

No. 2

May, 1996

# The LEGENDS

The Publication For

The Connoisseur Collector.

*Enter:  
The Bat-Man!*

R.D. HUGHES

U.S. \$5.95  
CAN \$6.95

**AND OUT OF THE DARKNESS  
AND CORRUPTION OF A  
CITY GONE BAD . . .**

**... WOULD ARISE A LEGEND ...**



**ENTER  
THE BAT-MAN**

*By Rob Hughes* © 1991, 1992 All Rights Reserved

THE BAT-MAN created by Bill Finger and Bob Kane

### Dedication

*To my Father; Who started me on my way and has supported me ever since.*



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**B**efore Robin. Before the Bat-Mobile, the Bat-Cave and Gotham City. Even before the debut of such arch-foes as The Joker, The Penguin, Cat-Woman, Two-Face and a innumerable legion of other Bat-Baddies that would plague the shadow-warrior for over five decades... There was Police Commissioner Gordon and there was... **THE "BAT-MAN!"**

"THE 'BAT-MAN', a mysterious and adventurous figure, fighting for righteousness and apprehending the wrong doer, in his lone battle against the evil forces of society... His identity remains unknown." Thus was the very first description ever printed of the Dark Avenger which appeared in the splash panel of the first page of **Detective Comics #27: May, 1939**. He appeared suddenly and magnificently by swooping down from the heavens and across rooftops (his rope and grappling hook must have been anchored to a nearby cloud) to bring swift justice to a gangster in a green pinstripe suit. **Let criminals everywhere mourn, The Bat-Man had been born! (Figure #1)**

The early, pre-Robin (**Detective #27-#37 & 1 story in Bat-Man #1**) adventures of The Bat-Man were dark, grim and quite violent. He waged an all out war against

crime, and was not interested in taking prisoners, rehabilitation or giving these law-breakers a second chance. He was judge jury and executioner all in one, meting out frightful retribution to all wrong-doers that were unfortunate enough to cross his path. Whatever the method was... sending a few thugs off rooftops to tumble to their doom via a barrage of berserk punches and kicks, breaking their neck with a fatally powerful kick, or just simply firing a few rounds into them with his .45 automatic... it made no difference (yes, in early issues of Detective, The Bat-Man used a gun and shot criminals dead). As long as it eliminated the filth in a reliable and effective manner. He became the true Nocturnal Nightmare to the Underworld. In his **History of Comics; Volume #1, Jim Steranko** described The Bat-Man as, "a dark, shadowy loner working outside the law, outside the public eye ruthlessly stalking his prey through rain-slick alleyways."

The whole mystique of The Bat-Man was that of the mysterious avenger of the night that struck unspeakable terror into the heart of the Underworld and the Police Force alike. In fact, Commissioner Gordon and his department tried repeatedly to bring this urban hunter

in, but to no avail. Time and time again he would stalk and capture the top criminal masterminds that had baffled the police, only to melt back into the shadows that seem to have spawned him. His name was mentioned only in whispers and in the strictest confidence. No one on either side of the law knew what to make of him, and that's the way he liked it. The Bat-Man became the enigmatic shadow which mantled and protected the city by night by preying on the vermin and criminal vampires that had sucked his city dry of goodness and decency.

The element that added the final extraordinary ingredient to the whole persona of The Bat-Man was his striking appearance... well, we will get to that shortly.

What is to follow is an exciting, in-depth and detailed journey into each of The Bat-Man's pre-Robin adventures. How this lone warrior progressed and developed through the first year of his creation by writer **Bill Finger** and artist **Bob Kane**. Finally a rarity number will be attached to each issue following the description and insights of each book. The purpose of the number is to give the reader an idea of the scarcity of these early Detective's; Basically how difficult they are to find in any grade. This number is based on a scale of **1: extremely common**, to **10: almost non-existent**. The information was gathered from the collective efforts and experience of some of the most seasoned, well respected and note-worthy comic book and collectable experts throughout the United States. Very special thanks to **Gary M. Carter** of Coronado, CA; **John Fairless** of Texarkana, TX; **Tom French** of San Diego, CA; **Jim Payette** of Bethlehem, NH; **Dr. Tim Riley** of Santa Monica, CA; **John Verzyl** of Alhambra, CA; **Mark Wilson** of Castle Rock, WA; and **Harley Yee** of Detroit, MI. Your time, help and advice is greatly appreciated.

And now, let's embark upon our quest. Onto the dimly moon-lit rooftops. Through the cold, dark and fog-laden alleyways. To the very roots and heart of his inception. **To the very beginning...**

## DETECTIVE #27 (May, 1939)

"**The Case of the Chemical Syndicate.**" The landmark issue which introduced to the world **POLICE COMMISSIONER GORDON** and one of the most significant and famous fictional characters of all time; **THE "BAT-MAN!"** He appeared like a huge gargoyle mounted on a rooftop silhouetted against the full moon. (splash panel) This is the first of only two issues in which creator-artist Bob Kane would formally sign his name



Figure #1: Detective #27, 1st app. of Commissioner Gordon and THE BAT-MAN. Cover Art by Bob Kane.

### Rob't Kane.

Panel 2, of page 3 would mark the very first that the public would actually see The Bat-Man in the pages of a comic book (not including the cover). Here he was, in his full glory and luster. A black (with blue high lights) cape that mimicked a huge pair of bat-wings when it



Figure #2: Debut panel where the public (and underworld) first encountered THE BAT-MAN!

flared out. The black cowl with the small bat-ears that seemed to protrude as much outward as they did upward. The eerie white orbs for eyes that gave the crime fighter an almost supernatural look. His boots and trunks were the same as today's and have remained unchanged for over 53 years. A metallic gray, skintight suit that sported the classic bat-symbol across his chest and the trusty utility belt that was fastened together with a circular belt buckle (for this issue only). And finally he wore ordinary, wrist-length gloves that were light-purple in color. (Figure #2)

On this dynamic page, where the underworld first encountered The Bat-Man, he would immediately dispose of one criminal by lashing "out with a terrific right", while "...He grabs his second adversary in a deadly headlock... and with a mighty heave... sends the burly criminal flying through space..." Apparently this criminal was flung off the rooftop to his death while The Bat-Man retrieved the document that was stolen from Steven Crane's safe. After the brief rooftop battle, we would also get a glimpse of this Super Detective's means of transportation; A red car that he speeds "forward to a unknown destination."

