

## = Batman : The Ultimate Evil =

Batman : The Ultimate Evil is a novel written by Andrew Vachss and published in 1995 by the Warner Aspect imprint of Warner Books . Vachss was an attorney specializing in child abuse cases , as well as a crime novelist best known for his series of books featuring the character Burke , a private investigator who also takes on child abuse cases . A representative from DC Comics approached Vachss about the possibility of writing a novel featuring Batman . Viewing this as an opportunity to reach a completely different audience , Vachss agreed and wrote a draft . He continued with his themes concerning child sexual abuse and explored the topic of child sex tourism . The publisher required Vachss to follow certain rules , like making a clear distinction between fiction and reality and prohibiting the Batman character from killing , cursing , or having sex .

In the story , billionaire Bruce Wayne , who as a child witnessed his parents ' murder , encounters the social worker Debra Kane , who takes Wayne to check up on her clients : he sees clear cases of child abuse and brave but futile resistance to it . Wayne 's loyal butler , Alfred Pennyworth , gives him the secret files from his mother 's investigation into child abuse , which had led to her and her husband 's murder , illuminating the darkest mystery of Wayne 's childhood . As Batman , Wayne investigates child abuse and , through a series of informants , is led to a child sex tourism syndicate using the southeast @-@ Asian country of Udon Khai . Batman travels to Udon Khai and , with the help of a local rebel force of guerrilla fighters , topples the kingpin who controls the industry . In the process , he avenges the murder of his parents . The book ends with a non @-@ fiction essay , by journalist David Hechler , entitled " Child Sex Tourism " .

## = = Background = =

At the time of publication , Vachss worked as an attorney , in New York City , specializing in child abuse cases and writing novels . The duality of Vachss 's work as a lawyer prosecuting and defending real cases and as a crime fiction author exploring fictional criminals resulted in Vachss being compared to the Bruce Wayne / Batman character . Vachss 's eighth novel , Footsteps of the Hawk , in the Burke series featuring a vigilante private investigator of child abuse cases , was released just two months before the publication of Batman : The Ultimate Evil . He had wanted to approach the topic of sex tourism in southeast Asia , but had been unable to find a way for the Burke character to go there ; the Batman character offered the chance for him to write about the topic .

Vachss had previously worked with Dark Horse Comics to produce a ten @-@ issue series ( 1992 ? 1993 ) titled Hard Looks . Steve Korte of DC Comics 's book division approached Vachss with the possibility of a partnership . Vachss was hesitant about using creative property that belonged to someone else but recognized the opportunity to reach a new audience . He started writing the novel , on speculation , and DC Comics eventually agreed to the project , allowing Vachss to take some creative liberties .

## = = Plot summary = =

At a party , Bruce Wayne meets Debra Kane , a caseworker with Child Protective Services . He asks to join her while she visits clients . She agrees and shows him the varying degrees of child abuse she encounters in the course of her job . Wanting to understand the factors behind child abuse , Bruce , as Batman , breaks into Hellgate Prison and talks with an informant who points him to a child pornography and prostitution ring . Bruce 's butler Alfred Pennyworth reveals that Bruce 's mother , Martha Wayne , had been secretly investigating a similar child prostitution ring and was murdered along with her husband Thomas in order to stop the investigation .

Picking up where his mother 's files left off , Bruce finds a connection to a Southeast Asian country named Udon Khai . Using the assumed name Big Jack Hollister , Batman travels to San Francisco to meet a contact who explains how the sex tours to Udon Khai operate . As Hollister , Batman travels to Udon Khai , where he meets Rhama , a local translator hired by Alfred . Rhama shows

Hollister life in Udon Khai and how the child sex tourism has affected its population . Saying Hollister sent him , Batman introduces himself to Rhama . Batman and Rhama confront a man who buys and sells children and they rescue a girl who had been sold by her family . They return the child to her village and find that her father , living in extreme poverty , had sold her so that the rest of the family could survive . The population mistakes Batman for a warrior of legend who would break the barriers that confine the population . Believing this to be their chance for a revolution to overthrow the military dictatorship , a rebel group joins Batman in storming the headquarters of the kingpin who controls the sex tour industry . Though Batman returns to Gotham City , the rebels continue to dismantle sex tour industry and overthrow the dictator of Udon Khai .

The novel ends with Bruce Wayne maintaining his friendship with Debra Kane as well as recruiting her as one of his informants as Batman , and also deciding to include child molesters as part of his quarry in his war on crime .

= = Publication = =

The 45 @, @ 000 @-@ word novel was released in November 1995 , simultaneous with an abridged audiobook and a two @-@ issue graphic novel . All three versions included a nonfiction essay about child prostitution in Thailand , titled " Child Sex Tourism " , by journalist David Hechler . The audiobook featured Tony Roberts , whose performance on the three @-@ hour , two @-@ cassette recording received a positive review from Trudi Miller Rosenblum of Billboard , who wrote that Roberts does " an outstanding job creating a distinctive voice for each character and effectively portraying Batman 's complex psyche " . The comic book adaption was drafted by Neal Barrett , Jr. with art by Denys Cowan . The novel was published by the Warner Aspect imprint of the Warner Books and promoted by Vachss with a book tour and as a guest at the 1995 San Diego Comic @-@ Con. Vachss used the promotion of the book to also raise awareness of child abuse and advocate a boycott of manufactured goods from Thailand . He declared that " three years from now , if there isn 't a boycott of Thailand , then this book is a cosmic failure " . Vachss supported Don 't ! Buy ! Thai ! , which believed that " if Thailand sells its children for money , then the only thing that will stop them is the loss of money " .

