WALKED THE
Razor's Edge
FOR SO LONG...



BUT YOU,
BRUCE...

-- YOU, WITH
YOUR WILD
OBSESSION --





--A SUDDEN COMMUNICATIONS
BLACKOUT IN CENTRAL
AMERICA, FOR FIVE HUNDRED
MILES SURROUNDING
CORTO MALTESE--



--FIFTY-FOOT WAVES
POUNDED THE SOUTH
AMERICAN COAST--



THE ONLY DANGER IS POSSIBLE HARASSMENT BY THE BATMAN. JUST WATCH THE SHOW TONIGHT. YOU'LL SEE HOW HARMLESS MY PATIENT IS -- HE'S A CHANGED MAN.



NO. I
BROUGHT
MY OWN.



WONDERFUL
TO SEE YOU SHOW
SUCH INTEREST.

--SEVEN POINT FIVE
ON THE RICHTER SCALE...
HAVE THOSE IDIOTS
FINALLY DONE IT?...

THIS IS STRICTLY AN
OBSERVATION MISSION FOR
YOU, ROBIN. YOU WILL STAY
IN THE COPTER.

YOU ARE NOT TO
TOUCH THE
CONTROLS.



VINDEL'S SERIOUS ABOUT THAT
ARREST ORDER. BUT I THINK
SHE'S IN FOR A SURPRISE
WHEN SHE SICS POLICE ON
ME. THEY'LL SEE US SOON...

...YES.
HOW'D YOU
KNOW
ABOUT...

A LUNGBUSTER
OF A SHOW
FOR YOU
TONIGHT...

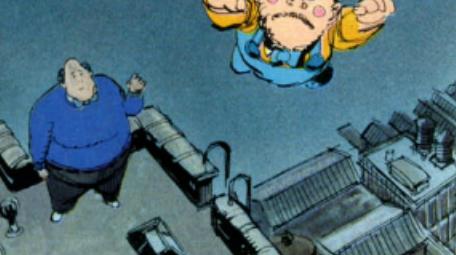
JUST BE
YOURSELF...

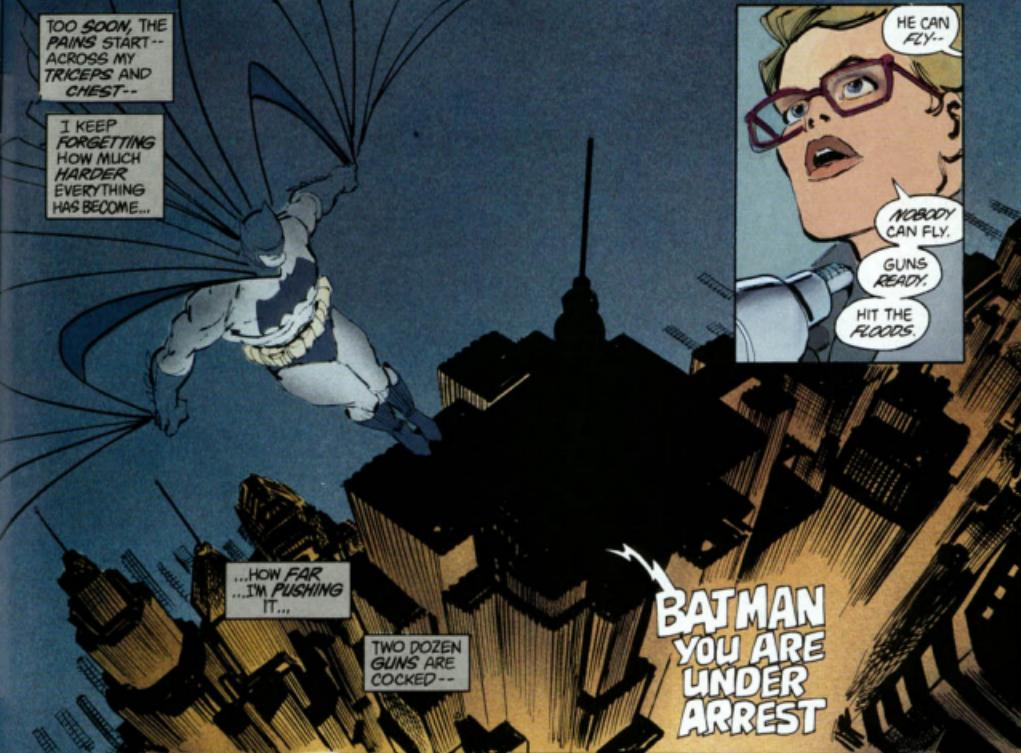


...PEOPLE ZHOULD
HAF ZEX UND ZEX
UND ZEX-- ALL ZE
TIME, DAVID...

YOUR SISTER MARY
DID REAL GOOD FOR
UNCLE JOKER, BOBBIE.
YOU WILL TOO, WON'T
YOU?

GOD DAMN
MILK
BABY.







WHAT CAN I SAY
ABOUT OUR NEXT
GUEST THAT HASN'T
BEEN SAID BEFORE?
PAUL?

HE'S A ROOK, DAVE.
A MANIAC. A REAL
LUNATIC. NO, I
MEAN IT. HE'S A
NUT.



**SO MANY
FACES--SO
DIFFERENT
FROM ONE
ANOTHER...**

**...SO FEW
SMILES...**



OVER
THERE--

I
SEE
HIM

JESUS,
HE'S--



YOU'RE SAID TO HAVE
ONLY KILLED ABOUT
SIX HUNDRED PEOPLE,
JOKER. NOW DON'T TAKE
THIS THE WRONG WAY;
BUT I THINK YOU'VE BEEN
HOLDING OUT ON US.

THIS IS A
SENSITIVE
HUMAN
BEING
HERE, I
DON'T
LET
YOU HARASS--

I
DON'T
KEEP
COUNT.

I'M
GOING TO
KILL
EVERYONE
IN THIS
ROOM.

NOW THAT'S DARN RUDE.

CAN'T BELIEVE IT--

--I'M ALREADY
BREATHING
HARD--

HE...AH..
HE'S JUST...
AH...
TRYING TO
BREAK
THE
TENSION...

:ANEM: DR.
VOLPER-YOU
HAF BLEMMED
ZE BATMAN
FOR ZESE
KILLINGS,
YES?

YES. YES. MY
PATIENT IS
A VICTIM OF
BATMAN'S
PSYCHOSIS.

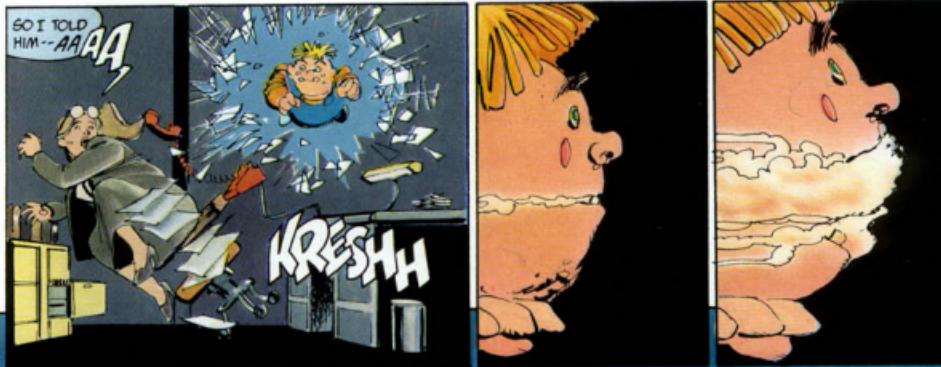
UND WHAT
IZ ZE
NATURE UF
BATMAN'S
PSYCHOSIS?

WHY,
SEXUAL
REPRESSION,
OF
COURSE.

ZEXUAL
REPRESSEN
--ZIS IS
A
TERRIBLE
ZING...

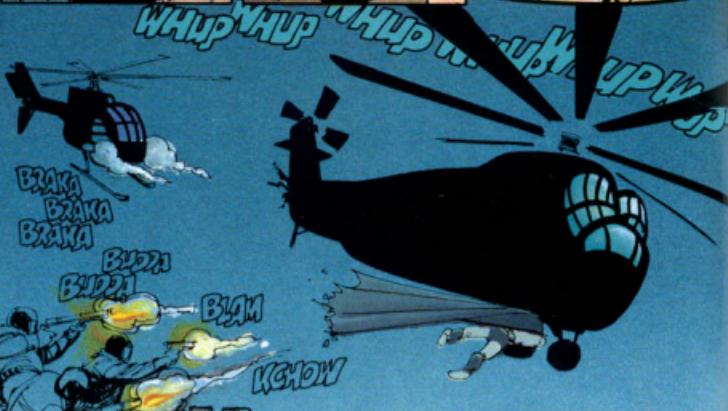
YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE MUST
NOT RESTRAIN
OURSELVES.

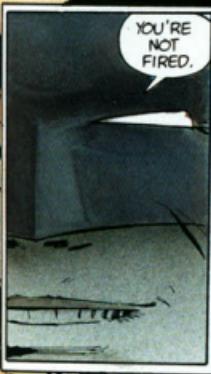






KRAAKK







WE MUST NOT
REMIND
THEM THAT
GIANTS
WALK THE
EARTH.

...URGING THE PUBLIC NOT TO WORRY, THE PRESIDENT HAS PLACED STRATEGIC AIR COMMANDS ON RED ALERT. "WE WON'T MAKE THE FIRST MOVE", SAID THE PRESIDENT. "BUT WE'RE READY TO MAKE THE LAST."

THE POPE TODAY DECLARED THAT THE CHURCH'S STAND ON CONTRACEPTION WILL NOT CHANGE, DESPITE YESTERDAY'S FIREBOMBING OF ST. PETER'S SQUARE... AND, IN LOCAL NEWS...

MY HEAD GOES LIGHT AND THE SMOKE COATS THE INSIDE OF MY MOUTH AND LEAVES A PATCH OF RED-HOT GRAVEL AT THE BASE OF MY THROAT.

I STOPPED DOING THIS TO MYSELF FIVE YEARS AGO...



COMMISSIONER WHITAKER'S GONE ALL SICK.
HE'S JUST A ROOKIE...

SEND HIM HOME, MERKEL.
TELL HIM IT'S ALL RIGHT.



...TWO HUNDRED AND SIX WERE SLAIN DURING THE JOKER'S ESCAPE FROM THE DAVID ENDOCHINE SHOW INCLUDING HOST ENDOCHINE AND DR. BARTHOLOMEW WOLPER.

THE JOKER REPORTEDLY USED HIS DEADLY SMILE GAS ON THE CROWD. COMMISSIONER YINDEL REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THIS, OR ON THE ESCAPE OF THE BATMAN WHICH LEFT TWELVE POLICE OFFICERS HOSPITALIZED...



...THE SONS OF THE BATMAN HAVE STRUCK AGAIN. IN FRONT OF A DOZEN WITNESSES, THEY ACCOSTED A SHOPLIFTER AND... CHOPPED HIS HANDS OFF...

THE SHOPLIFTER IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CARRYING SEVERAL MAGAZINES AND A CANDY BAR... AS YET, POLICE REPORT NO EVIDENCE TO DIRECTLY LINK THE BATMAN TO THESE CRIMES...



--MY FATHER DIES...



UHH... THIS I DIDN'T SAY FOR ELSIE--

SHHH...



NO-- I MEAN IT-- I'M A HAPPILY MARRIED MAN...



THERE'S SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO DO FOR ME, CONGRESSMAN. LISTEN CLOSELY...

YES... CLOSELY...



--HE'S STILL UP THERE, LOLA-- DRESSED IN NOTHING BUT AN AMERICAN FLAG CONGRESSMAN NOCHES, PLEADING FOR A FULL NUCLEAR STRIKE ON CARTO MALTESE--



--HE'S DOWN, LOLA. HE'S STREET PIZZA.
COMMISSIONER YINDEL IS ON THE SCENE-- LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET HER TO SAY A FEW WORDS...

COMMISSIONER
--DO YOU
THINK THE
JOKER--
GET
THIS
CLOWN
OUT OF
HERE.

