DARK KNIGHT TRIUMPHANT
Problem with crime is the more you know, the more nervous it makes you.

Me, I can’t look at that doorways 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 pass a liquor store, run my eyes over the rigid features of the hunk of metal that used to be a friendly merchant.

I wonder how many men he’s had to kill, just to stay in business.

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 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.

Then I suck it again.

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 gruff giggle and the cold, cold 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 MAJOR 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 MAJOR'S DESK CAME FROM THE VICTIMS RIGHTS TASK FORCE, DEMANDING AN OFFICIAL SANCTION OF THE VIGILANTE'S ACTIVITIES.

THE MAJOR 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--
--I've just been handed this bulletin--
Commissioner James Gordon has been shot and killed--

--Oops! Sorry, folks. I read it wrong--
Gordon was attacked outside his West End apartment... oh, wow...

...Said--What a brute down... seventeen years old...
Machismo with a badge--just like Chicago.
Remember Chicago, hon...?

Not real well. I was tripping the whole time...

One-step street pizza.
Maximum check-out.

Wind's aces. And the ledge isn't too much smaller than a balance beam.

Sure just slippery and about a mile up.

Wall's keeping me real clean--like under a car.

Figure I didn't spend two weeks’ lunch money on the suit...

Oh, real good, Carrie...
COMM/SS/CNER--
Ydocustshot
a
BOY.
NOW
DOES
THAT
FEEL?
commissioner?..  
DON'T
CALL
USA
6AH&.
VONTORU
US
CRIMINALS.
we
are
rue
law.
we
fee
THE
FUTURE.
GOTHAM
CITY
BELONGS
TO
THE
MUTANTS.
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SYNCs
THE
LEADER
OF
THE
MUTANT
ORGANIZATION
THROE
NTS
VYPEO
TAPED
DEATH
TREAT...
GORDON,
FAC/N6
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LATER
TH/S
WEEK,
HAS
OTTERED
70
STAY
AT
THE
JOB
UNT/E
THE
MUTANT
CRISIS
HAS
BEEN
RESOLVED.
POLYCE
MED/A
RELATIONS
DIRECTOR
LOWS
GALLAGHER
HAD
TH/STOSAY...
W/LL
KILL
THE
OLD
MAN
GORDON.
HIS
WOMEN
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HIM.
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WILL
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STREET.
Z'MSTFU
POOLING
OPINIONS.
I
'AM
STILL
POOLING
OPINIONS.
WITH
A
SCANT
SIX
HOURS
REMAINING,
THE
QUESTIONS
HAN6
IN
THE
AIR--
WHO
W/LL
REPLACE
JIM
GORDON?
AND
WHAT
WILL
BECOME
THE
OFFICIAL
POSITION
ON
THE
BATMAN?
Good
QUESTION,
LOLA.
MRS.
JOYCE
RIDLEY
WAS
ADMITTED
TO
A
PRIVATE
HOSPITAL
UPSTATE
FOR
PSYCHATRIC
OBSERVATION
FOLLOWING
HER
COLLAPSE
THIS
MORNING.
HER
TEEN-MONTH
BABY,
KEVIN,
HEIR
TO
THE
RIDELEY
CHEWING
GUM
FORTUNE,
IS
STILL
MISSING.
ANYONE
WITH
INFORMATION
IS
URGED
TO
CALL
THE
CRISIS
HOTLINE...
I
MYSELF
WILL
KILL
THE
FOOL
BATMAN.
I
WILL
RIP
THE
MEAT
FROM
HIS
BONES
AND
SUCK
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DRY.
I
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HEART
AND
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STREET.
DON'T
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DON'T
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CRIMINALS.
WE
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THE
FUTURE.
GOTHAM
CITY
BELONGS
TO
THE
MUTANTS.
SOON
THE
WORLD
WILL
BE
OURS.
GORDON,
FACING
MANDATORY
RETIREMENT
LATER
THIS
WEEK,
HAS
OFFERED
TO
STAY
AT
THE
JOB
UNTIL
THE
MUTANT
CRISIS
HAS
BEEN
RESOLVED.
POLICE
MEDIA
RELATIONS
DIRECTOR
LOUIS
GALLAGHER
HAS
THIS
to
say...
RIDLEY'S GONN FAT, BEGGIN' TO PAY.

HIT IT WIF THE TANK, MAN.

LES JUST FLUSH IM DOWN TH TANK, MAN.

