



# BATMAN

THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

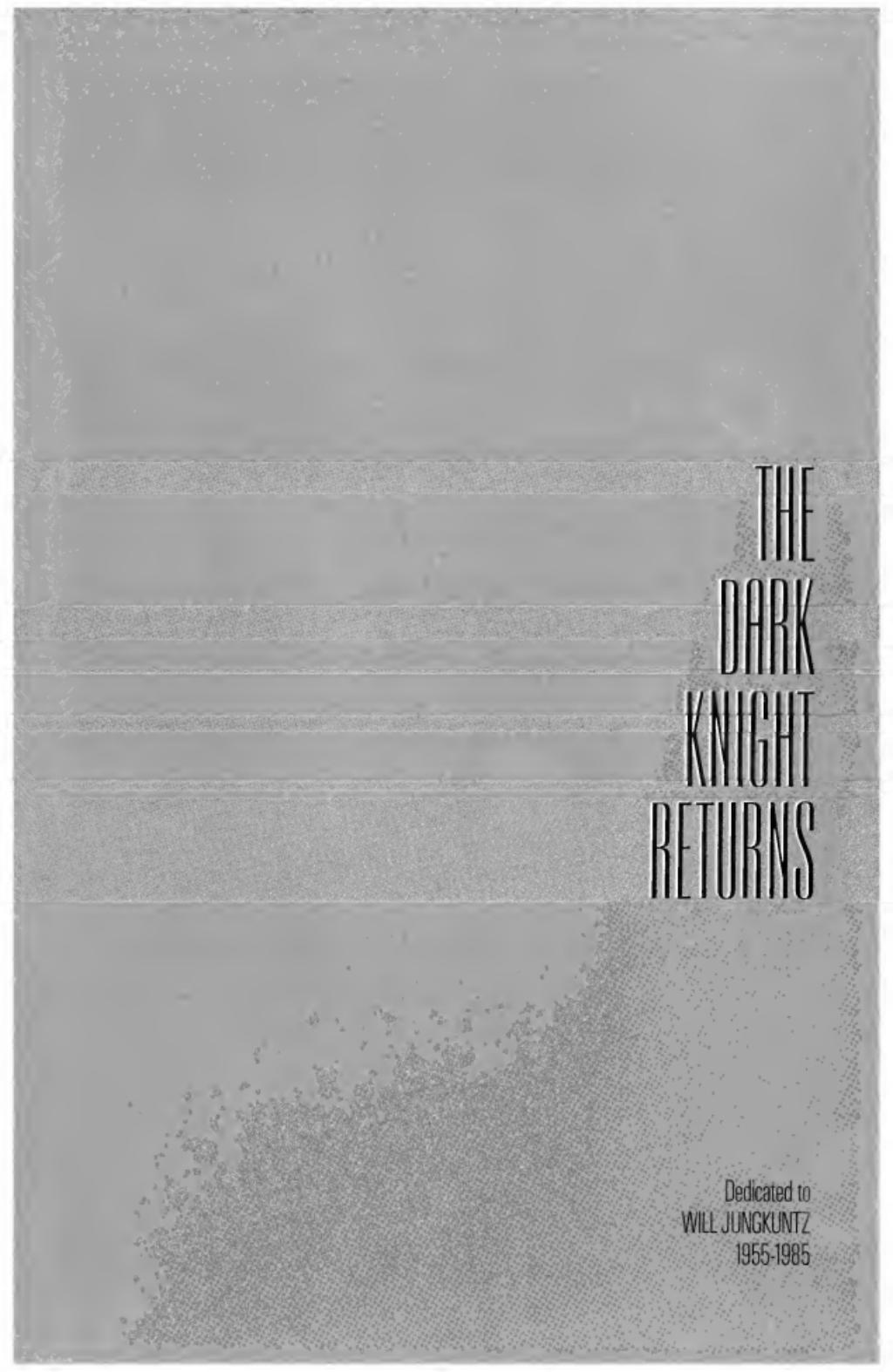
BY  
FRANK MILLER  
WITH  
KLAUS JANSON  
AND  
LYNN VARLEY

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CONVERSION BY  
**WILDSTORM**



THE  
DARK  
KNIGHT  
RETURNS

Dedicated to  
WILL JUNGKUNTZ  
1955-1985

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



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

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



IT ISN'T PROGRAMMED TO-- BRUCE!