GALLAGHER'S HEARING
ABOUT THIS!

O'HALLORAN, MA'AM.
SIXTH PRECINCT.
WHAT'VE GOT?

IT'S NO
SUICIDE,
LIEUTENANT.







SELINA...

KOFF
BRUCE...
HE'S WORSE
THAN EVER...

HOW MANY
MORE...
WILL IT
TAKE?

...HE'S USING
LIPSTICK,
BRUCE...MIND
CONTROL...
ELsie...

...HAD ELSIE USE
IT ON THAT
CONGRESSMAN.
THAT'S WHY
HE...
EASY.

MY GOD...
MARY...
SHE'S WITH THE
GOVERNOR...

BOSS...

--I GOT
SOMETHING.

COTTON
CANDY.
THE
COUNTY
FAIR.
THOUSANDS.

COUNTY...
...HALF MY
FRIENDS'LL BE
THERE...

... HOW MANY
MORE... UNTIL
I FINALLY
DO IT?

DON'T... TAKE
THE GIRL.
HE LL...
POLICE ARE
RIGHT ON TOP
OF US, ROBIN.

BRING THE WING
IN CLOSE.

ON
IT.

FSSSESS

SHE GOT HERE
FASTER THAN I
PLANNED...

...REMINDS
ME OF JIM
--IN THE
OLD DAYS...

KBLAMM

MARCH
IT--
HE'S...

CHRIST--
I CAN'T--
DAMN
HE'S--
--CAN'T
GET A
CLEAR
SHOT--

POOM

SKRKK

CHRIST--
IT'S
CRAZY--
SUICIDE--

...YOU TRIED
TO WARN
ME, JIM...

...SO
MANY
TIMES...

SPANK

...YOU TOLD ME
THAT I BREAK
TOO MANY OF
THE IMPORTANT
RULES...

...THAT I'VE
MADE TOO
MANY OF
THE WRONG
ENEMIES...

...THAT, FOR
ALL MY TRICKS
...I'VE BEEN
GETTING BY
ON LUCK...

...IT'S ALL A
GAME OF
ODDS, YOU
SAID...

...ALL IT
WILL TAKE
IS ONE BULLET.

KBLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM





...COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT CONTINUES AT CORTO MALTESE, AS DO THE BIZARRE NATURAL DISTURBANCES. HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR WINDS LASH THE PORT OF SAN CONCEPCION, SIXTY MILES SOUTH OF CORTO...

THEY COULD PUT ME IN A HELICOPTER AND FLY ME UP INTO THE AIR AND LINE THE BODIES HEAD TO TOE ON THE GROUND IN DELIGHTFUL GEOMETRIC PATTERNS LIKE AN ENDLESS JUNE TAYLOR DANCERS ROUTINE --

-- AND IT WOULD NEVER BE ENOUGH.

NO, I DON'T KEEP COUNT, BUT YOU DO.

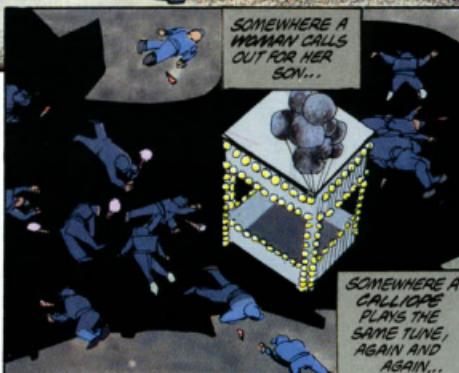
AND I LOVE YOU FOR IT.



PENTAGON CHIEF GENERAL LUCAS LOCKHEED CONFIRMS THAT STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND STANDS AT DEF CON THREE - A HEARTBEAT FROM DEPLOYMENT. "WE'RE PRIMED," SAYS LOCKHEED...

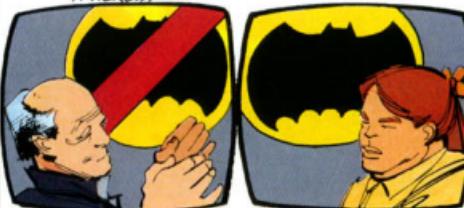
APPREHENDED WHILE TRYING TO POISON THE GOTHAM RESERVOIR WERE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG. THEIR SKIN WAS PAINTED CHALK WHITE, THEIR HAIR DYED GREEN...

SOMEWHERE A WOMAN CALLS OUT FOR HER SON...



LANA, YOU ASTONISH ME.
HAFTEEN POLICEMEN HOSPITALIZED -- HUNDREDS DEAD -- AND STILL YOU CLING TO THIS HERO WORSHIP. THOUGH HOW ANYONE CAN THINK OF A DETRACIO MURDERER AS A HERO...

BATMAN HASN'T KILLED ANYBODY, MORRIE.



PERHAPS HE HASN'T--
TECHNICALLY, THAT'S WHY
I SAID DE FACIO, LANA
DEAR. STILL, IT'S HARDLY
A COINCIDENCE THAT THE
JOKER CAME OUT OF A
TEN-YEAR CATATONIA--
NOW, OF ALL TIMES...

THANK
THE NICE
MAN,
DONALD.

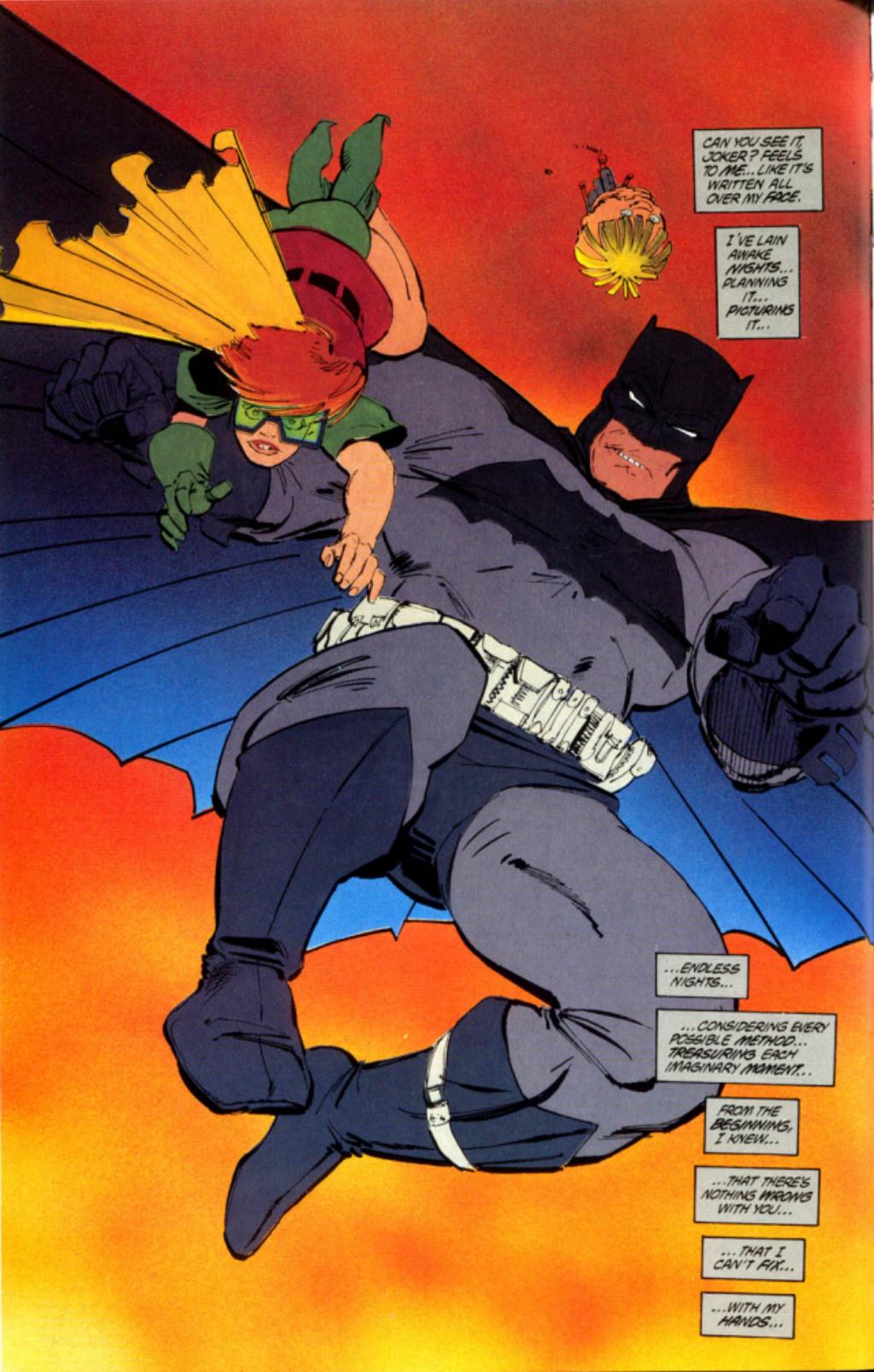
I WANT
THE KIND
THAT
TALKS.

PISS OFF.

UH, BOSS--
THERE'S A BAT
HEADING OUR
WAY.

IT'S BIG.
IT'S...





CAN YOU SEE IT,
JOKER? FEELS
TO ME... LIKE IT'S
WRITTEN ALL
OVER MY FACE.

I'VE LAIN
AWAKE
NIGHTS...
PLANNING
IT...
PICTURING
IT...

...ENDLESS
NIGHTS...

...CONSIDERING EVERY
POSSIBLE METHOD...
TREASURING EACH
IMAGINARY MOMENT...

FROM THE
BEGINNINGS,
I KNEW...

...THAT THERE'S
NOTHING WRONG
WITH YOU...

...THAT I
CAN'T FIX...

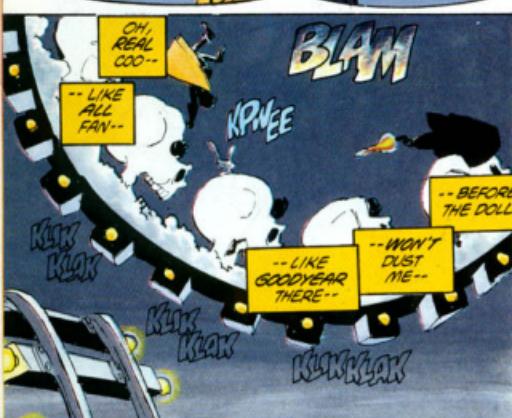
...WITH MY
HANDS...





IT IS A WAR, MORRIE--THOUGH HE SEEKS TO BE THE ONLY ONE WITH BALLS ENOUGH TO FIGHT IT.

WHO GAVE THIS THUG THE RIGHT TO DECLARE MARTIAL LAW, HIM? LAST I HEARD, THAT TAKES AN ACT OF CONGRESS.