HE'S FLUSHED, MAN. SOON'S WE GET TH MILL.

JESUS-- HE'S MESSED HIMSELF..

MAN--STICK HIS BUTT ANYWAY.

KLAC-KLAC

--DOOR WAS LOCKED.

SHH...

FUP FUP FUP

FUP FUP FUP

FUP FUP

SKREEEEEE

EE SKREEE SKREEE
CHILL, MAN-- IT'S JUST A GODDAMN--
---BAT...

SKREE SKRIRH OF SKREH

JESUS...

GET AWAY...

OH, MAN-- IT IS HIM--
GRACE--KEEP YOUR GUN ON TH' KID--
SPOT--GET OUT OF TH' WAY--

BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA

THUNK
Back off, man! --I'll kill the kid-- --Believe me, man, I will--

You should've gotten out of the way, Spot.

Wh-- the wall--

BRAKK
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.

I believe you.

Tonight, we will examine his impact on our consciousness. From Metropolis— we have Lana Lang, managing editor of the Daily Planet... 

... a ruthless, insidious vigilante, striking at the foundations of our democracy— merrily 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...

Dr. Wolper— you have claimed that the Batman is himself responsible for 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 disadventaged and socially misaligned— but his effects are far from positive.

Picture the public psyche as a vast, moist membrane— through that fine membrane the Batman has struck this membrane a vicious 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—

... joining us from Gotham City— Dr. Bartholemen 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.
Every anti-social act can be traced to irresponsible media input, given this: the presence of such an aberrant, violent force in the media can only lead to anti-social programming.

Just as Harvey Dent—Who's engineering steady, thanks for asking—assumed the role of ideological double agent 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 me—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 flappet... well...

Miss Lang, you are the Batman's most vocal supporter. Now can you condone behavior that is so blatantly illegal? What about due process—civil rights?

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...

We live in the shadow of crime, Ted, with the unsaid 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.
...I THINK I'M BLEEDING, MAN... I NEED A DOCTOR...

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

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

MAN...

THAT PISTOL WAS ODD.

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

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

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

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

LET ME SHOW YOU...

...NO ARMS, MAN... I WALK...

...WHAT DO YOU SAY, MAN?

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

MAN...

YOU'VE GOT A GUN THAT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN MADE FOR THE ARMY?...

SOLDIERS MOTHER, DON'T YOU?

EVERY PUNK SHOULD HAVE A MOTHER...

YOU JUST DON'T RUN ACROSS THAT... NOT OUTSIDE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW WHICH PAL'S WHICH...

MAN...

YOU'RE NOT IN A POSITION TO NEGOTIATE.

LET ME SHOW YOU...
IT WAS TOUGH WORK, CARRYING TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR POUNDS OF SOCOPATH TO THE TOP OF BATMAN TOWERS—THE HIGHEST SPOT IN THE CITY.

THE SCREAM ALONE IS WORTH IT.

WATCHA RED CARD, MAN, WATCHA RED CARD...

I HEARD THIS IS A CON GAME...

SEE FU YUSSELF, MAN—WATCHA RED CARD...

O'WAN MAN—WHAT THE HELL...
IT'S THE TRAIN, THINKS MARGARET CORCORAN. MY LESS 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.

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 ELECTRIC COMPANY WITH WINTER ON ITS WAY.

SHE FEELS THE METAL SQUARE INSIDE HER PURSE AND SMILES.

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

BUT YOUNG ROBERT'S ART TEACHER SAYS HE HAS TALENT...

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

HER PURSE STRAP BITES INTO HER SHOULDER...

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

...BEAS LIKE A WIND FOR A TEN-DOLLAR PAINT SET.

SHE FEELS HER PURSE HIT HER STOMACH AS THE TRAIN RUMMLES TO A STOP. SHE HEARS THEM LAUGH.

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 DISCORD IN ITS LAST FEW NOTES—BY MISAPPROPRIATED WEAPONS... SOLD TO THE MUTANTS.

I ALMOST ASKED HIM WHY...
--- FROM THE LEADER, SO GET IN---

WE DON'T CRIME, MAN--
AN WE BEHIND A GUARD -- NOT NO TIME FOR SPEECHES---

NOT TALKIN' SPEECHES, MAN. TALKIN' WAR, GOT AN HOUR TO MAKE THE DUMP.

OKAY, OKAY---

THE DUMP
I LOATHE THE DUMP.

