



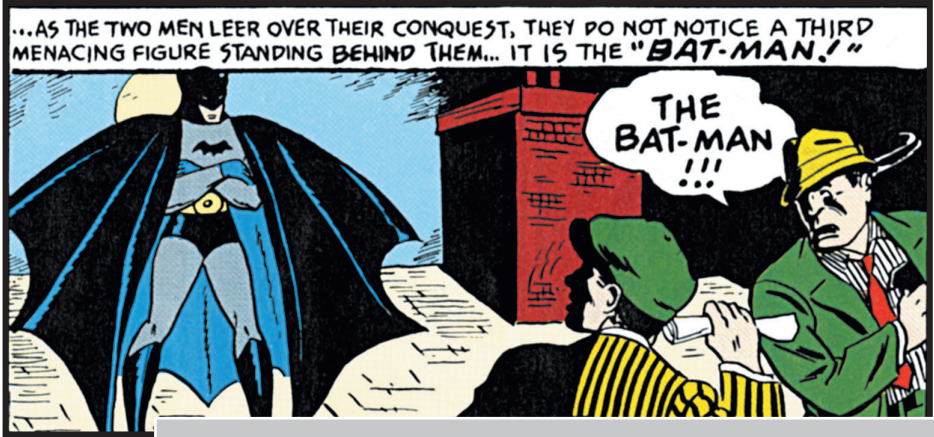
# THE CAPED CRUSADE



BATMAN AND  
THE  
RISE OF NERD  
CULTURE

G L E N   W E L D O N

1



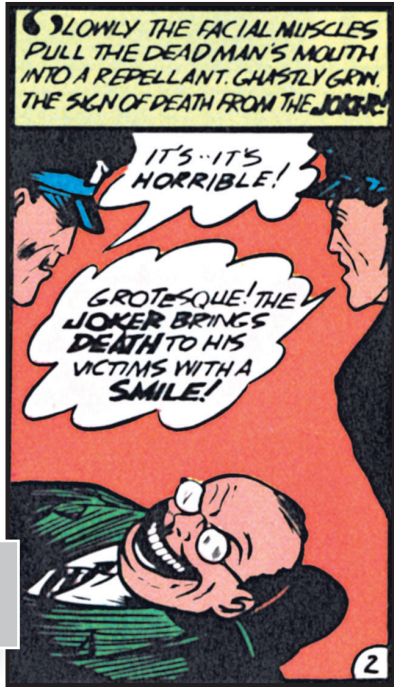
*Detective Comics #27: The very first glimpse we get of the guy and already he looks pissed.*

2



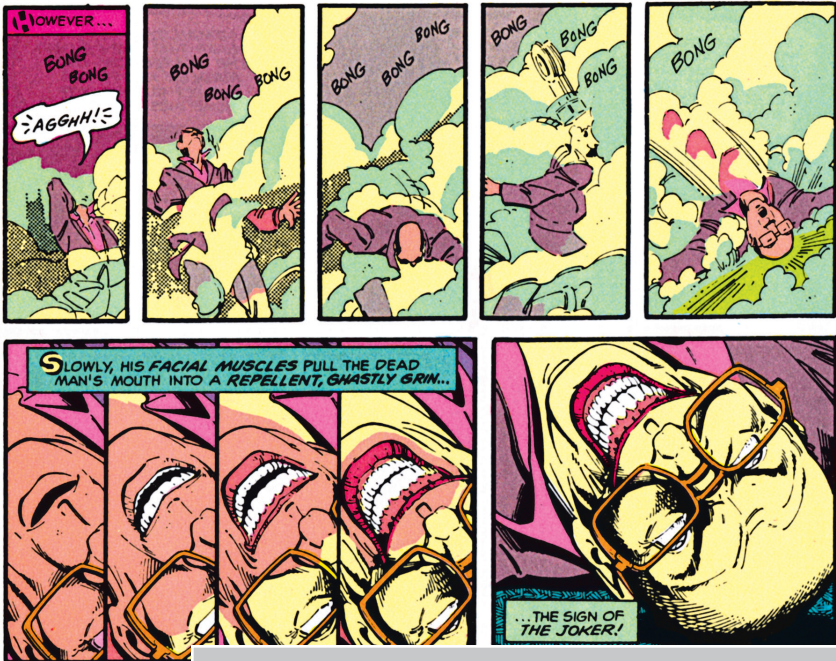
The first time we see Batman's origin. It, um, won't be the last. But modern retellings invariably discard this candlelit oath-making bit of business, likely deeming it hokey. Which: sure it is. But to skip it does a grave disservice; that oath is who Batman is.