The Bat-Man would soon save Paul Rogers from a gas chamber used to kill guinea pigs, subdue Alfred Stryker's assistant Jennings with a flying tackle, and rescue Rogers yet again from an enraged, knife wielding Stryker. The detective explains that Stryker, Crane, Rogers, and Lambert were all partners in the **Apex Chemical Corpora-**



Figure #3:  
THE BAT-MAN's  
true identity is  
revealed as  
Bruce Wayne.

tion in which Stryker wished to be the sole owner. Due to the fact that he had no ready cash, he made secret contracts with each one of his partners, scheming to murder them and steal the contracts before paying. Panic-stricken, Stryker suddenly tears free of The Bat-Man's grasp and pulls out a gun, firing at the mysterious caped figure. The Bat-Man thunders a left hook across the madman's jaw, sending him screaming into an acid tank below and exclaiming, "A fitting ending for his kind."

The next day, following a social visit with Commissioner Gordon, Bruce Wayne returns home where "a little later his door slowly opens and reveals its occupant... if the Commissioner could see his young friend now... he'd be amazed to learn that he is The 'Bat-Man!'" And so ended "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate", formally signed Rob't Kane! (Figure #3)

Scarcity: 6.5

## DETECTIVE #28 (June, 1939)

The only indication that the new mysterious superhero was still employed in **Detective Comics** (without opening the comic) was a rather simple, yellow scroll rolled open at the top-middle of the book that claimed, "This month and every month THE BATMAN!" Fred Guardineer illustrated this "cops and robbers" cover which left a much less impressionable impact than did the previous issue. (Figure #4) Even today this book seems to have been lost in obscurity and all but forgotten. Quote most frequently heard, "No Batman cover, pricy (expensive), dull story." Nevertheless, **Detective #28** kept the new costumed detective as the star and lead-off story and



Figure #4:  
Detective #28.  
Cover art by  
Fred Guardineer

holds a few subtle but noteworthy additions to the history of the character.

The reader quickly discovers that Bruce Wayne, apart from his other seemingly endless talents, is a master verbal impressionist: He disguises his voice as Commissioner Gordon and intercepts information from one of the Police Departments "stool pigeons" named Gimpy who "has access to the haunts of the underworld." Gimpy tells Wayne that **Frenchy Blake** is the leader of jewel gang that just pulled off their fifth lucrative heist for over \$100,000 and are planning to strike again tonight at the Vander-Smith's apartment. That night, "Gloves" and "Ricky" are in the process of making their escape to the roof when, "A mysterious figure in black watches in the darkness above them... It is The 'Bat-Man'..." A fight ensues, resulting in "Ricky" getting kicked off the roof to his premature death, and "Gloves" being knocked out cold with a crushing left hook. One notable change in The Bat-Man's uniform; He would now sport a square belt-buckle which replaced the circular one worn in the previous issue (Pg. #1, panel #7 shows our hero with a circular belt-buckle. However, panel #6 and all the other future panels have him with a square belt-buckle. This must have been an slightly

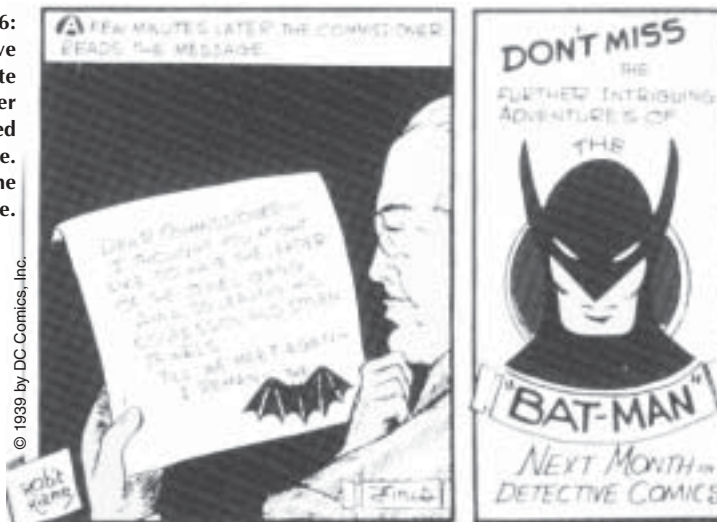
overlooked illustration error). The ears of his cowl would also begin to elongate a bit which gave the character a more unique and "bat-like" appearance. (Figure #5)



Figure #5:  
Kane giving  
his creation  
a more  
"bat-like" look.

© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #6:  
The detective  
leaves his first note  
for Commissioner  
Gordon, attached  
to his defeated foe.  
Signed Rob't Kane  
for the last time.



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Detective #28** also introduced to the reading public The Bat-Man's amazing and death-defying acrobatic skills, perfected in the heat of combat. To escape the gun-fire of two police officers he, "dives off the roof... turns a complete somersault in mid-air and lands on his feet on the Penthouse roof below!" The Bat-Man's nemesis, **Frenchy Blake**, would be introduced on page #3, panels #6 & #7 as he barked out orders to his gang for another robbery. Our hero would soon dispose of the three gang members, call Gordon to come pick up the criminal trash and speed his car toward Frenchy's apartment "to finish the business at hand." At Frenchy's apartment, the detective commands the gang-leader to complete and sign a written confession for all the jewel

who, "meets Frenchy's jaw and sends him flying back over the table."

Later that evening, Frenchy's unconscious body is deposited out of a car onto the sidewalk in front of Police Headquarters. Attached to the defeated adversary is a note addressed to Gordon from the Dark Avenger for the first time in their illustrious careers saying, "Dear Commissioner - I thought you might like to have the leader of the jewel gang. Am also leaving his confession and stolen jewels. **Till we meet again I remain - (Bat-Symbol).**" **Formally signed Rob't Kane for the last time. (Figure #6)**

**Scarcity: 7**

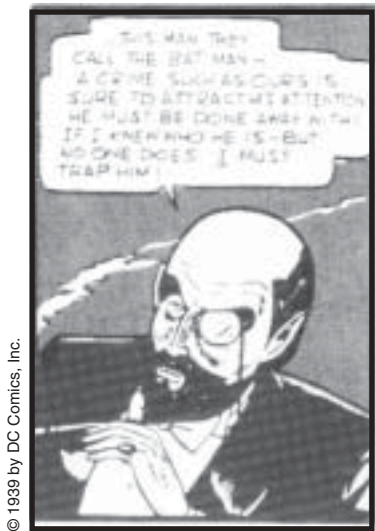


Figure #7:  
Detective #29,  
1st app. Dr. Death.  
Kane cover

© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

## DETECTIVE #29 (July, 1939)

The quintessential Batman cover of all the early **Detectives**. This "eerie figure of the night;" Dark, grim and silent, flying in the open window from a full moonlit and bat infested sky, with his black cape unfolding to resemble a pair of gigantic bat-wings. He brings not only immediate justice and excruciating pain to Jabah, Dr. Death's assistant, by striking him square in the sternum with a powerful kick, but also trembling fear and disdain from the doctor himself, whose thoughts betray him with sweat pouring down his brow while, at the same time, dropping one of his test-tubes (probably filled with his "Death Potion").