THE GUARD AT E 42ND TELLING IS NEARBY'D OFF WHEN I FIND THE TRUCKS. THEY AREN'T EVEN LOCKED.

YOU COULD OVERTHROW A SMALL GOVERNMENT WITH THIS MUCH POWER.

...JOHNS REUNION OF THE DILLY FAMILY, AND NOW A SAD NOTE -- FOUR-STAR GENERAL NATHAN BROBST IS DEAD, AN APPARENT SUICIDE. RELATIVES SAY BROBST HAD BEEN VIOLENTLY DEPRESSED...

...POLICE MEDIA DIRECTOR LOUIS BAGLIERI HAS PROMISED AN ANSWER SOON TO THE QUESTION THAT'S ON EVERYONE'S MIND -- WHO WILL BE THE NEW POLICE COMMISSIONER OF GOTHAM CITY?...

THE HEAT IS ON, YOUR HONOR...

EXECUTIVE STEAM ROOM

I CAN SEE THAT. CAN'T YOU TELL THAT I CAN SEE THAT? WISH WE COULD JUST HOLD AN ELECTION...

NOT FOR COMMISSIONER, YOUR HONOR. NOT ANYMORE. NO, IT'S UP TO YOU... TOUGH DECISION. TOO. GORDON'S POPULAR...

I KNOW THAT. DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW THAT? AND I'VE GIVEN IT A LOT OF THOUGHT. DALE'S LOOKING GOOD TO ME. HE'S AVAILABLE... AND HE'S BLACK...
I'M NOT NEUTRAL, WHO SAYS I'M NEUTRAL? I'M CONFUSED.

MASTER BRUCE, WHO ELSE, ALFRED?

BLACK'S FASÉ, YOUR HONOR. BESIDES, DAME'S NEUTRAL ON THE BATMAN THING, AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR OWN NEUTRALITY IS COSTING YOU...

I HIT THE ENGINE. SHE RESPONDS LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY.

IT IS YESTERDAY...

I'M SURPRISED THERE IS A CONTROVERSY. HIS ACTIONS ARE CITICALLY CRIMINAL. I WILL HAVE HIM BROUGHT TO TRIAL. EXCUSE ME?...

WELL, ALL RIGHT, GALLAGHER--I'LL MAKE A DECISION. I'LL SHOW THEM WHO'S BOSS. ON MY OWN PRIVATE AUTHORITY--I'LL ASSIGN YOU THE TASK OF FINDING ME A POLICE COMMISSIONER.

...CAPTAIN ELLEN YINDEL.

I'M EXCITED--NO, THRILLED--CAN'T YOU TELL I'M THRILLED?-- TO GIVE YOU THE NEXT POLICE COMMISSIONER OF GOTHAM CITY...

OF COURSE, SIR. IT'S JUST THAT THE SIGNAL IS COMING FROM INSIDE THE...

THAT'S RIGHT, ALFRED.

I'M TAKING HER OUT.

LITTLE MORE THAN HALF THE AGE OF THE MAN SHE'S REPLACING, ELLEN YINDEL IS A WOMAN. CHRIST ALMIGHTY...

DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, JIM?

...NOTHING, SWEETHEART...
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 RODENTS.

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

IT SMELLS OF ROT AND RUST—IT'S A BREEDING GROUND FOR INSECTS AND RODENTS.

...THEY CALL US A GAME. THEY CALL US A KOB. 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 MUTILANTS!

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...

--BATMAN AAA

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

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

THEY DON'T EVEN WAIT FOR THE ORDER.

YOUNG PEOPLE THESE DAYS...

...NO RESPECT FOR HISTORY.

MUTANTS! SURRENDER NOW -- OR BE DESTROYED!
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.
THE LAST SHOTS HAVE STOPPED ECHOING... BUT THE MOANS AND CRIES WILL CONTINUE LONG INTO THE NIGHT...

I FEEL THE EMPTY SEAT BesIDE ME AND ONCE AGAIN I THINK OF YOU, DICK... I LOOK AT THE ONE CREATURE WHO SHOULDN'T Be WOUNDED OR Hiding...

... WE NEVER Faced ANYTHIng LIKe THIS...

WE ONLY FOught HUMANS...

I CALL YOU COWARD!

COME OUT, COWARD-- F ace me--

-- I KILL YOU-- EAT YOU HEART--
“Master Bruce—come in, please—Master Bruce...

