

# GIANTS of GOTHAM

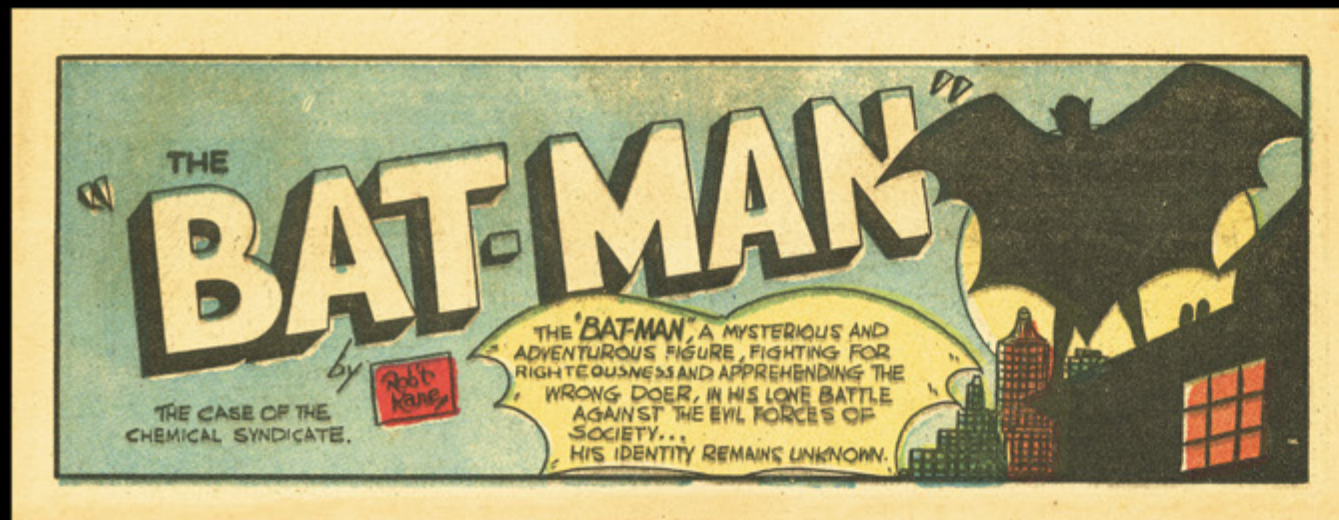
## and the Legacy of Batman Son of the Demon

**by Rob Hughes**

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Darkness descends over the sprawling cityscape and the full moon rises with the majestic magnificence of a medieval monarch to take her nocturnal throne, unrivaled in splendor and glory. Lunar light illuminates this manmade jungle of concrete and stone, brick and mortar as the ghostly fingers of cool bay fog creeps down trash-filled alleyways, while hot sewer steam rises from manholes with a stygian stench that causes the vermin of the underworld to stir and scurry. A unique signal sent from police headquarters, pierces the skyline to call forth the Gotham Guardian to his lone patrol over these seedy streets. With gleaming eyes and the silent grace of a midnight panther, he prowls across rain slicked rooftops as the shadows stand at attention at his passing. His body is sleek and powerful, sculpted to physical perfection and his genius intellect is fully trained to a keen razors edge for his crusade against crime. His unparalleled senses are apex, fully attuned to every detail and nuance of the city's heartbeat. This is the world he was born into. The theatre he was created for. He pauses for a moment to survey the scene below, standing stalwart atop grim gargoyles as he cuts a towering and imposing figure against the deep crimson sky, while black storm clouds swirl above – the harbinger of a coming tempest that will soon alter the life of the dread Batman like none other before or since.





**Detective Comics #27** splash (May, 1939). This historic panel represents the very first drawing of The "Bat-Man" ever rendered. From the debut story entitled, "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate" by Batman's creators Bob Kane (art) and Bill Finger (script).

From inception to conception, the darkly atmospheric, mysterious and moody presentation of the Dark Knight Detective is considered by most as the quintessential interpretation of the character, beloved by readers and seasoned collectors alike. This was the way he was conceived more than seven decades ago by artist Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger for the 27th issue of *Detective Comics* (May, 1939). The initial idea was Kane's, inspired by the unprecedented smashing success

**Detective Comics #27** (May, 1939)

First app. The Bat-Man and Commissioner Gordon by Bob Kane and Bill Finger. The second most important comic book ever published.



and overwhelming popularity of Superman (created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster for *Action Comics* #1 in June of 1938), with the iconic defining details supplied by Finger (such as the bat-eared cowl, the black and grey costume and the classic origin tale) to bring forth a grim and brooding avenger of the twilight. A workingman's hero, much in the tradition of the famous pulp character the Shadow, in stark contrast to the bright and bold blue, red and yellow demi-god from Krypton. Bruce Wayne was not born the Batman, but had to exhaustively train himself, both physically and mentally, to become a super-hero. Superman soared through the heavens, dominating the daylight hours above his adopted city Metropolis. But, The Bat-Man ruled the night, preying upon the evil denizens of Gotham City with an ever frightful and unwavering relentlessness. None knew exactly what to make of him, who he was nor when or where he would appear. He was a living shadow, materializing and disappearing seemingly at will.

For a little more than a year, his creators Kane and Finger, along with writer Gardner Fox, presented a fascinatingly haunting stage for their laconic loner that was highly influenced by film noir, noted for its heavy use of shadows and dramatic lighting. Kane's artwork was stylistic, but effective and utterly mesmerizing as it perfectly fit the dark mood and enigmatic ambiance of the environment that his, "strange and weird creature of the night" haunted. And Kane's covers during this first year were nothing short of absolutely phenomenal, possessing a true and tangible sense of mysterious moodiness and fully charged with emotional childhood fascination that grips the reader's attention like none other. In fact, most seasoned collectors consider the classic run of *Detective Comics* #27-#40 as the greatest covers of the Golden-Age of Comic Books, without exception. This unparalleled creative team introduced a myriad of memorable and long lasting villains such as Dr. Death, the Monk, Doctor Hugo Strange, Clayface, Catwoman and, of course, the greatest Bat-baddie of them all, the Joker. Those earliest tales by Finger and Fox were written with such wonderful fair and a genuine sense of mystery and intrigue that they likewise, rank as perhaps the very finest stories of the entire Golden-Age period. Lightning in a bottle!



**Detective Comics #35** (January, 1940)

Classic hypodermic needle bondage cover by Bob Kane.

It was soon abandoned. The initial concept and storytelling style, so intriguing and engrossing, was substituted for a lighter, more adolescent friendly approach soon after with the introduction of Robin, the Boy Wonder in *Detective Comics* #38 (April, 1940). Bouncing joyfully from panel to panel with a beaming smile and

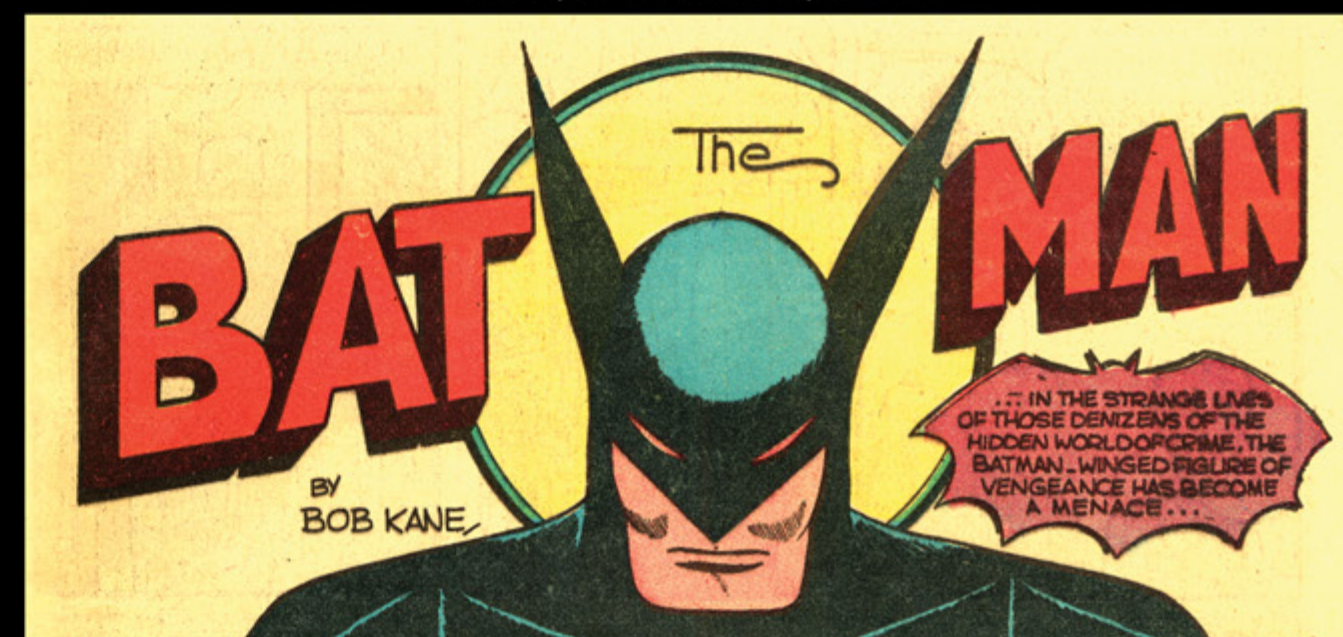


**Batman #1** (Spring, 1940) Debut issue introduces two arch-villains, the Joker and Catwoman (the Cat). Issue features the last solo Batman story of the Golden-Age. Cover art by Bob Kane.

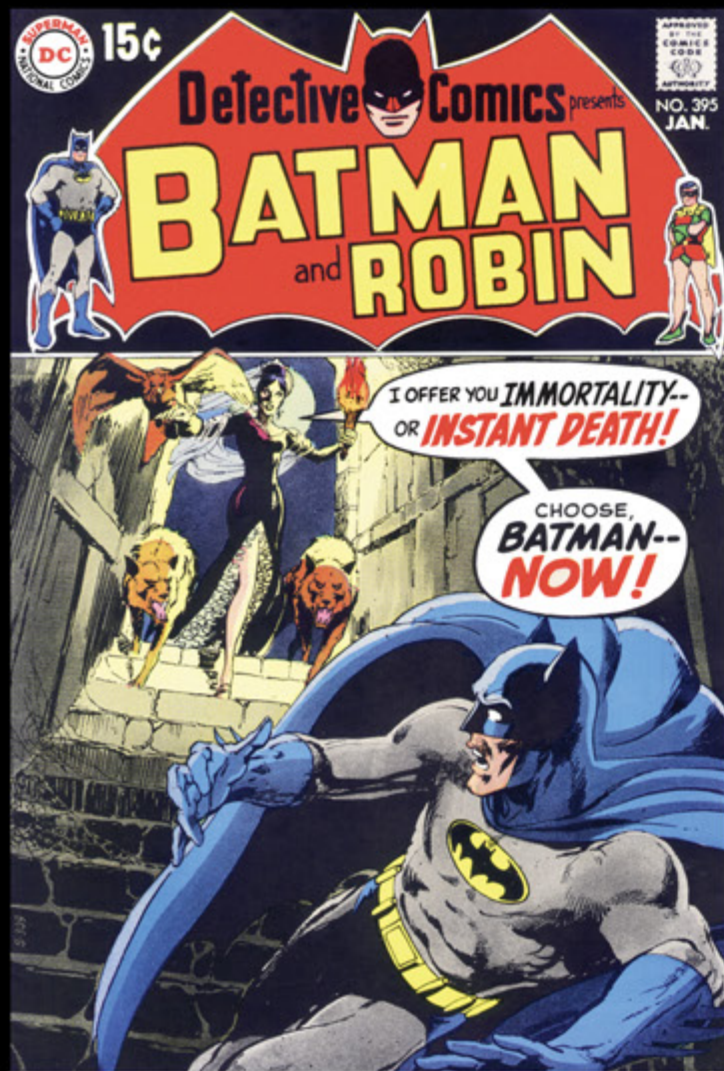
endless energy, Robin infused a strong sense of boyhood idyllic hope and bright Hollywood glamour that had been absent from the strip. This change, though lamentable to some, was quite significant, most likely necessary for the long-term survival of the strip, and would last for nearly 30 years.

**Detective Comics #30** splash (August, 1939)

Classic opening panel for part two of, "The Batman Meets Dr. Death" saga. Written by Gardner Fox and art by Bob Kane.







**Detective Comics #395** (Jan., 1970)  
 "The Secret of the Waiting Graves", by Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams - their first collaboration. Cover by Neal Adams.

And then came Neal Adams. It was the late 1960's and Adams was a young artist of extraordinary talent and unmatched vision, a throwback to such legendary illustrators as Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, Frank Frazetta and Al Williamson, who actually had the revolutionary idea of returning Batman back to the night, just as Kane and Finger had originally created him. The super-hype of "Batmania", which had sprung forth from the campy and cookey Batman TV series starring Adam West as Batman and Burt Ward as Robin (airing for three seasons on ABC from 1966-1968), had all but faded into oblivion and it was time once again for a change in direction - a much more serious direction. Adam's goal was to restore Batman back to his roots, re-cloak him with the somber shadows and unleash this, "dread creature of the night" upon an unsuspecting underworld and public at large. He had approached DC editor Julie Schwartz for a Batman gig, but Schwartz turned him down flat. Not one to be denied, Adams then walked down the hall to Murray Boltinoff's office who was the editor of *The Brave and the Bold* comic that teamed-up Batman with other superheroes of DC's pantheon. In an extensive interview that was recorded by Mark DiFruscio for *Back Issue #50* (TwoMorrows Pub., 2011), Adams explains, "So I asked Murray, 'I like to do one of your Brave and Bold stories.'

And he said, 'Sure, no problem.' And I said, 'But one thing, I would just like to take the stories from the daytime and place them at night.'"

Boltinoff replied, "Go ahead. Whatever you want. Are you going to change the stories?" To which Adams responded, "No, I'm not going to change a word. I just want to put them at night. And I'd like [Batman] rather than walk through a door, come in through a window.' Made more sense to me. Hide in the shadows. Little things like that."

Soon after, an irritated Schwartz gruffly ordered Adams into his office demanding, "Why are all these letters saying the only [good] Batman at DC Comics is in *Brave and Bold*?" Schwartz could be cantankerous and stubborn, but he certainly wasn't stupid and he perceived that his young star artist was definitely onto something here. In his wisdom, he awarded Adams Batman and teamed him a seasoned writer named Denny O'Neil, who had worked as a reporter for a newspaper and had actual experience on the police and hospital beats. These two titan talents were absolutely ideal for where Batman needed to return - the grim glory of his inception and the gritty reality of the mean streets of Gotham City. This was, beyond any doubt, a watershed momentous moment that marked one of the most important events in the entire mythos of the legend of the Batman. O'Neil and Adams literally made history here, with unforgettable stories of such magnitude and so highly influential that they are celebrated to this very day.



**Detective Comics #405** (Nov., 1970)  
 First appearance The League of Assassins.  
 Cover by Neal Adams.

O'Neil was likewise interviewed for *Back Issue #50*, where he explains, "What I thought we were doing was taking Batman back to May of 1939 and doing what Kane and Finger had done...What we were really doing was kind of remembering what we thought [Batman] should have been. What we thought it was. And that was our interpretation [beginning with] 'Secret of the Waiting Graves'" in *Detective Comics #395* (Jan., 1970).

Adams expounds, "So what Denny was doing was right. And hopefully what I was doing was right. But we all kind of got it. It was no secret that we were doing Batman right....It was fun, it was dark, it was mysterious. And you know what? It still is. It's pretty much the same as it was then. Everybody gets it." And reflecting back upon Schwartz's fateful decision of matching the proper writer with the ideal artist, Adams says, "He made the best and most sound judgment you could possibly make. And revolutionized comic books. Denny and I didn't revolutionize comic books. Julie Schwartz did. We did our job."

O'Neil sums it up beautifully by stating, "What comics did, and what Neal and I did, was magic realism. But then, comics and pulps had been doing it since the '30s."



**Detective Comics #409** (March, 1971)  
**Detective Comics #412** (June, 1971)  
**Detective Comics #413** (July, 1971)  
 All covers by Neal Adams.







**Batman #232** (June, 1971) First appearance Ra's Al Ghul in "Daughter of the Demon", by Denny O'Neil (story) and Neal Adams (art). Cover by Neal Adams.

And then in 1971, these three legends raised the bar even higher when they collaborated to create an arch-villain of monumental proportions – Ra's Al Ghul – an Anti-christ type would-be world dictator who's ultimate goal was to remake mankind and planet earth in his own image via global genocide. For *Back Issue #10* (TwoMorrows Publ., 2005), Peter Sanderson wrote an excellent in-depth article entitled "The Lives and Times of Ra's Al Ghul", in which the creation, origin and career of Al Ghul is explored in detail. Herein, O'Neil hypothesizes that, "...he and Schwartz saw a need for a new Batman villain, a mastermind who would be different from the Joker and the other costumed crooks associated with the character." O'Neil continued, "We didn't want just another street thug with a costume and a fancy name. We were going for grandeur."

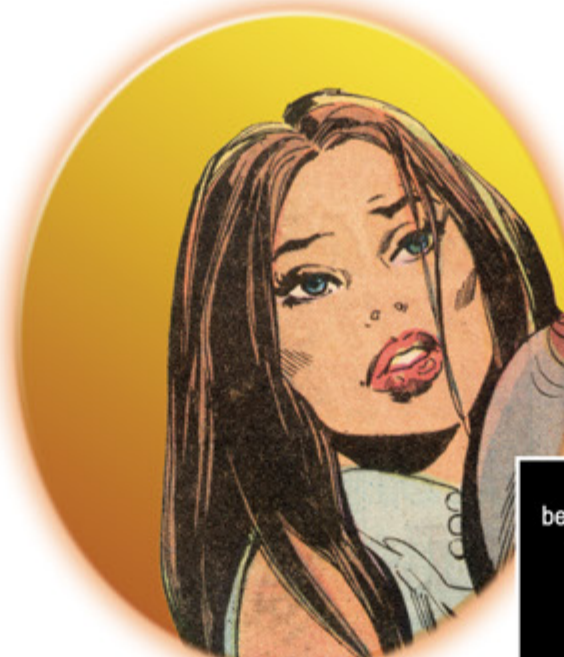
Schwartz came up with the foreboding name, which is loosely translated from the Arabic as "Head of the Demon", and Adams brought forth the look of Ra's entirely from his own imagination. Adams explains that Ra's was meant to be, "a character who is based in reality, which is sort of what our goal was at the time. In other words, come up with a villain, like Superman has Luthor, who is in some ways the equal of Batman, [and] not put him in a funny costume, but still make him striking." Not an easy task. Drawing from these concepts, Adams gave Ra's a high forehead explaining, "a high forehead is often regarded as a signifier of high intelligence,...it shows confidence."

He also gave him deep expressive eyes and a prominent brow that reflected the stern, non-nonsense persona of an unforgettable and very powerful presence. And then he added one last defining detail saying, "Here's another thing I can do that might make the character even more significant, give him no eyebrows. I removed the eyebrows, and it really made the character striking. Y'know, what's interesting about that is if you don't explain it sometimes, it's even cooler. So removing the eyebrows was important to me in that it created an air of mystery."