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Figure #8:**  
The hero's first "name" villain; Dr. Death!

(Figure #7)

**Detective #29, "The Bat-Man meets Doctor Death,"** landmarks the first time a Batman saga would span over two continuing issues and introduced the hero's very first "name" villain; **Doctor Karl Hellfern, alias: DR. DEATH. (Figure #8)** Finger and Kane were given a total of 10 pages this issue to fascinate and entertain us with their newly created superhero. They also slightly modified The Batman's uniform; His wrist-length gloves changed from light-purple in color to the modern day traditional blue.

The Nocturnal Knight would need every weapon in his ever-growing arsenal to battle the mad scientist, including gas pellets from his utility belt, suction gloves,



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Figure #9: Boldly accepting Dr. Death's challenge, The Batman silently enters the penthouse of the Beverly Apartments.**

and knee pads to scale the building of the Beverly Apartments. His uncanny foresight and keen detective instincts shine bright when, "For a quick getaway The Batman has his rope handy." The appearance of the Night-Hunter becomes even more menacing and frightening (**Figure #9**), as well as his attitude toward the evil and corrupt underworld which he utterly loathes. A stern, no-nonsense approach to getting answers from criminals can be clearly seen when he ruthlessly interrogates, at gun point, two of Dr. Death's hired assassins by coldly questioning, "**And who sent you, may I ask?... Your choice gentlemen! Tell me! Or I'll kill you!**" (**Figure #10**) Without warning **Jabah**, Dr. Death's giant Indian assistant, opens a door and shoots The Batman in the right shoulder. However, this "creature of the night" did not come unprepared. He ejects a gas pellet from his utility belt, slams it to the ground in front of Jabah, crashes through the window and dives off the roof to grab the hidden rope that he attached to the ledge earlier. With this he "swings onto a projecting cornice



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Figure #10:**  
Questioning Dr. Death's would-be assassins.

of the roof." Another breathtaking and fantastic escape, and Hellfern's plan to trap and eliminate this elusive daredevil fails.

After a quick visit to the family doctor as Bruce Wayne to remove the lodged bullet, and later saving the life of John P. Van Smith from the Dr.'s deadly pollen extract, The Batman prepares to engage Dr. Death in battle once again.

Jabah is quickly disposed of as The Batman wraps his lasso around the giant's neck, snapping it instantly. Then, after a brief chase through the laboratory and halls of Dr. Death's house, The Batman throws a fire extinguisher at Hellfern, causing him to drop a test-tube that "swiftly ignites into a blazing inferno," completely engulfing the mad scientist. Victorious, the Enigmatic-Warrior stoically watches as the house is reduced to smoldering ashes. "**Death... to Dr. Death!**"

"...But is it death to this arch criminal? Follow the further amazing and unique adventures of The Batman... in next month's Detective Comics." **Signed Bob Kane.**

**Scarcity: 8**



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #12: "The absolute essence and purest visual capturing... a exquisitely majestic appearance that radiates supernatural awesomeness [and] trembling intimidation."

## DETECTIVE #30 (August, 1939)

The blow-torch (second non-Batman) cover, superbly illustrated by Guardineer. (Figure #11)



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #11: Detective #30, Guardineer cover.

The phenomenal splash panel of this tale (conclusion from issue #29) reveals a vintage Bat-Man at his ultimate zenith. Here is the absolute essence and purest visual capturing of what the "Winged Figure of Vengeance" reflects and symbolizes: A set of truly forbidding bat-ears that reach their climatic pinnacle in the pages of this issue (as well as on the cover of #31) which gave The Bat-Man a exquisitely majestic appearance that radiates supernatural awesomeness as well as trembling intimidation. He became the Underworlds most loathsome and feared nightmare incarnate. (Figure #12)

The saga begins with a brief recap of the events which took place less than one week ago as, "The Batman saw

his sworn enemy, the grim Doctor Death, burned to ashes in a fire that wrecked an entire house." Yet, Bruce Wayne suspects that Dr. Death is still alive after reading in the newspaper, "strange death overcomes man victim of queer disease turns purple, doctors baffled." His suspicions are confirmed by Mrs. Jones who explains to Wayne that her husband received a threatening note from Dr. Death, demanding the payment of \$500,000, or else he would die. And so, that night, "**The Batman prepares to meet Dr. Death again,**" with a few gas vials tucked into his utility belt. (Figure #13) He then drives toward the Jones's home "in his specially built high-powered auto."

Kane would excel during these next two pages as his



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #13: Vintage Batman at his apex. Kane could develop such a deeply intense and alluring mood with his illustrations and overall layouts that they went, generally, unsurpassed throughout the Golden-Age Batman scripts.

© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.



Figure #14: Making a silent midnight entrance through the window of the Jones's home.

illustrations of The Winged Warrior not only fascinates and captivates the audience, but literally addicts them to the character as well. **It doesn't come any better than this. (Figure #13 & #14)**

Dr. Death, whose head is wrapped in bandages to protect his burned skin, orders his new assistant **Mikhail**

to break into the Jones's house and steal their diamonds to "reestablish" himself. After saving Mrs. Jones from sure death at the hands of Hellfern's murderous henchman, The Batman drops the bag of jewels in front of the huge Cossack and tracks his quarry to the "drop-off" point, Ivan Herd's Pawn Shop, and then to his downtown apartment. A quick shattering of a glass vial from his utility belt, and the foreigner is rendered unconscious.

The detective diligently searches through the apartment for any clue or hint of Dr. Death's whereabouts. Unexpectedly, Mikhail revives, with gun in hand, and fires at our hero who, once again, escapes The Grim Reaper by wheeling and diving out the nearby window to catch his silken rope. And, **"as Mikhail puts his head through the window... there is a sickening snap as the Cossack's neck breaks under the mighty pressure of The Batman's foot."** Chalk up another one for the o'l "Bats".

He would soon swing in through "Ivan Herd's" window and demand the diamonds back. As the quivering old man overturns a table between them, The Batman lasso's the fleeing thief as his wig falls to the ground. With this, a skin mask is likewise pulled off, revealing the burned and destroyed face of Dr. Death. Departing, he leaves the jewels and his calling card, **"... - With the compliments of THE BATMAN."**

Scarcity: 7

## DETECTIVE #31 (September, 1939)

Likely, one of the most famous and widely renown Detective covers, second only to issue #27. The classic **"Batman over castle;"** With The Batman, Dracula-like, ominously looming over an ancient medieval castle amidst a densely fog-bound and bat inhabited moonlit night. With his huge bat-ears towering into the heavens, all attention is focused downward at an sinister hooded

© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.



