

# Azrael (comics)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Azrael** is a fictional character in the DC Comics universe. Azrael is a member of a group of assassins who were created by The Sacred Order of Saint Dumas.

## Contents

- 1 Publication history
- 2 Fictional character biography
  - 2.1 Jean-Paul Valley
  - 2.2 Michael Lane
- 3 Powers and abilities
  - 3.1 Equipment
- 4 Other versions
- 5 In other media
  - 5.1 Television
  - 5.2 Video games
    - 5.2.1 *Arkham* series
- 6 Collected-editions
- 7 References
- 8 External links

## Publication history

The character first appeared in the 1992 series *Batman: Sword of Azrael*<sup>[1]</sup> as Jean-Paul Valley.

He then became a supporting character in the monthly Batman titles, eventually taking over the role of Batman<sup>[2]</sup> through the "Knightfall," "Knightquest," and "KnightsEnd" story arcs. One of the creators, Denny O'Neil, admitted to having difficulties with Azrael's transition from villain to hero: "If I'd known he was to become a monthly character, I might have set him up differently ... The problem is that I had to turn a bad guy into a real hero, not just an anti-hero or lead. It's possible to do that, but it's difficult to retain the original characterization. You almost have to change his personality."<sup>[3]</sup>

The subsequent *Azrael* series, chronicling Valley's battles against the Order of St. Dumas, ran for 100 issues between 1995 and 2003. Starting with issue #47, it was retitled to *Azrael: Agent of the Bat* in an attempt to boost sales by tying the series in with the rest of the Batman mythos, including Azrael as part of the team of Batman, Robin, and the new Batgirl.

### Azrael



Cover to *Batman: Sword of Azrael* #1 (1992).

Art by Joe Quesada and Kevin Nowlan.

#### Publication information

<b>Publisher</b>	DC Comics
<b>First appearance</b>	<b>As Azrael:</b> <div><i>Batman: Sword of Azrael</i> #1 (October 1992)</div> <b>As Batman:</b> <div><i>Batman</i> #489 (February 1993)</div>
<b>Created by</b>	<b>Jean-Paul Valley:</b> <div>Denny O'Neil</div> <div>Joe Quesada</div> <b>Michael Washington Lane:</b> <div>Grant Morrison</div>

#### In-story information

<b>Alter ego</b>	Jean-Paul Valley Jr. <div>Michael Washington Lane</div>
<b>Team affiliations</b>	The Sacred Order of Saint Dumas <div>Batman Family</div>
<b>Notable aliases</b>	Batman
<b>Abilities</b>	Master strategist and tactician <div>Rigorous military and police training</div>

Michael Lane is now the new main character of the series *Azrael*, introduced as part of the Battle for the Cowl, a new storyline told in a three-issue mini-series format written by Fabian Nicieza.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

## Fictional character biography

### Jean-Paul Valley

Jean-Paul Valley, a university graduate student of computer science in Gotham City, is unaware that he is the latest in a line of assassin-enforcers for "The Sacred Order of Saint Dumas", a sinister religious secret society. For most of his life, he has been brainwashed with *The System*, a deep level of psychological conditioning.

Valley only learned of his new status upon the death of his father, who was also his predecessor, at which time his conditioning was activated and he was called upon to take up the mantle of Azrael.<sup>[6]</sup> When he was sent by the Order to kill a weapons dealer, a rogue member of the Order who turned against the others and killed Valley's father, he crossed paths with Batman, who had been investigating the death. He worked with Alfred Pennyworth to find the weapons dealer after he had captured Bruce Wayne, using the Batman costume to kill the other Order members. Valley worked with Alfred, demonstrating a detective's intuition in tracking the dealer's movements and later risking himself to rescue Bruce despite his traditional mission of vengeance. In doing so, he was shown the error of his ways and decided to fight alongside Batman against the criminals of Gotham, rejecting his "birthright" and seeking Batman's help in breaking his conditioning to forge his own destiny.

His name is not revealed to Alfred and Bruce until the end of the story, at which point he claims it also was his father's name (a later storyline in his solo series stated his father's name to be Ludovic Valley, however).<sup>[7]</sup>

Valley is given a job as a security guard at WayneTech headquarters, and also becomes an apprentice crimefighter alongside Batman and Robin, learning basic detective work.