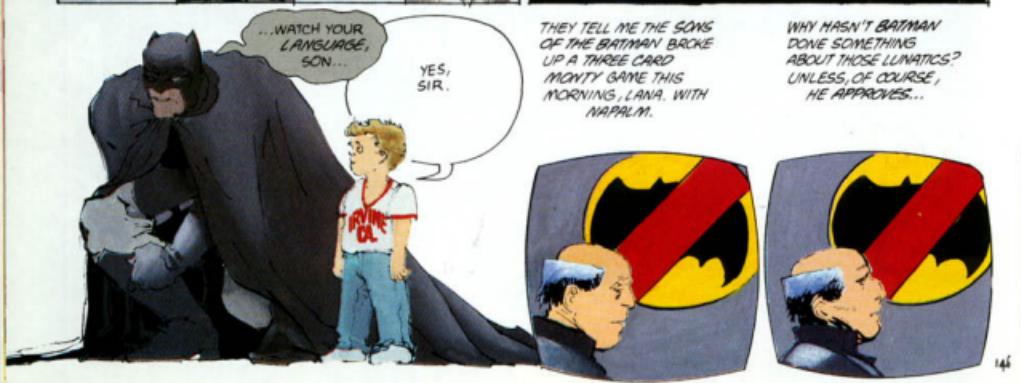
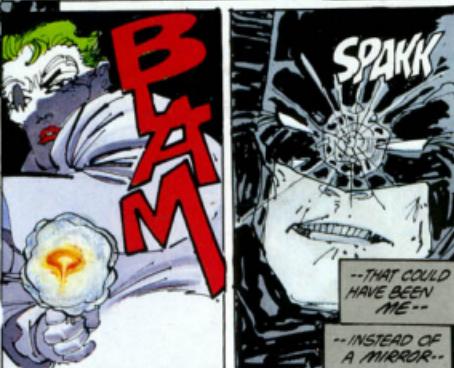
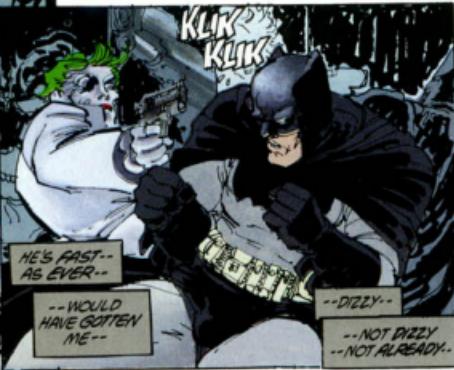


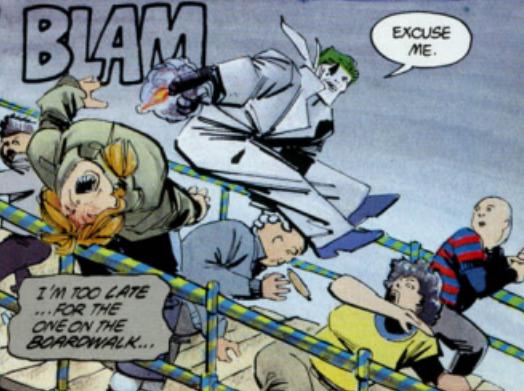
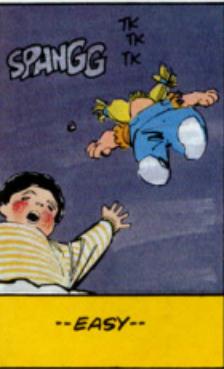


-- CHILD ENDANGERMENT IS THE LATEST CHARGE AGAINST THE BATMAN, REPORTS POLICE MEDIA RELATIONS DIRECTOR LOUIS GALLAGHER. BATMAN HAS BEEN SIGHTED USING A YOUNG BOY...

...AS A SHIELD AGAINST POLICE GUNFIRE, COMING UP--COMMISSIONER YANDEL SAVES THE GOVERNOR FROM LITERALLY STRANGLING HIMSELF WITH RED TAPE...



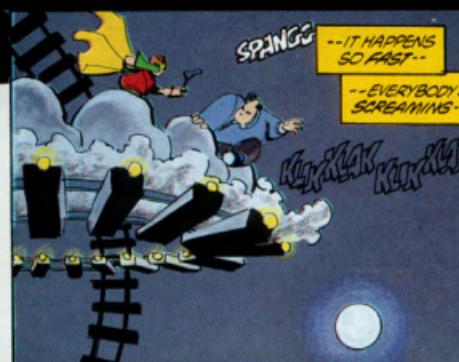


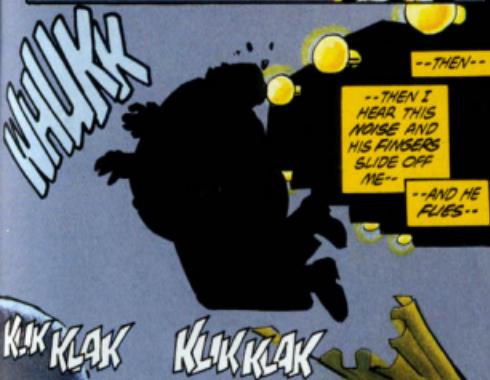


BLAM BLAM LOVE



HOW MANY TIMES
DO I HAVE TO SAY
IT, MORRIE?
BATMAN HASN'T
KILLED
ANYBODY...









B O O K F O U R



THE DARK KNIGHT FALLS

--THAT'S RIGHT, CAPTAIN--
THE COMMISSIONER GOT
TIRED OF WAITING. TOOK
A SQUAD IN HERSELF.

--GOT THE OTHER
END SEALED --
NO WAY THEY'LL
GET PAST US--

YOU LIKE
THAT BITCH,
DON'T YOU,
MERKEL?

--WITNESSES
SAY THEY
BOTH GOT
GUNS--

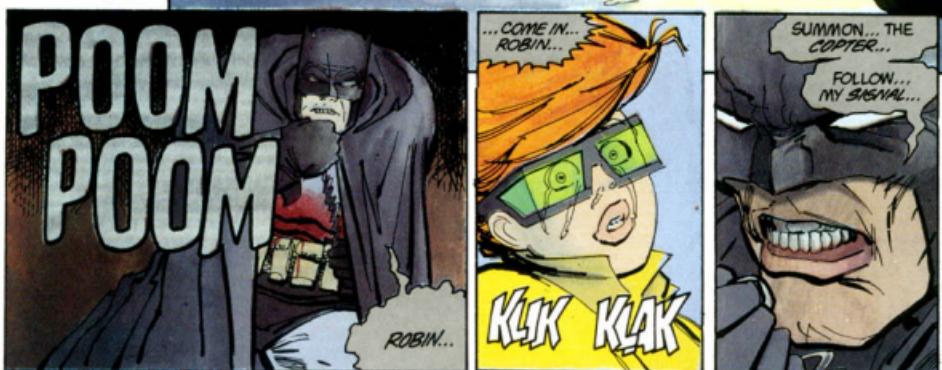
TUNNEL OF
LOVE

...SHOWDOWN AT THE
COUNTY FAIR, WHERE THE
JOKER IS SAID TO HAVE
MURDERED AT LEAST
TWENTY. SIGHTED WAS
THE BATMAN, IN HOT
PURSUIT OF THE JOKER...

--GET SOME
BODY BAGS--
GOT TWO
COLD ONES--

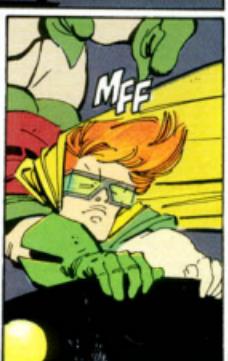
...LED BY COMMISSIONER
YINDEL, POLICE WERE LAST
SEEN CONVERGING ON
THE TUNNEL OF LOVE,
WITH ARREST ORDERS FOR
BOTH THE JOKER-- AND
FOR GOTHAM'S VIGILANTE...

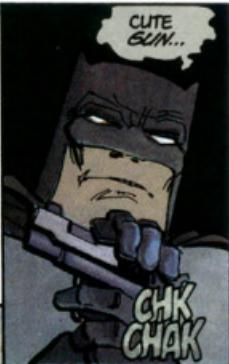




CLOSER-- MOVE IN CLOSER--
LOLA-- CAN YOU SEE
IT?-- LIVE FROM THE
NEWS TWO COPTER--
IT'S ROBIN-- THE
BOY WONDER!

HE'S YOUNG-- CAN'T
BE OLDER THAN
THIRTEEN-- HE'S
RIDING THE ROLLER
COASTER-- HE'S
WAIT-- HE'S--



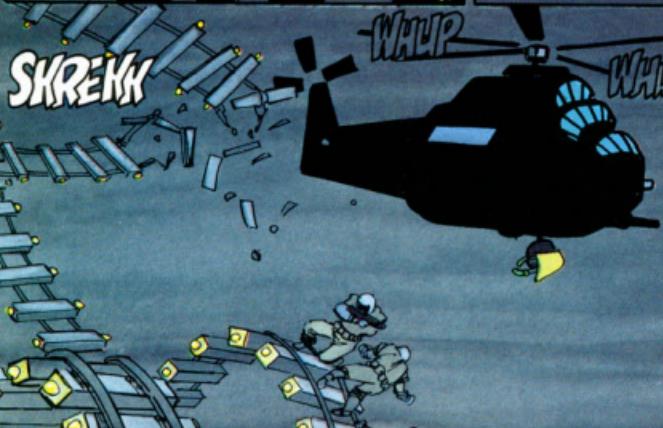
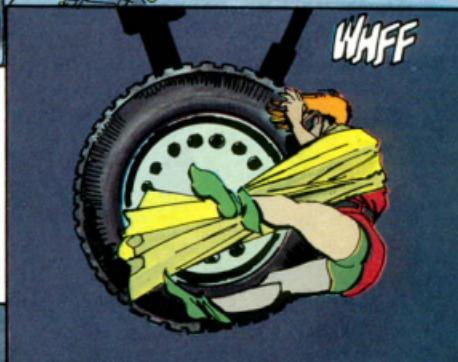


...HE SEEMS CONFIDENT
--WHAT THE-- THAT'S
NOT ONE OF OURS--
COMING RIGHT AT US--
BANK, YOU IDIOT--
BANK--

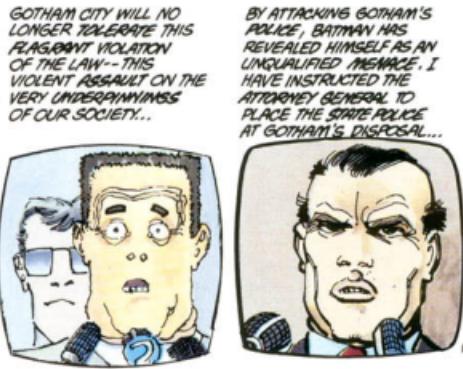
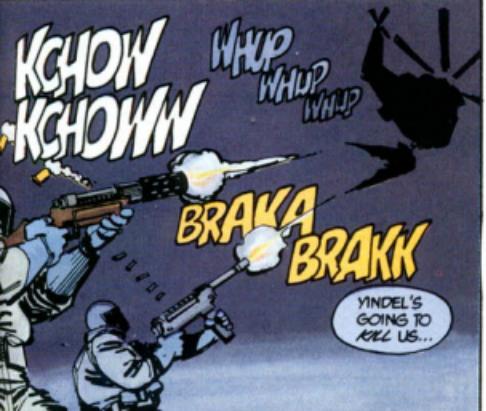
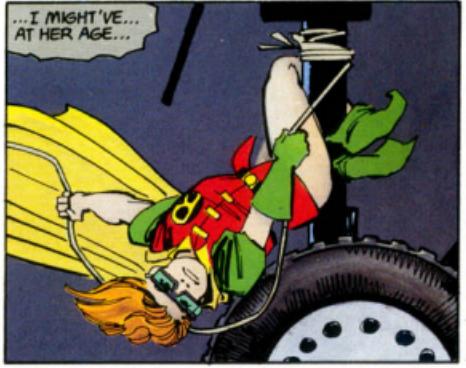
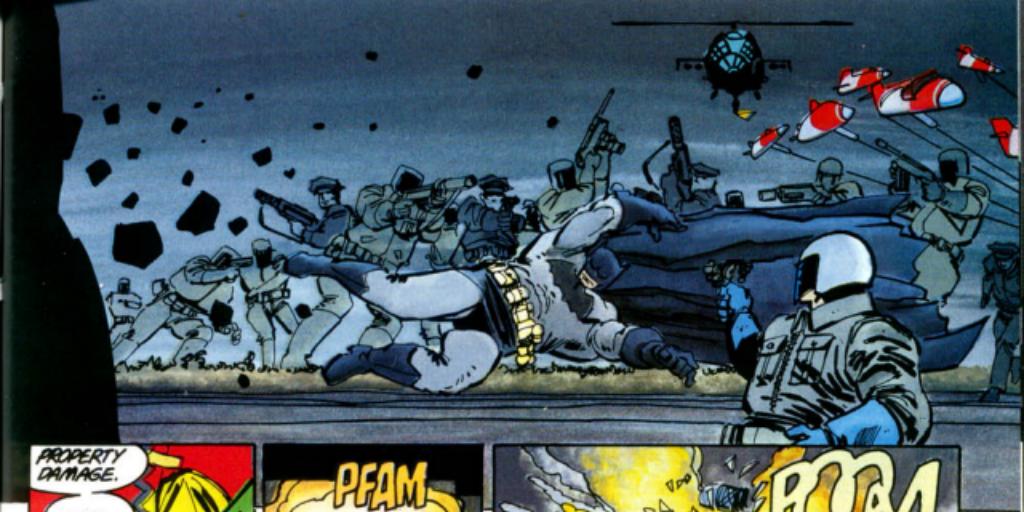
WHUP WHUP WHUP



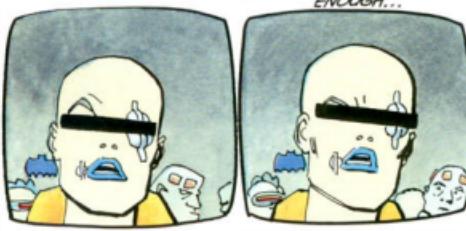
BRAKABRAKABRAKK







...THE JOKER'S BODY
FOUND MUTILATED AND
BURNED... MURDER IS
ADDED TO THE CHARGES
AGAINST THE
BATMAN...