Ra's Al Ghul's debut would come in the classic tale, "Daughter of the Demon" for *Batman #232* (June, 1971), wherein he shows up unannounced in the Batcave to seek out Batman's aid to rescue his beautiful daughter, Talia from some unknown abductor who had likewise kidnapped Robin. The adventure eventually takes Batman, Ra's and his giant bodyguard Ubu to Mount Nanda Devi, situated in the remote and dangerous Himalayas. Here, standing upon a ledge overlooking a deep crevice, Ra's makes a very profound and revealing confession, "It is a beauty to which my soul responds...so stark, so pure...as untainted as my desert home! I am cursed with a love for emptiness...desolation!" Soon after, Batman is reunited with Robin and exposes the whole journey for a ruse, a "staged and complicated quest...", but is quite baffled as to the reason why. Ra's responds, "Your admirable mind has reasoned all save the obvious...that my darling Talia loves you! My organization is vast...! I consider retiring from my activities--! I had to satisfy myself that you are a worthy successor to me!...A worthy Son-in-Law!" The tale concludes with a panel of Talia kissing a rather startled Batman ever so gently on his cheek.



Ra's recites his trademark maxim upon a rocky crag of Mt. Nanda Devi. Interior panel from his first app. in *Batman #232*. Art by Neal Adams.



Lovely close-up of the beautiful Talia as she looks to Batman for her fate. Interior panel from *Batman #244*. Art by Neal Adams.

The lovely, yet quite complex Talia (created by O'Neil and artist Bob Brown) first appeared in *Detective Comics #411* (May, 1971) in the story, "Into the Den of the Death-Dealers!" (cover by Adams, script by O'Neil, pencils by Brown and inks by Dick Giordano). In this tale, Batman tracks the villain Dr. Ebenezer Darrk, former president of the League of Assassins, to his lair in Asia where he meets and rescues Talia from his clutches. After a falling out with Ra's, Darrk had abducted Talia in retaliation and she soon ends up killing him in order to save Batman's life.

Talia is an exotic beauty, perhaps a cross between the Mediterranean and the Far East, possibly Mongolia, and the Neal Adam's version is considered the definitive one. The artist is quoted again in *Back Issue #10* saying, "There is a certain sexiness you can enter into a character, and that was what I wanted to do with her,...And so the idea was to take this woman, who is beautiful, and that is your first conception of her, and make her capable. And that to be was the most important thing, to be sexy and capable."

Talia is the forerunner of the action heroines who are so common in pop culture today." And she would prove herself most capable by aiding and saving Batman's life on several occasions over the years. O'Neil adds, "I've always seen Talia as dignified. Kind of a stately, Grecian statue."

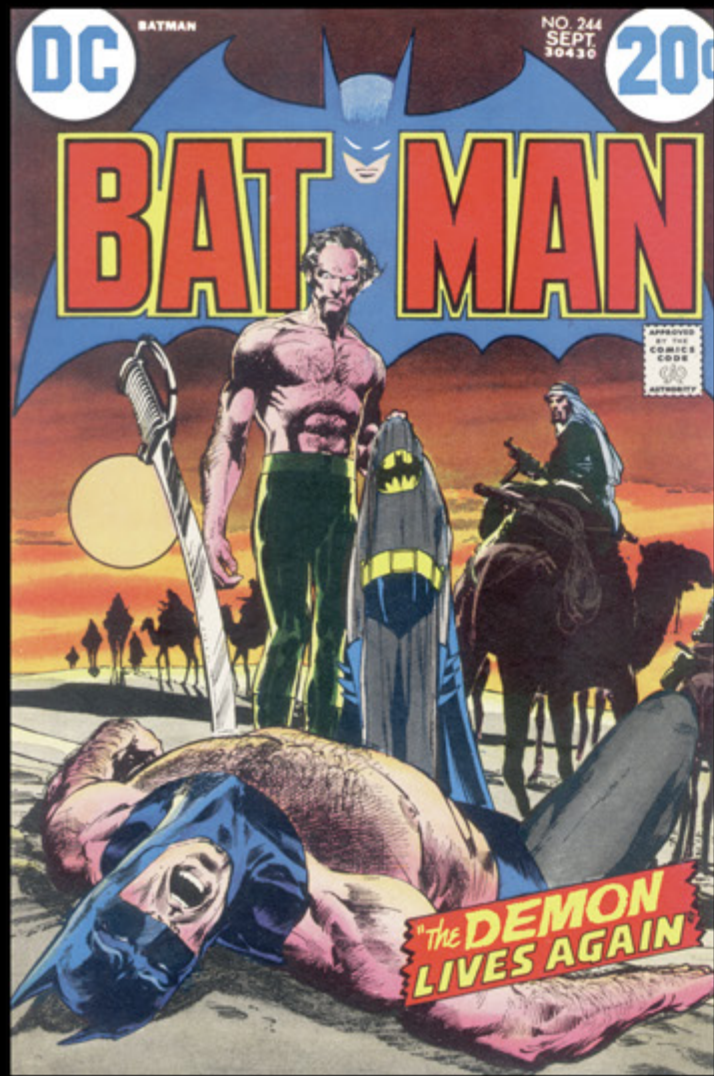
This story arc that introduced Ra's in *Batman #232* would continue in *Batman #242* "Bruce Wayne – R.I.P." (June, 1972), #243 "The Lazarus Pit" (Aug., 1972) and conclude in #244 "The Demon Lives Again" (Sept., 1972). In this climatic chapter, the detective tracks Al Ghul to his desert lair and eavesdrops to hear him admit, "I have been called a criminal and genius...and I am neither! I am an artist! I have a vision...of an earth as clean and pure as a snow-swept mountain...or the desert outside!" To which, Batman angrily responds, "It is the vision of a madman!" Ra's immediately challenges Batman to a duel-to-the-death with scimitars, to which he readily agrees. The two titans fiercely engage one another under the sweltering sun, but the intense combat is unexpectedly interrupted by the sharp sting from a lurking scorpion upon Batman's ankle, and Ra's leaves his fallen foe to his fate. Talia tarries behind long enough to secretly administer some anti-venom that saves the Detective's life. And, like a desert wraith, he rises from the dunes in the cool of the evening to re-emerge with unabashed rage at Al Ghul's tent and defeats the shocked villain who asks, "By the gods! You pursue me past your dying...! Are you man—or fiend from hell?"

Batman and Talia embrace once more before he departs with Ra's slung over his shoulders into the desert night.



Classic portrait of Talia and Ra's as they plan their next move from their secret desert encampment with the Batman in hot pursuit. Interior panel from *Batman #244*. Art by Neal Adams.





**Batman #244** (Sept., 1972)

Climatic chapter of the first Ra's Al Ghul saga titled "The Demon Lives Again", by O'Neil and Adams. A duel to the death on the hot desert dunes. Cover by Neal Adams.

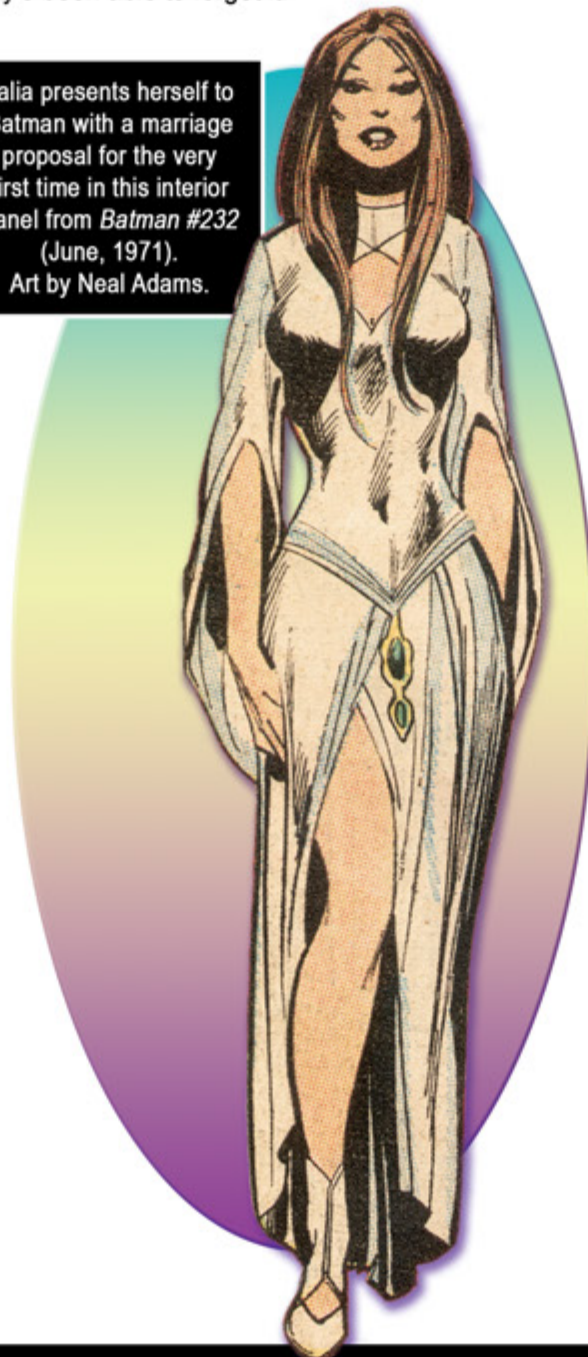
Thus, the characters had been created and introduced into the storyline with Ra's Al Ghul now firmly established as a major adversary, and his gorgeous daughter Talia, a true and genuine love interest for Batman. The premise was laid and the stage was set for the complex and ever revolving relationship of these three personalities to be explored and expanded upon even further.

Fast forward 15 years and the man of the hour was Mike W. Barr. Barr was a talented writer who had co-created *Batman and the Outsiders* with Jim Aparo after the cancellation of the long running title *The Brave and the Bold* with issue #200 (July, 1983), and was currently enjoying the smashing success of his maxi-series *Camelot 3000* (DC, 1982-85), illustrated by English artist Brian Bolland (who would go on to draw *Batman: The Killing Joke* in 1988). Barr approached his editor at DC, Dick Giordano about of idea of publishing graphic novels since Marvel had already been doing so since 1982 (over 20 released by this time) and were doing quite well - with some of the more notable ones being, (01) *Death of Captain Marvel* by Jim Starlin (1982), (04) *The New Mutants* by Chris Claremont and Bob McLeod (1982), (05) *X-Men: God Loves Man Kills* by Claremont and Brent Eric Anderson (1983) and the beautifully illustrated (21) *Marada the She-Wolf* by Claremont and John Bolton (1985).

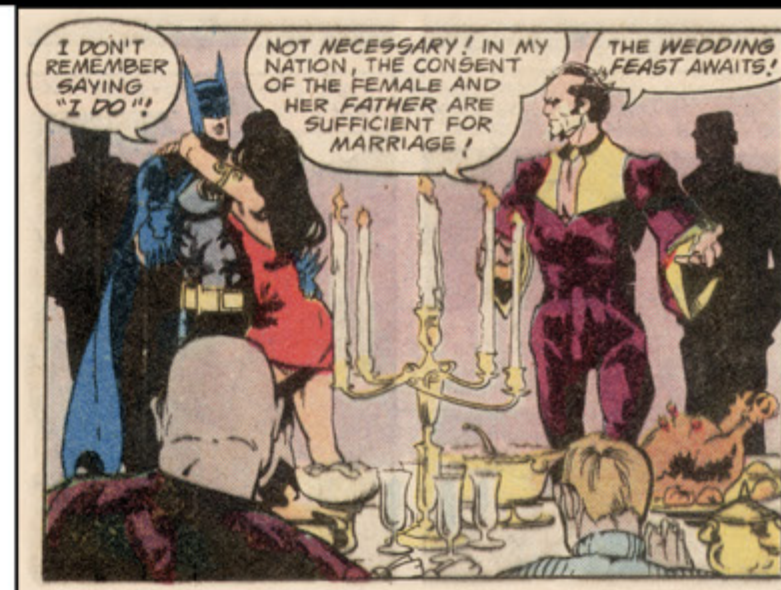
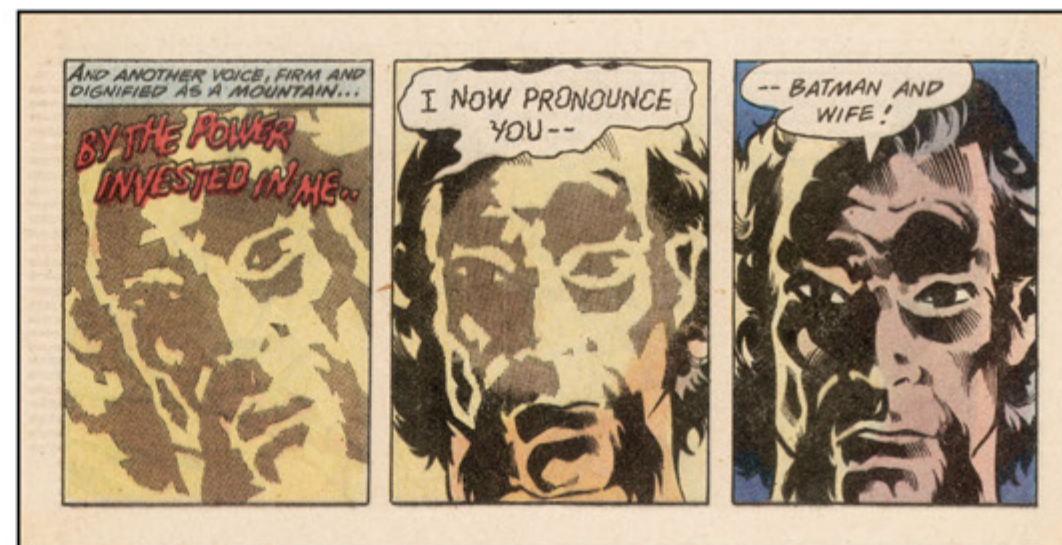
Barr obviously felt the DC was missing a really big boat with titanic potential! In the informative "sidebarr" article for *Back Issue #10*, Barr says, "I had a contract with DC to do a Batman graphic novel, and I had come up with the idea to do a Ra's al Ghul story because I had always liked the character and Denny was over at Marvel at the time, so he had really no claim on it anymore. I came up with the idea of Talia being pregnant with Batman's child. And then later on she would lose the child."

But Barr, being a true maverick and trend-setting author at heart, was not content with such a safe and secure, status quo restored ending. He believed that since this was to be the very first Batman graphic novel, published in larger prestige format on better paper stock and would carry a cover price of \$14.95 - 20x that of a regular comic book (75-cents) at that time - the readers would want something more than your typical cliché ending. He wanted a really significant, even life-changing event for Batman to occur within the story. Barr expounds, "So I said to Dick that at the end if it turns out she really has not lost the baby, that the baby's out there, that's going to be a punch that they're not going to be able to forget. And I think I was right. I don't know if anybody's been able to forget it."

Talia presents herself to Batman with a marriage proposal for the very first time in this interior panel from *Batman #232* (June, 1971). Art by Neal Adams.



But, Giordano balked. The thought of Batman, one of DC's stalwart pillars of success since the 1930's, actually having a child out of wedlock seemed anathema. An ironic mindset since DC's flagship hero Superman had bedded Lois Lane without a wedding in the feature film *Superman II* (portrayed by Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder in 1981). Were they actually married in the movie or did DC simply decide to look the other way here since it was the glamorous lights of Hollywood? Who knows? Nevertheless, Giordano was hesitant. Barr had anticipated this and showed him the comic *Batman Spectacular DC Special Series #15* (Summer, 1978 written by O'Neil, penciled by Michael Golden and inked by Giordano himself) that featured the story, "I Now Pronounce You Batman and Wife!" wherein Ra's marries Batman to Talia aboard his large tanker somewhere in the Atlantic - outside the jurisdiction of the U.S. When Batman responds, "I don't remember saying 'I do!'" Ra's interjects, "Not necessary! In my nation, the consent of the female and her father are sufficient for marriage!" Satisfied, Giordano signed off on Barr's controversial plot; one which would prove extremely explosive in subsequent years.



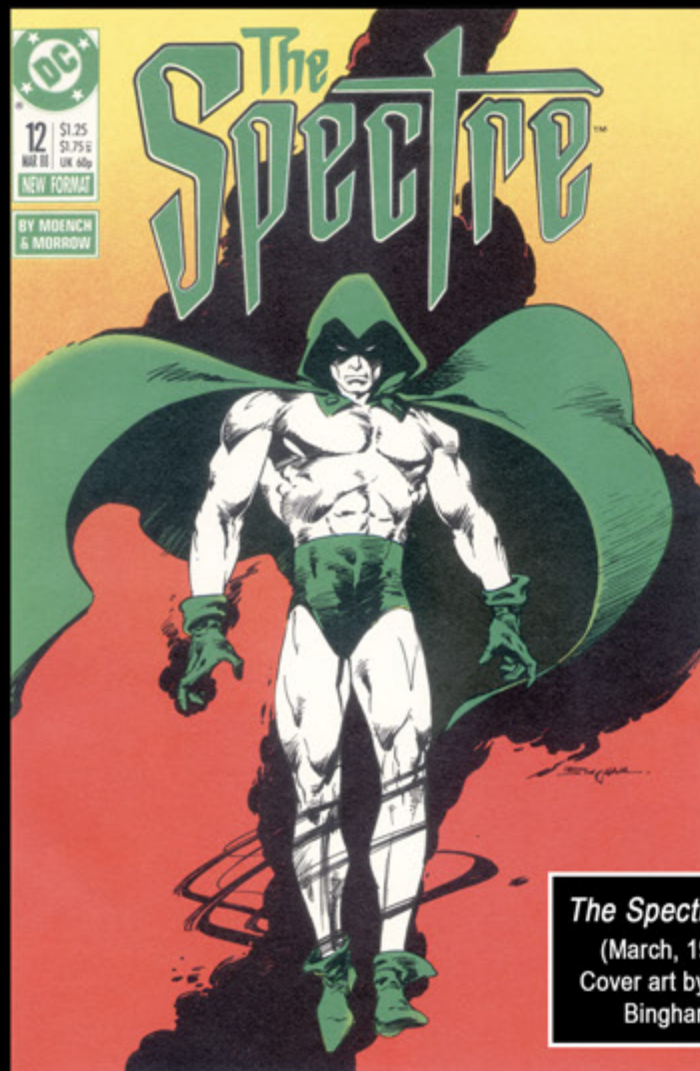
**DC Special Series #15 Batman Spectacular** (Summer, 1978)

This superb jam-packed issue features three full feature Batman stories including, #1 "Hang the Batman" by writer David V. Reed and art by Mike Nasser (Netzer), #2 "I Now Pronounce You Batman and Wife" written by Denny O'Neil with art by Michael Golden, and #3 "Death Strikes at Midnight and Three" - a short story by O'Neil and embellished with art by Marshall Rogers. This book contains no ads. Cover art by Marshall Rogers.

Interior panels from the story, "I Now Pronounce You Batman and Wife", wherein Ra's marries Batman to Talia aboard his tanker. Pencils by Michael Golden and inks by Dick Giordano - the tale from which Mike W. Barr based his premise for *SOD*.