...but there he is, Dick—the Mutant Leader...

...a kind of evil he 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...

...every muscle a steel spring—ready to lash out...

...and he's young...

...and he's exactly the kind of body I wish he didn't have...

...except he's got enough bulk to slow him down...

...in his physical prime...

...in his prime...

Come on, man—you born me...

Come on, man—you born me...

...every muscle a steel spring—ready to lash out...

...and I honestly don't know if I could beat him.

Can't have a back door, Alfred. Might be tempted to use it.

Sir, you can't be serious...

Sir, he'll kill you...

...except 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 he's got exactly the kind of body I wish he didn't have...

...powerful without enough bulk to slow him down...

...in his prime...

...and he's young...

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 he's got exactly the kind of body I wish he didn't have...

...powerful without enough bulk to slow him down...

...in his prime...

...and he's young...

Come on, man—you born me...

Come on, man—you born me...
...I make him eat some garbage...

--then I helped him swallow it.

--his claws dig into my back--

--his filed teeth like razors in my trapezius--

HA!

HA!

YOU SLOW, MAN!

HA!

FAPP

HE'S RIGHT--HE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD--

A BEAUTY TO HIS SOLAR PLEXUS--I WORRY HE MIGHT DROP TOO SOON--
"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 INTERVAL 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--"
--INSANE--
--LET ME TRY--
--HIM-- JUST
--TO SHOW--

--OKAY--
--OKAY--

--SHOW-- 
--ME--

--SHOW ME
--EXACTLY--

--HOW
--MUCH--

GETTING TIRE--D, OLD MAN?"
WHERE... WHERE'D HE GO--

...DON'T...

...NO--DON'T GO INTO SHOCK...

...COLD... GETTING COLD...

...COLD COLD...

...NO...

...NO...

...DON'T GO INTO SHOCK...

...DICK...

...WHERE... ARE YOU... DICK...

...YOU WERE ALWAYS...

...MY LITTLE MONKEY WRENCH...

...ROBIN... THE BOY HOSTAGE... THAT'S WHAT TWO-FACE CALLED YOU...

...HEH... YOU HATED THAT...

...REMEMBER TWO-FACE, DICK...?

...GOT YOURSELF IN DEEP AS FAR AS DICK...

...ALWAYS... IN OVER YOUR HEAD...
LUCY! YOU'RE LUCKY I'M ALWAYS HERE...

TO BAIL YOU OUT...

...DICK...

PORN STAR HOT GATES TODAY SIGNED A TWELVE-MILLION-DOLLAR CONTRACT WITH LANDMARK FILMS TO STAR IN A SEASON 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 RIPPLING ACROSS THE GOTHAM DUMP A NEWS HELICOPTER IS ON ITS WAY, POLICE...

GENTLY, GENTLY, GOOD GIRL...

NOW YOU JUST RUN ALONG HOME...
I love mints...

Son, I like to think I learned everything I know about running this country on my ranch. I know it's corny, but I like to think it...

...and well, it's all well and good... on a Ranch. I mean... for the horses... to be all different colors and sizes... long as they stay inside the fence.

...it's even okay to have a crazy bronco now and then... does he have good to break him in...

...But if that bronco up and kicks the fence out and gets the other horses crazy... well, it's bad for business.

World's changed, son. It's not like the old days. I wish it were... I'd give him a medal. You want a medal, son?

I love medals...

...now, son, I'm not asking you to drag him kicking and screaming into the stable. Just settle him down... ride him around the yard a few times if you have to...

Sir, I can talk to him, but...

Well, I'd sure appreciate it... I'd just hate to see things get out of... well, I'd just hate that...

Give it a shot, son. Your country's counting on you...

...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 Justice 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...

Oh, dear... he's not doing well at all...

Please, dear—stay out of the way of the sensor.

What are you doing with his arm, young lady?
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 ARE BOUNCING AROUND TOO--

NO...

NOT...

BOUNCING ME... DON'T WORRY...

STRETCHER'S... ON A GYROSCOPE... STAYS LEVEL... NO MATTER WHAT...

THAT'S KEEN.

I... KNOW WHAT SHE DID, ALFRED.

WHERE... DID YOU LEARN TO SET AN ARM... MAKE A SPLINT...?

CAROL, CARRO KELLEY.

WHAT'S... YOUR NAME...

NOW DON'T YOU STRAIN YOURSELF, SIR. YOU'VE QUITE A LOT OF INTERNAL BLEEDING.