...NO, HORNY HE WASN'T.
HE WAS JUST LOOKING
TO HURT SOMEBODY
AND HE'S THE KIND WHO
HURTS WOMEN. I WISH
THEY WERE RARE. HE
GAVE HIMSELF AN
EXCUSE...

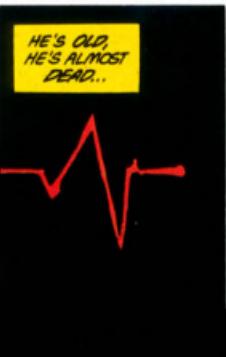
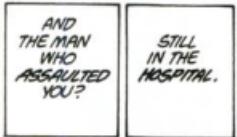
SO NOW HE'S GIGGLING
LIKE HE'S TURNED ON!
I FIGURE HE'S SERIOUS
ENOUGH TO RUN AFTER
ME. I GO FOR THE
MACE.



THE CREEP'S
PULLING
OUT HIS
WEAPON
WHEN
THERE'S
THIS
SHRIEK.

STRAIGHT OUT
OF HELL THERE'S
THIS SHRIEK...





DO NOT EXPECT ANY FURTHER STATEMENTS. THE SONS OF THE BATMAN DO NOT TALK. WE ACT. LET GOTHAM'S CRIMINALS BEWARE. THEY ARE ABOUT TO ENTER HELL.

THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD. THE MUTANTS ARE HISTORY. THIS IS THE MARK OF THE FUTURE. GOTHAM CITY BELONGS TO THE BATMAN.

...THE SONS OF THE BATMAN HAVE STRUCK AGAIN. JEFF STRECKER WAS CLOSING UP THE SOUTH STREET 7-11 WHEN HE BECAME BOTH WITNESS-- AND VICTIM...

THEY'RE YOUNGER THAN YOU'D THINK--THIS ONE WAS, ANYWAY. COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OLDER THAN SIXTEEN.. THAT'S RIGHT, THERE WAS JUST ONE OF THEM...



...BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF. IT ALL STARTED WHEN THREE NIXONS CAME INTO THE STORE. WHAT?... NO, I DID NOT GO FOR THE ALARM. THEY DON'T PAY ME ENOUGH FOR SUICIDE.



I WAS CLEARING OUT THE REGISTER WHEN THAT OFF-DUTY COP CAME UP FROM THE BACK.

HE ONLY SAW TWO OF THE NIXONS.



THE COP WAS STILL TWITCHING WHEN THEY HEADED FOR THE DOOR.

I HEARD A THUNDERCLAP.



THE TALL NIXON WENT FOR HIS PIECE.

MORE THUNDER.



THE LAST ONE WATCHED THE S.O.B. RELOAD HIS SHOTGUN AND DIDN'T SAY A WORD.



THE NIXONS ARE THE NEWEST SPLINTER GROUP OF THE MUTANT ARMY, WHICH EXPERTS BELIEVE DISBANDED WHEN THE BATMAN DEFEATED THEIR LEADER, TOM?



THANK YOU, LOLA. STILL HELD AT GOTHAM JAIL ARE EIGHTY-SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE MUTANT GANG, WHO WERE CAPTURED BY BATMAN.

COMMISSIONER YINDEL HAS REQUESTED THAT THEY BE MOVED TO THE STATE PENITENTIARY, WHILE THEY AWAIT TRIAL...

NO--NO TROUBLE, COMMISSIONER...THEY'RE STILL JUST WATCHING TV...

YINDEL'S REQUEST WAS CUT SHORT BY A COURT ORDER, ACQUIRED BY THE MUTANTS' ATTORNEY...

MY CLIENTS ARE YOUNG PEOPLE--MINORS, MOST OF THEM. IF THERE ISN'T ROOM IN THE JAIL, THEY SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE CARE OF THEIR PARENTS.

FOLLOWING THE ATTORNEY'S STATEMENT, A PETITION SIGNED BY SEVENTY-ONE OF THE MUTANTS' PARENTS, URGED THE MAYOR NOT TO RELEASE--

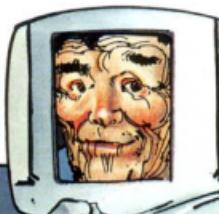
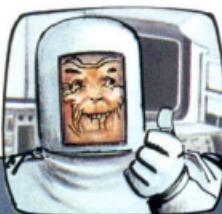
WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST FOR A NEWS TWO SPECIAL REPORT
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.



WELL, FOLKS, I'VE GOT SOME GOOD NEWS-- AND SOME BAD NEWS... HEH... THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE WITHDRAWN THEIR FORCES FROM THE ISLAND OF CORIO MALTESE...

SOMETHING WRONG, KENT?

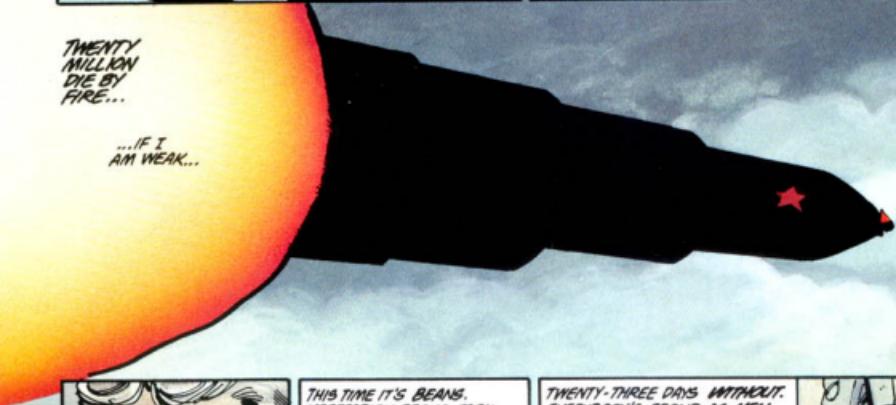
...AND THE BAD NEWS, WELL... IT LOOKS LIKE THOSE SOVIETS ARE PRETTY BAD LOSERS, YES, THEY ARE...





TWENTY
MILLION
DIE BY
FIRE...

...IF I
AM WEAK...



A SOVIET NUCLEAR WARHEAD--
SECONDS FROM DETONATION
OVER CARDI MALTESE--

THIS IS IT,
FOLKS--FIRST
STRIKE! TOM?

LOLA CHONG
GIVES GOOD NEWS

CAREFUL--BE CAREFUL
HOW YOU PUT THINGS, LOLA.
THIS IS ONE MISSILE--
THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS
THAT THIS IS PART OF A
FULL-SCALE ATTACK...

TELL THAT TO
THE AMERICAN
TROOPS STATIONED
THERE, TOM.

NEWS 2 GOTHAM



HOLD IT... WE'VE JUST
GOTTEN WORD THAT IT'S
NOT A CONVENTIONAL
NUCLEAR WARHEAD--WE
SWITCH YOU NOW TO DAN
MUSK, ABOARD THE NEWS
TWO SHUTTLE. WHAT'S
THE WORD, DAN?

STILL COLLATING, LOLA--
BUT IT'S A BIG ONE--
MEANLY MEGATONNAGE--
WITH UNUSUAL COMPUTER
ACTIVITY--WE CAN'T BE
CERTAIN OF ITS CAPABIL-
ITIES...

...AT THE VERY LEAST,
CARDI WILL BE LEVELED--
THE FIRES MIGHT
SPREAD TO MAINLAND
SOUTH AMERICA--
SHOULD IT GENERATE A
SUFFICIENT MAGNETIC
PULSE, THERE MIGHT--

THANKS FOR THE DATA,
DAN, BUT WE'LL ALL
KNOW SOON ENOUGH
WHAT IT CAN DO. RIGHT
NOW, WE'VE GOT
AUTHOR MARLEN
ELLISON IN THE STUDIO...



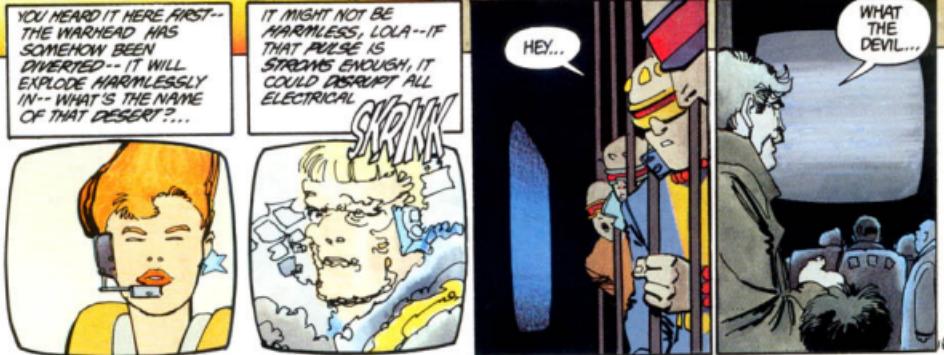
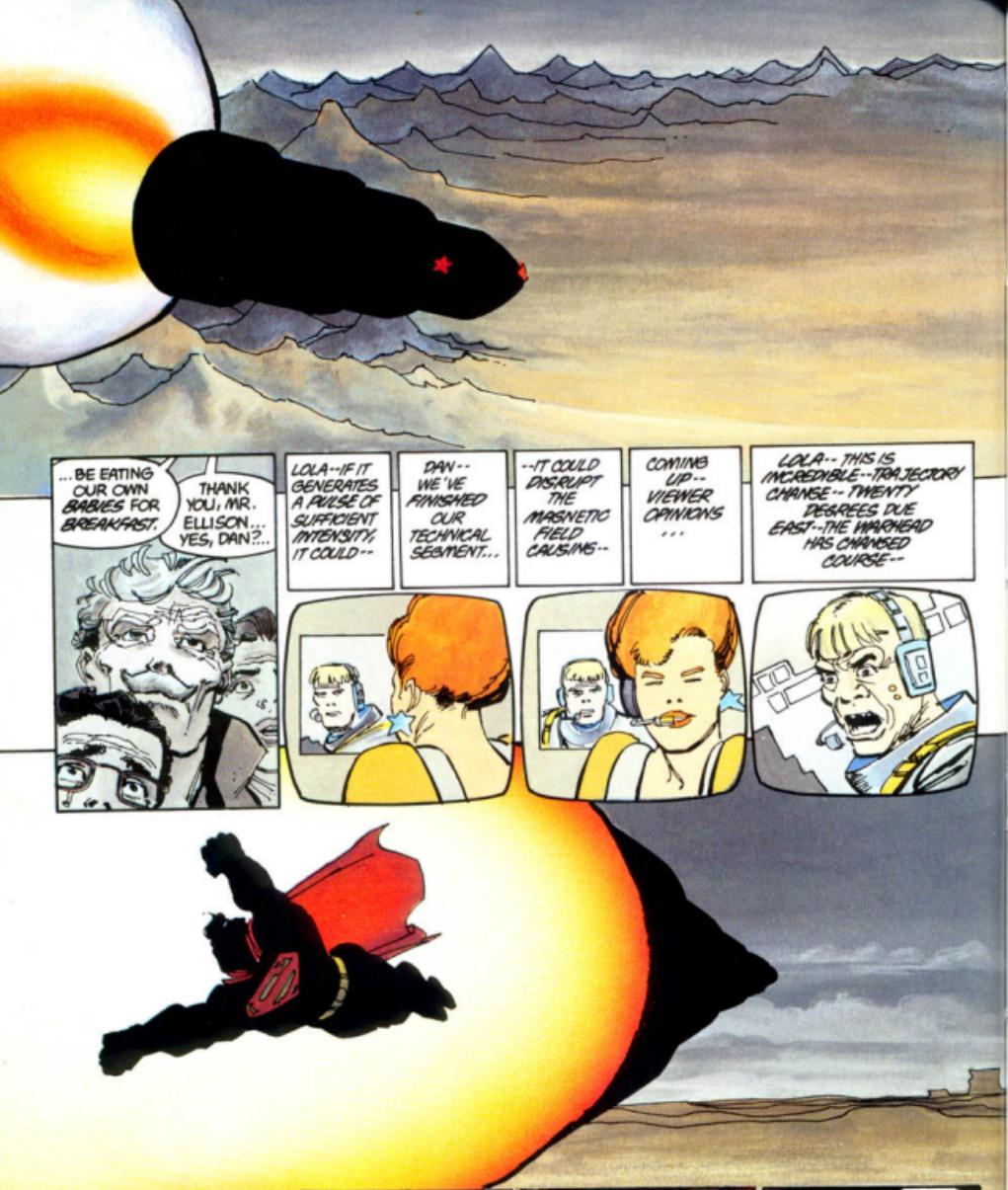
MR.
PRESIDENT
--GIVE THE
WORD...