**The Spectre #12**  
(March, 1988)  
Cover art by Jerry Bingham.

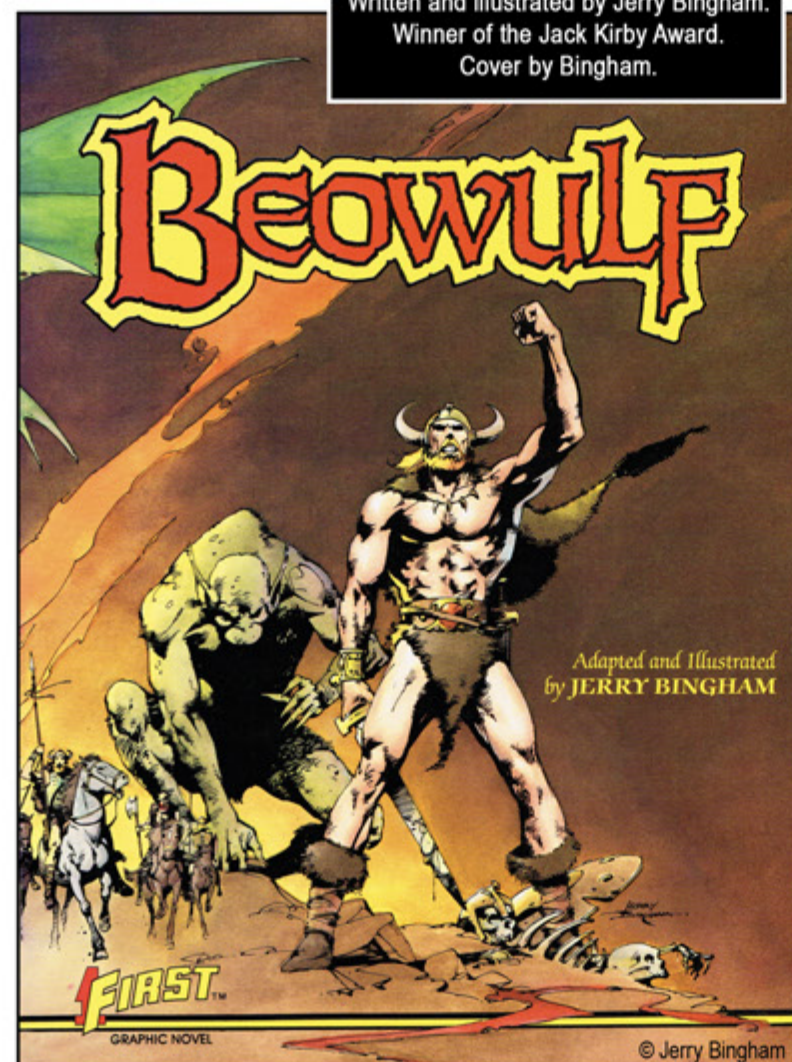
The graphic novel would be titled *Batman Son of the Demon* (SOD), and Barr was striving for something super special. He wanted a truly epic and more mature saga that would push the envelope by testing the limits of how far he could transcend Batman with a unique, never seen before character arc. He wanted, not only expand the existing readership, but potentially reach an entirely new audience as well. Hence, the story had to be bigger and better than your typical comic book - more sophisticated, engaging and impactful. Much more. In short, it had to be downright unforgettable! Barr explains, "The dilemma for me was how far could I push Batman past his present stories that were running in *Batman* and *Detective Comics*? In essence, how violent and how intense can I get and still remain true to the basic core of the character. I mean, Batman is not Dirty Harry who can kick down a door and start blasting away the bad guys."

Another important hurdle to be overcome was to find an artist who would do the book justice. When asked about how Jerry Bingham came to be involved in the project, Barr answered, "I initially asked Brian Bolland, whom I had done *Camelot 3000* with, but he said that he was not interested in doing a graphic novel and no one else suitable seemed to be available at the time. I then wrote an article for the *CBG* (*Comic Book Buyers Guide*), which stated that I was working on the very first Batman graphic novel and was looking for an artist. Jerry (who was best known for his Kirby Award winning graphic novel *Beowulf* - First Comics, 1984) read the article and called me up."

With Bingham signed on, Barr completed the SOD plot on December 15, 1985. Barr explains, "I wrote *Son of the Demon* 'Marvel style'. Sending Jerry a detailed [page by page] plot outline but no dialogue, nor panel breakdowns. In June of 1986, I began receiving copies of the penciled pages and began filling in the dialogue. By August of 1986, I had all the penciled pages with completed dialogue. The book was released one year later in August of 1987."

Barr also noted, "In the original plot there was an additional scene in which Batman follows a lead to the tough streets of Watts in South Central L.A." This however, was left out of the final version of the book.

For Bingham's part, the artwork for SOD took him an entire year and a half to fully finish with each individual page requiring, on average, three full days to complete the pencil and ink stages and then another day or two to apply Dr. Martin's watercolors upon blue lines of the art. The black and white artwork was rendered on huge "twice-up" 15" x 20" sheets of heavy illustration paper supplied by the DC offices. Of special note is that Bingham choose to ink with an old fashioned quill pen - a painstaking process of dip and apply, dip and apply etc., that not only demanded a great deal of skill, but time and immense patience as well. Nonetheless, the exceptional detail and outstanding rendering of his pen and ink work is fully apparent in each and every panel - a clear testament to his tremendous talent and dedication to his profession.

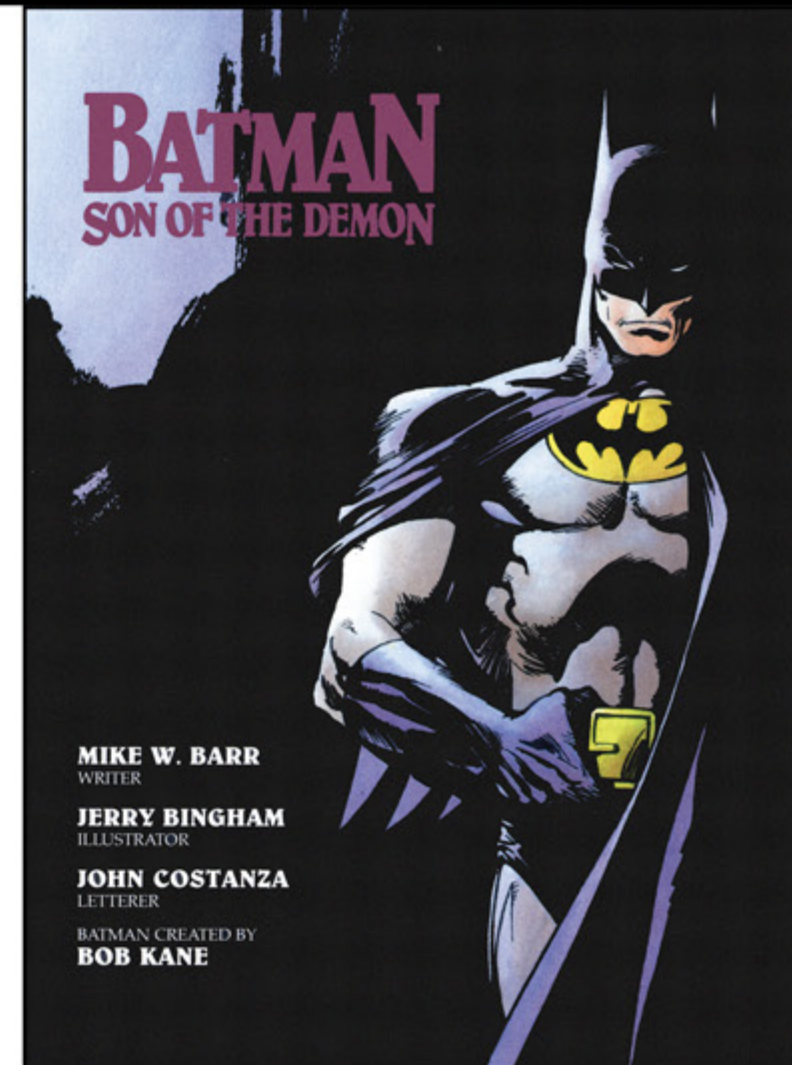


**Beowulf GN** (First Comics, 1984)  
Written and illustrated by Jerry Bingham.  
Winner of the Jack Kirby Award.  
Cover by Bingham.

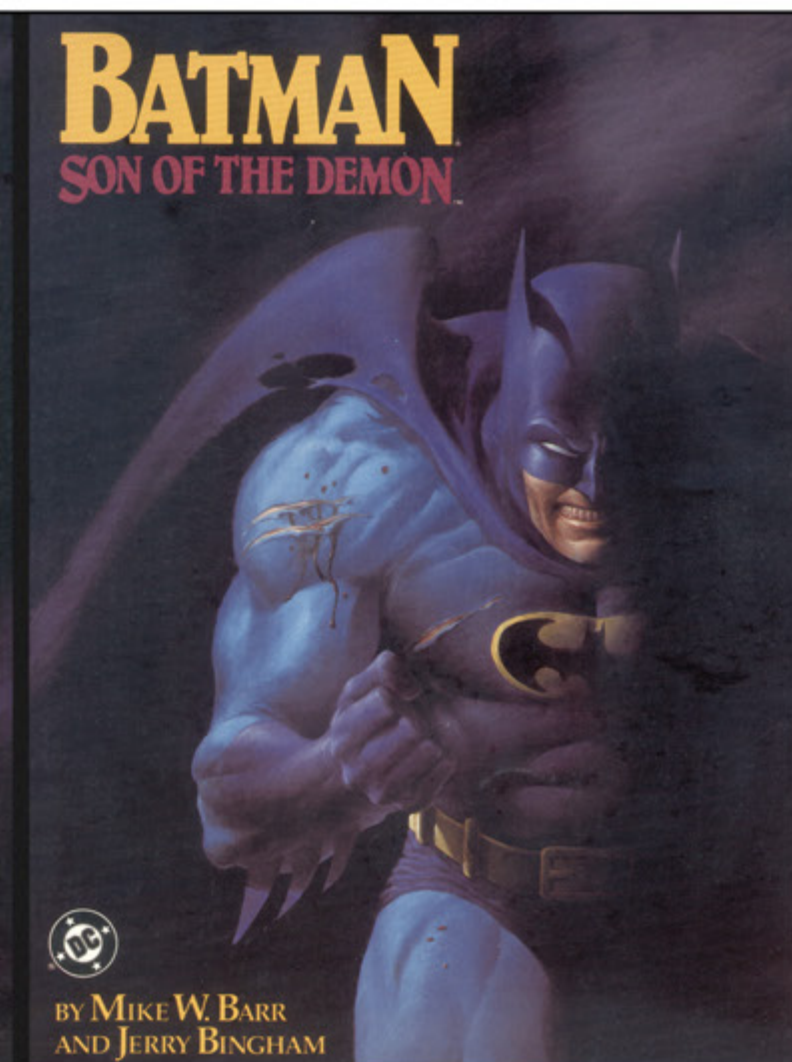
In an exclusive interview with Bingham for this article, the artist was asked, "Was there any particular reason why you chose to use an old fashioned quill pen to ink the interior pages? Would this type of tool give you more control and allow for greater detail in the finished artwork?"

Bingham replied, "At the time, the only options I knew were quill or brush. India ink had to be black because the printing process wasn't very forgiving and any translucency came across as muddy. A couple books tried to experiment with printing from pencils - Gene Colan drew all his comics in tone and his pencils were gorgeous, but (I believe) difficult to translate for some inkers, so he was the perfect choice to try this with - but the printing process of the era didn't do it justice. Still, anything he did looked great."

SOD is considered Bingham's Magnum Opus; a true masterpiece in illustrative storytelling and his wonderful classic art style is very reminiscent of such legendary talents as Hal Foster and Neal Adams. When asked if the large size format of the graphic novel influenced his decision making for the panel breakdowns, Bingham answered, "No. When I started this project, all I knew was the standard for the industry at the time. The only GN adaptation that I enjoyed was the ability to bleed the art beyond the outside borders of the panels. At the time, standard comics, while occasionally bleeding a figure from one panel to the next, the outside borders were a fairly rigid construct - If not by mandate, at least in this young artist's mind."

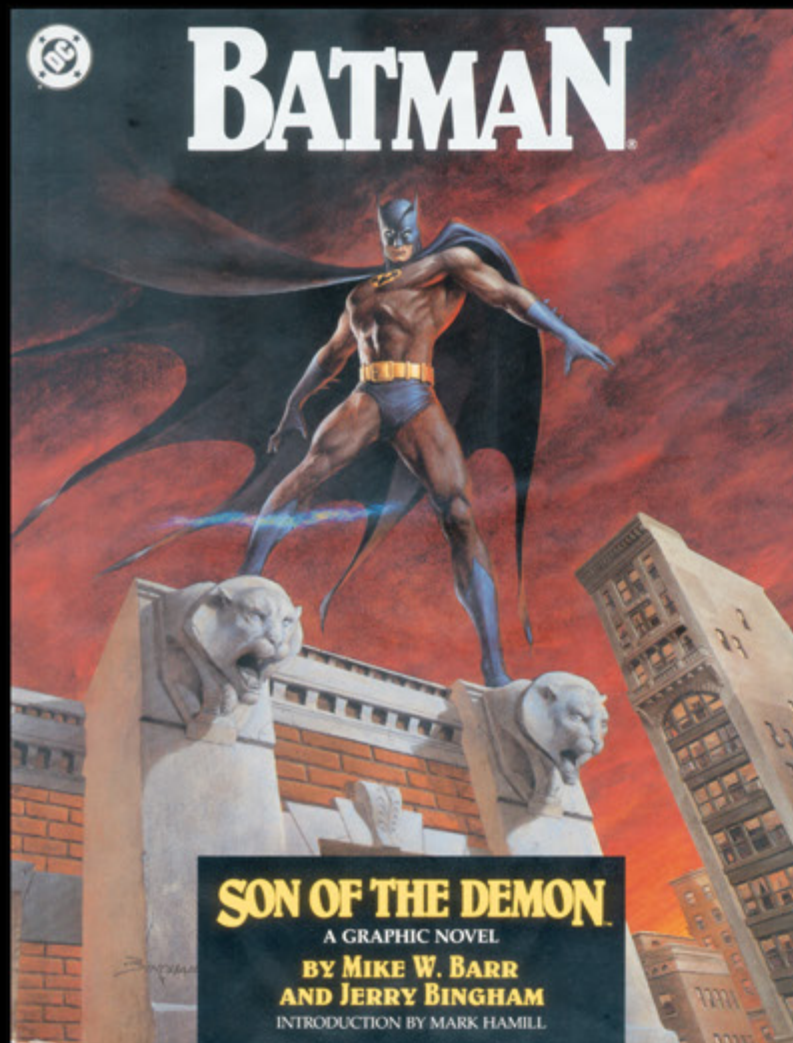


**MIKE W. BARR**  
WRITER  
**JERRY BINGHAM**  
ILLUSTRATOR  
**JOHN COSTANZA**  
LETTERER  
BATMAN CREATED BY  
**BOB KANE**



BY **MIKE W. BARR**  
AND **JERRY BINGHAM**





Another important factor to consider is that originally, *SOD* was scheduled to be printed only in soft cover format (SC), but when the editor and several of the DC executives saw the original artwork for the first time, they were so blown away at the epic beauty and genuine mastery of the work that they immediately decided to produce a deluxe hard cover edition (HC) in addition; one which would include an introduction by "Luke Skywalker" himself, Mark Hamill.

Bingham would produce a spectacular full oil painting for the HC edition - a piece that is considered to be one of the most iconic images of Batman ever created (image above) - as well as an additional oil wrap around cover for the SC. Bingham was asked, "The oil painting cover you did for the hard cover edition of *SOD* is truly a phenomenal piece of work. Do you recall if DC gave you any sort of art direction for the cover, or did they just leave it entirely up to you?" The artist replied, "Thank you, no. And, I was going for that iconic Batman look. I'm sure I'm not the first to envision Batman standing on a rooftop with gargoyles of some sort, and there really isn't much of Batman and skyscrapers in the story, but it was the first Batman graphic novel and I went for the epic approach. I used a dry brush technique for the background clouds. Stylistically, my painting approach was still in its infancy, I was mostly self-taught, so what you see is what you got."

"The building [lower right of Batman's figure] was inspired by the work of the great New York cityscape artist, Richard Estes. I remember one year at the San Diego Comic Con a fan came up to my table with a tattoo of the cover on his arm."

Of Bingham's art on *SOD*, Barr states, "I feel it is the finest work Jerry has ever done in comics."

When questioned about his biggest influences as an artist, due to the classic style of his illustration, Bingham answered, "If there is a classical feel to my art, it's probably because I have over a hundred influences. I try to get something out of every artist I enjoy. But regarding comics, my two greatest influences growing up were "Big" John Buscema and Neal Adams. Jack Kirby was by impetus. But Buscema the style. I lived and breathed his books, thrilled at every new issue, and I'm so grateful he was as prolific as he was and left such a mountain of work behind."

And so, Giordano had opened the gates for these two thoroughbred talents, who strove with such vehement passion that they would lift Batman to a pinnacle in graphic literature that few others have been able to equal or even begin to approach to this very day.

*Batman Son of the Demon* opens ominously with a four panel prologue in a remote desert-like region as Ra's al Ghul rises up from a deep crevice in the earth's surface, perhaps even out of hell itself. Barr writes, "The earth screams, like a woman giving birth..."

When asked about this striking scene and whether or not he was implying some sort of supernatural subtext here, Barr replies, "To the best of my recollection, the original plot for *SOD* played right off of my story ['The Messiah of the Crimson Sun'] in *Batman Annual* #8 (1982) with Ra's being revived from his 'death' in that story. I believe I was later told that Ra's had been used since Annual #8, so I just cobbled together a moody, but non-specific resurrection scene. I was able to use prose and art to hook together the theme of storms and birth that weave in and out throughout the tale."

Bingham expounds exponentially about this haunting opening scene:

"I really liked the layout of this page. I like geometrical compositions and was conscious of directional lines and placement of important elements, the transitions between distant, extreme close-up, close-up and receding, then to the master overhead - chopper's eye view. And the blacks circle the page to make the compositional point.

"Panel #1: abstract, directional lines formed by the clouds and a lightning-like crack in the earth...all pointing directly to the clutching hand in extreme close-up..."

"Panel #2: the negative space (sans caption) is necessary for that hand to pop...the hand pointing to the close-up of Ra's face..."

"Panel #3: Ra's hands are positioned in a way that one can draw a straight line from the panel #1 clouds, through the "straight" pinky on the panel #2 hand, down and across to the heavy shadows on panel #4...and the all-important split in the earth.

"Panel #4: The receding Ra's is becoming insignificant and the panel is now more about the vertical lightning crack in the earth that leads the eye purposefully down into the major circular composition of the helicopter's POV.

"Panel #5 (Half-Splash): Let your eyes follow the lines of the bridges, around the design of shadows and blacks across the warehouse, back around the suspended track lines, bottom left, to the twin water tanks, and then you notice the vehicles. From the semi truck to the circles of cop cars and van to the small tanker truck (top of the panel). The small vehicle circle encapsulating the front of the warehouse...where the intended action will take place. The circling elements don't clutter because of the purposeful negative space, lower right.



Your eye cannot avoid seeing those vehicles. All is slammed home by the big "X" (draw a line diagonally from the bridges down the roofline of the warehouse, then another line for the heaviest shadows and smokestacks down to those water tanks). The curve of that shoreline is even meant to lead the eye back to panel #1.

"The best composition keeps the eye moving where the artist wants it to go.

"Much of what I describe, is thought out in the initial thumbnails, with the minor accents and details contributing as the page develops."



Strangely, there is not one full splash page used in *SOD*. When asked about this odd omission, and whether or not his approach to the script was any different because of the larger format in which the book was going to be printed, Barr recollects that the prestige format would provide for much larger images and thus, convey a grandiose feel throughout. He states, "I recall thinking that with the larger format we could probably keep the same amount of panels and make them more panoramic, to 'open it up', as they say in Hollywood, so the larger panels would be that much more spectacular. That may have been one of the reasons the book was done from a plot rather than a full script, to give Jerry the best possible advantage to use the expanded format."

Bingham also interjected about this, "I would've loved large splash pages, but I personally hate more than six panels per page and as I recall, if I had any difficulty breaking down the visuals on this book, it was because the script was pretty complicated and I was trying to force multiple actions into a single panel just to get a little breathing room. For me, storytelling comes first. It is what comics are all about. Beyond artistic style, and making pretty pictures, the movie must play out without difficulty for the viewer. Everything else is personal, artistic taste."