BRUCE YOU SON OF A STRAIN

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



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



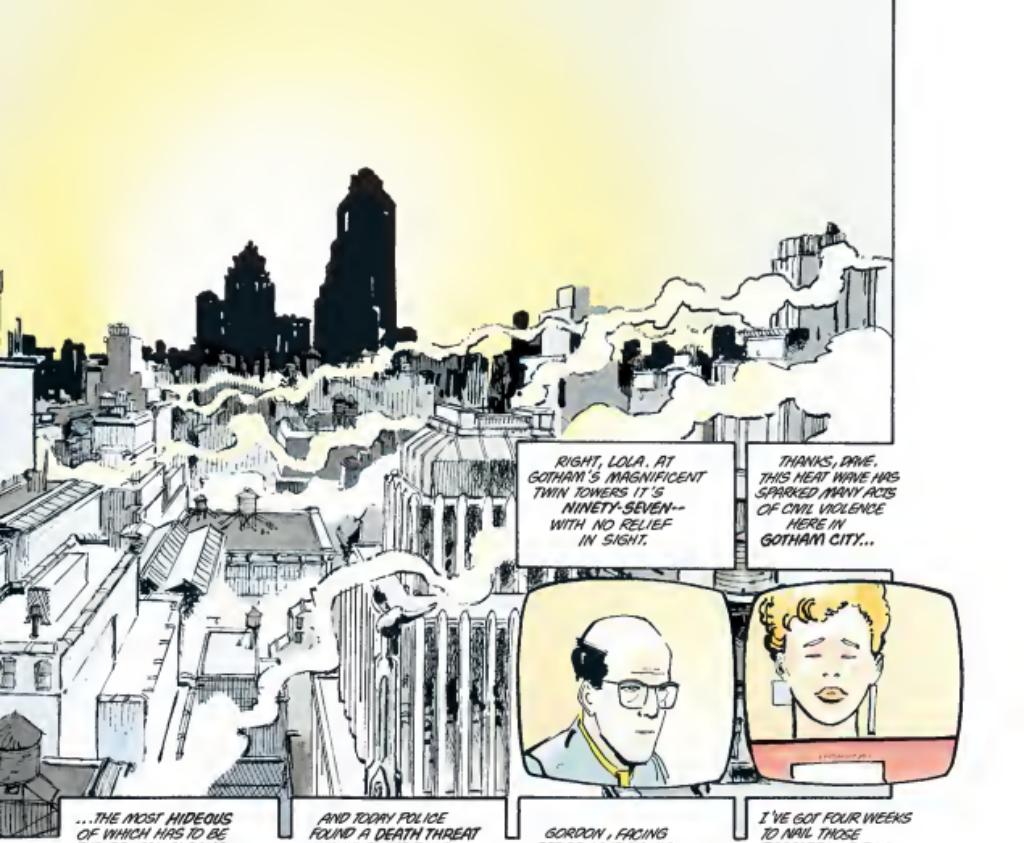
...BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

..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.

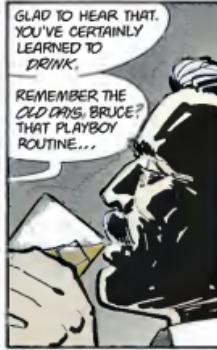


BUT REAL HE WAS. EVEN  
TODAY, DEBATE  
CONTINUES ON THE  
RIGHT AND WRONG OF  
HIS ONE-MAN WAR ON  
CRIME.



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





AS WE PART,  
JIM SQUEEZES MY  
SHOULDER AND  
GRINS. "YOU JUST  
NEED A WOMAN,"  
HE SAYS.

...WHILE IN MY GUT  
THE CREATURE WRITHES  
AND SNARLS AND  
TELLS ME WHAT I  
NEED...

I LEAVE MY CAR IN  
THE LOT. I CAN'T  
STAND TO BE INSIDE  
ANYTHING RIGHT NOW.  
I WALK THE STREETS  
OF THIS CITY. I'M  
LEARNING TO HATE, THE  
CITY THAT'S GIVEN UP,  
LIKE THE WHOLE  
WORLD SEEMS TO  
HAVE.

I'M A ZOMBIE. A  
FLYING DUTCHMAN.  
A DEAD MAN,  
TEN YEARS DEAD..

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 SHEETS 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 HAS CHANGED. IT'S OLDER, DIRTY, BUT--

--IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

IT COULD BE HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

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



...AND THE MAN WHO STOLE ALL SENSE FROM YOUR LIFE, HE COULD BE STANDING...