NOW YOU
JUST
KEEP YOUR
SHIRT
ON,
LUCIUS...

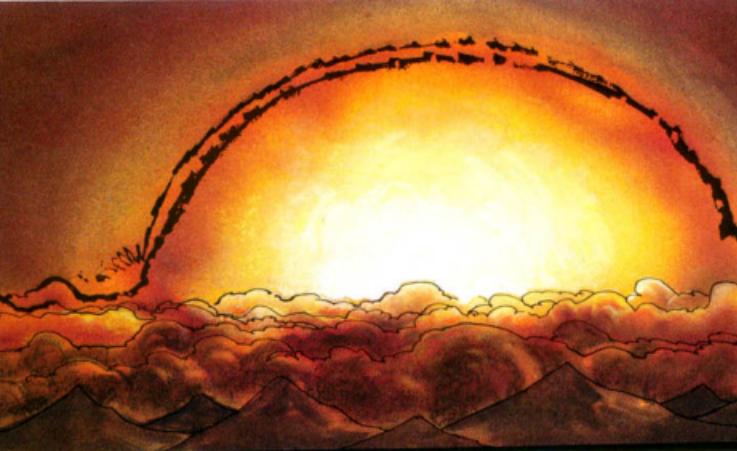


MR.
PRESIDENT
--WE'LL LOOK
LIKE WIMPS
IF WE DON'T--
--LET'S
SEE WHAT
OUR OWN
LITTLE
DETERRENT
CAN DO...









MAYBE DURING A BREAK BETWEEN POLICE ACTIONS, ONE OF YOUR MILITARY FRIENDS TOLD YOU WHAT AN ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE IS. AND MAYBE YOU LISTENED, CLARK.

ALL YOU NEED TO GENERATE THE PULSE IS THE ORGANIZED DETONATION OF A FEW DOZEN NUCLEAR WARHEADS.

THAT, OR A SPECIAL KIND OF NUKE THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DEVELOP...



Sweetheart,
The last of the
readings gave a hint of
what would happen.

When the computer
failed, I knew for sure.

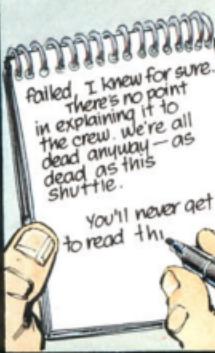
...YES, CLARK.
BOTH SIDES.

THE AMERICAN NAME FOR
IT IS COLDBRINGER.
IT'S DESIGNED TO CAUSE
MAXIMUM DAMAGE
TO THE ENVIRONMENT--
ALL THE WHILE SPARING
THE INDUSTRIAL SITES
YOUR FRIENDS REGARD
SO HIGHLY.

SINCE MY
OWN ATOMS
AREN'T BOUNCING
AROUND THE
STRATOSPHERE--



--SINCE GOTHAM CITY
SQUATS LIKE A GREAT
BLACK GRAVEYARD--



You'll never get
to read this letter.
It'll burn up with me
when our orbit
deteriorates. Still, my
last thoughts will be
a prayer for you, for
humanity...

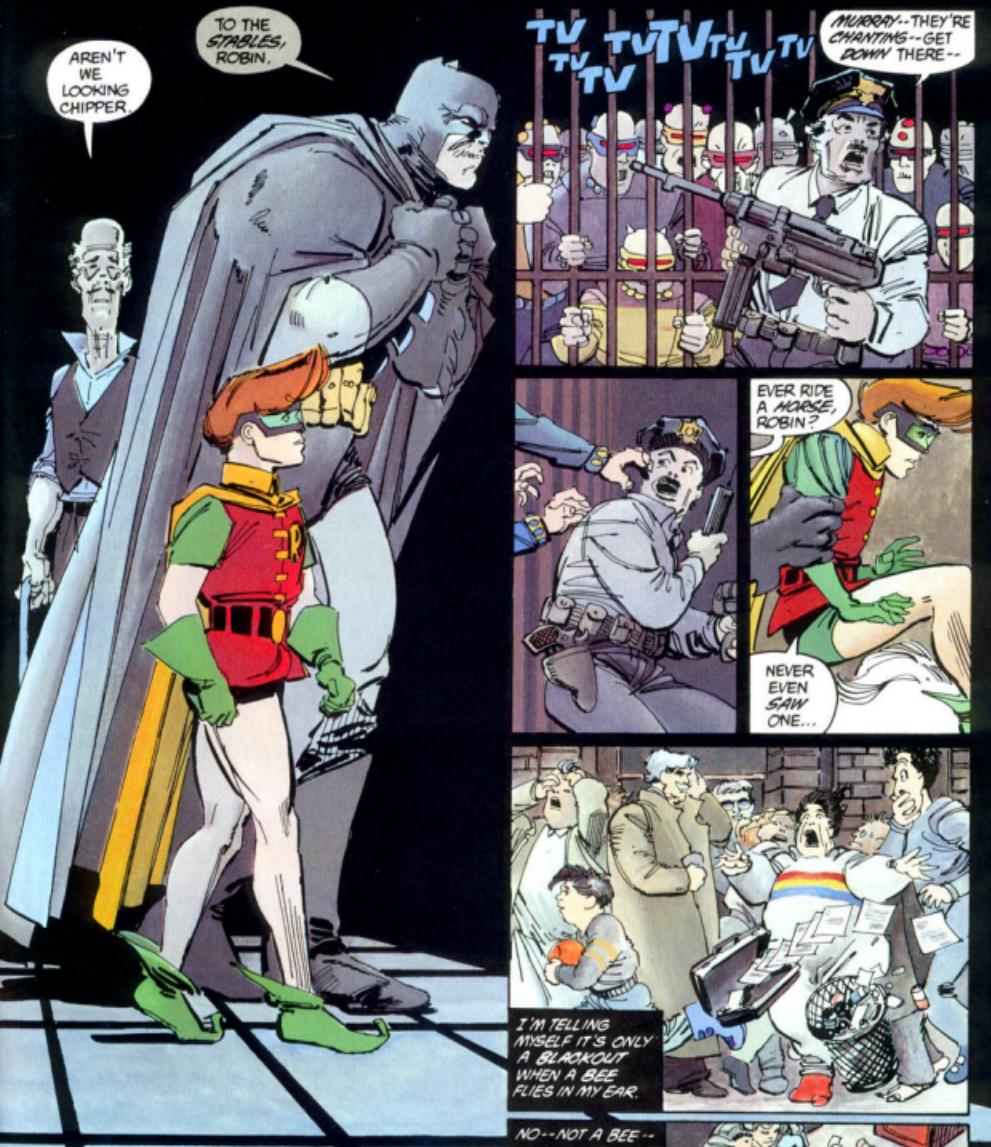
...and for planet Earth.



Nothing could stop the
Russians from emptying
their silos at us now.
We'd have no defense,
no way to retaliate.

The one hope we have
is that the decision
to murder billions has
to be made by a human
being.











THE
DUMP.

IT'S A BREEDING
GROUND FOR
INSECTS AND
RODENTS.

SOME
RODENTS
FLY.

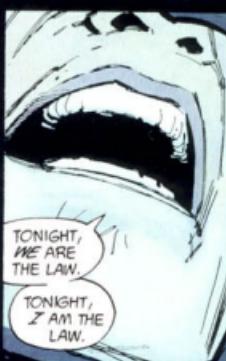
THE WIND PICKS UP,
SPREADING THE FLAMES
ACROSS THE WEST
SIDE-- TOWARD MY
HOME-- TOWARD--

--TOWARD SARAH.

JESUS CHRIST
ALMIGHTY SARAH--

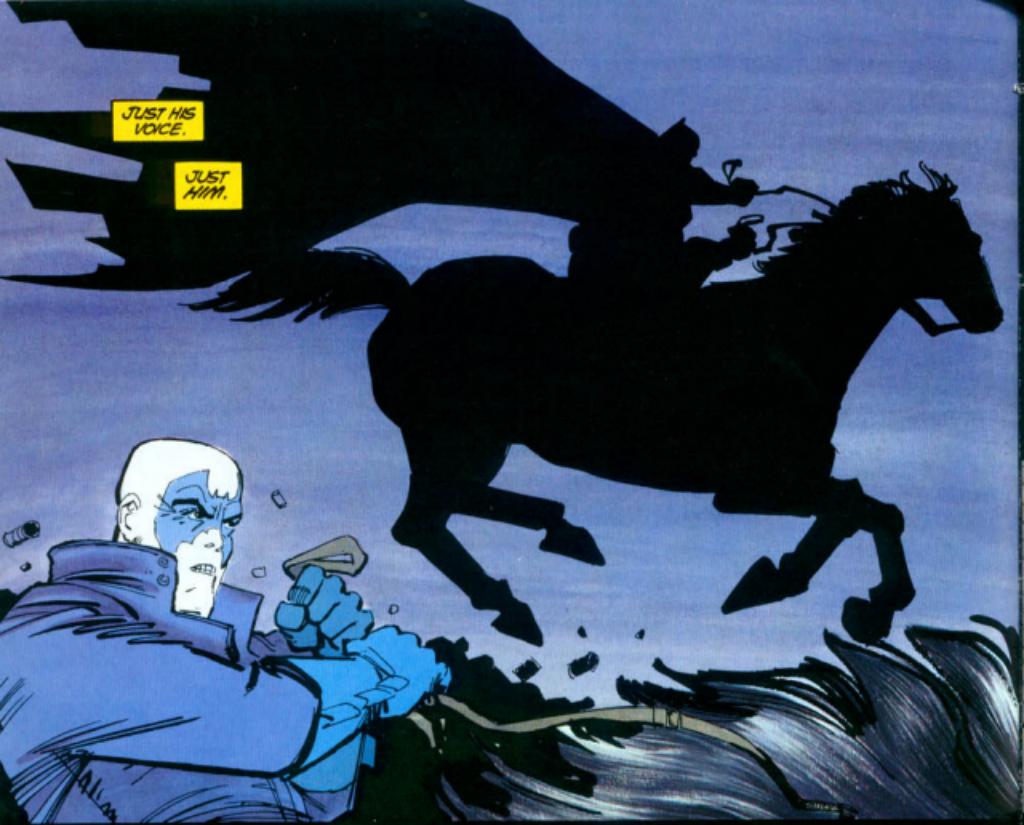
RASH

NGGA



JUST HIS
VOICE.