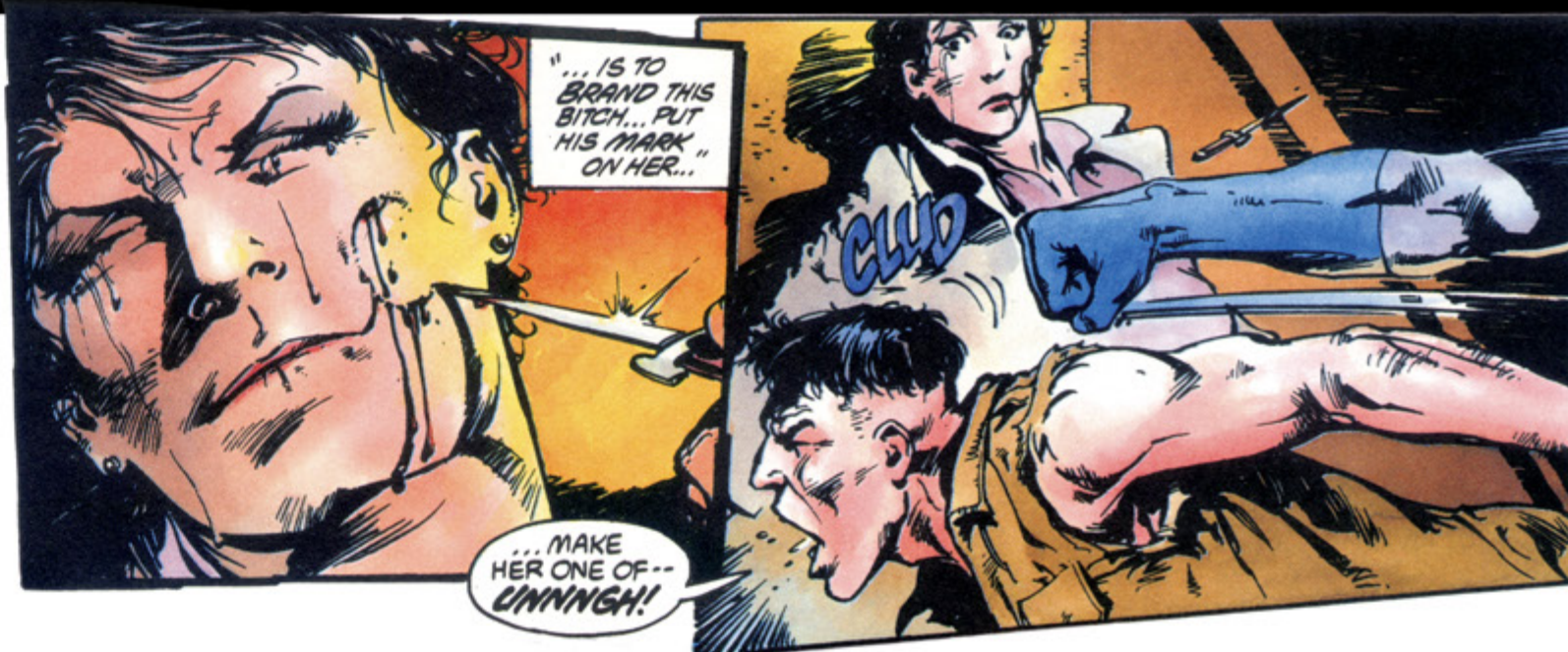
Gordon simply replies, "Professional negotiators are on their way!"

Unimpressed, the terrorist screams back, "Screw your negotiators, man!"

"Have it your way, junior..." Gordon thinks, "...but I guarantee, you won't like the alternative...!" He then peers up in the night sky at the bright bat-signal, boldly emblazoned upon a cloud.



After this brief prologue, the tale cuts to a (half splash) establishing aerial shot of the Gotham Chemical Plant, which has been surrounded by police squad cars and a Swat unit in a tense stand off with a group of international terrorists. The insurgents hold a number of hostages, have access to deadly chemicals and are not interested in any type of negotiations with Commissioner Gordon's police force. An unnamed sadistic terrorist grabs a very frightened woman in late pregnancy named Nancy by her hair and points his Uzi to her head, yelling defiantly out the window, "Listen up, cops! I gotta fat lady here! You try anything, she buys it! You follow? Well?"



This scene is a wonderful ode to the Kane/Finger and O'Neil/Adams classic collaborations with a very high emphasis on mood and atmosphere, while simultaneously building tremendous tension through the antics of the antagonists. The terrorist who has set his eyes upon Nancy is particularly vile as he threatens to ravish her right in front of her husband, but, before doing so, flips up his switchblade boasting, "...and what I want most...is to brand this bitch...put his mark on her..." In utter hopelessness with tears steaming down her face, Nancy shuts her eyes tight and turns away as he begins to slowly carve the letter "Q" in her cheek. The vile act is beyond brutal, the savagery and humiliation infuriating in this extremely intense moment, packed with such raw emotion that it prompts the reader to scream out for immediate retribution. This is storytelling at its very finest and Barr and Bingham are firing on all cylinders here in, beyond any doubt, one of the best and most moving panels of the entire book.

With careful examination, the reader may notice that each one of the terrorists have this strange "Q" etched somewhere on their bodies as a signifier (as we would learn later on in the tale) of the one man whom they serve under - Qayin. When asked if this "Mark of Qayin" branding was meant to have any connection to the infamous Mark of Cain in the Book of Genesis 4:15, where God places a mark on Cain after he had murdered his younger brother Abel, Barr says, "That's exactly right. That was a thematic resonance I thought was too good to pass up. And if Qayin is Cain, then Batman, later in the story, becomes Abel, since they're both sons of Ra's Al Ghul."

It is now, at long last, that the dread Batman makes his first appearance with a powerful punch to the back of the terrorist's cranium, who fires wildly in an enraged daze, but our hero has secured himself once more in the shadows. Three more perpetrators open fire and Batman tosses a couple of gas pellets to produce a thick smokescreen that causes chaos and uncertainty among the crazed criminals.





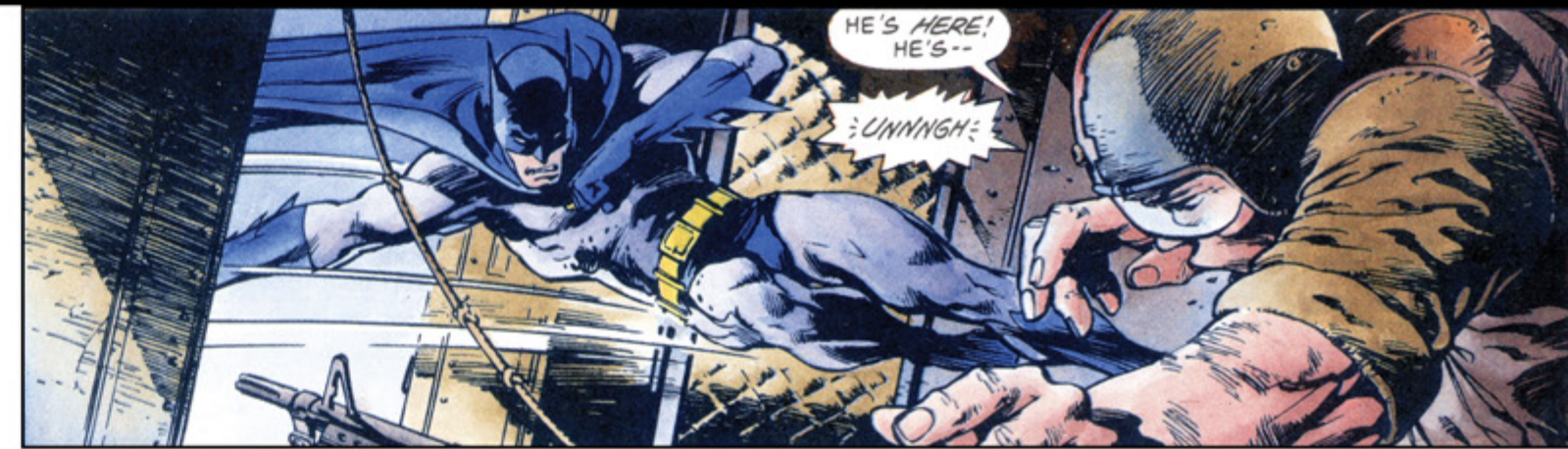
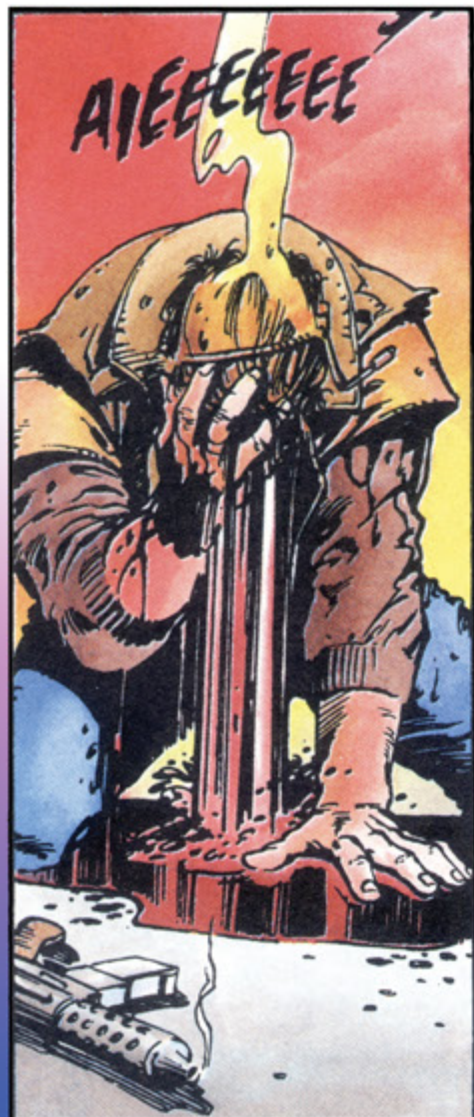


Pressing his advantage, the manhunter flows in and out of the darkness with the silent speed and grace of a deadly jungle cat, taking out the terrorists one by one until only a single perp remains on the floor. One that grabs Nancy, threatening to murder her if his unseen opponent does not show himself in five seconds. After a quick countdown, the Batman boldly steps into full view and cryptically states, "Time's up." The terrorist spins and fires at a blitzing Batman who takes a couple of bullets in his side, while a few others slam into the barrels behind him - barrels full of highly pressurized toxic chemicals that violently spew out at full force into the shocked villain's face. In this horizontal action panel (above), Batman strikes, perhaps his most famous pose by dramatically sweeping his azure cloak across his body for protection - the classic Golden-Age stance created and immortalized by Kane himself. The black ooze instantly melts the flesh from the gunman's face as he looks up and curses Batman by saying, "God damn you...!" Batman leers down at his defeated foe with laconic indifference and ironically responds, "Looks like he got you first."

But, the caped crusader's task is not yet finished as he quickly climbs the stairs of a towering smoke stack, leaps onto the helicopter that was hovering to extract the terrorist team and makes short work of the gunner and pair of pilots as the helicopter explodes like an erupting volcano.

Commissioner Gordon has looked on with grave concern, ordering the Harbor Patrol to begin searching the river for bodies, that is, until Batman surfaces with a deep gasp and asking his friend of the welfare of the hostages. The concerned crusader returns to check on the hostages and eyes a doctor giving medical attention to a wounded terrorist who had been accidentally shot by one of his own men. Batman grabs the doctor and angrily demands, "That man can wait, doctor." The ruffled doctor responds, "He -- He has some rights, you know." Batman declares, "That woman has more."

With broad muscular shoulders that seem to carry the weight of the world, Batman moves over to speak with Nancy and her husband Mark, "Are the two of you all right, Ma'am?"



Mark answers, "Why..er...yes...thank you for all your...your help, Batman..."

"And your child?", he further questions.

Nancy responds, "I...I think he's fine...thank you..."

"Good," comments Batman, "...a child needs his parents...it's a terrible thing for a child to have to grow up alone."

Barr's dialogue exchange here is quite significant on various levels as it simultaneously reveals sophisticated subtext, introduces two profound themes of the story, while reflecting back on Batman's tragic and sorrow filled past. When asked about these all-important themes, expressly that of (#1) Batman as a Christ-like figure and (#2) that of the father/son relationship explored throughout *SOD*, Barr explains, "Superman is most often mentioned when discussing Christ figures in comics, but I think Batman also qualifies. He suffered immensely by the deaths of his parents, but, rather than turning inward and becoming bitter, he made the deliberate choice to try to prevent others from suffering as he has, risking his life every day to aid people he has never met."

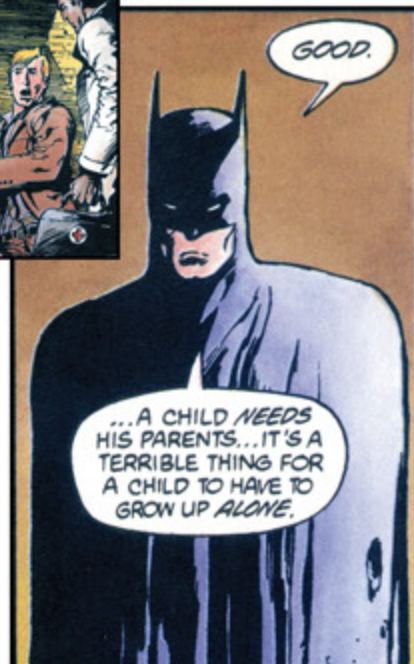
"The father-son/parent-child relationship is expressed in many ways in *SOD*, from the pregnant woman Batman saves in the story's opening scene to the relationship between Harris Blaine Sr. to [Harris Blaine] Junior and Batman to Ra's Al Ghul. Qayin's motivation comes from the deaths of his parents. Even Batman and Qayin become Ra's' sons during the story, making them, in an odd way, brothers. This kind of parallel structure and reemphasized theme is pure gold if a writer knows how to utilize it."

"That's why Robin isn't in the story. The inclusion of the Boy Wonder would seem a natural in a story dealing with father/son themes, but I felt that including Robin as Batman's symbolic son would dilute the intensity both of the relationship between Batman and Ra's Al Ghul, and the relationship between Batman and Talia when Batman learns Talia is pregnant. When Batman learns that, their child has to become the primary focus of any father/son relationship that he might be involved in."

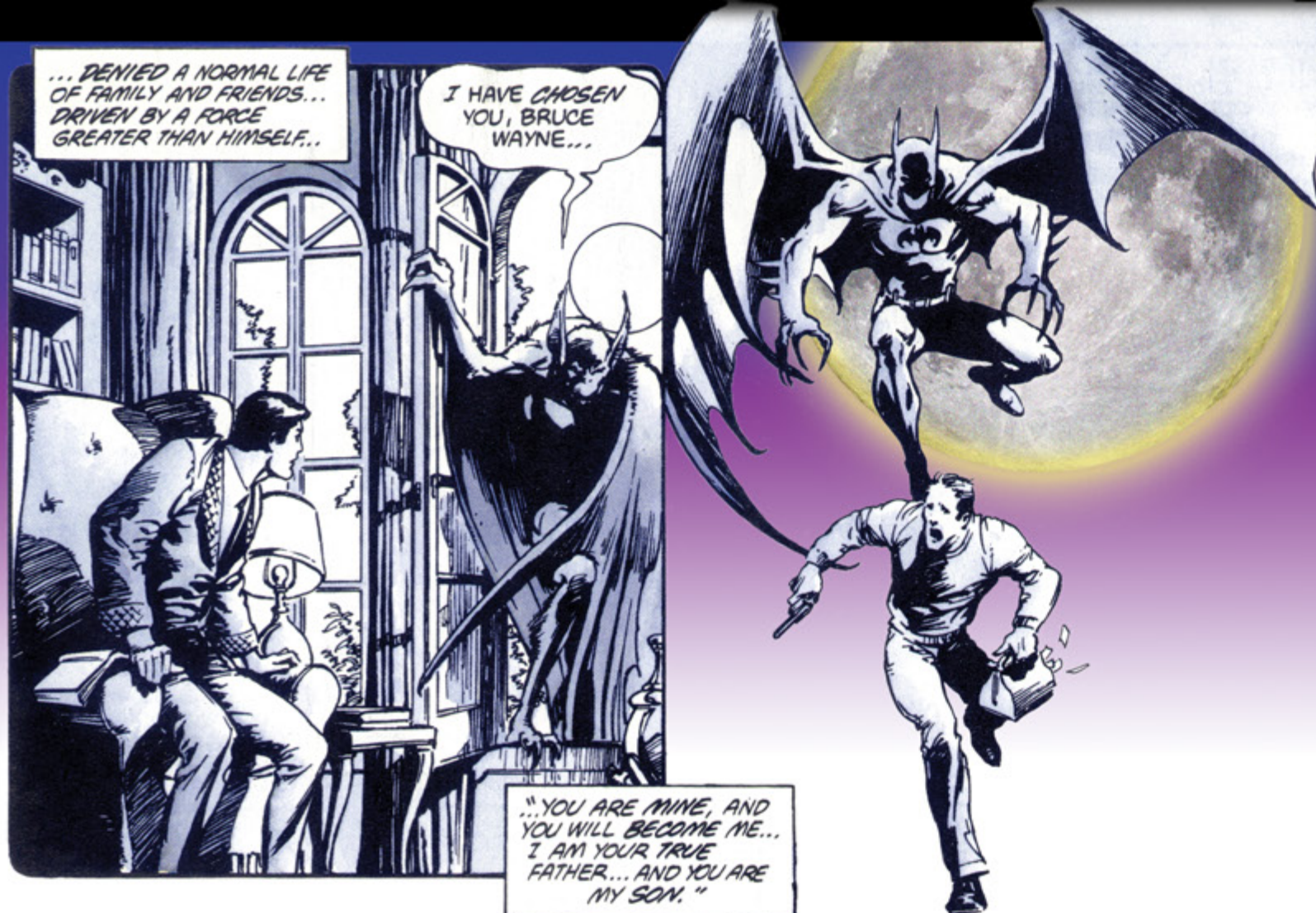
This idea of Batman as a Christ-like character is wonderfully fascinating and has many parallels and like comparisons in the world

of superheroes; most notably that of Superman (as mentioned) and the Silver Surfer - beings from far-off alien worlds, endowed with god-like powers and abilities and graced with great compassion and concern for mankind and the betterment of the human race as a whole. Batman is a more down-to-earth and realistic example of this. A man of flesh and blood, just like us, with a keen intellect and possessing a relentless drive to battle evil and protect the good, God-fearing and law abiding citizens of his city. A man who has chosen a life of hard discipline and extreme self sacrifice for the dream of a much safer and secure world - a modern day King David.

Barr likewise touches upon a very intriguing subtext in this scene - that of the rights of a victim vs the rights of the criminal. If an individual chooses to commit a crime - a deliberate and violent crime - one that violates the basic rights of another, how much claim should they have to their own? And to what extent should they be able to make claim to these rights, especially if they have blatantly disregarded the sanctity and welfare of a fellow human being? Should they be able to "hide" behind these rights, be protected by them in a court of law? I believe that Batman would ascribe to the words of Jesus Christ here, who decrees, "Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matthew 18: 7)







Batman swings off, chastising himself for diving in the very polluted Gotham River with an open wound, and soon alights down into a nearby alleyway for a brief rest. Due to the contamination of the river and the amount of blood loss, he collapses into unconsciousness as the statuesque silhouette of a beautiful woman approaches from behind.