SO MANY LOVELY WAYS TO PUNISH HIM...



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 HAVING ENOUGH TO THINK HIM THE LOWEST SORT OF MAN.



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



...AND THIS WORLD IS THEIRS.

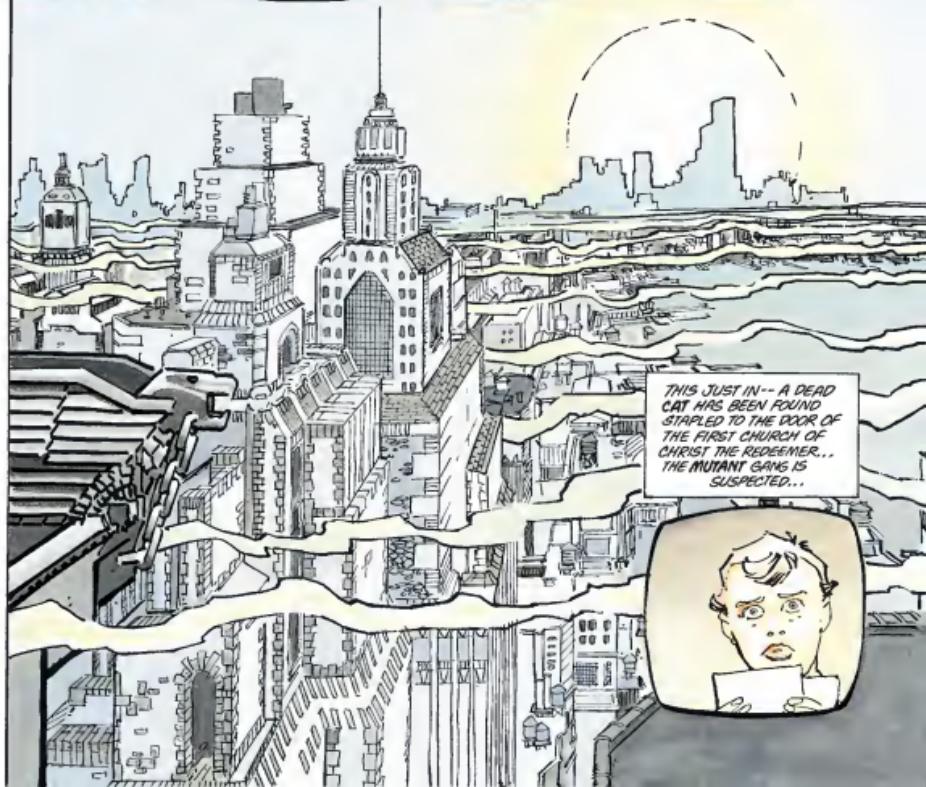


...BUTCHERY OF EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. THE MUTANT ORGANIZATION IS BELIEVED TO HAVE COMMITTED THIS ATROPHY FOR MONEY THE FAMILY HAD...

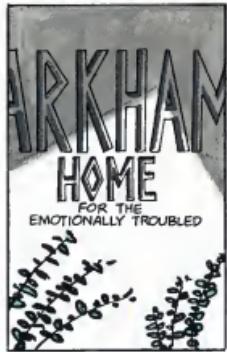
SOMETHING UNDER TWELVE DOLLARS. THIS IS CONSIDERED A DRUG-RELATED CRIME AT PRESENT, BUT SURELY THIS NEAT WAVE IS A FACTOR, RIGHT, DOC?

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...





...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 REVELED 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 WOLPER 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 APPRAISE 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.

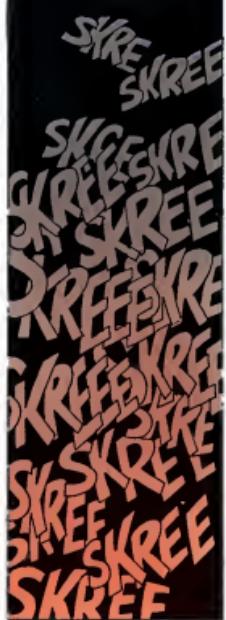
THE COMMISSIONER IS AN EXCELLENT COP--BUT, I THINK, A POOR JUDGE OF CHARACTER. WE MUST BELIEVE IN HARVEY DENT.

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



...FASTER THAN A RABBIT...





NO!  
GO  
WAY!



GO  
WAY!