THIS YOUNG LADY WAS KIND ENOUGH TO HELP YOU ABOARD.

SIR!

SIR! YOU'RE DELIRIOUS, SIR! YOU JUST LEFT THE HOSPITAL--

NO... HOSPITAL, ALFRED...

... THE CAVE...

SIR!

SIR! YOU'RE DELIRIOUS, SIR! YOU JUST LEFT THE HOSPITAL--

WE'RE ONLY MOMENTS FROM THE HOSPITAL--

SIR!

SIR! YOU'RE DELIRIOUS, SIR! YOU JUST LEFT THE HOSPITAL--

WE'RE ONLY MOMENTS FROM THE HOSPITAL--

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

SIR!

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

I DON'T THINK YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SUGGESTING, DR. WOLPER. HARVEY DENT DIDN'T EXACTLY BRING US POSITIVE PUBLICITY, AND THIS ONE...

I KNOW, GLEN. I KNOW...

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.

FIVE MINUTES, GLEN. HE IS A PATIENT.

OKAY, ALL RIGHT. FIVE MINUTES.

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

DON'T WORRY, ROBIN...

...IT'S JUST A HUGOGRAM...

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

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

COME NOW, GLEN! HE'S BEEN NEARLY COMPARE 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 SUPERHUMAN ABOUT THAT ONE...
I leave them behind me...

...Where I first met you...
...Before my parents died...
...Before I learned, what I am.

I go...
...To the dark place...

I'm dying...
But I can't die...

I'm not finished yet...
...And you're not finished with me.

Then...
...Something shuffles, out of sight...
...Something sucks the stale air...

...And kisses...
WE WILL COME FOR OUR LEADER. WE WILL BALE GOTHAM. WE WILL RAKE 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 fiddles the old 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.

The young girl who was painted just like a whore screamed for the manager and the manager walked out from the back room and wouldn’t even listen and fired Arnold Crimp.

That was this afternoon, in the store.

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.

Row on 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 is what Arnold Crimp is absolutely certain he heard when he played “Stairway to Heaven” backwards.

On the screen a nun a nun is doing something and she’s painted exactly like a whore.

The young girl who was painted just like a whore didn’t believe him.

But the young girl who was painted just like a whore didn’t believe him.

Father Don said that Led Zeppelin had a prayer to Satan in their song “Stairway to Heaven.”

They hid it very well. They recorded it backwards.

That was this afternoon, in the store. He explained it to her very carefully. She said awful words.

He lost his temper and broke the record into four pieces that were exactly the same size.

He thinks about Led Zeppelin and how they are trying to kill him.

He had not known about Led Zeppelin until Father Don explains it last night.

Father Don said that Led Zeppelin had a prayer to Satan in their song “Stairway to Heaven.”

There are three slain in Batman-inspired porn theater. Details to follow...

The crew is on the street, the crew is on the street.
Iron Man Vasquez can't taste his Snickers bar. He knows he should be out of here, out and home, waiting for biggers to send the sixty dollars, thirty for each leg, he thinks, feeling nothing.

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 died 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 realizes he's reading about a man.

A man who dresses up like a monster and makes things right.

Caped would-be killer dresses as Batman -- after this...

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...

A devout Catholic, Peppi Spaneck can't say he approves of this Batman.

He can feel his pulse; just below his ears. He knows he's gone crazy. But the mugger is running, afraid. Afraid of Batman!

Nobody is hurt badly enough for this to make the news.
...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 SEEM LIKE A CAPTIVE ARMY. I'D LIKE TO THINK THEY'RE CRAZY-- BUT HERE I AM, WALKING THE MAYOR TO MEET THEIR LEADER--

THE CELL DOOR OPENS. THE AIR GOES THICK. I FEEL THE MAYOR SHUDDER, IF NOT 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.

I SEE SOMETHING I'LL TAKE TO MY GRAVE. SOME IDIOT STOPS ME FROM DOING THE OBVIOUS THING.

...THE MAYOR IS DEAD.

THE MUTANT LEADER RIPPLED THE MAYOR'S THROAT OUT WITH HIS TEETH. THE MUTANT HAS BEEN RETURNED TO HIS CELL. MORE ON THIS AS WE GET IT.
Soviet destroyers have been sighted in the waters off Corto Maltese... and, in Gotham City, it also looks like an impending war--as the city girds itself for the Mutant attack...