And then Bruce Wayne dreams, with Barr writing, "His eyes close...and every time his eyes close, he watches his parents die." Here, Barr and Bingham recap Batman's famous origin; from the horrendous moment he witnessed the senseless murder of his parents at the hand of the murderous street thug Joe Chill, to the night he stood before his parents grave and swore to wage war on all criminals, and finally to that fateful life-altering evening in his study in Wayne Manor in which he would be, at last, inspired to become what fate had destined him to be. Now, everything would be made crystal clear in one of the most spectacular and spooky panels of the entire story. Barr writes, "...denied a normal life of family and friends...driven by a force greater than himself..." Bingham literally outdoes himself here, illustrating a young Bruce getting to his feet, completely mesmerized as a huge man-bat climbs in through the window to confront him and grimly declaring, "I have chosen you, Bruce Wayne...you are mine, and you will become me...I am your true father...and you are my son." Once again, Barr touches upon the all-important father/son relationship idea in a much more surreal and symbolic manner.

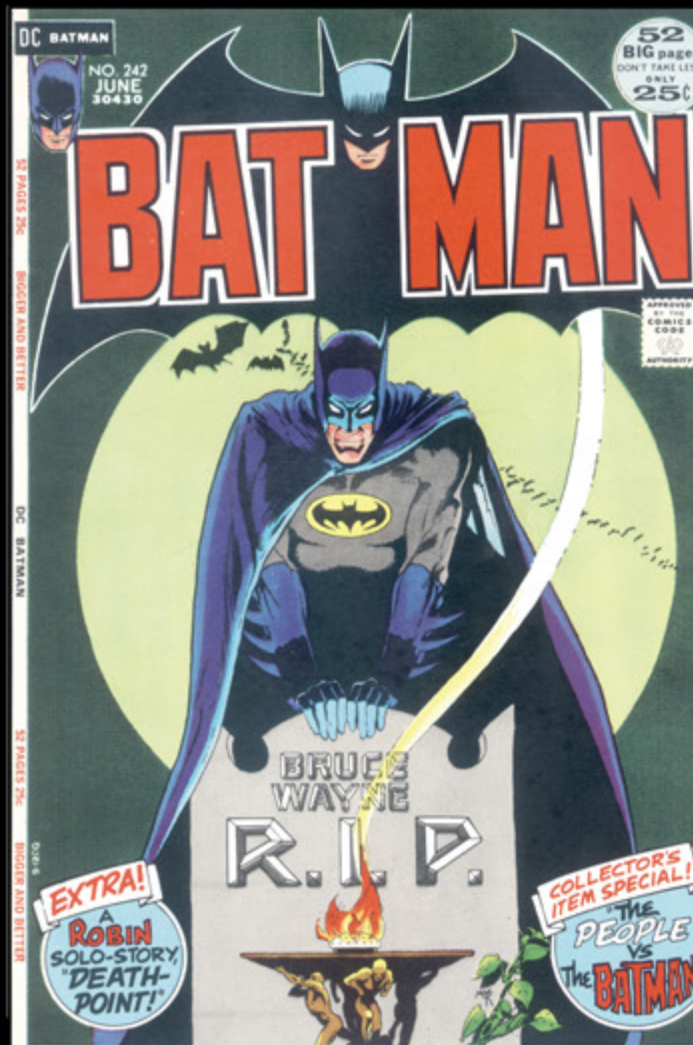
The next panel hearkens back to the early Golden-Age featuring a vintage Batman with full batwings and talons chasing down a

fleeing terrified thief – a homage to the classic first-year Bob Kane Batman when he rendered his character as a "dark creature of the night", with his black cape unfurling behind him like a pair of enormous batwings. This brief origin sequence is just simply flat out brilliant, since never before nor hence has the main object of Bruce's inspiration been rendered as a giant man-bat, as all the other origin retellings have a normal black bat flying in the window. Writer and artist are both fully operating "in the zone" here. When asked about this intriguing idea, Barr recollects, "I really do not remember if I wrote the script with a regular bat flying into Bruce's study, or if I wrote something like a 'huge bat-creature' climbs in through the window."

Bruce awakes with sweat pouring down his face in the Bat Cave and calls for Alfred, but is greeted by Talia - the second main player of *SOD* - who confesses, "I followed you from the factory, beloved...I knew you would need assistance, even though you would not admit it yourself." Barr is giving us a subtle look into the very psyche of Batman here - a loner at heart, possessed with a fierce and uncompromising independence. A man who has trained himself to the apex of human skill and endurance, with great pride and confidence in his abilities, and possessing the knowledge to solve any case and handle any danger that could possibly present itself. However, one who is reluctant to ask for aid in his time of need and admit his own limitations as seen in the next two panels as both Talia and Alfred object to Bruce not resting to recover from his recent wounds. As he dons his bat-garb, Bruce stubbornly responds, "I don't recall asking for a vote." Talia sighs, "You can be most exasperating at times."







**Batman #242 (June, 1972)**

"Bruce Wayne R.I.P." written by Denny O'Neil and art by Irv Novick. Cover by Michael Wm. Kaluta.

Barr expounds, "I have had many a conversation about Batman with Denny (O'Neil) and Frank (Miller). I used to hang out with them quite often when we lived in New York. Many of these discussions have lasted for hours, but I've never seen Batman as a mentally incapacitated person nor insane. He is not a man who boards on being psychotic. He is just very determined and fully dedicated in his mission. Batman is like a larger-than-life, religious character. Christ-like! Here to help and aid mankind in his struggles against evil and tyranny. He has chosen the road of self-sacrifice and self-denial for the betterment of mankind and benefit of us all. In short, Batman is a role model in the truest sense."



Batman and Talia head off to police headquarters to meet with Commissioner Gordon who provides intelligence on the terrorist group they captured at the Gotham Chemical Plant. Since each bears the letter "Q" carved into their flesh he hypostatizes that they work for the mysterious Qayin - an international terrorist who has never been captured nor even photographed.

Batman interjects, "A terrorist and murderer...like his namesake, Cain." The Detective then explains how Qayin has connections to General Yossid of Golia - a fictional middle eastern country named after the Biblical Philistine giant Goliath and landlocked between Turkey and Iran with the massive U.S.S.R. looming ever so close to the north. Batman then asks about the chemicals that were in the barrels which Qayin's men were trying to heist and Gordon informs him that they were, "an experimental preparation, to be used in...pluviculture..." - the (real) science of rainmaking.

They visit "Blaine - Pearson Research", the company owned and run by Dr. Harris Blaine. Batman easily bypasses the security system to find Dr. Blaine dead on his desk, poisoned only seconds ago and clutching, "a star chart...of the constellation Perseus...focusing on the binary star...Algol?"

After a quick interrogation of Blaine's partner John Pearson, son Harris Blaine Jr., and Professor Margaret Trask who give him Blaine's research papers on pluviculture, the Detective strides off and grimly declares, "Justice will be done. I promise."

Soaring in Talia's Learjet, she asks, "What do you study so intently, beloved?" Batman answers, "Algol is a star whose name literally means 'the Ghul', or 'the Demon.' Your father? Ra's Al Ghul? 'The Demons Head?'"

This clue, plus the fact that Ra's had once tried to recruit Dr. Blaine to his cause back in *Batman* #242 (June, 1972), causes the Detective to strongly suspect that his old foe is responsible even though he is not entirely sure if Ra's is even alive. Talia sternly objects, saying that her father, if alive, would never take the life of Harris Blaine. When Batman presses the issue, also asking about her interest in Qayin, Talia concludes, "I...I can say no more."



To this, Batman reflects, "I understand...I hope someday I'll experience that kind of respect, that kind of loyalty...that kind of love...the love of a child for his father." - a clever and very important foreshadow by Barr.

They land at "Demon's Head", a secluded mountain citadel carved right into the face of the rock. Disembarking, Batman remarks, "That voice...I knew he was still alive...but I didn't let myself believe it...until now." The hero once again is confronted by his age-old arch nemesis, Ra's al Ghul - the third and final star player of *SOD* - who stands, along side Dr. Weltmann, supervising the construction of a new Lazarus Pit.

Ra's turns, saying, "Who? Ah, the Detective...I might have known you would intrude, even as I prepare my greatest campaign." He then addresses his daughter, "Is it your intension to betray me again, as you did the last time we met?"

Talia bravely answers, "I would not hope to...but I do what I must, father, as do you."

Ra's replies, "Spoken like flesh of my flesh! You will dine with me." This dialogue exchange between the trio is a reference back to Barr's story, "Messiah of the Crimson Sun" in *Batman Annual* #8 (1982), where Batman witnesses the apparent death of Ra's.

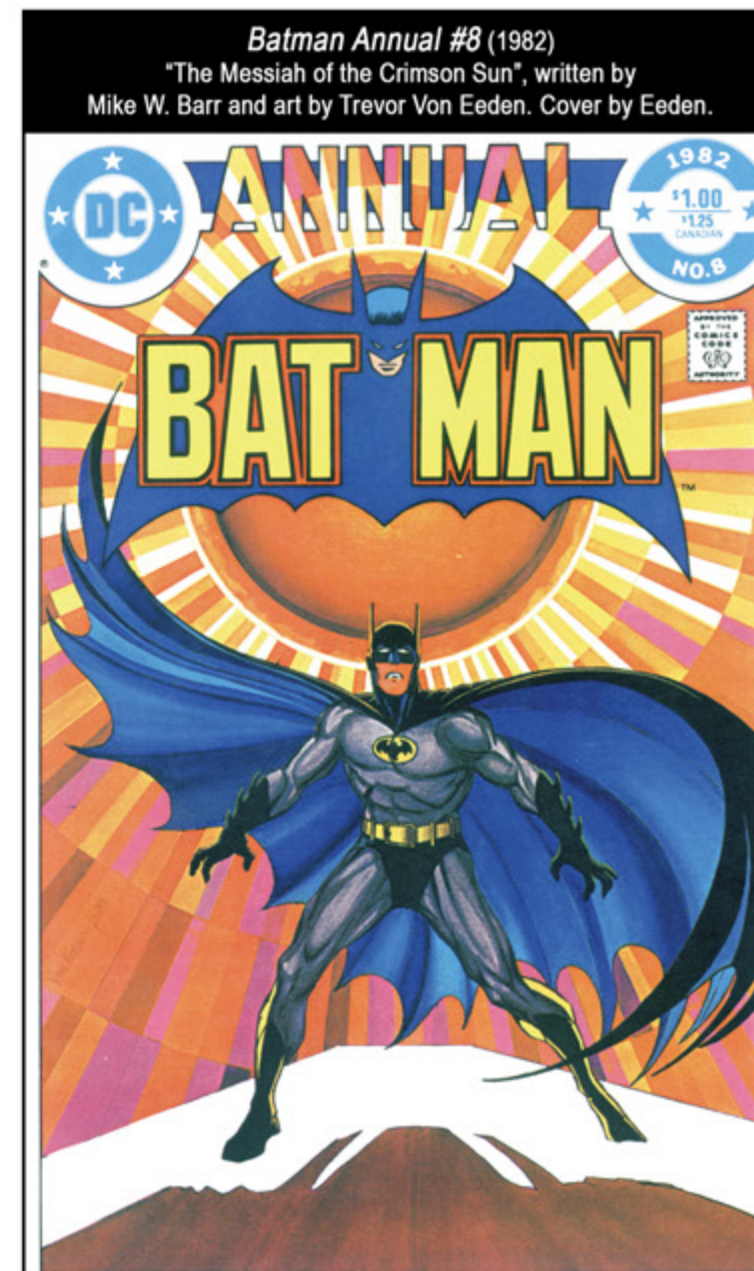
At this stage, *SOD* has now taken on a much grander scope, even epic in scale, much in the tradition of Ian Fleming's master spy James Bond 007 adventures. When asked about this inferred influence, Barr says, "Ra's was created to be a larger-than-life, James Bond style of villain. One who posed a global threat to mankind, not just a local one to Gotham City like the Joker, Penguin and Two-Face.

"Ra's is a very powerful, very real adversary with a genius intellect that would challenge Batman to the nth degree - one who would really test his meddle. With the added element of Talia as a love interest, Batman would also have to deal with his difficult and inner most emotions and feelings for his adversaries' daughter that could very well be his undoing if not handled carefully and correctly.

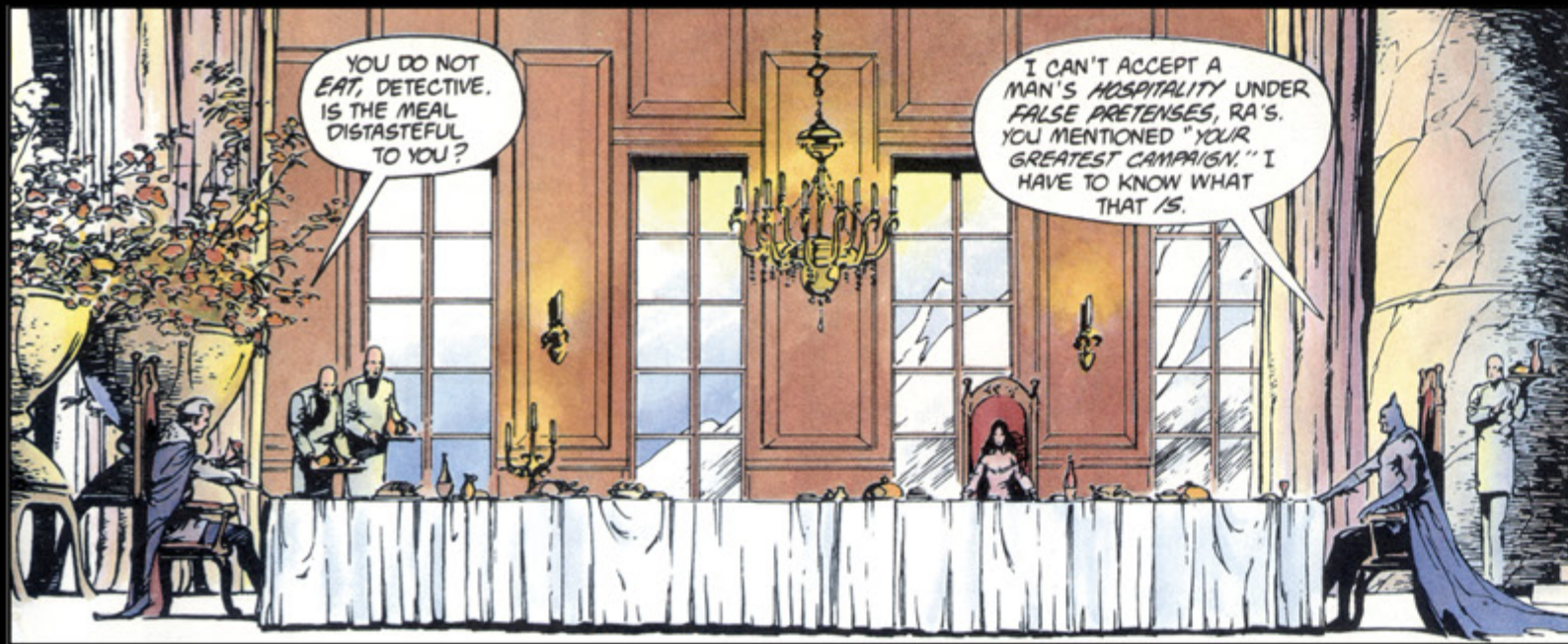
"It's a multi-themed and multi-layered plot that has reflections

from Flemings 007 novel, *On Her Majesties Secret Service* (April, 1963), wherein one of the main characters, Marc-Ange Draco (head of the largest European crime syndicate), offers Bond his only daughter - the beautiful Contessa Teresa "Tracy" di Vincenzo - hand in marriage."

Tracy has several similarities to Talia - a beautiful, resourceful and headstrong young woman that aids Bond in escaping from his main adversary, SPECTRE. Bond is smitten and marries Tracy, but the happy ending is not to be as she is viciously gunned down in Bond's car on their honeymoon.







At a grand dinner table that would make any monarch green with envy, Batman sits at one end and Ra's at the other, with Talia inbetween, yet conspicuously closer to Batman than her father. Could there be a subtle suggestion here by Bingham of where her loyalties rest? Bingham answers, "I deliberately designed the panel that way in order to visually show that Talia, at least at this time, was closer to Batman than her own father. And yet, she is obviously not sitting right next to Batman out of respect for her father." Talia is the "bridge" that will bind these two competing colossal personas together.

Batman questions Ra's about the murder of Dr. Harris Blaine, to which Ra's responds, "I assure you, Detective, I was in no way involved in Blaine's death. Indeed, the rendering useless of such an intellect is distasteful to me."

Batman rises to respond with one of the best lines of the entire book, "You'll understand if I need to be convinced." He pushes his interrogation further by asking, "...tell me, Ra's, have you ever had any dealings with a man named Qayin?"

Disgusted, Ra's rises and leans forward with a very threatening posture, demanding, "Qayin? You dare mention his name to me?"

Talia interjects, "Father, he doesn't know..."

Batman presses, "Then there is a connection?" And Ra's, deflated, slowly sinks back into his chair saying, "Most assuredly, Detective. Qayin is the murderer of my wife."

Batman is taken aback at this shocking revelation, as Talia reminds, "My mother. I barely remember her...but she was so beautiful..." Ra's adds, "She remains so, in our hearts, daughter. Never forget that." Al Ghul then reflects back upon some very tragic and most painful history, revealing that he had once been the head of a covert military organization that battled the Axis powers during World War II. He was the

godfather and guardian to young Quinlan, the son of one of his trusted lieutenants. Ra's had sent Quinlan's parents on a secret mission to the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, remarking, "A date of some historical significance, I think you will recall, Detective."

Quinlan was devastated at the death of his parents as Ra's continues, "...from that day forward, he became moody, fatalistic, obsessed with the subject of death. He demanded we call him Qayin, after the variation on the name of the first murderer." And then tragedy really struck home when Ra's wife, Melisande caught Qayin snooping around in the secret room where Ra's keep an early version of the Lazarus Pit. Since the room was forbidden to all save Ra's himself, Qayin fled in horror, and in doing so, pushes Melisande into the pit. Ra's grimly concludes, "Her death was instantaneous..."



Batman asks, "And Talia saw it?"

To which she answers, "Yes..."