Artwork for the cover of *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* vol. 1, 25 (March, 1994 DC Comics).

Art by Brian Stelfreeze.

Peak physical conditioning  
Skilled hand-to-hand combatant and martial artist  
Artificially enhanced physiology, intelligence, combat skills, and metabolism  
Suit of Sorrows armor grants superhuman strength and reflexes  
Sword of Sin "burns with the souls of the damned"

Valley plays a pivotal role in the *Knightfall* story arc (1993–1994), in which he stands in as Batman after Bruce Wayne is defeated and paralyzed at the hands of Bane. He decides that Bruce's tactics as Batman are obsolete and believes that he must fight criminals on their terms which makes him far more brutal and merciless, often even showing little regard for innocent bystanders. Against Bruce Wayne's orders, Valley fights and defeats Bane, wearing enhanced battle-armor he designed and built under the influence of the System after he was narrowly defeated by Bane in their first confrontation.<sup>[8]</sup> His performance as Batman is influenced by his Azrael conditioning. He grows increasingly violent and delusional, allowing the mass murderer Abattoir to fall to his death, thereby also allowing one of Abattoir's still-living hostages to die.<sup>[9]</sup> Valley also has control problems with Tim Drake's partnership, emphasized when Valley almost strangles him to death and bans him from the Batcave. He seals off the Batcave from Wayne Manor and the Drake property, and eschews working with Commissioner Gordon and the Gotham police. Valley also suffers from continuous hallucinations of both his father and St. Dumas who tell him that he is the real Batman and that he must avenge his father's death.

Initially, Wayne is impressed enough with Valley's results to let him remain as Batman, but when Drake tells Wayne of Abattoir's death, he resolves to reclaim the Batman mantle. With his back repaired thanks to the sacrifice of Doctor Shondra Kinsolving, and his

fighting instincts rehabilitated after lessons with Lady Shiva, Wayne goes after Valley to reclaim his identity. After a prolonged battle, culminating in a final showdown in the Batcave, Bruce tricks Valley into removing his armor, excluding his helmet (with night-vision lenses engaged), and exposes him to bright sunlight - the shock snaps Valley out of his delusional state. He apologizes and asks for his forgiveness, which Bruce accepts, recognizing his own role in Valley's descent into madness during his time as Batman, but tells Valley to leave immediately. Valley subsequently departs Wayne Manor after acknowledging Bruce Wayne as the true Batman.<sup>[7]</sup>

Valley lives among the homeless population of Gotham for several weeks, befriendng an alcoholic former psychiatrist named Brian.

Valley is then sought out by Bruce Wayne, who feels responsible for his mental breakdown after attaining and losing the mantle of Batman. Bruce grants him a small fortune in money, information on the Order of St. Dumas' whereabouts, and resources to explore his origins. Along with Brian, he discovers the evil conspiracies within the order of St. Dumas, and they help a nun named Sister Lilhy escape. With the help of Ra's al Ghul, Valley discovers that he is a genetically engineered test tube baby, and his genes have been spliced with those of animals.

He returns to Gotham for several crossover events, including *Underworld Unleashed*, *Contagion*, *Legacy*, and *Cataclysm*. He also discovers that his father's killer, Carlton LeHah, is still alive. Valley attempts to regain Batman's trust after the events of the *KnightsEnd* arc. Batman, who feels responsible for Valley, especially after realizing that he gave him very little training and support, decides to give Azrael missions to carry out as a test to prove himself. The first of these missions is to defeat a resurfaced Bane, but it is not until Azrael saves the lives of a group of U.S. Senators (one of which tries to plead to Congress for the funds to rebuild Gotham City after its devastating earthquake) that Batman begins to fully trust him again. Prior to those events, Batman sent Azrael after Nicholas Scratch, who was planning to kill another Senator who also wanted federal money to save Gotham City. While pursuing Scratch, Azrael was framed for the Senator's murder after he was strangled to death moments before Azrael arrived to save him.