Figure #15: Detective #31, 1st app. The Monk and Julie Madison

© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.



Figure #16: The Arch-criminal known as The Monk!

and red-clocked figure carrying a beautiful blond damsel toward the lunar-illuminated castle in the distance. This is the **"terrifying master of crime known as THE MONK."** (Figure #15)

Unexpectedly, creator-writer Bill Finger was taken off the character and replaced by a young lawyer fresh out of college named **Gardner Fox**. Fox's approach to the script was quite bizarre and unorthodox. Nevertheless, he did introduced a villain that would give The Batman a good run for his money, his first love interest in fiancée **JULIE MADISON**, and opened the floodgates for an inexhaustible amount of state-of-the-art equipment, weapons and gadgets that

he would use to battle crime all over the world.

**Detective #31** opens with this “weird menace to all crime” prowling “through the dark of a New York night.” There is one slight change in his costume; The short, blue, wrist-length gloves were lengthened to cover his forearm which lasted through issue #35. There are two new weapons introduced: **The Baterang** and **Batgyro (first Batplane)** to follow Julie in as she voyages across the Atlantic to Paris. Soon after arriving on the ship, The Night Avenger boldly attacks The Monk who immediately puts him in a paralyzing hypnotic state. **(Figure #16)** However, “By tremendous effort of will, the Batman leaps into action,” and the powerful spell is broken. Our hero decides to take on the criminal mastermind in Paris who has kidnaped Julie by placing her under his hypnotic control and demonic will.

Locating her, The Batman must first dodge a gargantuan killer gorilla and, as an encore, cut his way out of a net with a piece of broken glass while being lowered into a den of deadly poisonous snakes. Twisted and evil, the diabolical Monk traps him once again as the savage gorilla descends into the cage to tear him in pieces. **But, for every perilous situation there is a way of escape, and The Batman knows them all.** He “makes a desperate leap for the rope that lowered the gorilla,” and, while climbing hand over hand to safety, flings his Baterang toward a guard about to draw a gun which strikes true



**Figure #17:**  
Rescuing Julie and planning on vengeance.

with precise accuracy that could only be achieved by years of endless practice under the most trying conditions. With no time to waste, he rescues Julie from a speeding car with his ever trusty gas pellets, climbs into the **(now named) Bat-plane**, “and sets his automatic controls for Hungary - home of the vicious Monk and his werewolves!” **(Figure #17)**

**Scarcity: 6.5**

## DETECTIVE #32 (October, 1939)

By the time issue #32 was released, it becomes quite apparent that **D.C. Comics** was catching on to the fact that it was their new Super-Detective who was responsible for the increasing sales of their flag-ship title. This can be assumed since they began to place a small picture-logo of The Batman at the top-center of the



**Figure #18:**  
**Detective #32,**  
**Guardineer cover.**

comic book when he was not the main cover attraction. **(Figure #18)** By this time though, the hand writing was already on the wall since there would be only one more non-Batman cover after this issue. A streak that has remained unbroken for over five decades.

**Detective #32** begins with The Batman trailing the mysterious Monk into his native Hungary. Believing that he has located his strange foe, he “drops like a huge bat onto a speeding carriage,” and finds **Dala**, the Monk’s female assistant. As he returns to his hotel that is embedded deep in the Carlathan mountains of Hungary, The Batman discovers that this darkly beautiful woman is in actuality, a vampire who has already bitten Julie and now pleads for mercy at his feet. Furious and frustrated, the relentless manhunter demands to know where the Monk dwells. Frightened and helpless, Dala confesses: “In the lost mountains of Cathala by the turbulent river Dess. I shall guide you.” Anxious to get to the bottom of the case, he leaves Julie some money and warns her to, “fight against the power that calls you to this Monk” and departs with Dala to destroy the wicked fiend.

“A great silver net” drags the Batplane earthward, and the Monk “by his marvelous hypnotic powers, ...slowly overpowers The Batman.” With his enemy completely subdued and harmless, the Monk then “forces his power through space” which fastens onto Julie’s will to come

to him and she cannot resist . Then the Monk informs the detective that he will be cast into a den of bloodthirsty wolves that will tear him asunder with their jagged fangs and metamorphoses into a werewolf himself to call the wild mountain pack to dinner. **(Figure #19)** Once again though, the evil mastermind has underestimated his worthy and determined foe who keeps the hungry wolves at bay with his ever-ready gas pellets. Climbing to safety, The Batman melts down a silver statue into two silver bullets and slays the werewolf-vampire couple by emptying his gun into them and vowing, **“Never again will you harm any mortal being.”** This event marks a very significant and memorable moment in the chronological evolution of the character since **it is the first time in which The Batman would use a gun to eliminate his adversaries.**

**Scarcity: 8.5**



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Figure #19:** The Monk informs his worthy adversary of the fate he has in store for him.

## DETECTIVE #33 (November, 1939)

At long last, the book that explained the legend of the cowled detective and how he came to be. The anxiously awaited origin of **“this Weird Figure of the Dark... this Avenger of Evil, ‘The Batman’.”** **(Figure #20)** As a young boy, fifteen years ago, Bruce Wayne’s parents were brutally and mercilessly murdered in cold blood before his terrified eyes. Some time later, a grief-stricken orphan would consecrate the rest of his life to battling crime and opposing all forms of injustice, swearing **“by the spirits of [his] parents to avenge their deaths by spending the rest of [his] life warring on all criminals.”** For the next decade and a half, Wayne would tirelessly train and fine tune his mind to become a master scientist and his body to physical perfection for the monumental task at hand. Then, one fateful night as he sat in the study of Wayne Manor, he states one of the most famous quotes in all comic book history: **“Criminals are a superstitious cowardly lot. So my disguise must be able to strike terror into their hearts. I must be a creature of**



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Figure #20:** Detective #33, origin of The Batman. Gun holster cover.