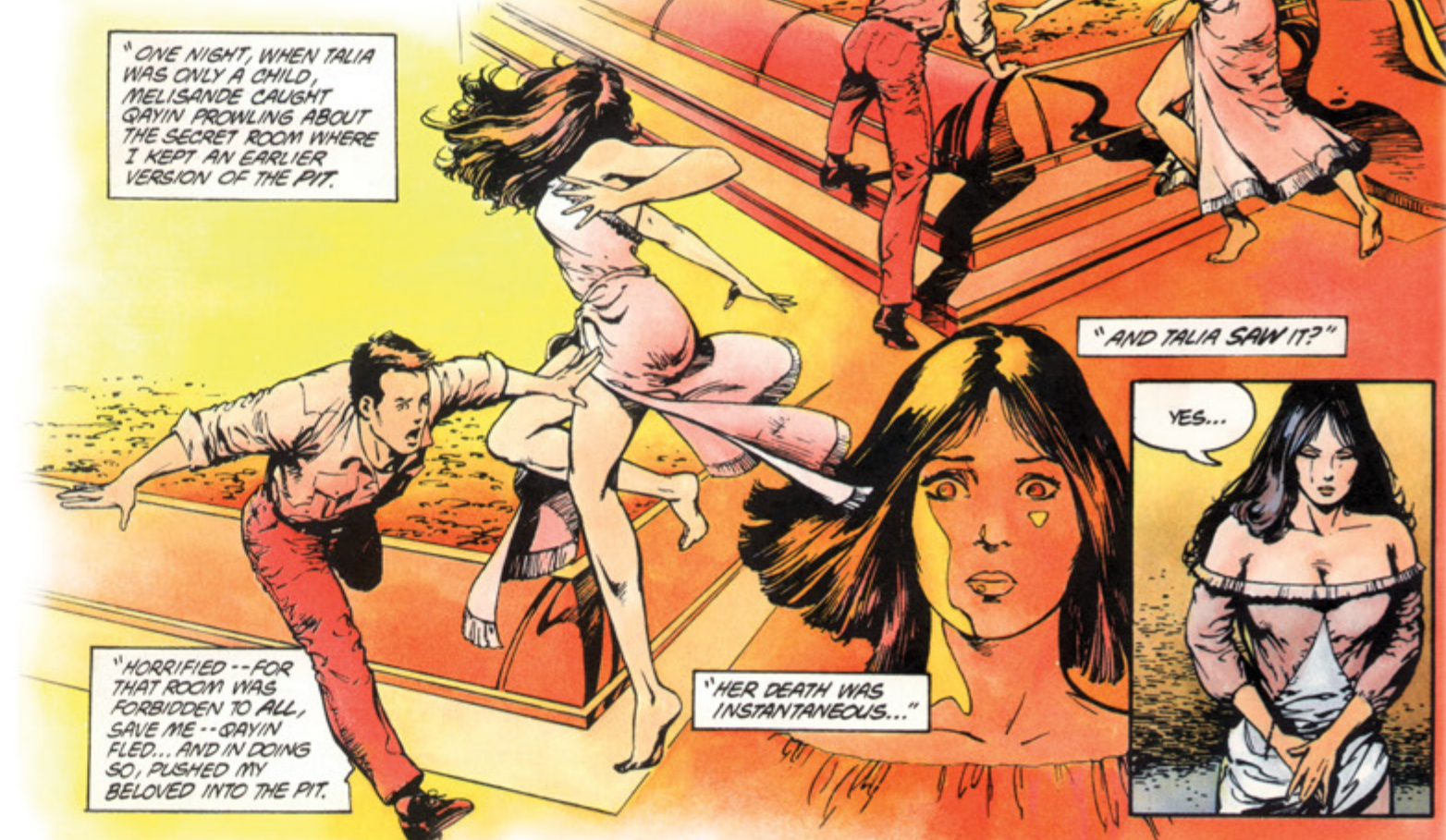
Of special note is an exquisite rendering of a close-up of Talia as a young girl in this sorrowful scene, probably the first one ever done.

This is a very intriguing and enlightening origin story, the first of its kind to reveal any sort of family history of Ra's al Ghul. And Talia witnessing the death of her mother no doubt, struck a deeply felt and compassionate cord with Batman who had likewise witnessed first hand the murder of his own beloved mother, Martha. When asked about his initial ideas behind creating a wife for Ra's, Barr recalls, "I decided on the name Melisande since it sounds very melodious - pleasant. Her name needed to convey a strong sense of beauty and elegance, which would be fitting for a wife of Ra's al Ghul."

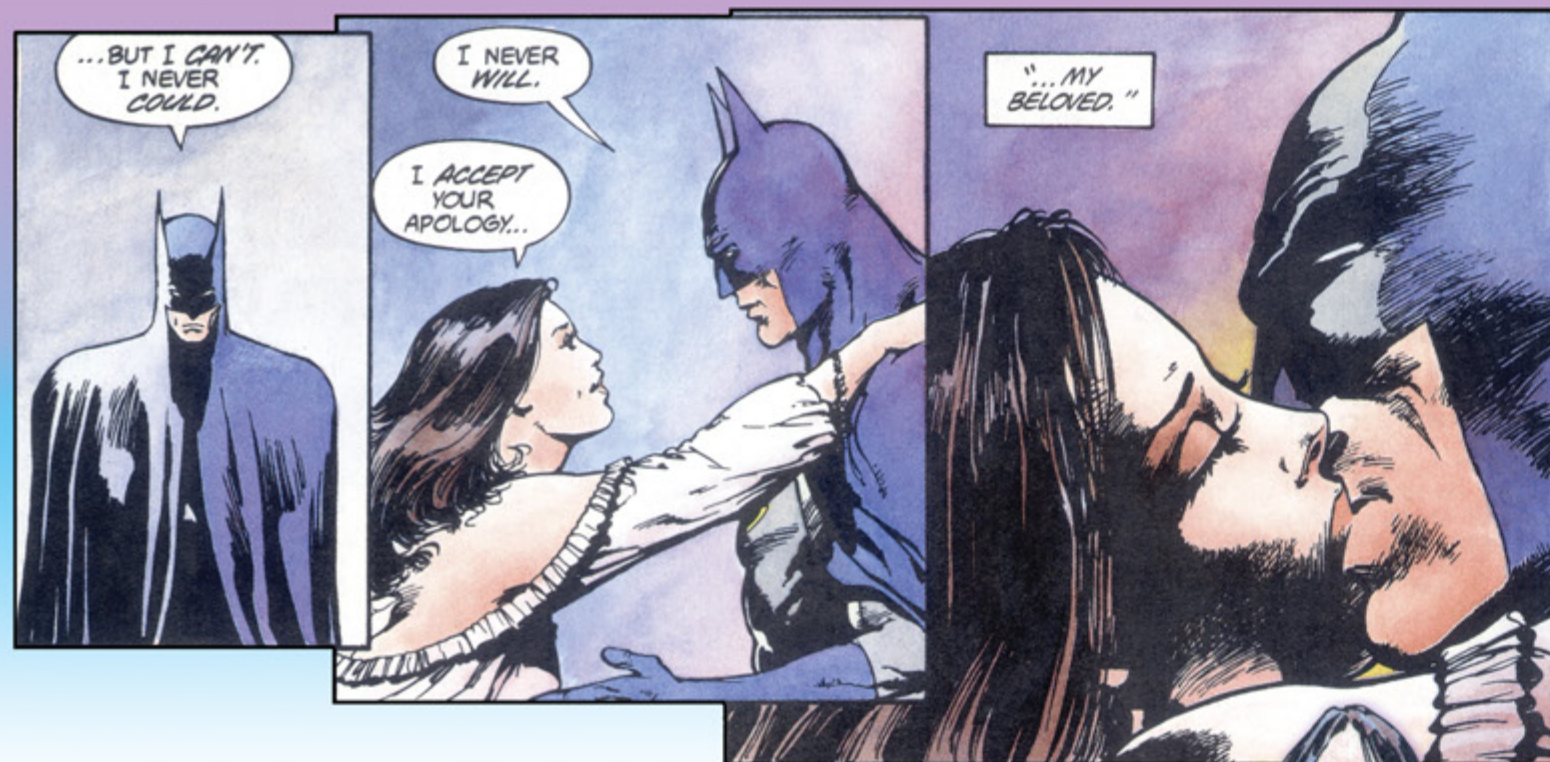
The famous Lazarus Pit is another important element in the legend of Ra's al Ghul that has its origin in Biblical history - the resurrection from the dead of Lazarus by Jesus Christ being one of the most memorable and sensational miracles in the Holy Scriptures. The pit consists of an unknown, yet very potent concoction of terrestrial chemicals that bubble up at various key points in the earth's crust, usually at the intersection of the mysterious ley lines. Here, the raw powerful energy that rises up to the surface infuses these chemicals with super strong rejuvenative healing powers. The pit can heal the sick, diseased and injured, restore youth and even raise the dead. However, if a healthy person were to be put into the pit, they would perish - like Melisande.



Barr interjects, "The whole idea behind the Lazarus Pit is that of resurrection and re-birth. Being born again."

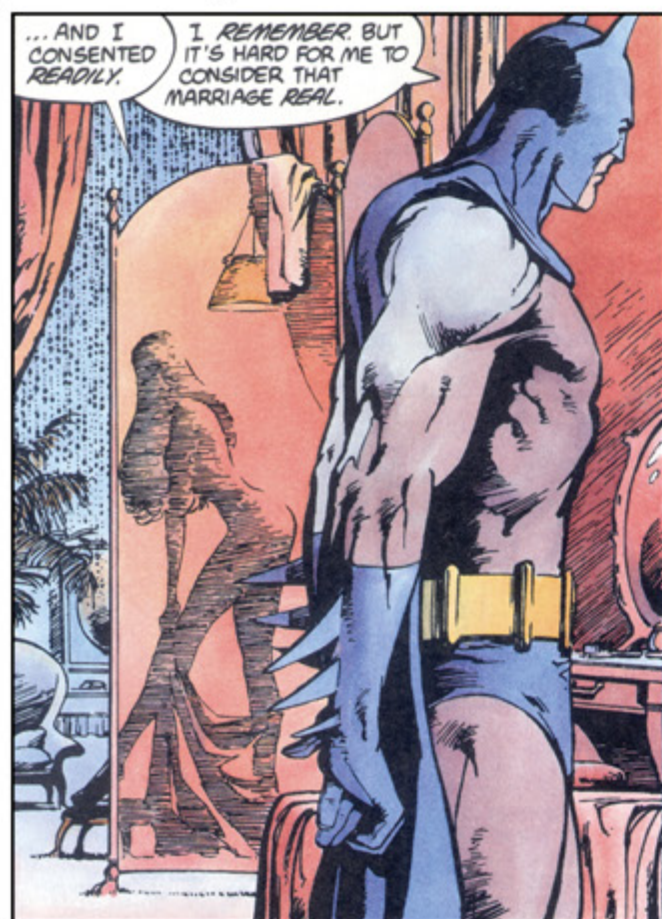






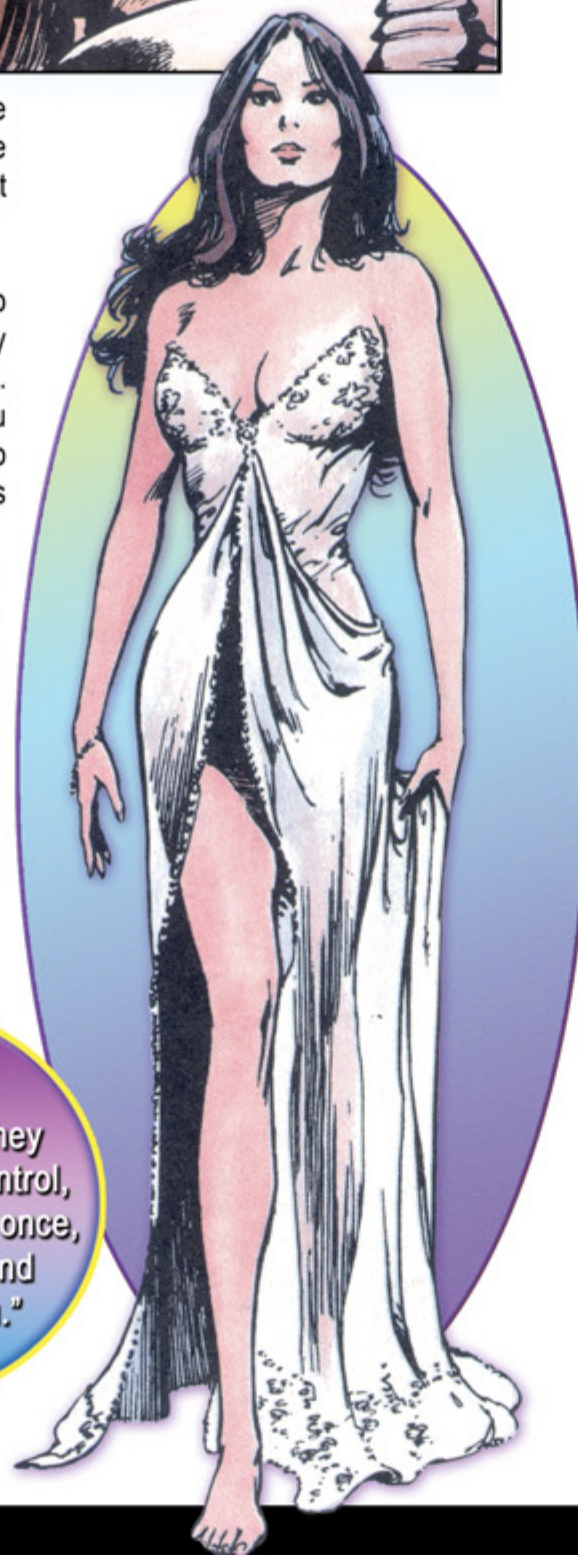
We then come to the core, most significant moment of *SOD*, in which Ra's offers an alliance with Batman to track down and bring Qayin to justice - one that he accepts. Ra's then ups the ante by saying, "...and with this position comes the hand of my daughter. To accept the first is to accept the second, there is no middle ground. Do you still accept my offer, Detective?"

Batman responds with the classic, "I do" and readily admits that he has never been able to fully forget Talia nor keep her from his thoughts. Bingham then lays out a stunning and very tasteful two-page love scene spread where Batman and Talia consummate their marriage. When Batman asks Talia about the need for a formal ceremony, she says, "Beloved, have you so quickly forgotten? There already has been...my father once married us, in an attempt to keep you from interfering with his plans. In his country, only the consent of the bride is required for a marriage..."



Of course, this is a direct reference to the O'Neil-Golden story in *Batman Spectacular DC Special Series #15*, previously published in the summer of 1978.

"But, just this once, accept things as they are...forego your control, your discipline...just once, let yourself go...and take me with you."  
--Talia



We then change venues to the small Middle Eastern country of Golatia and her military dictator, General Yossid. The general strides down a gloomy prison wing of an ancient stone fortress amidst lamentable cries for help and mercy, all the while cursing the enveloping darkness. He pauses before the imposing Qayin, a burley behemoth with a disturbing taste for torture and brutality. A brief conversation follows, by which it becomes obvious that both parties are jockeying for position and using one another in their lust for greater power. Their conversation concludes with false promises and Qayin strides away when his personal physician asks to see him. An x-ray of Qayin's rib cage reveals a large black spot of decay, and Qayin asks, "I'm dying, am I not?"

"Yes.", replies the doctor.

Qayin asks, "How long?"

"A matter of weeks. Eight, perhaps...more likely six" says the doctor. Qayin cryptically murmurs, "That will be enough time...enough time to either save myself, or take the world with me."

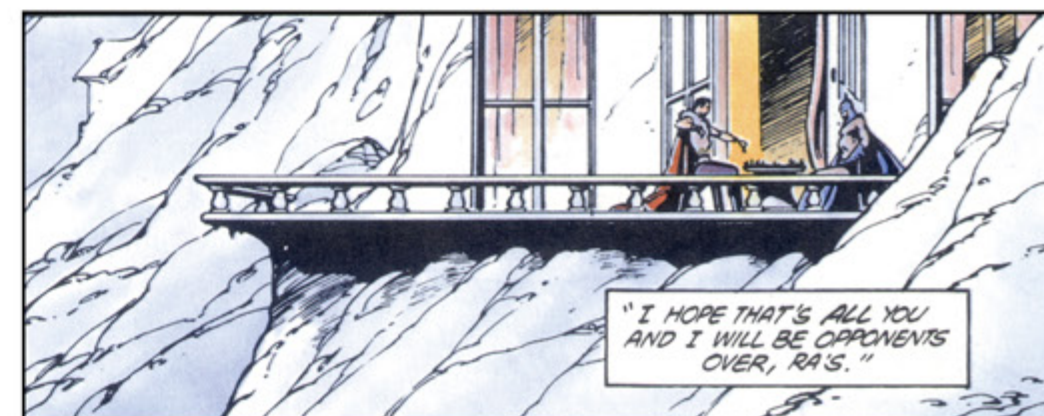


Commenting on this scene, Barr says, "Qayin's disease was left vague on purpose. I wanted to convey with a strong implication that he was dying from his own internal rottenness - his own personal evil that is a canker consuming him from the inside out."

Asked about the visual design of Qayin, Bingham says, "I really don't recall any design notes on Qayin - blame my age - perhaps the writer said he was a big strong guy, which was obvious by his ability to crush a man's ribcage with his bare hands, maybe he mentioned the scar, but the design was mine, as simple as it was."

Barr returns us back to Al Ghul's mountain fortress and Bingham renders a wonderful establishing shot of Batman and Ra's sitting at a chess match (more subtext here). The pair sit upon a jutting rocky crag, that provides for an awe inspiring panoramic view of the surrounding majestic mountains with three massive windows towering behind them - a stunning panel, which provides for that truly epic feel. They discuss their newfound, yet fragile friendship and Ra's reflects with his classic maxim - one that is nearly verbatim from his statement in *Batman #232* - saying, "Detective, as you know, I am cursed with a love for emptiness...desolation. It is a beauty to which my soul responds...as pure, as untainted as the deserts of my birth."

"I deem it my mission to purify this planet, to restore it to its former beauty...a mission I will brook no interference in..." Yikes!







This type of mindset re-conjures up a very thought provoking idea - that of Ra's al Ghul representing a type of Anti-christ - the would-be world conqueror and dictator who's ultimate goal is to remake the planet and mankind in his own image, ruled by his absolute and uncontested will. A very powerful and charismatic overlord of great resources, possessed with unparalleled ambition and bodacious bravado. A political and military leader who shall speak with great swelling words infused with sinister supernatural power and influence. One who cannot stand nor will tolerate any rival to his plans for a global utopia - "New World Order" - under his power. Barr sees Ra's as, "A total fascist! In his mind, he is the only one who has the solution to mankind's problems and he believes that there is no other way of looking at things."

These radical sentiments are not merely comic book fiction, as history has shown, and it would be quite naive to dismiss them as such. This demented belief and grossly misguided marketing of man's need to "purify the planet" is nothing more than semantic gibberish, a smokescreen statement that in actuality calls for global genocide, which is nothing less than mass murder on an unprecedented scale. And this wicked teaching is ominously promoted on a mysterious monument that stands in Elbert County, Georgia, formally known as the Georgia Guidestones. Also called the "American Stonehenge", this huge structure consists of six slabs constructed of Pyramid blue granite, stands nearly 20-feet high and weighs approximately 240,000lbs. The excellent article "Sinister Sites: The Georgia Guidestones", which can be found on The Vigilant Citizen web-site, goes into in-depth detail about the site by saying, "The most astonishing detail of the monument is however not its massive size but the message engraved into it: Ten rules for an 'Age of Reason'."

These guides touch upon subjects that are associated with the 'New World Order', including massive depopulation, a single world government, the introduction of a new type of spirituality, etc. The authors of these rules have requested to remain totally anonymous...The Guidestones describe the "ideal world", as envisioned by occult secret societies." In short, there are ten rules or so-called "commandments" chiseled on the stones, the very first one stating, "Maintain humanity under 500 million in perpetual balance with nature", while the last one says, "Be not a cancer on the earth - leave room for nature - leave room for nature." So much for human rights? But, I digress.

Returning to the SOD saga, what follows next is an exciting and action-packed seven page scene in which Batman, Talia and a small group of Al Ghul's men break into Cape Canaveral by night in order to sabotage the launch of a weather satellite that the Detective is convinced Qayin will use against mankind. They fail, with Batman engaging in a quick, yet brutal melee with Qayin - the two combatants only being separated by the powerful blast of the rocket ship being sent into orbit.

Returning to "Demon's Head" base, Ra's is pleased that they have established a direct connection between Qayin and the nation of Gollathia, but Batman is somber, disappointed at their failure to thwart the launch and concerned about losing one of Ra's soldiers named Donal. Talia interrupts their conversation to drop a bomb on her new husband's world, one that would become another landmark moment in the legend of the Batman.

She beckons Batman, "Beloved, a word?"

He counters, "Can't it wait, Talia?"

She insists, "It cannot."

He concedes, "Now, Talia, what's so impor—"

"Beloved, I am with child. I am pregnant.", she announces, with Batman being dumbfounded at the monumental news.

He then embraces her saying, "That's wonderful!"