After being framed, Azrael is given a new costume designed by Batman and uses it for a time, especially during the *No Man's Land* story arc. Azrael helps Batman maintain a chaotic Gotham City, often with the assistance of the new Batgirl, and protects Leslie Thompkins' medical clinic inside of No Man's Land. After foiling Scratch's plan of framing him for murder, Azrael returns to his original costume and battles hallucinations that represent both his father and St. Dumas himself. Toward the end of the series, Azrael is plagued by supernatural occurrences in the form of possible miracles.

Azrael is seemingly killed in the series' final issue, shot with two specially-coated bullets while battling Scratch and LeHah. Scratch is arrested, and LeHah falls into the river with Azrael. However, Azrael's body is never recovered,<sup>[7]</sup> and his death went unconfirmed for several years. In *Booster Gold* (vol. 2) #10, a note can be seen written on time traveler Rip Hunter's chalk board reading "Jean-Paul Valley Lives!". In the following issue, another note says "Azrael comes and goes." Azrael appears in *Blackest Night* #4 (October 2009) as an undead member of the Black Lantern Corps; although at first it had not been confirmed whether it was Jean-Paul Valley or another Azrael (such as Ludovic Valley, who died in Gotham City). It was later revealed, in the index section of the *Blackest Night* tabloid vol.1, that it was in fact Jean-Paul.<sup>[10]</sup>

Jean-Paul Valley makes a cameo at Batman's funeral service in Neil Gaiman's 2009 story *Batman: Whatever Happened to the Caped Crusader?*. He is seen stepping up to deliver his own version of Batman's death as a background event, however his story is unseen and he has no lines. The story is metaphysical in nature, not affecting the overall status of the canon or Azrael's fate.

In *The New 52*, Jean-Paul Valley reappeared as Azrael in an arc of *Batman & Robin: Eternal*. His design was updated, with his main weapon being his sword rather than gauntlets (although he was later shown to still possess the gauntlet blades). His character, however, was essentially the same, working as an enforcer for the Order of St. Dumas. In the comic, he defeated Bane and eventually turned on his handler and the Order to assist

Red Hood and Tim Drake. This marked the first proper appearance of a living Jean-Paul Valley in the DCU in over a dozen years, with previous appearances relegated to either minimal cameos or the aforementioned Black Lantern revival of the character.<sup>[11]</sup>

In 2016, Jean Paul has appeared in short cameos of the *Detective Comics* Rebirth line.

## Michael Lane

In 2009, a mini-series titled *Azrael: Death's Dark Knight*<sup>[12]</sup> was produced as a tie-in to the *Battle for the Cowl* crossover event, with a later regular series.

The new Azrael is the Third "Ghost of Batman" to undergo Doctor Hurt's experiments, an ex-cop named **Michael Washington Lane**. He is approached by the Order of Purity to reclaim the mantle of Azrael after the Order's latest Azrael went mad and killed an undercover police officer. On his first night as Azrael, Lane fights Talia al Ghul (and her team of mercenaries led by Merlyn) and later encounters Nightwing.<sup>[13]</sup> After convincing Nightwing that he was not responsible for the murdered police officer, Nightwing persuades Talia to allow Michael to keep the Suit of Sorrows. In *Batman and the Outsiders* (vol. 2) #14, the character is displayed as a charming man who undergoes various purification rituals overseen by the Order of Purity.<sup>[14]</sup>

Ra's al Ghul later attempts to manipulate Lane into destroying Gotham by having him commit suicide and be subsequently resurrected by the Suit, which had been dipped in a Lazarus Pit. Lane worked with metahuman Crusader to 'judge' Batman, Catwoman, and Red Robin for their past 'sins' to determine if Gotham should be saved. These included the insane obsession of Selina's sister that Selina is 'possessed', Robin not showing due reverence when he destroyed a church window to save hostages, and a childhood incident where Dick let another circus performer get assaulted because he was jealous. Although Lane is manipulated into perceiving the Bat-Family as having failed his tests, Batman convinces Lane to use his swords to test himself, revealing Ra's' plan in time for Lane to stop the planned destruction of new metahuman Fireball. Ra's intended for Azrael to detonate Fireball and make it appear as though Gotham had been destroyed by terrorists, inciting a wave of violence that would cleanse Earth and allow Ra's to take control.