SKREE  
SKREE  
SKREE



*THEN...*



*...SOMETHING  
SHUFFLES.  
OUT OF SIGHT.*

*...SOMETHING  
SUCKS THE  
STALE AIR...*

*...AND  
HISSES.*

GLIDING WITH ANCIENT GRACE...



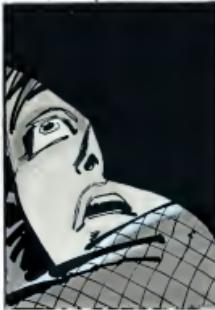
UNWILLING TO RETREAT AS HIS BROTHERS DID...



EYES GLEAMING, UNTOUCHED BY LOVE OR JOY OR SORROW...



BREATH HOT WITH THE TASTE OF FALLEN FOES... THE STENCH OF DEAD THINGS, DAMNED THINGS...



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



GLARING, HATING...



...CLAIMING ME AS HIS OWN.



DREAMING...

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...



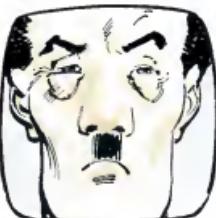
--AND I  
THINK HE  
SHOULD SEE  
IT OR FOLD.



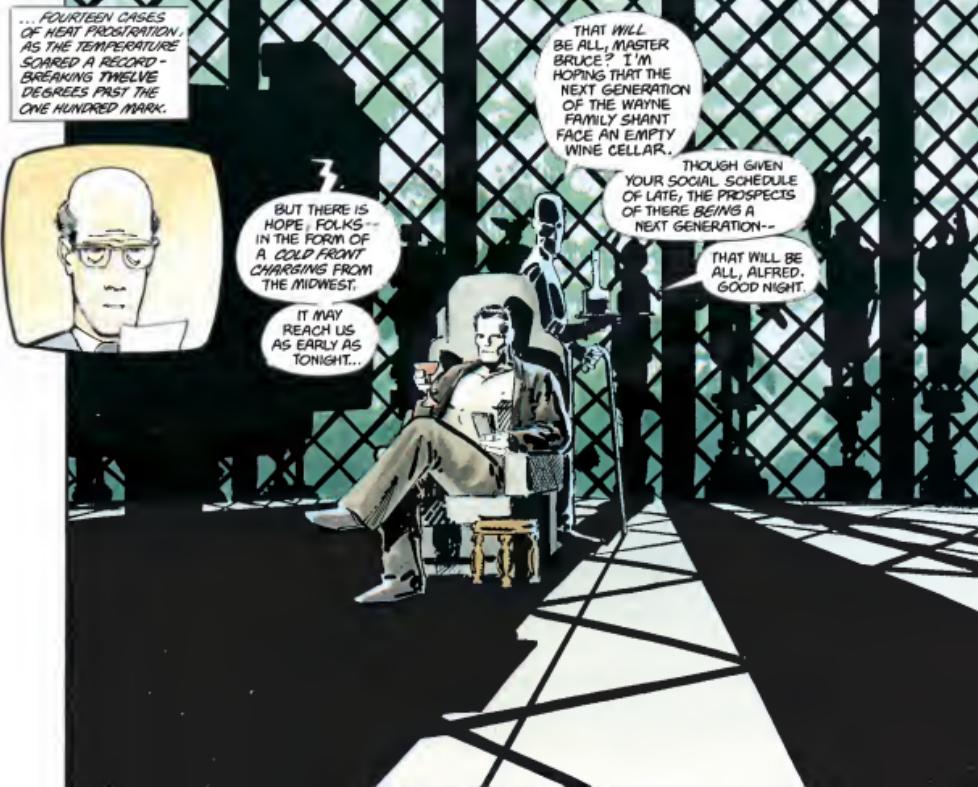
SO DO I. OUGHTA SEE IT OR FOLD.

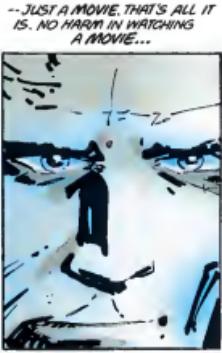


...AND CHARACTERISTIC INSENSITIVITY. HARVEY, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS AN EXTREMELY SENSITIVE MAN...



...IN EXTREMELY VULNERABLE EMOTIONAL CONDITION. I BELIEVE...