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

**Figure #21:** The significantly famous night in which Bruce Wayne would finally discover how to fulfill his childhood vow of “spending the rest of his life warring on all criminals.”

the night. Black, terrible... A... A..." and "– As if in answer, a huge bat flies in the open window!" Wayne concludes, "A Bat! That's it! It's an omen. I shall become A BAT! And thus is born The Batman." (Figure #21)

The cover of **Detective #33** is extremely dramatic, action-packed and historically important, for it depicts the very first time ever in which The Batman appears with a gun holster around his waist. (Figure #20) Later on, as the superhero grew and developed throughout the years, the use of any type of firearm became the number one no-no. Remember, it was a gun that killed



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #22: Preparing for a nocturnal visit to the abode of the demented Dr. Kruger.

his parents and these were the weapons which he utterly detested.

A full 12 pages would be given to The Batman saga in issue #33 (2 page origin plus 10 page story) which was double the amount of his debut (issue #27) and second appearance (issue #28) in the title. Obviously the Nocturnal Nemesis of Crime was gaining popularity and obtaining a grander audience. Kane's art-work of his character was also becoming much more refined and authentically detailed. (Figure #22)

The detective now faced a egotist named **Dr. Carl Kruger**, whose ambition was to rule the world (he suffered from a Napoleon Complex), with his "**Scarlet Horde**" army and their **Dirigible of Doom**. This rocket ship carried a deadly potent Death Ray machine that shot forth a red beam of light that could completely destroy large skyscrapers and whatever else it struck. Fortunately for New York City, Bruce Wayne resided there, and was not going to let this madman destroy the city which he loved so dearly.

After a quick confrontation with the demented Dr. Kruger The Batman is knocked senseless, tied up and bound with ropes and left to die as a incandescery bomb ticks nearby. He slices his way free of his restraints with a secretly placed steel blade in his right boot, climbs out the nearby window and races for cover as the bomb explodes, totally demolishing the house. A miraculous escape from death with no time to spare.

Tracking Ryder (one of Dr. Kruger's lieutenants) in the Batplane to the secret hanger where the Dirigible is hidden, The Batman destroys the Death Ray machines, and, as he raises an axe to strike a fatal blow to the Dirigible, is shot in the back shoulder plate by Kruger. Narrowing escaping once again, Wayne returns home and works through the whole night, developing a mysterious chemical to coat the Batplane with (to neutralize the effects of the death ray) and prepares himself for the final battle with Dr. Kruger.

The next day, The Batman spots and steers his aircraft strait toward the Dirigible, ejects out in a parachute and kamikazes the scarlet rocket ship, blowing them both to smithereens. However, Kruger has likewise departed from his doomed ship in a catapult-plane. Not wanting this criminal menace to go free, the detective fastens his silken cord to a wheel of the small plane, climbs onto the wing and throws a gas pellet at Kruger, rendering him unconscious. The would-be-world-conqueror plunges to a watery death.

Final panel shows the mysterious Avenger of Evil with smoking .45 pistol in hand.

**Scarcity: 5.5**

## DETECTIVE #34 (December, 1939)

The 2nd cover appearance of The Crimson Avenger and final non-Batman cover. (Figure #23) **Detective #34** begins exactly where issue #32 concluded. Issue #33 was substituted in at the last moment to give the readers an idea of where and how The Batman came to be.

After rescuing his fiancée, Julie from the diabolically devious Monk, Bruce Wayne sees her safely aboard a ship bound for America and plans to return shortly thereafter. However, as he leaves his hotel, the wealthy socialite runs straight into a fellow with no face. And a new mystery begins in Paris, the City of Lights.

While reading the local newspaper and relaxing in a taxi cab, Wayne encounters a fair young French woman named Karel Maire. She is apparently being stalked by a group of thugs called the Apaches, who cast a dagger at her in the car. Fainting from mortal fear in Wayne's



© 1939 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #23: Detective #34, 2nd Crimson Avenger (and last non-Batman) cover. Cover Art by Guardineer.

arms, the man-with-no-face suddenly appears and explains he and his sister's dire straits. **(Figure #24)** The odd stranger tells Wayne that they are hiding from **The Duc D'Orterre**, an evil and morally destitute individual who is the leader of the Apaches that used a "terrible ray" to burn away all the features of his face because he



**Figure #24:** Charles and Karel Marie explain their seemingly hopeless situation to Bruce Wayne.

interfered with the Duc's enchanted infatuation with Karel.

"That night as Paris sleeps," The Batman stalks the rooftops and then swoops down into the city sewer to search for the criminal's subterranean laboratory. The detective soon discovers that the lab must be nearby since he quickly defeats two attacking Apaches, who mistake the paramount expert of martial arts and combat for a silly masquerade ball drunk. **(Figure #25)** Nevertheless, the Batman is much too hasty with his flying leap to overcome the Duc and is temporarily blinded by a light that shoots forth out of the criminal's cane. Tied to a deadly "**Wheel of Chance**," this great escape-artist must rescue himself once again or be thrown against a concrete wall and splattered to formless paste or driven completely mad by the never ceasing whirling of the enormous wheel. Of course, our hero would not let us down. "By tensing his steel-like muscles. He breaks the leather thongs."



**Figure #25:** Ready to do battle with a few Apaches.

After freeing Charles from the "Wheel," The Batman climbs in his ever-ready Batplane and tracks down the Duc who has kidnapped Karel and is speeding toward his palace in Champagne.

Setting the automatic controls of the Batplane, the eerie bat-figure drops down with his rope and makes a valiant leap onto the speeding car. As Karel kicks the knife wielding Duc in his back, the Count drops his weapon, giving The Batman the opportunity he needs to leap through the open window and take the offensive advantage. A fierce struggle ensues and the crimefighter crushes the Duc's windpipe causing the runaway car to "careen crazily" off a narrow bridge. And, "Split seconds meaning life or death. The Batman grasps for his rope ladder... and catches it just in time to escape sudden death." **He must have studied under the great Harry Houdini.**

With the mystery solved and the corrupt Duc eliminated, The Batman says "Au Revoir" to the grateful brother and sister and departs into the night.