JUST
HIM.



EEEEEKKKKKK

ALL RUNNING AWAY--LOOKS
BAD-- --I'M CRYING
BUT IT'S JUST
THE SMOKE--

KK

DOWN
THERE--

SOMETHING
EXPLODES--

--SMOKE--
DOESN'T IT
FIGURE--

COPS--

AINT SHIN--
FAN--

--RIGHT ON
MY BLOCK--
--A GAS
MAIN--

BUDDA







...BULLFROGS,
WHO SLEPT
FOR YEARS IN
DRIED-OUT
RIVER-BEDS...
THEN DUG
THEIR WAY
TO THE
SURFACE
WHEN THE
RAINS
CAME...

NOW...
THERE IS
ONLY
BLACKENED
GLASS...

...ENDLESS
FLAME...

OUR
PEOPLE,
BRUCE.
YOU
LAUGH
AT
THEM.

THEY
CAN DO
THIS...
AND YOU
LAUGH...

...THEY CAN SPILT
THE VERY FABRIC
OF REALITY...
BLAST A HUNDRED
THOUSAND TONS
OF SAND INTO
THE SKY...

...BLOTTING OUT
THE SOURCE OF
ALL MY POWER...
THE HOPE
FOR SCREAMING
MILLIONS...

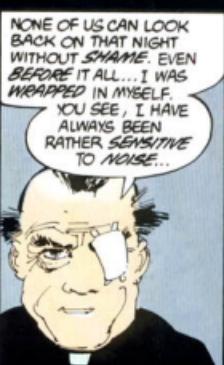
MAGNETIC STORM
...YOU HAVE
EVERY REASON
TO BE OUTRAGED,
MOTHER EARTH...
YOU HAVE GIVEN
THEM...
EVERYTHING...

THEY ARE TINY AND
STUPID AND VICIOUS
...BUT PLEASE...
LISTEN TO THEM...

PLEASE...I AM
SLOW AND
DYING...

I NEED
ONLY...
REACH
THE SUN...





...AND THAT BOY... HE SEEMED TO KEEP PACE WITH ME DELIBERATELY, TAKING THE JOY FROM MY EVENING WALK...

...WITH HIS HORRIBLY LOUD RADIO...

WHEN IT SHRIEKED, I BLAMED THE BOY. TRUTH TO TELL, I TURNED TO CONFRONT HIM...



YES, I WAS SHOUTING. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? I HAPPENED TO BE UP AGAINST A BIRTH OF A DEADLINE. WHAT?...
...YES, OF COURSE I'D HEARD ABOUT THE BOMB. BUT I'VE GOT PROBLEMS OF MY OWN.

I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT GETTING OUT OF MY CAR-- NOT IN THAT NEIGHBORHOOD--
--BUT I KNOW I BETTER CALL THE AGENCY AND MAKE SURE MY ASS IS COVERED.



SO I'M BARELY STANDING UP WHEN THERE'S THIS EXPLOSION. KNOCKS ME FLAT...

MY ANKLE FEELS LIKE IT'S BROKEN-- SOMEBODY IS GOING TO GET SUED--

I'M BARLEY
ON MY FEET
WHEN THAT GIRL
IS ALL OVER
ME, TALKING
ABOUT WORLD
WAR THREE.

I DON'T LIKE
BEING TOUCHED
--AND LIKE I
SAID, I'VE GOT
MY OWN
PROBLEMS--

--BUT SHE
WON'T SHUT
UP--



GUESS I JUST LOST
CONTROL. I... I'D BEEN
HAVING NIGHTMARES
ABOUT THE BOMB...
READ UP ON IT A LOT...

...AND WHEN THE
LIGHTS WENT OUT...

...WELL, I KNEW IT HAD TO
BE THE ELECTROMAGNETIC
PULSE... AND ALL THE
BOOKS SAY THAT'D
ONLY HAPPEN DURING
A FULL-SCALE EXCHANGE...

...AND WHEN I
HEARD THAT
EXPLOSION...

...I MEAN, LATER I
FOUND OUT IT WAS A
PLANE, CRASHING INTO
THE BRISHAM BUILDING...

BUT JUST THEN, I... I
MEAN NOT KNOWING...
BUT... IT WAS DUMB,
BUT WHEN I HEARD
THE EXPLOSION, I
THOUGHT...

...AND WHEN
THE CARS STARTED
GOING UP...



Nobody told me about
any airplane. The cars
were popping off like
firecrackers--
everybody screaming--

--IT WAS EVERY
MAN FOR
HIMSELF.

OH, RIGHT. THE COP.
LISTEN, I'VE NEVER
BROKEN THE LAW--NOT
IN ANY WAY THAT COUNTS.

AND IT WASN'T ME WHO
TOLD HIM TO TRY TO
HELP THAT JAP BITCH
OUT OF HER
VOLKSWAGEN.



GROW UP. SOMEBODY
WAS GOING TO GET HIS
GUN. HE SURE DIDN'T
HAVE ANY USE FOR IT.

THAT ARREST,
HE DIDN'T SEE
IT MY WAY...

HE WOULDN'T LET GO,
WOULDN'T LISTEN TO
REASON. I'VE BEEN TO
CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY
SINCE I WAS A KID,
BUT WHEN PUSH COMES
TO SHOVE...



HEY--YOU WEREN'T THERE,
COULD BARELY SEE
THROUGH ALL THE SMOKE
--WAS SURE I HEARD
SHELLINGS.
IT WAS THE END OF
THE WORLD-- AND
I HAD A GUN--

WOULDN'T TAKE A
GENIUS TO REALIZE THAT
THE ONLY OTHER THING
WORTH A DAMN WAS
FOOD.

I WASN'T
ALONE,
EITHER.

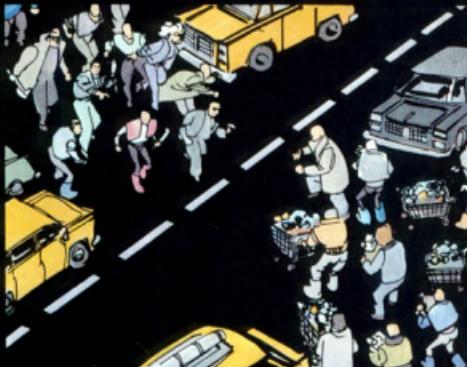
THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR
WHAT WE DID. WE WEREN'T
CRAZY. WE WERE JUST
AN UGLY BUNCH OF STUPID,
SELFISH BASTARDS.

THERE WAS THE
PRIEST, A BLOODY
MESS. I DIDN'T
CARE...

...NO EXCUSE... I WAS IN
WITH THE REST OF THEM,
SHOVING, YELLING ABOUT
FOOD AND GUNS...

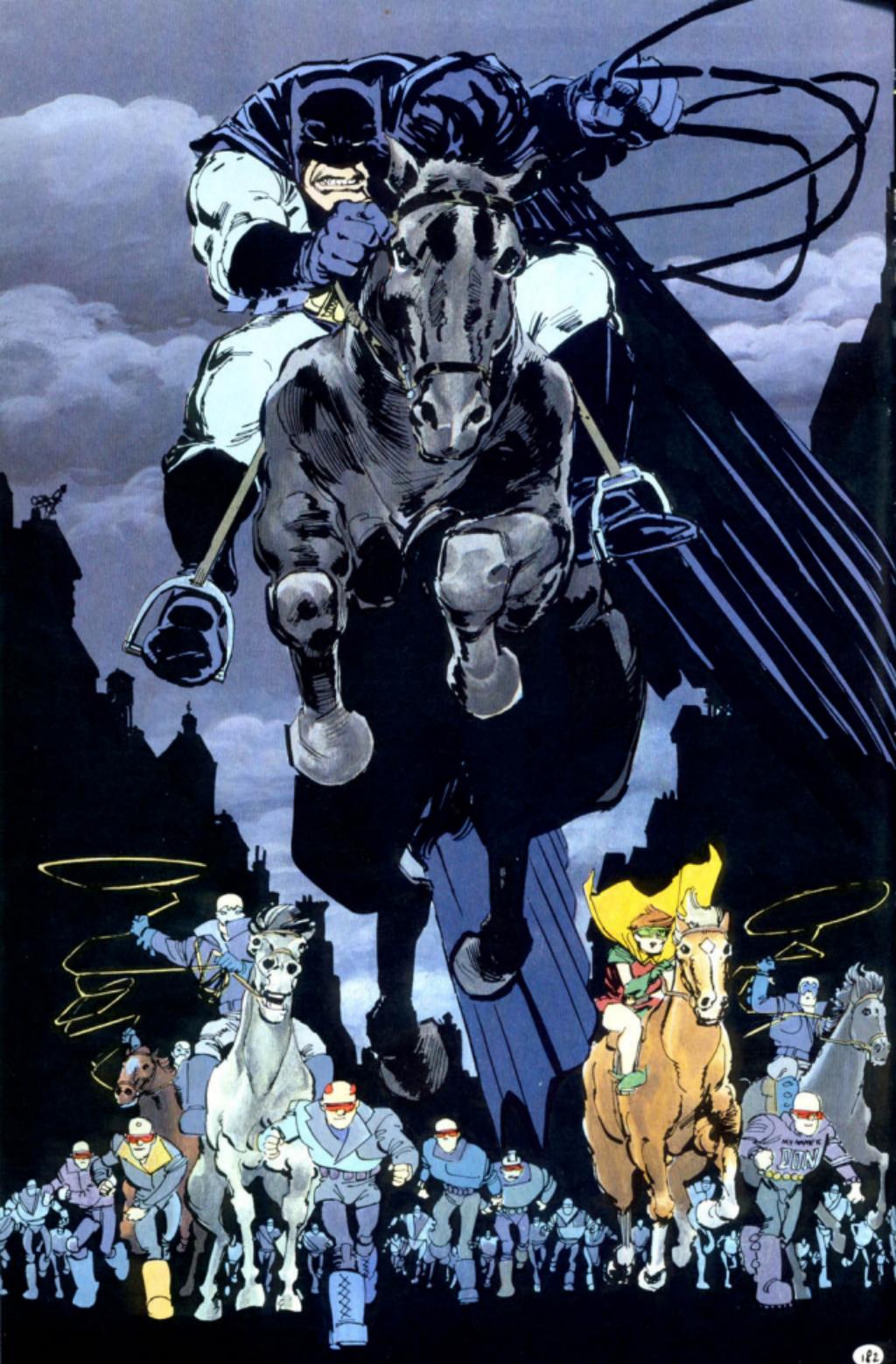
THERE WAS NO PLAN,
NOBODY FIGHTING
THE FIRE...

FIRE ARE FOR THE
FIRE DEPARTMENT. THAT'S
WHY I PAY MY TAXES. WE
HAD OURSELVES TO LOOK
AFTER.



I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT
GOT AS BAD AS IT DID.
YOU'D NEVER HAVE
KNOWN THAT JUST A FEW
MINUTES EARLIER WE'D
BEEN...

...I WAS STRANGLING
SOMEBODY WHEN I
HEARD THE HORSES...





LIKE THE GESTAPO, THEY MOVED IN ON US--BATMAN AND THAT BRAT ARMY OF HIS-- YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT WE WERE CRIMINALS.

I TRIED TO DEFEND MYSELF--HE SINGLED ME OUT--



SHE ONLY GOT TO SCREAM ONCE, IT WAS TOO LATE TO HELP HER.



SHE ISN'T SARAH. I DON'T KNOW HER.



IT'S ONLY ONCE... IN THE WHOLE NIGHT... THAT IT SNOWS...

HE'S GIVEN ORDERS AND ALL THE MUTANTS AND S.O.B.S. AND EVERYBODY ARE GONE FOR A MINUTE...

... HE JUST SAGS IN HIS SADDLE LIKE AN OLD MAN...

...THEN HE STRAIGHTENS UP AND BRINGS AT ME LIKE IT'S FUNNY.