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





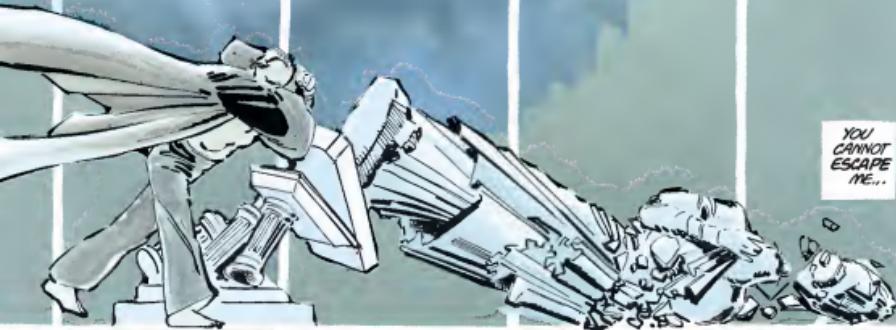


THE  
TIME  
HAS  
COME.

YOU  
KNOW  
IT IN  
YOUR  
SOUL.

FOR I  
AM YOUR  
SOUL...

YOU  
CANNOT  
ESCAPE  
ME...



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



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

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

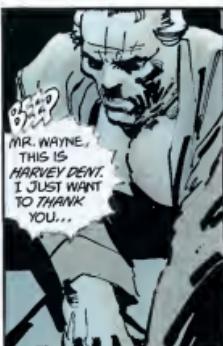
YOU TRY TO DROWN ME OUT...

...BUT YOUR  
VOICE IS  
WEAK...

YOU'VE DONE SO  
MUCH. I FEEL SO  
WHOLE, SO FREE.  
I WANT YOU TO  
KNOW THAT,  
SOMEDAY--

-I'LL  
FIND A  
WAY TO  
REPAY YOU...

BEEP  
BRUCE?  
CLARK, JUST  
THOUGHT YOU  
SHOULD  
KNOW...



RRRRRRMMMMBBLLLL



...POWER LINES ARE DOWN ALL OVER THE SUBURBS. IT'S A MEAN ONE-- AND IT'S HEADED STRAIGHT FOR GOTHAM.

LIKE THE WRATH OF GOD IT'S HEADED FOR GOTHAM...



KRE  
SS  
SHAH



KRE  
SS  
ART











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.



REPEAT  
-- ALL  
UNITS --  
ROBBERY IN  
PROGRESS AT  
GOTHAM SECURITY  
TRUST --

THERE  
THEY ARE,  
KID.  
LET'S  
MOTIVATE.

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

THE CHILDREN  
DESCRIBED AN ATTACK  
ON THE GANG MEMBERS  
BY A MUSE MAN  
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...



...BATTERED, WOUNDED CRIMINALS ARE BEING FOUND BY POLICE -- WHILE WITNESSES' DESCRIPTIONS ARE CONFUSED AND CONFLICTING...

...MOST DESCRIPTIONS SEEM TO MATCH THE METHOD AND APPEARANCE OF THE BATMAN-- OR AT LEAST THE IMPRESSION HE WAS KNOWN TO MAKE...

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...

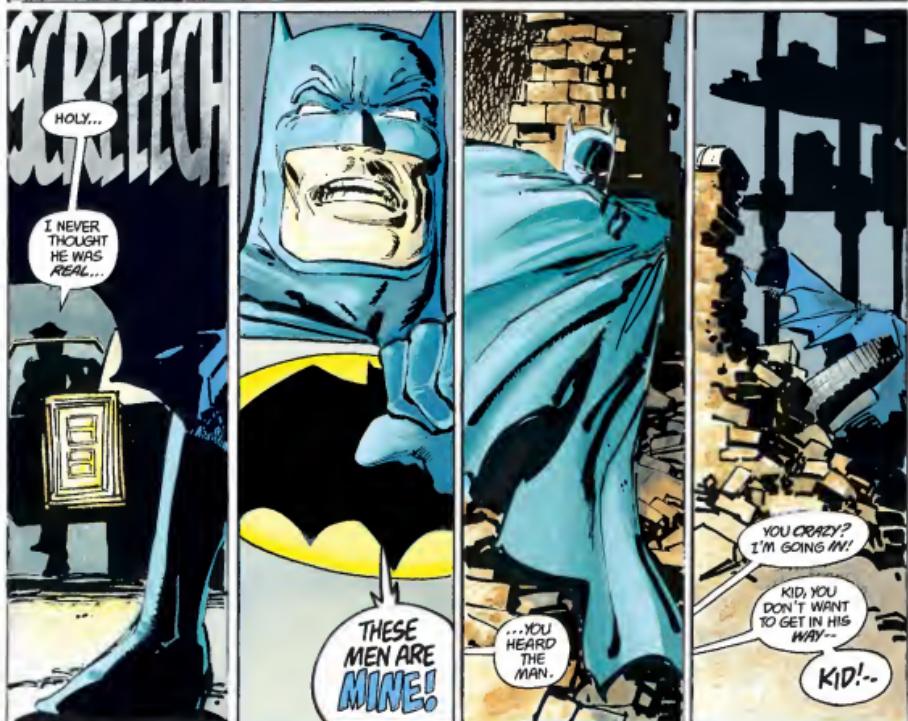
I'M  
BORN  
AGAIN...