Check what's coming, innsmouth piece--tasty--hey--is that who I think--it is--

Hey, sweet piece--we got plans if you--

Nice plans.

Soviet destroyers have been sighted... and, in Gotham City, it also looks like an impending war--as the city girds itself for the Mutant attack...

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Check what's coming, innsmouth piece--tasty--hey--is that who I think--it is--

Hey, sweet piece--we got plans if you--

Nice plans.
"I don't care if his mother's pregnant!"

I hear you, Captain. It's a waiting game now.

Any duty, sir.

I'm afraid we're as ready as we're going to get, Captain. It's a waiting game now. If you'd like to wait here, have a seat.

Your training begins tomorrow.

It will be weeks before you're ready for direct contact with the enemy.

I have detailed tonight's plan. Alter it in any way you see fit. And you're fired.

Commissioner--I've admired you since I was a child.

Hard to believe that, Yindel, considering how you got your job.

Yes, Gallagher. He loves me. I don't like him. I'm amazed at his judgment. I've read your record.

...please...

I'm on time--or I'll have his badge!

Few days early, aren't you--

--Captain Yindel?
THANK YOU, I DON’T THINK HE’S READ IT.
HE ONLY SEEMED TO CARE HOW I FELT
ABOUT BATMAN.

LET’S... NOT TALK ABOUT
BATMAN, SHALL WE?

AND LEADER
DON’T SHIV ON
BATMAN—LEADER
SAID HE PEGGED
BATMAN.

IN BATMAN—
HE NUKED HALF
THE GAME!
RADICAL
HEY—EYES
SIDEWAYS, DON.
CHICKEN LEG
COMIN’—WEARIN’
COLORS.

AND LEADER
SAID.
LEADER CHILL—
IN A CELL, DON.

MY NAME IS ROB
CHEESE --
ALL LINES ARE BUSY.

CHEESE BILLY--
CHEESE PRE-SCHOOL MUTANT.

LEADER TAKE
YOU FACE IT
TOUCH ME, SPUD.

SURE, I FIGURE
YOU ARE MUTANTS,

WE MUTANTS!
WHAT’S THIS PIPE?

REAL COOL, ROB.

SHUT UP.
YOU GOT
ANY KIDS,
OFFICER?

AND LEADER
HE NASTY TOSSED
SPIKE RIGHT
THROUGH TH
SIGN, DON.

I FIGURE THAT
REAL COOL, ROB.
FIGURE FLOPPING
THE SIGN DIDN’T BILLY
UP THE PRICE OF
TH GAMES.

AIN’T FAN, WHAT
PIPE, CHICKEN LEG?

SURE, I FIGURE
IT FROM ME,
SPUD.

GEE, BOYS--
I FIGURE
YOU AIN’T ALL
BRIGHT.

WE MUTANTS!
WE SLICER
DICKERS!

I’m SURE,
THAT’S WHY
YOU AT THE
PIPE,
I DON’T SHIV.
YOU STAND FOR EVERYTHING I BELIEVE IN. COMMISSIONER, I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE THE KIND OF COP YOU ARE. I CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT A VIGILANTE.

YOU'D JUST THINK I'M SEENILE, YINDEL.

I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD OLD FOLKS LIKE ME TALK ABOUT PEARL HARBOR, YINDEL.

FACT IS, WE MOSTLY LIE ABOUT IT. WE MAKE IT SOUND LIKE WE ALL LEANED TO OUR FEET AND WENT AFTER THE AXIS ON THE SPOT.

HELL, WE WERE SCARED. RUMORS WERE FLYING, WE THOUGHT THE JAPANESE HAD TAKEN CALIFORNIA. WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE AN ARMY, SO THERE WE WERE, LYING IN BED PULLING THE SHEETS OVER OUR HEADS.

AND THERE WAS ROOSEVELT, ON THE RADIO, STARING AND SURE, TAKING PEARL AND TURNING IT INTO A FIGHTING SPIRIT, ALMOST OVERNIGHT WE HAD OUR ARMY.

WE NOW THE WAR.

SINCE THEN, PRESIDENTS HAVE COME AND GONE. EACH ONE SEEMING SMALLER, WEAKE... THE BEST OF THEM LIKE FAINT ECHOES OF ROOSEVELT... JESUS, I'M TALKING TOO MUCH.

GO ON...