### Scarcity 5.5

## DETECTIVE #35 (January, 1940)

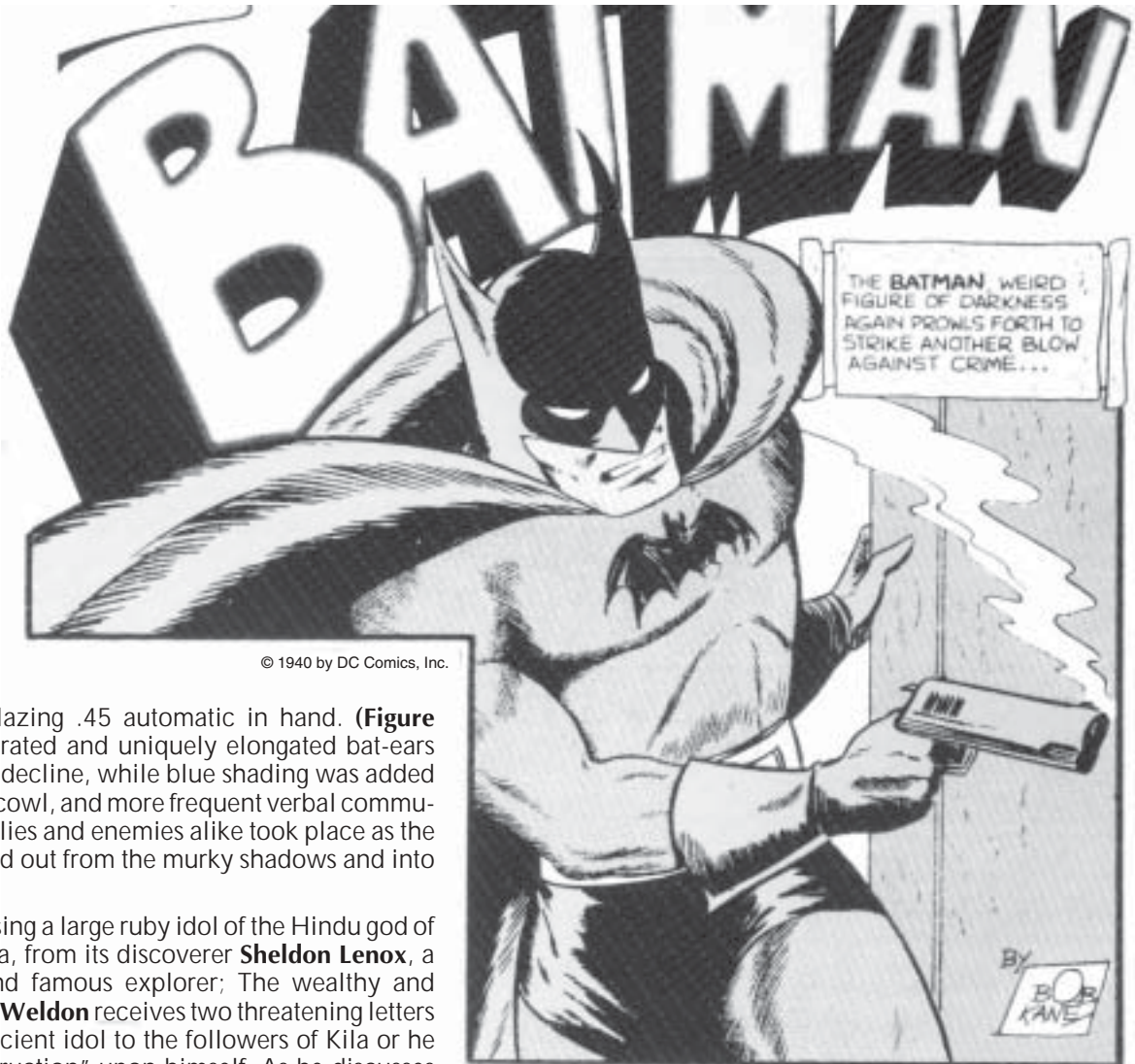
The acclaimed **hypodermic (hypo) cover** depicting The Batman putting a strong forearm choke-hold on a villainous doctor as he is about to inject serum into a rope-tied and horror-stricken victim. Of particular note are the emphasized and fascinating bat-ears that project upward into the logo. **(Figure #26)** This would be the first issue that produced a full 12 pages for one complete story and crowned the superhero as the reigning king and star of all the future covers of **Detective Comics**.

The sensational splash panel of **Detective #35** is perhaps one of the most definitive examples of The Batman's whole persona and image during his first year of crimefighting (second only to the splash panel in Detective #30). Here is this "weird figure of darkness, again prowling forth to strike another blow against



**Figure #26:** Detective #35. The acclaimed "hypo" cover.

Figure #27:  
Splash panel.  
"One of the most  
definitive  
examples of the  
Batman's whole  
persona and  
image during his  
first year of  
crimefighting."



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

crime," with blazing .45 automatic in hand. (Figure #27) The celebrated and uniquely elongated bat-ears would begin to decline, while blue shading was added to his cape and cowl, and more frequent verbal communication with allies and enemies alike took place as the character moved out from the murky shadows and into the limelight.

After purchasing a large ruby idol of the Hindu god of destruction, Kila, from its discoverer **Sheldon Lenox**, a globe-trotter and famous explorer; The wealthy and astute collector **Weldon** receives two threatening letters to return the ancient idol to the followers of Kila or he will bring "destruction" upon himself. As he discusses these letters with Commissioner Gordon and Bruce Wayne, the two long time friends race toward Lenox's house. They soon find the archaeologist being kidnapped and sped away in a car full of Hindu worshipers. Gordon and Wayne would watch in utter shock as the Hindu's sacrifice Lenox and toss his body into a river. The police search the river but never find the body.

A few weeks pass and Weldon dismisses the police protection that Gordon had given him and his house to guard the ruby idol. After acquiring this information, Wayne plans to stakeout the rich collectors abode as his nighttime alter-ego stating, "When the police are away the rats will play." His foresights confirmed, The Batman takes on a trio of gangsters who show a great interest in sculpture-art as they try to disarm the alarm-system. The shadow warrior knocks the first silly with a right hook, and preforms a over-the-head judo flip with the second, breaking the gangsters arm in the process. The last gang member rushes toward the detective with knife ready, only to meet a smashing granite fist across the jaw. But,

the victory is short lived as a billy club crashes down upon the his head, knocking him to the ground seriously dazed. The Hindu's quickly steal the idol and escape out the window as the estate's guards arrive.

The Batman races his high-powered roadster to the home of the unofficial mayor of China Town **Wong**, a wise and honest man. The Chinaman warns the superhero that the ruby idol will most likely be cut into several pieces and sold by **Sin Fang** who is a receiver and distributor of stolen goods. And that very night he visits the store of Sin Fang. Telling the curios dealer that the idol is stolen, Fang states that he was not aware of that fact and that he will return the artifact so his reputation will not suffer.

Fang leads The Batman into the back rooms of his store. Suddenly Fang disappears and unleashes a triad of death traps to eliminate this darkly garbed intruder. The Batman disposes of two giant Mongols wielding large

curved swords, renders a deadly mustard gas harmless with a gas pellet from his utility belt, and escapes a watery death by catching a protruding water pipe before falling into the deep well and climbs to safety.

Discovering that Fang is none other than Sheldon Lenox, the detective dodges a few bullets, reaches for the small idol and hurls it at Lenox. Striking the deceitful smuggler in the head, Lenox falls through an open window to his death.