= = Style and themes = =

The publishers required that Vachss follow certain rules , including prohibiting the Batman character from killing , cursing , or having sex , and keeping a clear distinction between fiction and reality . For example , while Vachss wanted to write about Thailand , he created a fictional country named Udon Khai which had many similarities with Thailand ? though Udon Khai is described as being dominated by a lone kingpin who controls the country 's one @-@ industry economy based on sex tourism while Thailand 's tourism economy , which includes sex tourism , is part of an economic development strategy enabled by international development agencies . Vachss deviated from Batman canon by having the Wayne family butler , Alfred Pennyworth , reveal to Bruce Wayne that his mother , Martha , was a sociologist who was secretly investigating a child pornography ring . In Vachss ' novel , the Waynes were not the victims of a random crime ; instead , Martha was targeted for assassination . One reviewer compared the characterization of Batman as " the same brooding , handsome , rich character that Val Kilmer played [ in Batman Forever ] " but with the " gothic presence of the older Batman seen in 1940s movie serials " . More complex analysis compared the story to an " 18th @-@ century contes philosophiques in which the dark irrationality of the Greek gods has been flattened out into tidy didactic instruction . "

Vachss said " writing is my way of preaching . For me , it 's always , always the message . The plot is something I contrive to deliver the message . You 've got to have enough narrative force to get people to finish the book , but if you can give them an exciting story , you can always make your points . " He stated that " the whole point of the book is to raise awareness about the kiddie @-@ sex tourism business in Thailand " . Though the story uses more realism than the escapism typically associated with superhero fiction , Vachss did end the book with endorsements of two real non

@-@ profit groups ; Don 't ! Buy ! Thai ! and End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism . The writing is not subtle , as Vachss noted " If you don 't get angry , you 're not going to do anything " . Understanding that the likely readers were young males with short attention spans , Vachss tried to be dramatic by using what author Adam Begley calls " a motivational hat trick : sympathy for the victims , revenge , and a family calling " .

A major theme in the book is the characterization of child abuse . The story follows Bruce Wayne as he learns about the different categories of child abuse , from the ignorant to the incapable and to those who do it for pleasure . Batman , whose motivation is to prevent crimes like the murder of his parents , is contrasted against a social worker whose motivation is protecting children ; Batman realizes that throughout his career he had been fighting criminals , not crime . Vachss asserts that " child protection and crime prevention are the same thing " ; he believes that child abuse is never just a random crime but is done with intent . While Vachss warns that those abused can become future abusers , he also states that " abuse can push two similarly maltreated children in opposite directions . One incest victim becomes a promiscuous adult , another never engages in sex again . ... If you excuse a serial killer because he was tortured as a child , you disrespect the thousands of children who were treated worse and never imitated their oppressor . "

= = Reception = =

The book was described as a " slim , vivid novel " with a " very simple " and " fast paced " plot line . A review in The Washington Times was positive : " With a plot that takes Batman very seriously ? and makes him very human ? and a dismaying amount of information on the sexual exploitation of children for profit , this novel makes an ineradicable impression " . Likewise , another reviewer found it " an engaging and disturbing one @-@ night read that 's all the more astonishing because Vachss manages to explore and make his points about a wholly depressing topic without driving your moods into the sewer . " Roger Catlin in the Hartford Courant said " Vachss ' bold , simple prose is well suited to his story . He 's good at making Batman 's various devices ? the Batmobile , computers , flying gizmos ? come to life with his cool description . "

A review in the New York Times noted that the basic premise is a good idea , but " studded as it is with undigested chunks of scientific jargon , sociology @-@ speak and polemical rhetoric Batman : The Ultimate Evil misses out almost completely on the pure pulp thrills that lie at the heart of its title character 's appeal . " In the St. Petersburg Times , Adam Begley also noted the use of what he called " techno @-@ babble " . In The Washington Post , Jack Womack wrote that Vachss describes the Batmobile " lovingly yet gnomically , as if a Motor Trend review had been translated into Slovakian by someone more familiar with Czech " and concluded that the novel was " as satisfying ? aesthetically , ethically , morally ? as a pulse @-@ pounding yarn in which pulp @-@ fiction hero Doc Savage ransacks the shantytowns of South America in a terribly successful search for Doc Mengele . " In Kirkus Reviews , the story was compared to a generic " Destroy All Exploiters " video game where Batman " disposes of each lower @-@ level pimp , then moves up to the next level " . Sybil Steinberg in Publishers Weekly noted that " while no classic , this is likely the the [ sic ] most stylish adaptation yet of a comic @-@ book figure , its cold stiletto prose and white @-@ hot passions lifting it leagues above recent Spider @-@ man and Incredible Hulk offerings . It 's also Vachss ' best work since Shella " . Both the Library Journal and Booklist predicted heavy demand for it at public libraries .