A FEW YEARS BACK, I WAS READING A NEWS MAGAZINE -- A LOT OF PEOPLE WITH A LOT OF EVIDENCE SAID THAT ROOSEVELT KNEW PEARL HARBOR WAS GOING TO BE ATTACKED --

--AND THAT HE LET IT HAPPEN.

YOU AIN'T HEARD, MAN? TH' PIPE.

I HEARD, MAN, I HEARD.

BUT A LOT OF INNOCENT MEN DIED. BUT WE HOPE IT BOUNCED BACK, AND FORTH IN MY HEAD UNTIL I REALIZED I COULDN'T JUDGE IT, IT WAS TOO BIG.

HE WAS TOO BIG... I DON'T SEE WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH A VIGILANTE.

MAYBE YOU WILL.

COMMISSIONER?

--YOU BETTER SEE THIS--

--IT'S THE MUTANTS--
There's thousands of them, Batman! Why? Why there?
Because I want them there, Jim.
We could move in— with helicopters and all the men we have... maybe the National Guard.
No, Jim.
They can't be arrested. You could never hold them all. They have to be defeated, humiliated.

It's the only way, Jim. I'm counting on your help. One last time, old friend.

How about a wife? Got a sweet little wife?
Shut up.

Thompson! You're relieved.
YOU COME TO SAY HELLO, OLD MAN?

NO.

I CAME TO SAY GOOD-BYE.

YOU SO DEAD, OLD MAN!

GOOD BOY, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH AN OPEN DOOR.

NOW LET'S TRY A VENT. IT'S YOUR WAY OUT.

CHAK-Chak

Grrr

FoRGET TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE DARK.

YOU'LL BE COMING ACROSS A HOLE SOON--JUST ABOUT THE RIGHT SIZE FOR YOU.

THERE JUST CLIMB INTO THE PIPE.

REMEMBER--RATS CARRY DISEASES.

DON'T EAT ANY.

NGG

Oof!

Good Boy.

Grrrr

Can you smell the river yet?

See the end of the pipe?

The only thing between you--and it--

--is me.

GGRAAA
YOU SEE, DON. BATMAN -- HE NASTY.
HOPE ROB DON'T SAY BALLS NASTY.

BALLS NASTY.

SHH!

MY NAME IS ROBY.

-- AND NOBODY'S VERY FAST WHEN HE'S THIGH-DEEP IN MUD. I WAIT FOR HIM TO TRY A KICK--

-- THE KIND THAT BLEEDS.

-- I STRUGGLE. LEADER BOOGIN' LEADER BILLY BERSERK, SPUD LEADER FISH BATS.

LEADER SAYS BLIND --

SPLOOT

SHH!

MY MISTAKE WAS TO TRY TO MATCH HIS SAVAGERY.

HE'S FAST -- FASTER THAN I AM, AND STRONGER--

AND SEEMINGLY IMPERVIOUS TO PAIN. BUT THEY DO COME SMARTER.

RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. THE BLOOD HITS HIS EYES.

I GRAB A CLUMP OF MUD.

-- A QUICK ONE TO THE NERVE CLUSTER IN HIS DELTOID. IT DOESN'T HURT HIM--

-- BUT NO FORCE ON EARTH COULD HELP HIM MOVE HIS LEFT ARM NOW.

HE DUSTED! HE DUSTED!

MY NON BATS DON'T SHIV. YOU SEE.
YOU DON'T ...
... GET IT, BOY...
THIS ISN'T A MUDHOLE...

...IT'S AN OPERATING TABLE.
AND I'M THE SURGEON.

SOMETHING TELLS ME TO STOP WITH THE LEG.

I DON'T LISTEN TO IT.
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 GET 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.

...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.

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

FIFTY YEARS OF THIS AND THEY WONDER.

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.

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

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.

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.

I THINK OF SARAH.

THE REST IS EASY.

THE WIND RISES, TEARING DEAD LEAVES FREE.

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

A WOLF HOWLS.

I KNOW HOW HE FEELS.

ELLEN YINDEL
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
NEXT:

HUNT THE DARK KNIGHT
FRANK MILLER
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Frank Miller’s classic graphic novel features a Gotham City that has sunk into decadence and lawlessness ten years after an aging Batman retired. The Dark Knight returns in a blaze of glory when his city needs him most to end the threat of a brutal new generation of criminals while encountering the Joker, Two-Face and the Man of Steel for the final time.

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- VANITY FAIR