The concluding story panel has Gordon reading the newspaper and explaining to Wayne that The Batman has foiled and stopped yet another criminal gang-leader and confessing that this masked vigilante is making his department look completely ridiculous. **If the Commissioner only knew.**

Scarcity: 6 5

## DETECTIVE #36 (February, 1940)

Another fantastic splash panel that perfectly sets the dark, mysterious and solemn mood for the archetype nocturnal manhunter. This issue marked the debut of the "bat-fin" gauntlets that The Batman utilizes. These became a famous traditional trademark that he has retained even to this day. These new finned gloves were an interesting surprise addition to his costume, beginning on the splash page, since they did not appear on the cover. **(Figure # 28) Detective #36** also introduced to the public the evil mastermind and notorious criminal genius known as **PROFESSOR HUGO STRANGE**.



Figure #28:  
Detective #36,  
1st app. Professor  
Hugo Strange.

The narration of the adventures were becoming much more metaphorically sophisticated and acute. This can be seen in the introductory splash panel, **"Already an almost legendary figure the cowled shadow of The Batman prowls through the night preying upon the criminal parasite, like the winged creature whose name he had adopted."** The crimefighting detective was also achieving greater respect as stories and rumors of this shadow figure was bolting like wildfire throughout the underworld, making his name a by-word of terror and

creating unchecked fear and anxiety for all wrongdoers. Panel #3 of page #1 quotes a thug confessing, "The Batman! Lets get outa here... I don't want to fool around with him." The detective comes to the aid of a F.B.I. agent who dies in his arms after being shot with a Tommy-gun in his back. The Batman quickly takes a notebook off the G-Man and hurry's away into the night, escaping a barrage of screaming police bullets. His unparalleled elusiveness is complemented with a statement by one of the amazed officers, **"You might as well chase a ghost."**

Professor Hugo Strange appears for the very first time as "he broods over the many evil schemes that surge through his brilliant but distorted brain." Here is this magnificent human personification of wickedness and corrupt imagination. The professor's massive muscular frame towers over his petty servants, complemented with brutally physical and verbal intimidation which is overshadowed only by his ultra-intelligent criminal plans for conquest of power and wealth. **(Figure #29)**

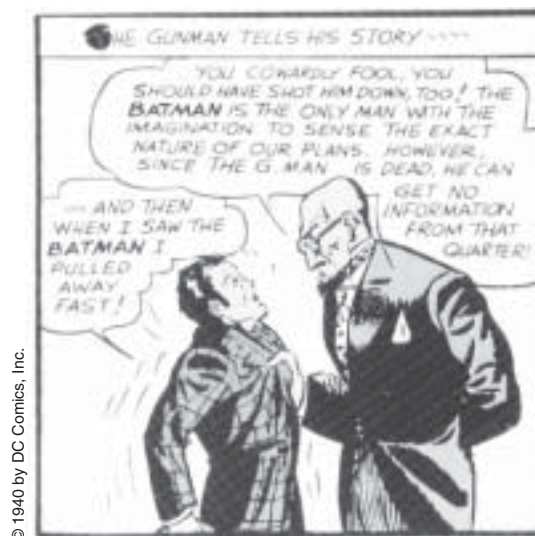


Figure #29: Professor Hugo Strange.

A few nights later, Bruce Wayne figures that the unnaturally thick fog that has been blanketing the city, the disappearance of an electrical engineer, and the recent robberies of the names written in the G-Man's book must all be linked somehow with the name Hugo Strange. Thus he ready's himself.

As Professor Strange's henchmen are in the process of robbing **The Sterling Silver Company**, The Batman stuns the criminals with an expert guise and dynamically plows over the six man gang by hurtling through the air and thundering down like a bomb-shell, levelling everyone in his path. He then alerts the police to the scene with a flair-gun. The arch-criminal Strange is outraged with The Batman's interference and capture of his men. He decides to trap the detective at his next heist at **The Wolf Brothers Fur Company** and vows to crush him like a fragile glass.

Inside the warehouse of the Wolf Bros., The Batman is now forced to engage nine of Strange's men who rush toward the darkly garbed crusader like a "feeding frenzy"

of hungry sharks . The hero displays great strength, agility and fantastic speed by pouncing down on the gangsters, "like a panther, crushing them with powerhouse blows!" While "keeping up a ceaseless barrage of blows upon the gunmen." However, he is only a man, and is ultimately felled by a "black jack" across the back of his head.

Transported to the professors hideout, a warehouse near the river front, The Batman is tied up and mercilessly lashed across the midsection with a bull-whip. Strange would only enjoy a single blow as the night warrior's "steel muscles suddenly surge with strength and snap his bonds." (Figure #30) The Batman renders the other men unconscious with a gas pellet and dives angrily at Strange. "With the power of a madman, the professor succeeds in securing a strangle hold on The Batman's throat." But, expertly trained for years on end for such perilous situations, The Batman breaks Strange's grip and sends him flying overhead with an ancient Jiu-Jitsu move. He finally conquers his foe with a dramatic



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #30: With a sudden and powerful surge of strength, The Batman breaks free of the bonds.



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #31: The fantastic fog-machine used by Strange to cover-up his multiple heists throughout the city.

leaping tackle and smashing left hook.

The hero soon discovers the huge fog-machine used to cover-up the multiple robberies throughout the city and the electrical engineer, Henry Jenkins who had been kidnapped by Strange and forced to build his unique invention. (Figure #31) The fog is lifted from the city and the full moon is clearly viewed once again.

With Strange captured by the mysterious guardian, The Batman's name and heroics begin to be greatly admired and appreciated by the citizens of his beloved city; A child asks his father who The Batman is. The response, "A great man son. A great man!"

But, can the state penitentiary keep Professor Hugo Strange locked up for long? Bruce Wayne wonders.

**Scarcity: 6**

## DETECTIVE #37 (March, 1940)

The final solo Batman adventure in the pages of **Detective Comics**. Another darkly vivid and alluring cover drawn by Kane; The Batman in brutal melee combat, Judo flipping one thug, with a .45 auto dropping to the foggy, moon illuminated dock, while racing at full velocity toward a second knife wielding adversary. A vintage scene that has never acquired the attention and acclaim it deserves. (Figure #32)

The splash panel opens with a view of The Batman's high-speed roadster that will soon become widely known as **The Batmobile**. Cautiously stepping into a lone and remote house in the woodlands, the detective runs smack into a torturing session involving three mobsters interrogating their immobile victim, Joey, with a molten-hot iron for selling secret information. The Batman materializes from out of the dense shadows and defeats



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #32: Detective #37, The Batman's last solo (Golden-Age) app. in the title.

the torturers in lightening quick fashion. However, Joey double-crosses his timely rescuer by knocking him cold with the handle of his gun and then murders the three gangsters in cold blood. Awakening, our hero finds the blood covered bodies and perceives that Turg, a name that was mentioned earlier that night, must be involved somehow.