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



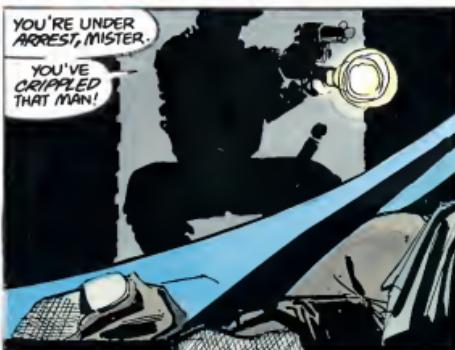
I SMELL THEIR FEAR--AND IT IS SWEET.











LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

CIGARETTES,  
NO WONDER  
YOU'RE SO  
SLOW...

ON  
CHRIST  
I CAN'T  
STAND  
IT...

I MEAN IT,  
MAN--GET AWAY  
FROM HIM--

I'LL  
SHOOT--

DON'T TRY IT,  
KID. HE'S  
BEING PATIENT  
WITH YOU AS  
IT IS.

NICE  
TO HAVE  
YOU BACK,  
BATS.

GO TO THEIR CAR,  
KID. FETCH THE  
PAYROLL.

I DON'T  
BELIEVE  
THIS...

IT ISN'T IN THE CAR.  
IT'S NOWHERE AROUND  
HERE...

PILLS. NO END  
TO YOUR BAD  
HABITS...

PPLEASE...

Y'KNOW, BATS-- I SAW  
YOU ONCE-- BACK WHEN  
I WAS WORKING THE  
EAST END.

I WAS A  
ROOKIE-- LIKE  
SHMUCK FACE HERE.

IT WAS A  
LONG TIME  
AGO.

AT THE  
BANK-- WAS  
THERE A  
SECOND CAR?

CAR? YEAH.  
AN OLD  
JALOPY  
DIDN'T  
THINK--

YOU  
WEREN'T  
SUPPOSED  
TO.

ANYWAY,  
IT WAS A  
RAINY NIGHT,  
JUST LIKE  
THIS. I WAS  
WALKIN' MY  
BEAT--

-- I MEAN I WAS  
JUST A KID  
BACK THEN...

... AND I  
SAW THIS  
GUY DRAW  
A GUN  
ON--  
TELL  
GORDON  
WE HAVE  
TO TALK.

SURE THING,  
BATS. BUT  
HOW'S HE  
SPOSED TO  
GET IN TOUCH  
WITH--

OH, YEAH!  
NOW I  
REMEMBER...

...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...

BB...

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

BBBAT...

A REBIRTH  
OF THE  
AMERICAN  
FIGHTING  
SPIRIT.

BATMAN:  
EASE UP,  
LANA. THE  
ONLY THING HE  
SIGNIFIES...

...IS AN  
ABERRANT  
PSYCHOTIC  
FORCE...

DARLING.

--MORALLY BANKRUPT,  
POLITICALLY HAZARDOUS,  
REACTIONARY  
PARANOID--

--A DANGER  
TO EVERY  
CITIZEN OF  
GOTHAM!  
PERHAPS,  
MORRIE.  
PERHAPS  
THE  
BATMAN  
IS DANGEROUS...

...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 END

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 PATROL 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...

SCREEN 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.

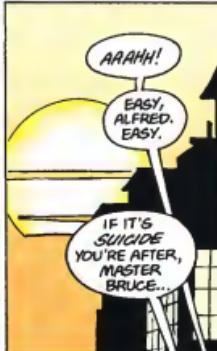
A SAD, STRANGE CRIMINAL WAS HARVEY DENT.

COMMISSIONER, IF YOU PLEASE...