Michael Lane has also appeared in *The New 52*. Michael Lane was originally featured in *Batwoman* issue #2 as a cameo, which was written before the relaunch but published after, however the art was edited in order to remove him.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Powers and abilities

As Azrael, Jean-Paul has enhanced physical abilities. He has been shown to fight at heightened levels even when fatigued, a fact exemplified when Azrael was able to defeat Bane, despite suffering from both extreme exhaustion and Venom withdrawal.<sup>[16]</sup> He has also been shown to be able to resist an even more potent version of the Venom drug, having been able to break its vast addiction in only one night. Azrael is also a superior fighter; although he lacks technique and style in his fighting moves, he makes up for it with his inhuman speed, reflexes, and agility. Azrael has been able to match Deathstroke in a sword duel and has even defeated Batman in hand-to-hand combat.<sup>[17]</sup> This is not only due to his martial arts skills, but also due to his inhuman physical abilities.

## Equipment

The original Azrael costume worn by Jean-Paul Valley consists of red and gold armor. After becoming an "Agent of the Bat", he dons silver and black armor with a red cape and a stylized red bat symbol on the chest. Later on, he dons red armor with golden gauntlets, boots, shoulder pads and a blue cape. He sometimes carries a flaming sword, and also uses two retractable daggers hidden in the gauntlets of his costume that can be charged with thermal energy to increase their destructive power. In *Batman: The Ultimate Guide to the Dark Knight*,

Scott Beatty implied that Azrael's changing costumes were reflections of the changes in Azrael's life from an agent of St. Dumas to an agent of the Batman to his own man.<sup>[7]</sup> The gauntlets were taken by Kate Spencer, the current Manhunter, and are used in her outfit. The *New 52* version of Jean-Paul wears a similar costume, and his weapon is a flaming knight sword called Murasame. He also possesses the familiar gauntlet blades as well.

## Other versions

Valley and Lane are not the only bearers of the name Azrael in the DC Universe:

- Valley's father (Jean-Paul/Ludovic Valley) was the previous Azrael, as seen in *Batman: Sword of Azrael* (referenced by his son as having the same name) and, with more detail, in *Azrael Annual #1* (identified as just Ludovic Valley).
- A Chinese man, supposedly given the same training as Valley and an identical costume, is briefly under the control of the Order. Also, the position of the Order of St. Dumas' enforcer has been passed on since medieval times.
- Earlier on in the *Azrael* series, another man is supposedly selected and trained in the same way as Valley and the Chinese man to be Valley's replacement. He is defeated by Valley and supposedly falls to his death, only to resurface in Gotham at one point wearing one of Valley's 'Batman' armors and engaging in underground fights.
- There was a character Azrael who was briefly associated with the Teen Titans and is otherwise unrelated to the character introduced in the Batman comics.<sup>[18]</sup>
- In *The Multiversity: The Just*, which takes place on the alternate Earth-16 (where the grown sidekicks and children of superheroes live on an Earth free of crime), Damian Wayne, the new Batman, has a variation of Jean Paul's Azrael suit in a glass display in the Batcave.

## In other media

### Television

- Azrael made his debut in the second season of *Gotham*, portrayed by James Frain.<sup>[19]</sup> This version of the character is Theo Galavan, a billionaire industrialist who is secretly the heir apparent of the Order of Saint Dumas. Galavan is the power behind a group of insane criminals called "The Maniax" who terrorize Gotham, but betrays them by killing their leader, Jerome Valeska, making him a public hero. He is elected Mayor of Gotham with the reluctant help of Oswald Cobblepot, whom he blackmails into killing the other mayoral candidates by holding his mother, Gertrude, hostage. When Galavan's sister kills Gertrude anyway, Cobblepot swears revenge and enters a tenuous alliance with Detective Jim Gordon to bring Galavan down. The two of them eventually expose Galavan's corruption, destroy his criminal empire, and kill him. In "Wrath of the Villains: Pinewood," Galavan is revived by Hugo Strange, who gives him enhanced physical abilities. Strange's experiments warp Galavan's mind, however; he has no memory of his past life, and believes himself to be Azrael, an ancient warrior who vanquished the Order's enemies. Strange takes advantage of Galavan's delusions by ordering "Azrael" to kill Gordon. Galavan attacks the Gotham City Police Department, killing several police officers and wounding its captain, Nathaniel Barnes. In "Wrath of the Villains: Unleashed," Galavan is poised to finally kill Gordon, when Cobblepot and his henchman Butch Gilzean blow him up with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher.<sup>[20]</sup>