Tracking his quarry to a grocery store, Bruce Wayne notices Joey walking out of the store with **Elias Turg** and visits the "store front" later that night as The Batman. Walking in on their business meeting, the darkly garbed figure combats his five adversaries in pitch dark, inky blackness with the aid of infra-red goggles.

Discovering that these men are international spies sent on a mission to destroy the foreign ship **Ronij** to frame the United States and start a world wide crises, the detective secretly follows the spies to a deserted water-



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #33: The Nocturnal Knight turning to confront international spies and terrorists.



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #34: Concluding panel of Detective #37. The story advertised would not appear in the following issue (the origin and 1st app. of Robin was substituted in for it.) This saga was postponed and published in Batman #1.

front dock. After being thrown into the ocean in a large sack and slashing free with his ever handy steel blade, The Batman confronts the criminals and gains victory by kicking and heaving them all over the dock. (Figure #33) He then foils their crafty plans by steering the small boat loaded with dynamite away from the Ocean-Liner.

With only the leader of the spies left, the tenacious Batman arrives at Turg's home, who immediately throws a razor sharp sword at the dark intruder. In a flash, the hero opens the door directly in front of the speeding blade that "sends the sharp steel hissing through the soft wood." As Turg tries to escape, The Batman sends the international criminal hurling back with a stunning right hook, impelling him on his own sword. **Case closed. One less vindictive vermin to plague society.**

The final panel displays a "David and Goliath" scene with The Batman staring up toward two "Huge, terrifying Man-Monsters" that he must confront and battle in next months adventure of Detective Comics. (Figure #34)

Scarcity: 6

## BATMAN #1 (Spring, 1940)

By the time of his first anniversary in the spring of 1940, The Batman had become so popular and in-demand that he was rewarded his own title. It would be here, in his very first issue, that this lone warrior soloed for the last time. **The story was originally scheduled to appear in Detective Comics #38 (April 1940), but the origin and first appearance of Robin, The Boy Wonder was substituted in for it at the last minute.**

The splash panel shows The Batman looking skyward to a gigantic human-beast, with both arms uplifted, ready to wreak unmeasurable havoc and destruction upon New York city.

The story opens with the vicious Professor Hugo Strange escaping from the federal penitentiary and kidnapping several mental patients from The Metropolis Insane Asylum the following evening. A month passes and downtown Manhattan begins to be demolished by



© 1940 by DC Comics, Inc.

Figure #35: Batman Comics #1. The superhero is awarded his own title.



Figure #36: Vengefully attacking Strange's giant beserking Man-Monsters with his fully automatic machine gun, mounted atop the Batplane.

a 15 foot tall, huge Man-Monster who smashes a car with his bare hands and attacks a wave of police officers as their bullets harmlessly bounce off him. As suddenly as the raging hulk appeared, he escapes in a large truck that was idling nearby. The following day, the grotesque beast shows up again, this time wreaking the elevated subway. Even though he evades the police once again, the fleeing truck is spotted by the keen, eagle-eyes of The Batman who follows the mysterious demolishers in The Batplane.

As The Batman enters cautiously into the ocean cliff warehouse, two of the angry giants grab hold of the detective and bring him before their master. The demented genius explains to the darkly garbed advisor that the giant man-beasts are the escaped lunatics which he kidnapped and injected with an extract that speeds up growth glands. The end result is a berserking gargantuan ready to do his bidding. Strange then injects The Batman with the fluid which will take effect in 18 hours and instructs his men to escort a couple of the hulking beasts to the city to loot a few banks with "no slip ups!" With time running short, The

Soon, this laconic loner's future would forever be changed with the introduction of his first adapted son **Dick Grayson**: Known to the world as **Robin, The Boy Wonder**. The tactics of fighting his opponents were altered. The use of any kind of firearm and taking lives became totally eschewed. His attitude toward life, and preserving it at all costs became first and foremost. He smiled more, had a ally to speak too and consult with,

Batman explodes his way free out of the cell and with a powerful blow, "sends Strange out to fall to the murky waters below..." He quickly turns the raging monsters against each other who fight it out to the death while the expert chemist mixes a compound to act as an antidote to neutralize the growth gland serum.

The Batman chases after the professor's hoods in his Batplane with machine-gun mounted atop the cockpit, blazing lead death into the speeding trucks and cutting them down. "**Much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary,**" sneers the intractable justice seeker with teeth clenched and eyes fixed on his target, burning with awesome vengeance. (Figure #36) The bullets take their toll as the truck crashes into a nearby tree. As the monster rises from the wreckage, The Batman's steel-like rope wraps around his neck, and with a sudden powerful upward lift of the Batplane, the beast is jerked off the ground. His neck snaps like a dry twig as the detective grimly concludes, "**He's probably better off this way.**"

In the concluding scene, the final giant climbs a high tower in order to attack the elusive aircraft. The Batman pilots his plane for one final pass and calmly drops a gas pellet, choking the barbaric and frustrated creature who, "**shakes his hands defiantly... and then topples off to his doom!**"

#### Scarcity: 4



Figure #37: Watching the last lunatic beast fall to his doom.

and most important, one to protect, nurture and set an example for which gave the black and gray knight an even higher purpose for existing. The young boy, with his smile from ear to ear, would spring across the concrete jungle of **Gotham City** like a bright bolt of sunshine and provided the strip with the breath of fresh air it needed. **But, that is another story... reserved for another time.**



## Acknowledgments:

---

**Martin Johnson:** His professional help, advice and time proved to be invaluable in the writing, revising and overall development of the entire article. He summed it up best in saying, **“Not only is this a detailed look of The Batman and his early beginnings, but it’s an all out, full blown celebration of the character as well. Written from the heart!”**

**Jack Der:** For his superb technical skills, knowledge and time he spent in producing and designing the finished product.

**John Gallagher:** With his creativity and eye for graphics and color that were valuable assets in the cover design.

**Gary M. Carter:** Who put his faith in me through the many months it took to get the written copy from my desk to his. And for all his support and enthusiasm. **For there is perhaps no better seasoned and experienced authority on The Batman than he.**

**Bill Finger & Bob Kane:** The two men whose creation has brought untold joy and adventure to millions of people across the globe for over five decades. **Their superhero is a true and timeless legend.**