JAMES W.  
GORDON  
COMMISSIONER  
OF POLICE





WE WILL KILL THE OLD MAN GORDON. HIS WOMEN WILL WEED 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 VIDEOTAPE 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 FAVORS THE DIRTY.

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





BATMAN? YEAH, I THINK HE'S A-OKAY. HE'S KICKING JUST THE RIGHT BUTTS-- BUT IS THE COPS AIN'T KICKING, THAT'S FOR SURE. HOPE HE GOES AFTER THE HOMOS NEXT.

MAKES ME SICK. WE MUST TREAT THE SOCIALLY MIS-ORIENTED WITH REHABILITATIVE METHODS. WE MUST PATIENTLY REALIGN THEIR-- EXCUSE ME--? NO, I'D NEVER LIVE IN THE CITY...

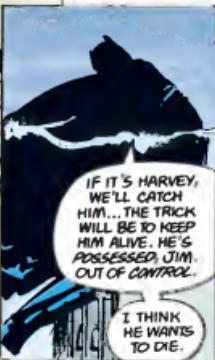




TWO HELICOPTERS WERE STOLEN TODAY. ONE, A STATE-OF-THE-ART MILITARY FIGHTER -- THE OTHER, AN OLD ARMY SURPLUS JOB. THAT'S GOT TO BE DENT'S WORK.



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



WE ARE TALKING ABOUT HARVEY DENT...



...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 CORRESPONDING INTERSTICING PATTERNS.

YOU MIGHT SAY BATMAN COMMITS THE CRIMES... USING HIS SO-CALLED VILLAINS AS NARCISSISTIC PROPS...



ONE MORE TIME I  
CHECK MY UTILITY  
BELT.

GAS AMPOULES,  
FREEFALL  
COMPOND,  
CABLE,  
GRAPPLING  
HOOKS,  
STETHOSCOPE,  
PAIN  
KILLERS.

NONE OF IT'S  
GONE ANYWHERE  
IN THE LAST  
TEN MINUTES.

I SHIFT MY LEGS  
TO KEEP THEM  
FROM CRAMPING  
AND WATCH  
NIGHT SETTLE  
LIKE A CEASE  
FIRE ON THE  
CITY OF GOTHAM.

THEN I  
HEAR IT.

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

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

BUT I'M NOT  
COUNTING ON IT.

POKITAPOKITAPOKITAPOKITAPOKITAP

THEY SPLIT.  
THE ARMY  
SURPLUS JOB  
SETTLES DOWN,  
SPUTTERING  
LIKE A  
CRANKY OLD  
MAN BEHIND  
ME.

I PICKED  
THE WRONG  
ROOF.

POKITAPOKITAPOKITAPOKITAPOKITAP

GOOD THING I  
BROUGHT  
THE GUN.

THE NEW ONE  
COMES IN LOW,  
A GLEAMING  
METAL DRAGONFLY.

I'LL HAVE  
TO BUY  
ONE OF  
THOSE...

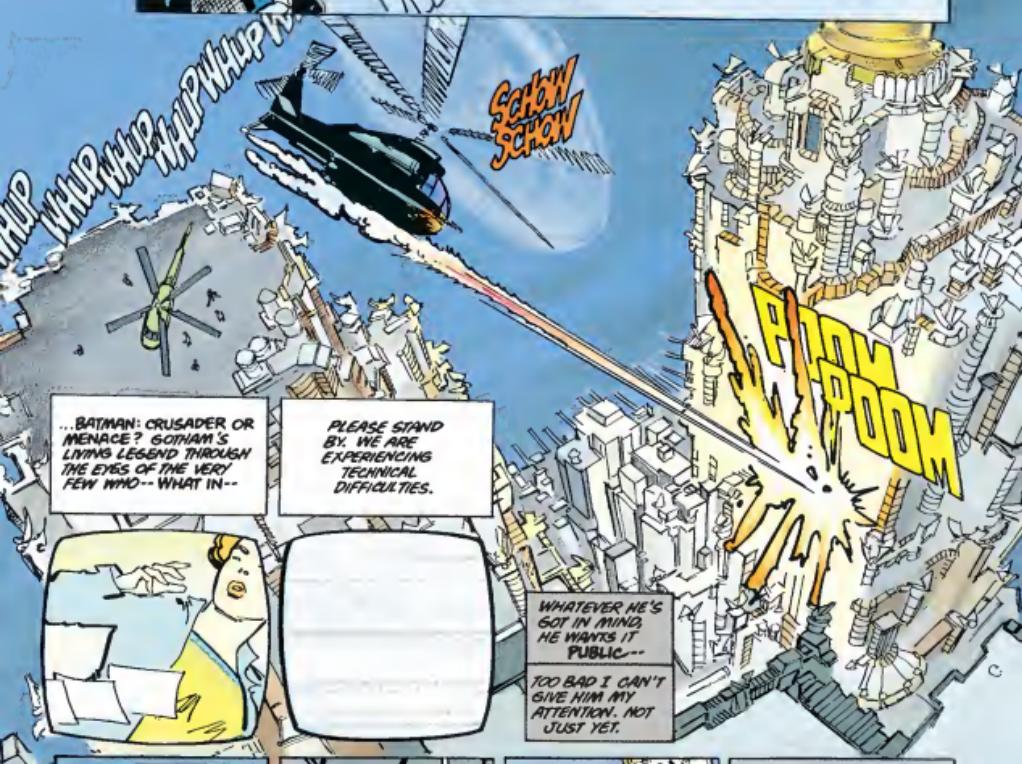
BROADCAST LIVE  
FROM GOTHAM'S TWIN  
TOWERS, IT'S  
NEWS TWO...