HE CAN'T DIE...

TURNS OUT SARAH FORGOT TO TELL ME SHE NEEDED MILK.

ONE MORE THING.

TURNS OUT SARAH HAD GONE TO THE GROCERY STORE.

AFTER THE MOB LEFT, THE EXPLOSIONS CONTINUED. THE FIRES WERE EVERYWHERE...

...I WAS BARELY CONSCIOUS...IF NOT FOR THE BOY. I...

THAT'S RIGHT. THE BOY WITH THE RADIO. HE PULLED ME CLEAR. SAVED MY LIFE. WHEN BATMAN DROPPED OFF THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES, THE BOY PASSED THEM AROUND...

BUT, OF COURSE, THERE WASN'T ANY MORNING...

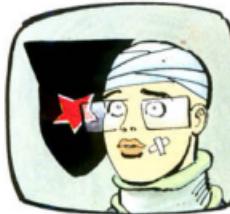
...HE WAS AT MY SIDE TILL MORNING, HELPING THE BURNED.

LOLA, THE SOVIET COLDBRINGER WAS DESIGNED TO INDUCE THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF FULL-SCALE NUCLEAR WAR. FIRST, IT GENERATED THE PULSE THAT BLACKED OUT...

ON THAT PULSE-- DON'T MISS OUR SPECIAL TONIGHT-- YOUR FAVORITE STARS ARE ASKED "WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT?" CARLA?

LOLA, THE PULSE WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING. WEATHER PATTERNS ACROSS THE HEMISPHERE HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DISRUPTED...

THEY SURE HAVE, CARLA, AND SO HAS MY WARDROBE. THIS IS THE COLDEST DAY OF THE YEAR. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO WEAR THESE DAYS...



STARVING
CUBANS WON'T BUDGE
RIOTS
MEDIA PUSH
CREDIBILITY DISASTER
CIVIL WAR IN THE MID-WEST

THE COLDEST, LOLA-- UNTIL TOMORROW, THE BOMB'S BLAST THRUST HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF TONS OF SOOT INTO THE STRATOSPHERE--

--CREATING A BLACK CLOUD THAT COVERS THE AMERICAS, BLOTTING OUT THE SUN-- DEPRIVING US OF LIGHT AND MEAT...



...PEOPLE ARE FREEZING TO DEATH BY THE THOUSANDS-- THE DAMAGE TO CROPS COULD WELL BRING ON A FAMINE...



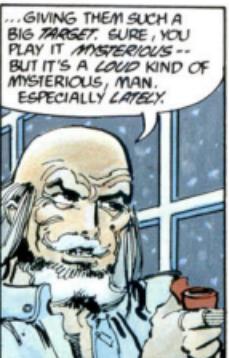
I'M SURPRISED HE TOOK THE CHANCE OF COMING TO AMERICA-- WITH CLARK IN THE COUNTRY...

-BUT OLIVER HAS ALWAYS LIVED BY HIS IMPULSES.



YOU GOT TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE THOSE SON OF BITCHES WORK FOR YOU. LOOK-- IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE I BLEW OUT OF PRISON--

...COMPUTER FAILURE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SINKING OF THE U.S. NUCLEAR SUBMARINE VALIANT, PENTAGON SOURCES DISCLOSED TODAY... NO HANDS WERE LOST...



--AND THEY'VE BEEN
COVERING FOR ME, JUST
LIKE THEY COVERED UP
MY ESCAPE, SURE, THEY'D
LOVE TO FROST ME...

...LONG AS
THEY CAN DO IT
WITHOUT ADMITTING
I EXIST.



I ALWAYS KNEW IT'D
GET DOWN TO YOU AND
THE BIG BLUE SCHOOLBOY.
PLANET'S TOO BIG FOR
THE TWO OF YOU.

WHEN IT ALL
COMES DOWN...

...I WANT A PIECE OF
HIM. A SMALL PIECE WILL
DO, FOR OLD TIMES
SAKE, YOU KNOW...

...NOTHING WE
CAN'T HANDLE,
FOLKS.
WE'RE STILL
AMERICA--
AND I'M STILL
PRESIDENT.

WHO WAS
THAT SPUD?
TALKS LIKE
MY DAD.

HE USED TO
FIGHT
CRIME.



...IT
STILL
HURTS
WHEN IT'S
COLD...



...THE PRESIDENT HAS
IMPOSED LIMITED MARITAL
LAW, THEREBY DEPLOYING
MILITARY AID TO LAW-
ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES
AGAINST OUTBREAKS OF
VIOLENCE AND LOOTING...

RIGHT THERE-- IN THAT
SADDLE-- IS ALL THE
REASON I NEED...

...IT'S ALMOST
FRIGHTENING
HOW QUICKLY
SHE'S LEARNING
TO RIDE...



...NEW YORK, CHICAGO,
METROPOLIS-- EVERY
CITY IN AMERICA IS
CAUGHT IN THE GRIP OF
A NATIONAL PANIC--
WITH ONE EXCEPTION.
RIGHT, TOM?...

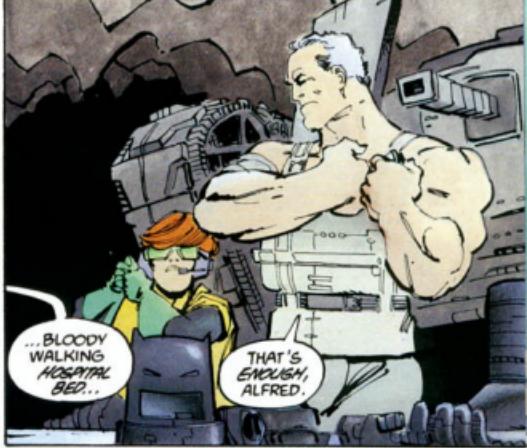
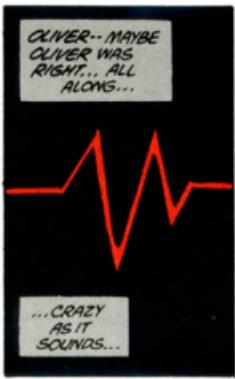


WHERE?

--AND IT
BEGINS...



...THAT'S RIGHT, LOLA.
THANKS TO THE BATMAN
AND HIS VIGILANTE
GANG, GOTHAM'S STREETS
ARE SAFE-- UNLESS YOU
TRY TO COMMIT A
CRIME...



...IN THE PAST WEEK, SEVENTY THREE VIOLENT ATTACKS ON WOULD-BE LOOTERS HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED BY WITNESSES TO THE BATMAN AND HIS GANG...



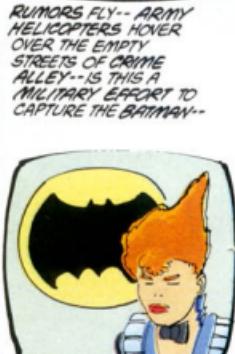
THAT NIGHT... BEGAN THIRTY YEARS OF HUNTING THIEVES AND MURDERERS...



...COMMISSIONER YINDEL REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE CHARGE THAT GOTHAM'S POLICE HAVE BEEN LAX IN PURSUING THE MURDER CHARGE AGAINST THE BATMAN...

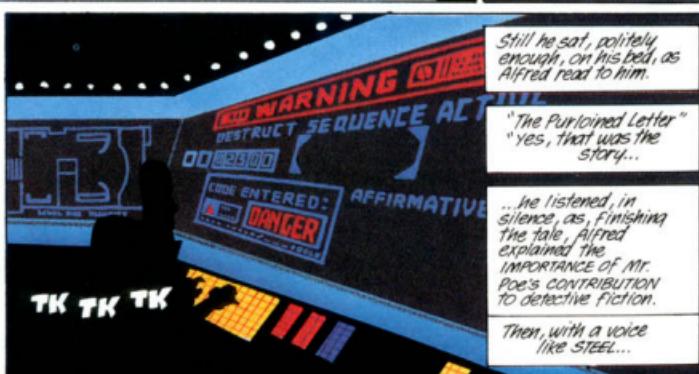


...ARMY TROOPS HAVE EVACUATED THE SLUM KNOWN AS CRIME ALLEY--NO EXPLANATION IS GIVEN--NEWS COVERAGE HAS BEEN FLATLY DENIED--





Strange to think of that particular evening, more than forty years past.

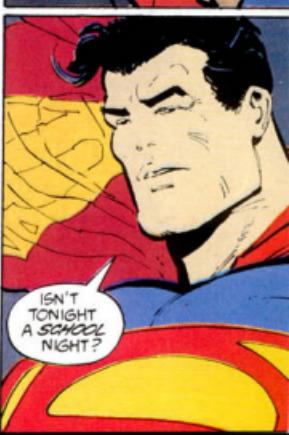


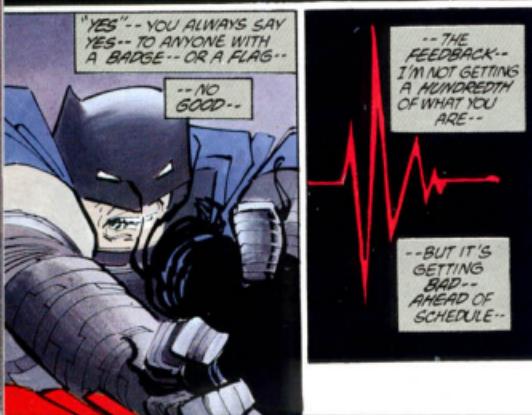
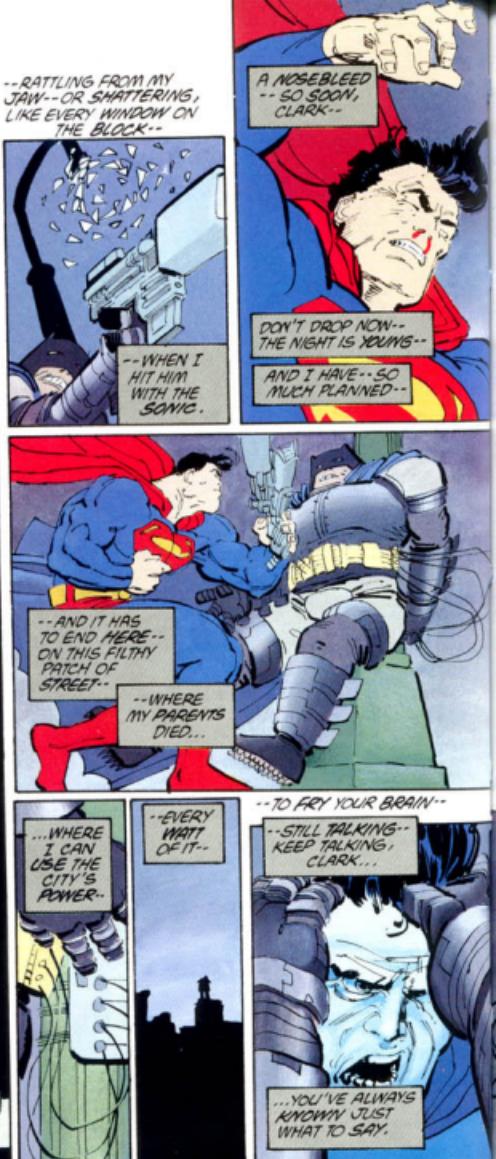
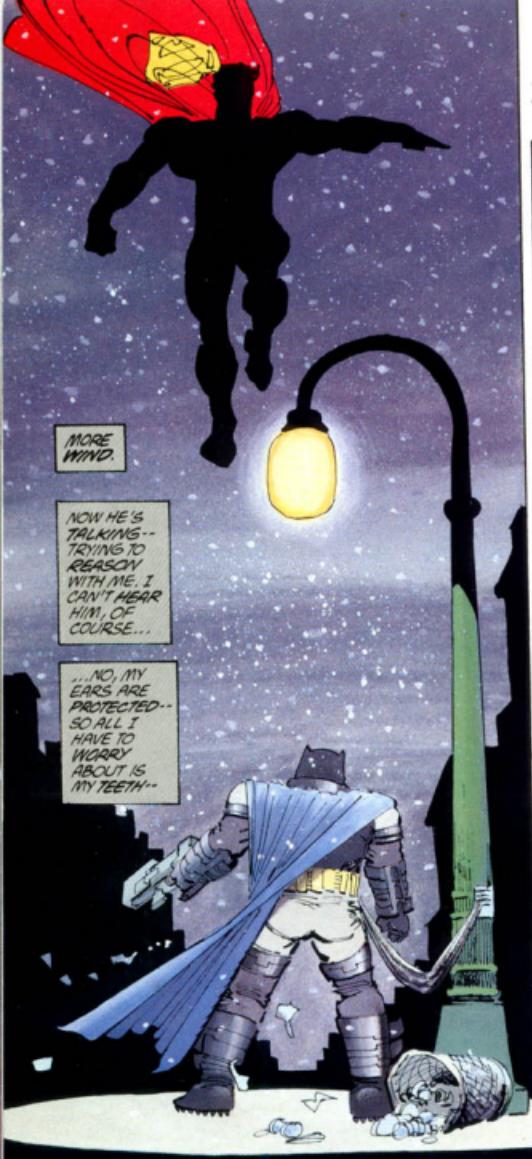
so frightfully formal,
his dark eyes FLASHING...