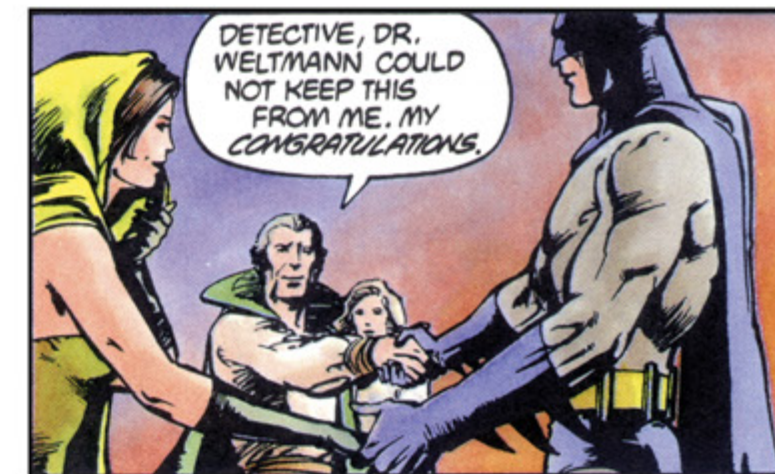
After a heartfelt congratulations from Ra's, Batman ponders, "A child. We'll name it Thomas...or Martha, if it's a girl. It'll be the happiest baby in the world."



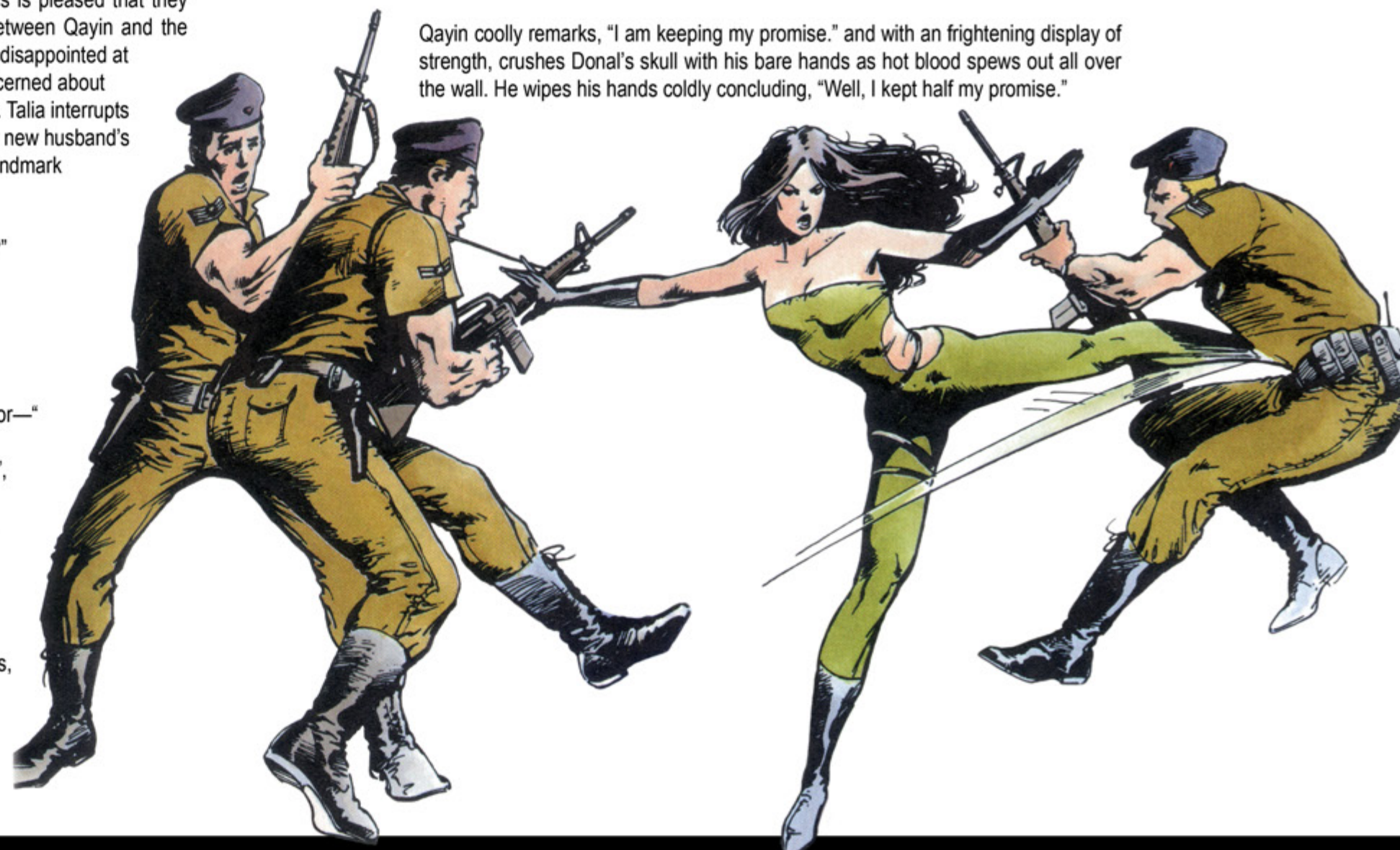
Barr then quickens the pace considerably by whipping up a rousing rodeo of high-paced action and intense confrontations fully supplied with tense and tight dialogue. Back at the Gollathia desert fortress, Qayin savagely tortures Donal until he screams out for a mercy killing saying, "Please! ...You said you would kill me with no pain if I told you where Al Ghul is."

Qayin coldly answers, "So I did." The broken soldier pleads, "I have told you..."

Qayin sneers at Donal with cruel eyes to remark, "So you have...and so I will." The burly giant then puts his huge hands on either side of Donal's head as the terrified soldier asks, "What are you...No!"



Qayin coolly remarks, "I am keeping my promise." and with an frightening display of strength, crushes Donal's skull with his bare hands as hot blood spews out all over the wall. He wipes his hands coldly concluding, "Well, I kept half my promise."







Cutting back to Demon's Head, Batman and Talia are sharing a quiet and tender moment alone, while outside, a squadron of military helicopters approach the mountain locale. Batman gives her a beautiful ornate jeweled necklace and Talia promises, "Whenever I wear it, I shall think of you...and I shall wear it always."

Asked if there any special significance to the jeweled necklace, Barr offers his insight, "To my recollection, the necklace had not appeared before. Knowing the way my mind works, I probably searched back issues for some prop to use for this purpose, but found none, and so created one. It was a visual way of connecting the baby to Talia, letting the reader know that this is the child of Bats and Talia."

Bingham interjects, "This is obviously after Talia has told Batman that she is pregnant and they are really beginning to connect emotionally here, as symbolized by the necklace."

The security door suddenly begins to crack and then explodes, "...like the sudden violence of a summer storm" writes Barr, and Qayin's commando force storm into the landing bay. A quick engagement ensues with Batman and Talia suddenly caught in a furious firefight. Far to preoccupied with the safety of his wife and unborn child, Batman and Talia are nearly slain in a flurry of bullets before he can secure her behind the protection of the bay dock doors.

Talia calls for help while thinking, "Killed. He was almost killed...He may yet be...all because he is trying to protect me." Batman escapes the oncoming force to rendezvous with Ra's. He informs Al Ghul that he is through with the mission and that Talia's safety is all that matters to him now and they will be departing as soon as possible.

Another security door is blown to smithereens and Qayin now stands before the Lazarus Pit, his only hope of being cured of his deadly disease. The giant boasts, "...and at last...the Lazarus Pit is mine."



Ra's appears on a large monitor to interrupt his old enemy saying, "I think not, Qayin."

Qayin fires back, "Al Ghul. I commend your courage in daring to face me...in my moment of triumph."

Ra's coolly responds, "You always spoke too quickly, Qayin. You may recall the story of Moses...who was permitted to see the Promise Land...but never to enter it." With this, Ra's detonates the complete destruction of the Pit - a wonderful metaphor by Barr! Qayin's commando force is soon overrun and begin to flee the base, while Qayin himself, bloodied and bruised, pushes himself up from under the rubble and swears swift vengeance upon Al Ghul and the world.

Back at Golatia, Qayin has usurped control of the American weather satellite and orders his scientist to have it create a full-blown hurricane and send it over the boarder to the Soviet Union in the hopes of inciting World War III. Horrified at this prospect, General Yossid interjects saying, "Stop this immediately..."



Qayin pulls the general away from the satellite controls stating, "Your will no longer matters, General...I have grown weary of you." Bingham then draws a absolutely chilling four panel progression where the evil Qayin, once again, displays his extraordinary strength and disdainful taste for cruelty as he crushes Yossid's ribcage in his bare burly hands - OUCH!

Bingham sees this as Qayin's "Darth Vader" moment, where he is bombastically showcasing his physical superiority in the most terrifying manner. The artist continues, "The four panel sequence really works well because of the close-up reaction shot of Qayin." The sinister and sadistic smirk betraying, not only his immense capacity for evil works, but the awful fact that he takes great pleasure in doing them.

Mikhail Gorbachev, head of the Soviet Union, places an emergency phone call to the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan to inform him that the hurricane caused by the U.S. satellite has entered Russia and is devastating several villages. Gorbachev further adds that if the storm comes within 100 miles of Moscow, it will be considered an act of war, strongly implying that Russia will retaliate with a full out nuclear strike.

Back at Demon's Head, Batman and Ra's discuss their next move when Talia faints in the arms of her father. In the medical ward, Barr and Bingham provide us with a somber scene, in which a weeping Talia informs her husband, "I am well, beloved,..." She turns away from him to add, "I...I have lost the baby." - a most superb hint of subtle subtext by Bingham by the use of body language.





"... ALL THE STRIFE  
OF THE RAID... ALL  
THE EXERTION..."



"BELOVED,  
I AM VERY  
SORRY."

The next panel is a masterstroke of Bingham's quill pen as he draws our hero in total isolation, with no borders and no background whatsoever; Batman, devastated by the news, is hunched over with clenched fists in extreme emotional anguish, feeling very much alone as he hears Talia explain, "...all the strife of the raid...all the exertion...Beloved, I am very sorry." This is a very heartfelt piece - so skillfully done by Bingham to really hammer home the psychological pain that our hero is experiencing - the realization of profound loss.

Bingham explains, "Notice how small the figure Batman is here. His whole world has just crashed down upon him. He is isolated and all alone. He feels impotent and insignificant."

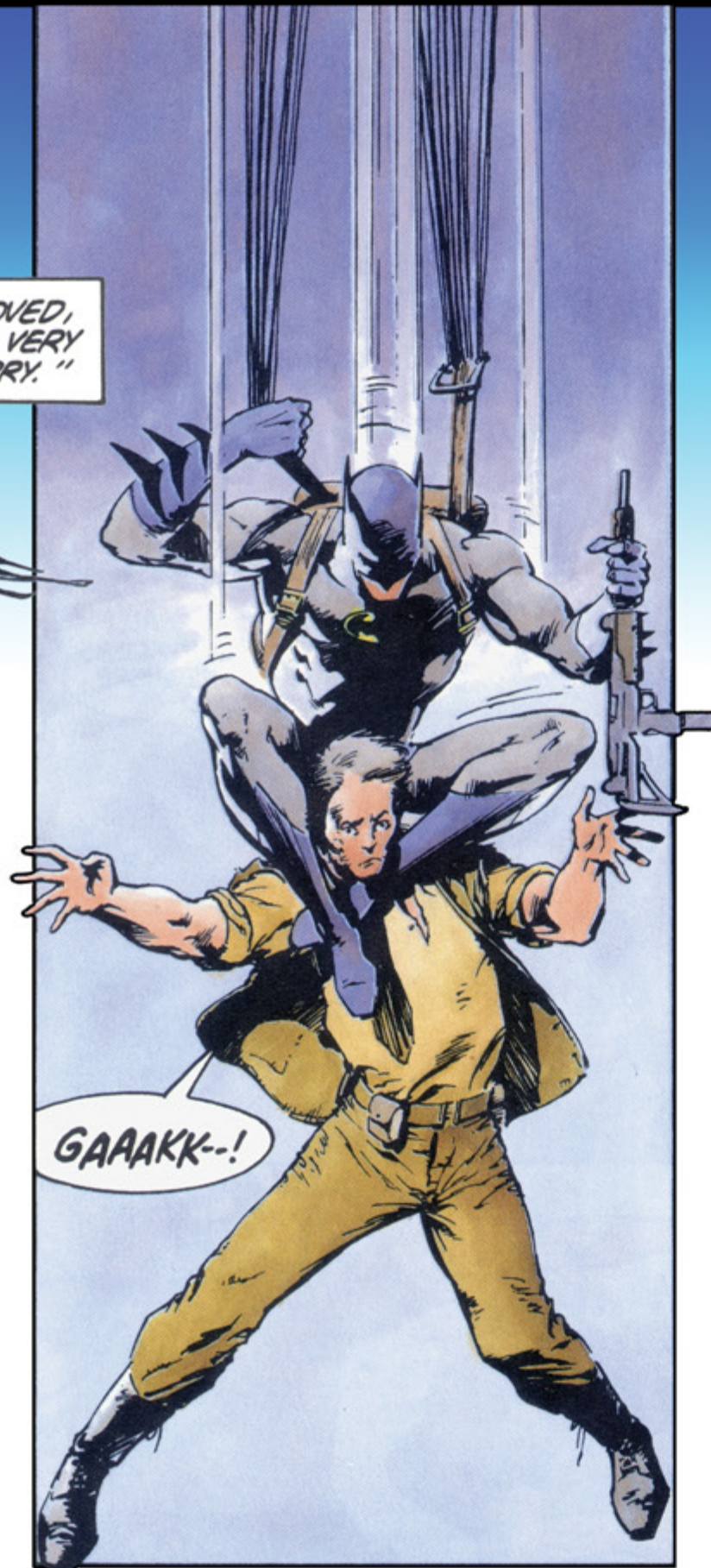
Believing that his child is no more, Batman can resume his mission with little concern for his own safety and thus, rejoins Ra's and his men to confront Qayin. Because of Qayin's fixation on Biblical history, Batman informs Ra's that the terrorist leader's base will be on Mt. Ararat, the landing place of Noah's Ark after the Great Deluge. Ra's team parachute in and take Qayin's men by surprise. When one of the patrol guards has Al Ghul dead in his sights, Batman drops down upon him from above to save Ra's life. Securing the perimeter, Batman and Ra's enter the compound and confront Qayin in his control center.

The beastly giant turns to greet the intruders, "Welcome. I knew you would find me."

Batman boldly declares, "Then you have to know it's over."

To which, Qayin boasts, "I know no such thing...I remain to be convinced."

Batman and Ra's jump down to the platform floor with the Detective ordering, "Ra's, deactivate the radar screen controls...Qayin is mine."



A fierce fight ensues with Batman engaging Qayin while Ra's stands at the control board of the weather satellite in this most critical moment of mental crises as he ponders the possibilities of having such a powerful device in his personal arsenal. He pulls out the live wires from the circuit board to bypass the access code but hesitates, thinking to himself, "...but such a waste. Such a device would do much for my cause to see the planet purified...made new..."



Barr deliberately placed the very fate of the world in the hands of this arch nemesis of Batman in order to build the highest level of climatic anticipation possible. Now, at the very brink of achieving his lifelong goal of seeing earth born anew out of destruction, what would this sworn and self-styled world ruler do? At this fateful moment, Ra's al Ghul decides, "No matter. My campaign may be set back...but it must be done." He touches the wires together and the weather satellite appears back on radar as U.S. missile command fires a flurry of rockets to destroy it.

Ra's leans over a defeated Qayin, advising him to turn over his knowledge of terrorist groups to the authorities. The fallen giant responds, "I am a dead man anyway, Al Ghul...and so are you." Qayin quickly grabs Ra's with one hand and the live wires in the other, holding them to Ra's face saying, "I may not see the world die before me, but at least I shall take with me the murderer of my parents!"

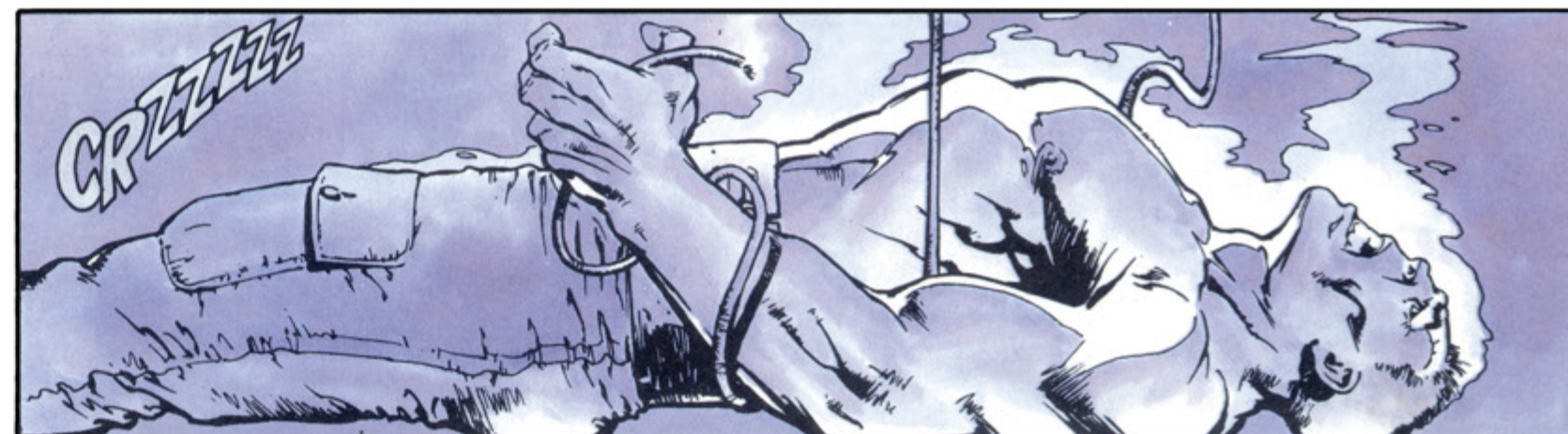


Just before he can slay his life long and most hated enemy, Batman suddenly leaps to the rescue with a powerful and fateful kick to Qayin's jaw and the burley beast is entangled within the live sparkling wires, electrocuting him in the process. Bingham explains, "Notice, that in this panel I did not draw the floor. I wanted to show that Qayin is grounded, literally being fused to the floor itself."