NEWS 2

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



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

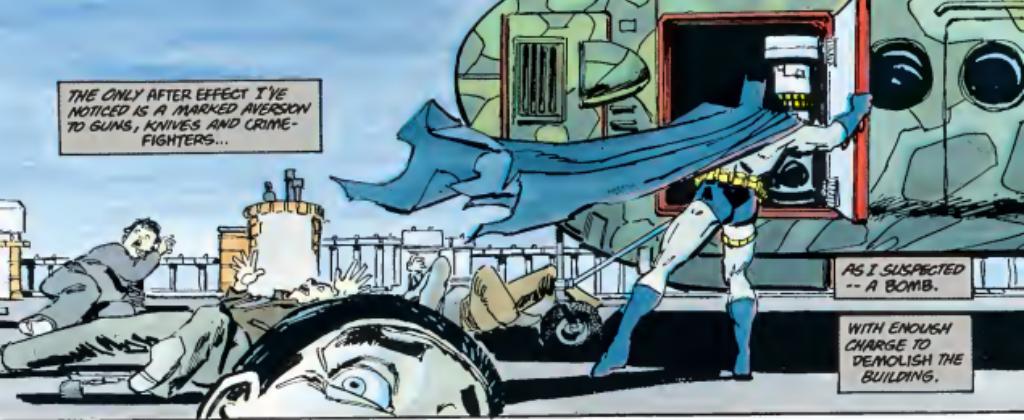


IT CONCENTRATES A POWERFUL STIMULANT TO A SECTION OF THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE OF YOUR BRAIN.



-- AND YOU SPEND TWENTY OR THIRTY MINUTES RELIVING YOUR LEAST FAVORITE NIGHTMARE.

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



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.



SO I FREEZE IT. AND IF  
I HAD THE TIME OR THE  
RIGHT--



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.





-- MAGNUM LOAD HAS TO BE --  
HITS ME LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN -- THE PLATE HOLDS --

-- WHY DO YOU THINK I WEAR  
A TARGET ON MY CHEST --  
CAN'T ARMOR MY HEAD --  
LEFT ARM NUMB --

-- IF IT'S A HEART ATTACK  
I'M FINISHED --





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.

BLAM  
BLAM

BLAM



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.

THE  
IMPACT IS  
TREMENDOUS.  
EVEN BONE  
IS TURNED TO  
POWDER.

NOT MUCH  
OF A CORPSE  
LEFT.  
MOSTLY  
LIQUID.  
PROBLEM  
IS...

...THERE  
MIGHT NOT  
BE ANY  
FINGER-  
PRINTS.  
EVEN DENTAL  
RECORDS  
WOULD PROBABLY  
BE USELESS.

AND  
LIKE I  
SAID,  
HARVEY...  
...I HAVE  
TO KNOW.

**WHEW**



WE TUMBLE  
LIKE LOVERS.



LEAVING THE  
WORLD NO  
POORER--

--FOUR MEN  
DIE.



...HARVEY...

...WHAT ARE YOU SO MAD  
ABOUT, BAT? 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...  
SAYING  
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.



NEXT:

THE  
DARK  
KNIGHT  
TRIUMPHANT

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