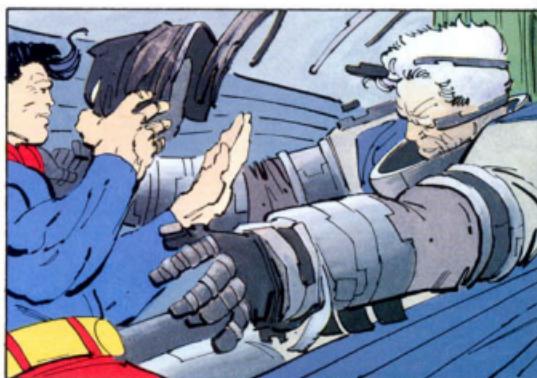
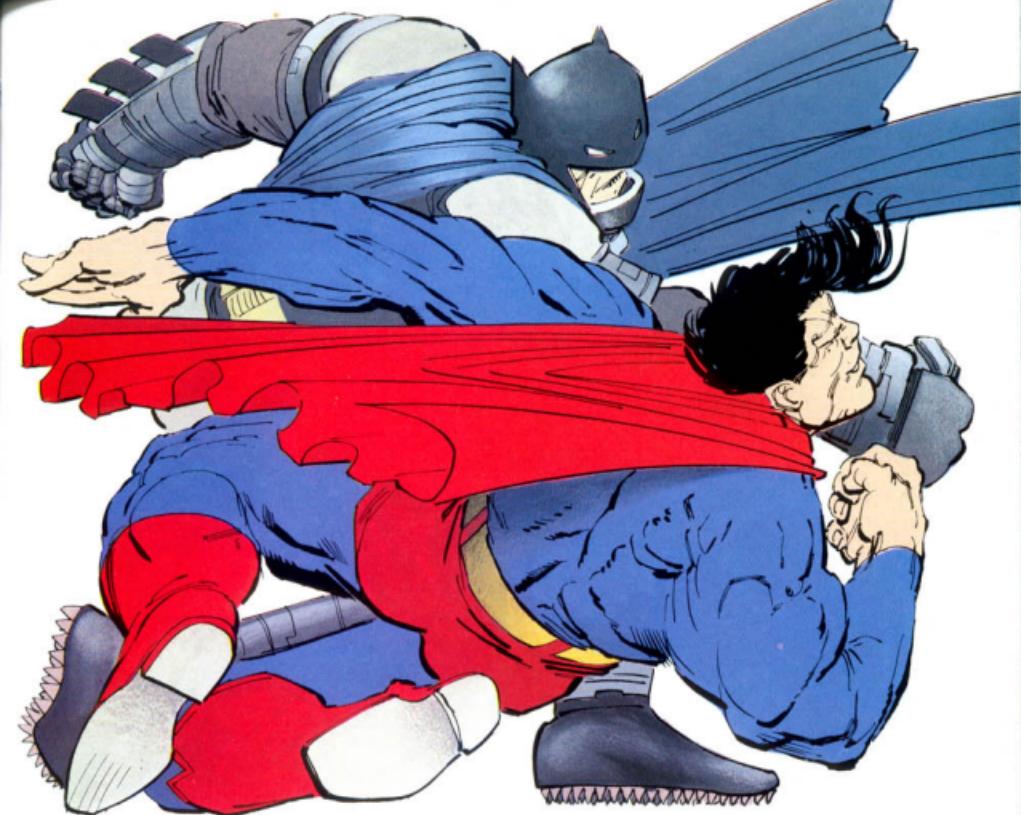
...Master Bruce
asked -- NO,
DEMANDED...
"The killer was
CAUGHT AND
PUNISHED."

Alfred assured him
that the villain had
met justice.

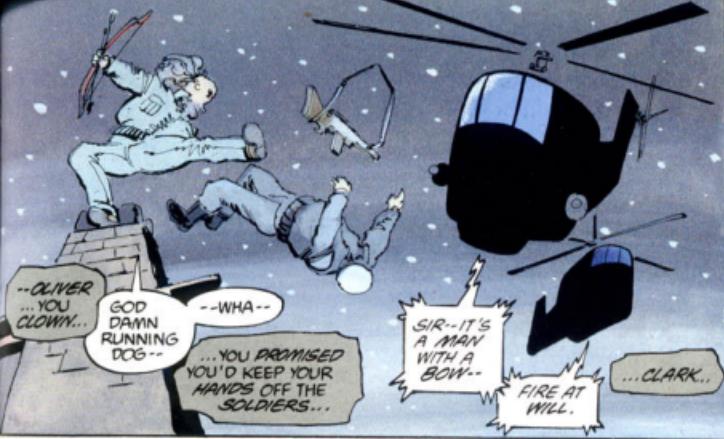
Bruce slept.
Like a boy.



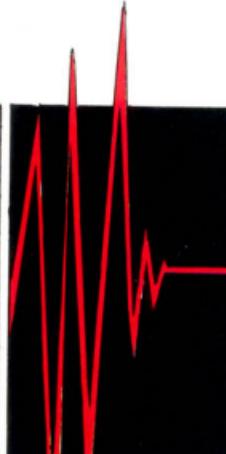


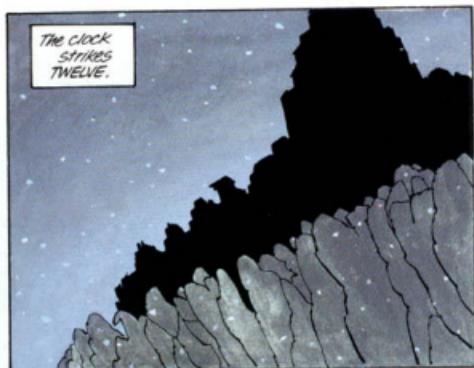












Mrs. Wayne's priceless collection of porcelain shatters, musically...



The world turns ruby red. The manor roof rises, madly, into the sky, riding a pillar of flame.



A jolt travels the length of Alfred's spine. Of course, he thinks, as his head goes light.



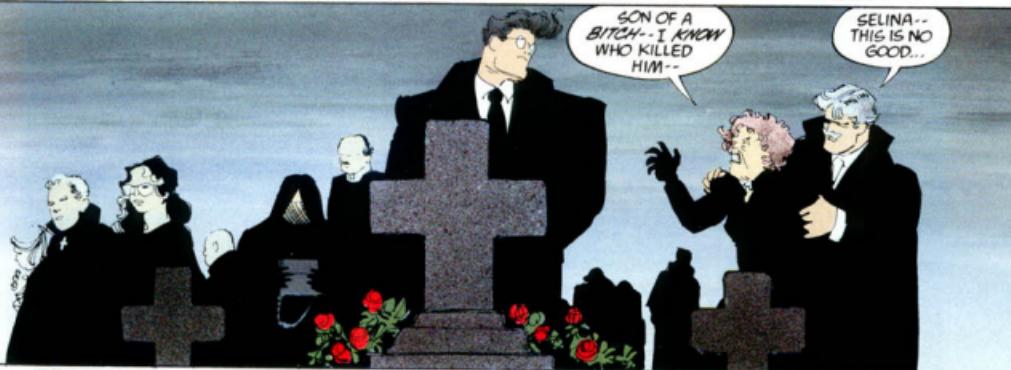
...COMMAND HIS SOUL...

...CLOUD HAS ALMOST COMPLETELY CLEARED IN THE PAST SEVENTY-TWO HOURS. THE PRESIDENT HAS DECLARED A STATE OF STABILIZED EMERGENCY...

REPEATING THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES--THE SPECTACULAR CAREER OF THE BATMAN CAME TO A TRAGIC CONCLUSION...

...AS THE CRIMEFIGHTER SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK WHILE BATTLING GOVERNMENT TROOPS.

HE HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS FIFTY-FIVE YEAR OLD BILLIONAIRE BRUCE WAYNE-- AND HIS DEATH HAS PROVEN AS MYSTERIOUS AS HIS LIFE...



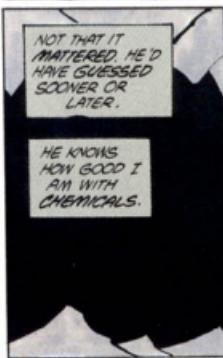
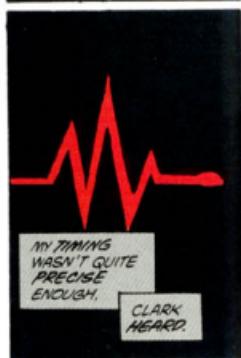
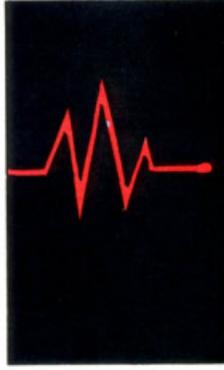
WAYNE MANOR WAS LEVELLED BY A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS, SET APPARENTLY, BY WAYNE'S BUTLER, FOUND DEAD FROM A STROKE AT THE SCENE...

...FLAMES DESTROYED WHATEVER EVIDENCE MAY HAVE EXISTED AS TO BATMAN'S METHODS. ALSO MISSING, IT SEEMS, IS THE WAYNE FORTUNE...

INTERNAL REVENUE AGENTS INVESTIGATED WAYNE'S RECORDS, FINDING HIS EVERY BANK ACCOUNT EMPTY, EVERY STOCK SOLD...



... WHERE THE MONEY
WENT IS ONE MORE
SECRET WAYNE HAS
TAKEN TO HIS GRAVE...
HIS BODY WAS CLAIMED
BY HIS ONLY LIVING
RELATIVE, A DISTANT
COUSIN...



HE'LL LEAVE ME
ALONE, NOW. IN
RETURN, I'LL
STAY QUIET.

SO WILL ROBIN-
AND THE REST...

THERE -- SEE
THAT LEDGE?
GET A LAMP
UP THERE.

RIGHT,
BOSS.

CAREFUL
WITH
THAT--

RIGHT, ALL
SET BOSS

GOOD. NOW
GATHER ROUND.

WE HAVEN'T
GOT ALL NIGHT,
BOY.

*...WE HAVE YEARS--
AS MANY AS WE
NEED...*

FIRST WE GET A
STEADY SUPPLY OF
WATER. THERE'S
A SPRING RIGHT
BENEATH--

--ROBIN!
SIT UP
STRAIGHT.

YEARS-- TO
TRAIN AND
STUDY AND
PLAN...

... HERE, IN THE ENDLESS CAVE, FAR PAST THE BURNT REMAINS OF A CRIMEFIGHTER WHOSE TIME HAS PASSED,...

IT BEGINS HERE-- AN ARMY-- TO BRING SENSE TO A WORLD PLAGUED BY WORSE THAN THIEVES AND MURDERERS...

THIS WILL
BE A
GOOD
LIFE...



...GOOD
ENOUGH.