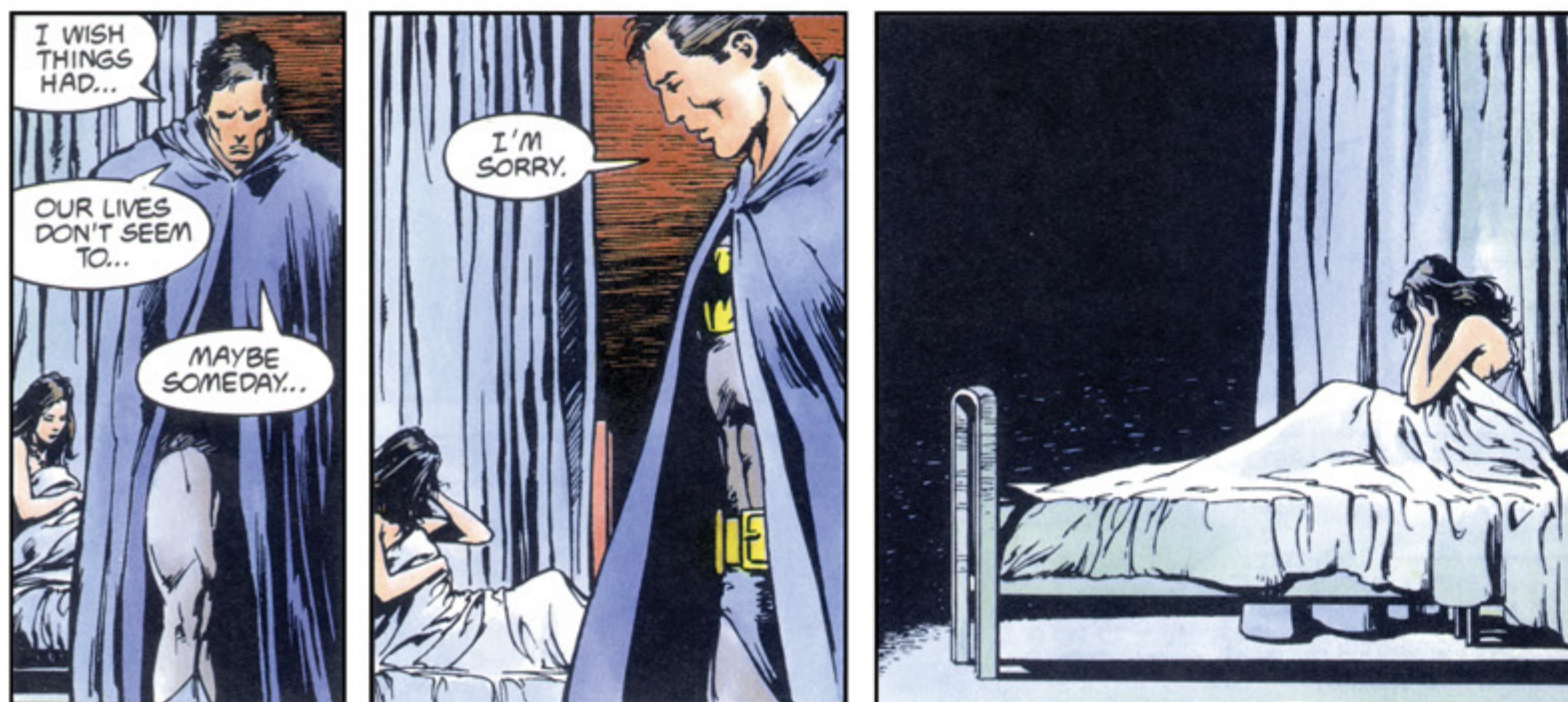
Looking down upon his fallen foe, Ra's remarks, "Perhaps now he is at peace."

Batman responds by dipping his finger in Qayin's blood and drawing a "Q" on his cheek, grimly concluding, "Perhaps...I hope not."

Bingham offers an interesting insight here, "Batman is placing Qayin's own mark upon his cheek, in direct payback for his terrorist cutting his mark on Nancy's cheek back in the opening scene at the Gotham Chemical Plant."







Barr returns us back to the medical ward at Ra's base to a tender scene between Batman and Talia who is still recovering in bed. Talia tells him, "I would be alone."

Batman removes his cowl saying, "All right, I'll come back late..." She interrupts, "No, beloved...I wish you to leave."

Emotionally spent, Bruce surrenders, "All right Talia...I wish things had...our lives don't seem...maybe someday...I'm sorry." He leaves her to solitary mourning.

As Batman walks away, a sorrowful Ra's says, "I, too, am sorry...my son."

When considering this sorrowful, yet significant scene, both writer and artist offer their thoughts. Barr was asked "At the end your story 'Messiah of the Crimson Sun' in Batman Annual #8, Talia says, 'My father wished us to be married, beloved...and once, I, too, desired that...but now, I wish only that you leave.' And also, at the end of *SOD*, Talia asks Batman to leave once again after lying about losing their baby. If Talia loves him so much, always calling Batman her "beloved", why does she keep asking him to leave her?

Barr answers, "Like many star-crossed couples, they live together happily for a while, but something always comes along to spoil it. It may be that they're destined not to be together for any amount of time. But when they are together, it's pretty good for each of them."

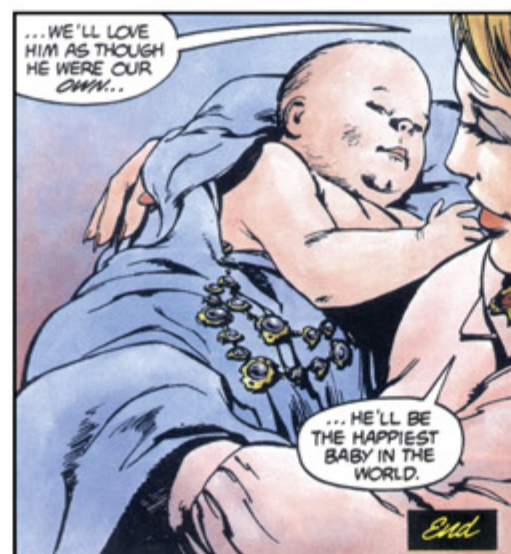
Bingham states, "Talia sends Bruce Wayne away because she knows that he would never be the Batman she loves and admires so much if he were to stay with her. He's way too protective and preoccupied with her safety, especially if children were involved. She feels that it is probably best for them not to be together and is willing to sacrifice their marriage for his well being."

The locale shifts back to Gotham City where Batman clears up the remaining plot threads with Commissioner Gordon. Batman departs out the window into the face of a rainstorm as Gordon says, "You'd better get inside, it looks like the storm is about to break."

Batman grimly answers, "Commissioner...it already has."

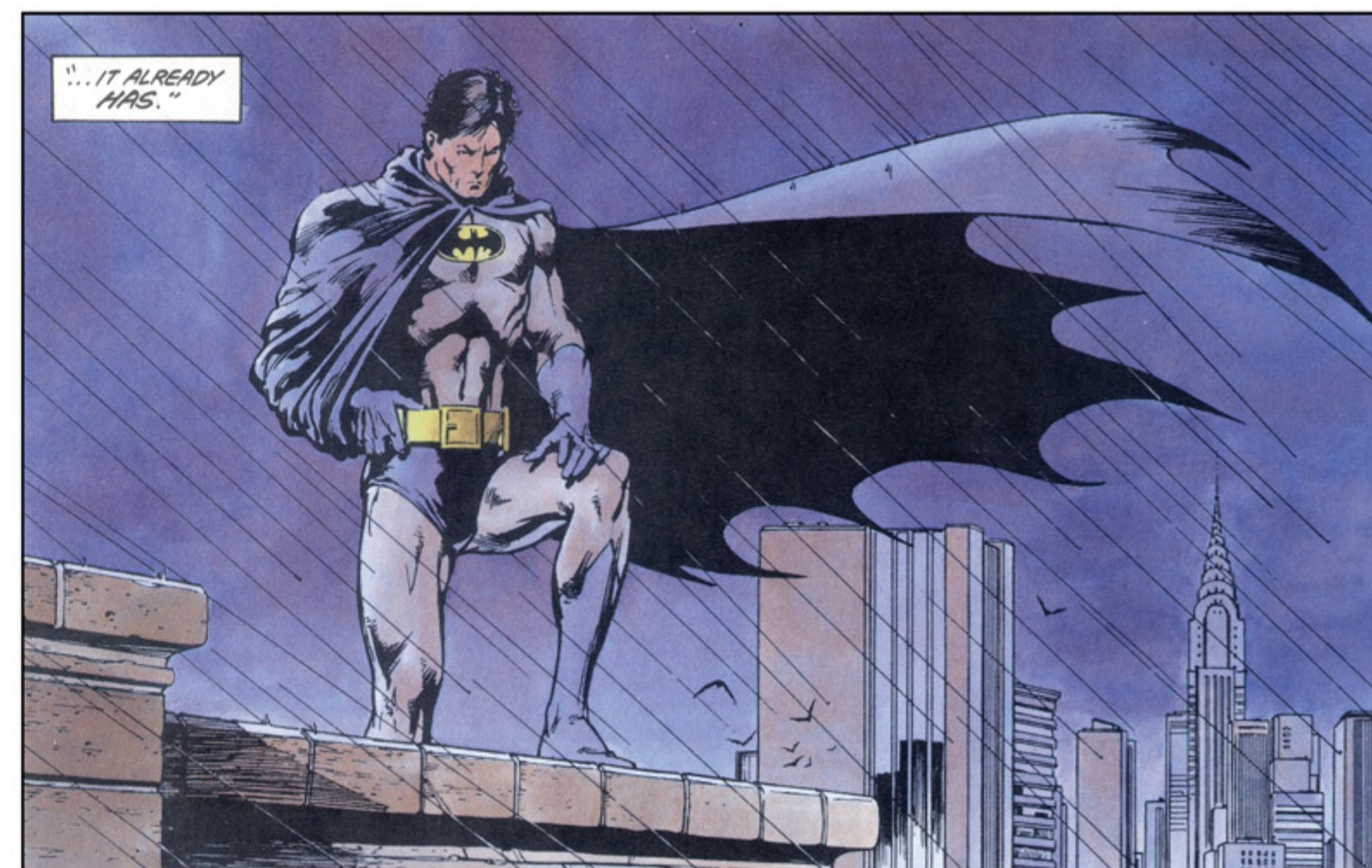
Bingham provides one last profound look of our unmasked hero, standing stoically silent upon a high rooftop in sorrowful reflection as the rain descends in relentless sheets, like heavy tears from the heavenly host. Bingham says, "This panel I drew with his cowl down to convey that Bruce is not the Batman here - the iconic legend of lore. No. Here, he is just a man, like you and me. A man of flesh and blood who is experiencing great pain and regret like any ordinary human being."

*Batman Son of the Demon* closes at Brooksdale Orphanage with a nurse proudly presenting a newly born baby boy to an unnamed delighted couple - a baby who has a beautifully wrought necklace of ornate jewels laid across his body. His adopted mother promises, "...he'll be the happiest baby in the world."



In an exclusive phone interview with Barr for this article, I asked him, "Now Mike, this may be a really stupid question, so please don't laugh. But, just so I am completely clear, who exactly is the Son of the Demon?" Barr answered, "It is not a stupid question and actually, one that I have never been asked before. Batman is the Son of the Demon. Ra's recruits him to marry his daughter, Talia - who is the Daughter of the Demon, and thus becomes Al Ghul's literal son-in-law. With this, Ra's then considers Batman his son, calling him such in the book, and eventual heir to his vast empire."

As previously mentioned, *Batman Son of the Demon* - the very first Batman graphic novel ever produced, was published in August of 1987 - a very important historical event in the ever growing mythos of one of the most famous and beloved characters in the rich history of comic books. One would think this would call for a good deal of promotion via an aggressive advertising campaign. There would be absolutely ZERO! Huh? No, you read that absolutely correct - NONE! NADA! NIL! ZILCH! A rational person might easily believe they had stepped out from reality and right into the Twilight Zone.







Again, in the excellent and very informative "sidebarr" article featured in *Back Issue #10*, Barr explains, "There was no advertising for [SOD] whatsoever, which surprised me, because you'd think it'd be a fairly high-profile project with the popularity of Batman, and this being the first Batman graphic novel and all that...So DC did no advertising on it whatsoever, and despite this the book did sell out anyway. In fact, in terms of sales, the revenue from *SOD* pushed DC ahead of Marvel in the direct market for the first time since 1971. Or rather, it was the first time since 1971 that DC beat Marvel in revenues." A most remarkable feat that even *Batman The Dark Knight Returns* mini-series (1986) and *Batman The Killing Joke* one-shot (1988), failed to accomplish.

One would think that the DC brass would have been ecstatic and chomping at the bit for a sequel as soon as possible. And so did Barr, but what he suddenly encountered was a solid stone-wall. Barr explains, "So, as soon as I heard that [SOD] had done so well, I immediately contacted DC and said, 'Let's do a sequel.' [But], they would not entertain any notion of it. They wanted to do another Batman graphic novel with me, but they didn't want to do a direct sequel to *SOD*." And to top this all off, DC was not even willing to acknowledge the validity of *SOD* being part of the official Batman storylines such as were appearing in *Batman* and *Detective Comics*. Pardon? Remember, that the Elseworlds book line had not been released by DC yet.

Bingham reflects with a sense of irony, "So here I was, the artist of one of the most successful Batman books ever, the biggest selling graphic novel in the company's history, actually pushing DC above Marvel no less in sales for the first time in over a 15 years, and 6 months later I cannot get work. Go figure?"

Barr continues, "It was dropped from the canon the instant that it hit print." DC had a huge hit on their hands, the type of book all publishers dream of - a simultaneous commercial and critical success. A total cash cow, for which they were more than

willing to collect the revenues from, but were ashamed to claim the responsibility of due to the controversial nature of the story. Go figure.

So, what was the real problem? And why was a book that was so financially successful and so well received by the readers, left to languish in limbo for nearly two decades? Hard to pinpoint for sure. Was it per chance envy of the book's success? Jealousy of Barr and Bingham's talents and fast growing popularity? Perhaps, it was some petty power play by competing executives, possibly a personal grudge, or mayhap someone simply thought that Barr had pushed the envelope a bit to far this time, going beyond his allotted jurisdiction with Batman? Barr was told by one DC executive that *SOD* seemed, "inappropriate for the characters and storyline as [DC was] then interpreting them."

The "sidebarr" article mentions that it may not have been DC's decision to make anyway. Barr mentions that he had a phone conversation with the head honcho at DC, publisher Jenette Kahn, saying, "I was told by Jenette Kahn herself...that she had been told by the higher-ups at Warner Bros. that if there's another graphic novel with the son of Batman and Talia in it, she would be fired." Barr is not completely sure whether or not this is true saying, "I think that may have been an excuse not to do anything with the book or the character." Yes, make no claim to the creation and existence of a new and significant character in Batman's life, but just sit back and collect all the money he will generate for you. Seems like a reasonable mindset.

When asked, "Why then is the SC trade paperback of *SOD* still in print?" Barr answers, "Because it makes money for [DC]."

Even though DC choose to look upon *SOD* as a "black sheep", the influence and time-tested lasting impact of the book is undeniable. Batman and Talia's child would soon show up in various books under various names, depending upon the interpretation of the particular writer and artist.



-In the Elseworlds story *Brotherhood of the Bat* (DC, 1995), the character is named Tallant Wayne who crusades against his grandfather, Ra's al Ghul.

-In Alex Ross and Mark Waid's spectacular epic Elseworlds mini-series *Kingdom Come* (DC, 1996), the character's name is Ibn al Xu'ffasch - Arabic for "Son of the Bat" - who shows up as part of Lex Luthor's, Mankind Liberation Front. Ross writes, "Xu'ffasch is the heir to Ra's al Ghul's secret empire for one simple reason: he is Ra's grandson. The child sired by Ra's daughter Talia and his greatest enemy, The Batman, made his first appearance in the *Son of the Demon* graphic novel by Mike W. Barr and Jerry Bingham."

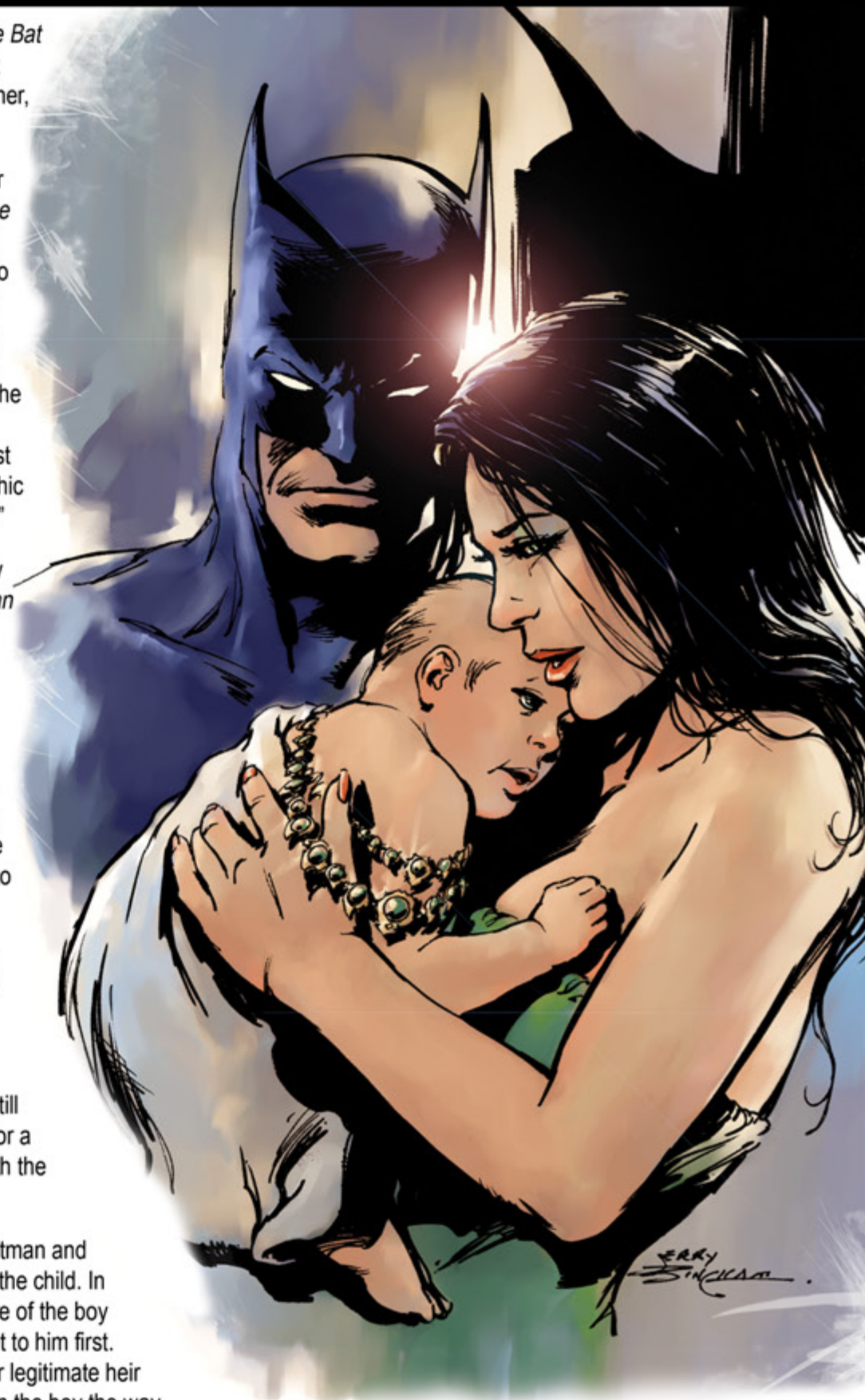
-In Grant Morrison and Andy Kubert's story arc "Batman and Son", which ran in *Batman* #655-658 (DC, Sept. - Dec., 2006), and expands upon the original *SOD* storyline, the boy is named Damian Wayne. Raised by Talia under the tutorship of the League of Assassins, Damian is a problematic protégé - narcissistic, spoiled and violent - which poses quite a challenge for Batman in his efforts to properly train and direct the boy. It is this character that has merged into the main Batman storylines.

The sequel that Barr would follow up *SOD* with would be *Batman Bride of the Demon* (DC, 1990), with artwork by Tom and Eva Grindberg.

Nonetheless, the very profound question still lingers; had DC given Barr carte blanche for a *SOD* sequel, what would he have done with the characters and story?

Barr answers, "Well, at the end of *SOD* Batman and Ra's are both unaware of the existence of the child. In the sequel, both would have become aware of the boy and begin to move heaven and earth to get to him first. Both Batman and Ra's see the boy as their legitimate heir and want custody in order to raise and train the boy the way they each see fit. And Talia would be right smack in the middle of this titanic clash." Now that would make for an epic confrontation between Batman and Ra's for sure.

And what about the jeweled necklace? Would he have included this in the follow up sequel to *SOD*? Barr answers, "Almost certainly. I'm very big on visual motifs and their reuse to establish story theme."



Barr expounds a bit further on his thoughts regarding the all-important relationship between the two protagonists being asked, "Would Batman and Talia still be married in your opinion since they consummated their marriage in *SOD*? To which he says, "I believe so, though they would certainly be in the midst of a long-term separation. The original version of the sequel would have taken care of that, as well as resolving the matter of the child."