### Video games

- Azrael is a character that can be officially created after obtaining all the mini-kits for the hero chapters in *Lego Batman: The Videogame*. The Nintendo DS version also features him and can be unlocked and made available to purchase after all the levels have been completed and True Hero has been achieved on all of them.
- Azrael appears in *Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes*.
- Jean-Paul Valley, Michael Lane, and Azrael Batman are all playable characters in *Scribblenauts Unmasked: A DC Comics Adventure*.

## Arkham series

The Michael Lane incarnation of Azrael appears in the *Batman Arkham* series, where he is voiced by Khary Payton:

- Azrael first appears in *Batman: Arkham City* as part of the "Watcher in the Wings" side mission. After events in the game's story, he can be seen on the rooftops of certain buildings within Arkham City's districts, watching over Batman. When approached, Azrael will disappear in a cloud of smoke, leaving the symbol for Batman to scan. After scanning these and combining them to reveal a location, Batman meets Azrael. The knight tells him of the Order of St. Dumas and warns him of their prophecy of future events and the Dark Knight's end. Though Batman doubts this, Azrael tells him that, regardless of his belief, there are parts of it that are becoming true and they will meet again, disappearing into a cloud of smoke.
- The PlayStation 3 edition of *Batman: Arkham Origins* features the *Knightfall* DLC pack containing an alternate Batman outfit based on Jean-Paul Valley's Batsuit as well as challenge maps based on *Batman: Knightfall*.<sup>[21]</sup>
- Azrael returns in *Batman: Arkham Knight*, where his outfit is primarily white with red patches. He is the main character behind the "Heir to the Cowl" side quest. During Scarecrow's takeover of Gotham, the Order of St. Dumas sends Azrael to Gotham on a mission to become Batman's successor. After he is put through several trials, Batman eventually discovers Azrael's secret identity to be Michael Lane. It is later revealed that the Order of St. Dumas had planted a microchip in Lane's brain that subtly controlled his actions. After Batman uncovers a secret message, he discovers Azrael's true intentions of killing him. After confronting Batman at the clock tower, Azrael is given three options by the player:
  - Attempt to kill Batman with the "Sword of Sin", only to be subdued and incarcerated at the Gotham City Police Department, where Lane vows to escape and end the Dark Knight. During this time, Azrael will argue with Deacon Blackfire over who is the true champion of God.
  - Resist the orders to kill Batman, then break the "Sword of Sin" before leaving the clock tower to get revenge on the Order of St. Dumas. Batman declares that Azrael has made the right choice.
  - Leave the clock tower via the elevator without touching the sword.

## Collected-editions

- *Batman: Contagion* (Azrael #15)
- *Batman: No Man's Land* Vol. 1 (Azrael: Agent of the Bat #51-55)
- *Batman: No Man's Land* Vol. 2 (Azrael: Agent of the Bat #56)
- *Batman: No Man's Land* Vol. 3 (Azrael: Agent of the Bat #58)
- *Batman: No Man's Land* Vol. 4 (Azrael: Agent of the Bat #59-61)
- *Batman: Sword of Azrael* (#1-#4) [1993] - ISBN 1-56389-100-X
- *Knightfall*
- *Azrael: Angel in the Dark* (Azrael vol2 #1-#6) [2010] - ISBN 978-1-4012-2874-3
- *Batman: Gotham Shall Be Judged* (Azrael vol2 #14-#18) [2012] - ISBN 978-1-4012-3378-5
- *Azrael: Death's Dark Knight* (#1-#3)
- *Azrael vol. 1: Fallen Angel* (Batman: Sword of Azrael #1-4, Showcase '94 #10, Azrael vol 1 #1-7)

## References

1. Manning, Matthew K.; Dolan, Hannah, ed. (2010). "1990s". *DC Comics Year By Year A Visual Chronicle*. Dorling Kindersley. p. 255. ISBN 978-0-7566-6742-9. "Azrael, one of the most important characters of the modern Batman mythos, was dropped right under the noses of an unsuspecting reading populace in the debut issue of *Batman: Sword of Azrael* by esteemed bat-scribe Denny O'Neil, talented young penciler Joe Quesada, and inker extraordinaire Kevin Nowlan."
2. Manning "1990s" in Dolan, p. 260: "By *Batman* #500, the last chapter of the 'Knightfall' saga by writer Doug Moench and artist Jim Aparo and Mike Manley, Azrael was truly his own [version of] Batman."
3. Shutt, Craig (August 1997). "Villain Turned Hero: Azrael". *Wizard* (72). p. 39.
4. Batman: Battle for the Cowl - Enter Azrael (<http://comics.ign.com/articles/939/939673p1.html>), IGN, December 18, 2008



5. Fabian Nicieza Unleashes Azrael (<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=19314>), Comic Book Resources, December 29, 2008
6. batman: Sword of Azrael # 1
7. Wallace, Dan (2008). "Azrael". In Dougall, Alastair. *The DC Comics Encyclopedia*. London: Dorling Kindersley. p. 33. ISBN 0-7566-4119-5.
8. Batman # 500
9. Batman # 508
10. Johns, Geoff (w). *Blackest Night* 4 (October 2009), DC Comics
11. Batman and Robin: Eternal #9
12. Newsarama.com : Dan DiDio: 20 Answers, 1 Question - Batman and More (<http://www.newsarama.com/comics/120810-DiDio-20.html>), Newsarama
13. *Azrael: Death's Dark Knight* #1-#3 (May 2009 - July 2009)
14. Tieri, Frank (w), Benjamin, Ryan (p), Crawford, Saleem (i). "A Family Affair" *Batman and the Outsiders* v2, 14 (February 2009), DC Comics
15. Johnston, Rich. "Batwoman #2 Deletes Azrael And Lady Blackhawk From The DC Universe". Bleeding Cool.
16. Azrael # 39
17. Azrael # 99
18. "Azrael (DC) (03 - Alien, Teen Titans)". Comic Book DB. Retrieved 2016-04-08.
19. "Get Ready for Azrael's "Gotham" Debut with New Synopsis". Comic Book Resources. 2016-04-08. Retrieved 2016-04-08.
20. Gotham EP Promises Comics-Accurate Azrael in Second Half of Season 2 (<http://comicbook.com/2016/02/11/gotham-ep-promises-comics-accurate-azrael-in-second-half-of-seas/>)
21. Kubba, Sinan (June 11, 2013). "Batman: Arkham Origins PS3 'Knightfall' content detailed". *Joystiq*. AOL. Archived from the original on June 12, 2013. Retrieved June 12, 2013.

## External links

- World of Black Heroes: Azrael Michael Washington Lane Biography (<http://worldofblackheroes.com/2011/06/10/azrael-michael-washington-lane/>)
- Azrael (Jean-Paul Valley) at the DC Database Project
- Azrael (Jean-Paul Ludovic Valley, the father) at the DC Database Project
- Azrael (Michael Lane) at the DC Database Project
- Azrael Biography (<http://www.batmanytb.com/bios/heroes/azrael/index.php>) at Batman Myth.com
- Azrael (Jean-Paul Valley) (<http://comicbookdb.com/character.php?ID=519>) at the Comic Book DB
- '**Azrael Annual**' (<http://www.comics.org/series/5221>) at the Grand Comics Database

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Azrael\\_\(comics\)&oldid=777068392](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Azrael_(comics)&oldid=777068392)"

Categories: DC Comics superheroes | DC Comics supervillains | 1992 comics debuts  
 Comics characters introduced in 1992 | DC Comics metahumans  
 DC Comics characters with superhuman strength  
 DC Comics characters who can move at superhuman speeds | DC Comics martial artists | DC Comics titles  
 Fictional characters with multiple personalities | Fictional assassins | Fictional vigilantes  
 Fictional genetically engineered characters | Fictional African-American people | Fictional police officers  
 Characters created by Dennis O'Neil | Characters created by Joe Quesada  
 Characters created by Grant Morrison | Fictional knights

- 
- This page was last modified on 25 April 2017, at 01:35.
  - Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.