3



For the very first time, the Joker strikes.

4

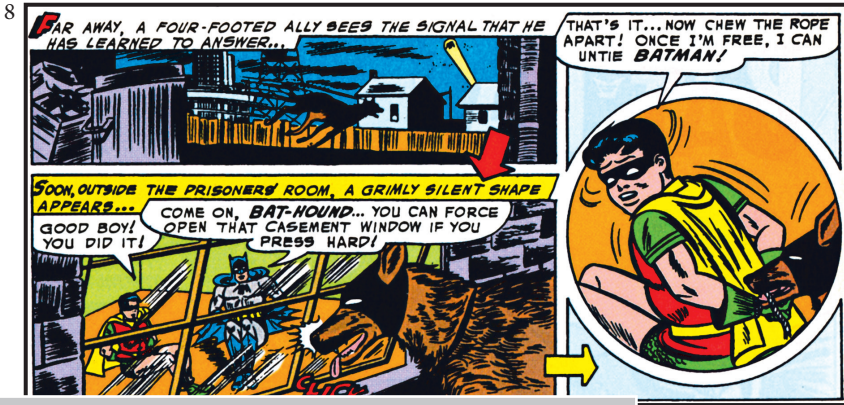


Thirty-eight years after that gruesome first kill, the Englehart/Rogers/Austin team would pay fannish homage to it—and to a lot of Batman's history—during their acclaimed run.

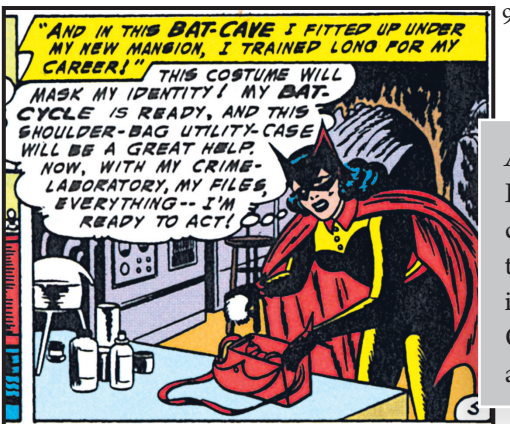




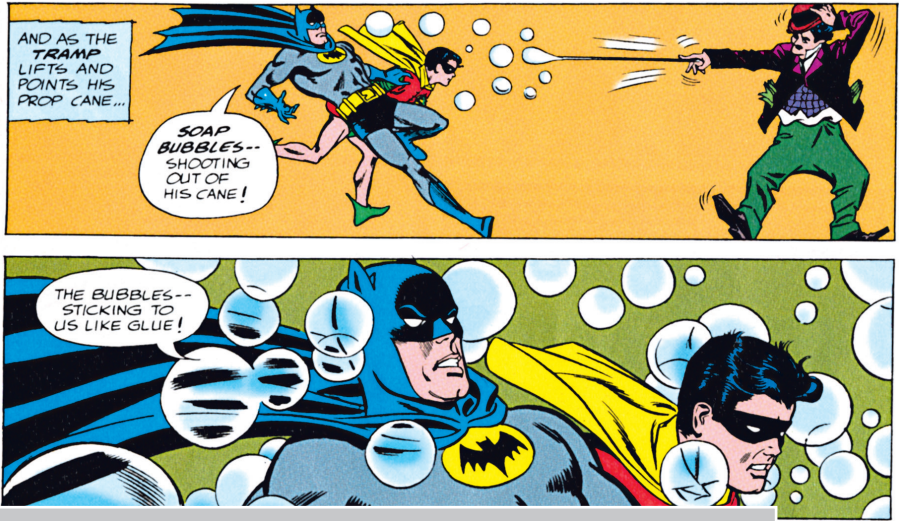
Robin's chirpy presence made for a sunnier Batman. His rogues' gallery felt it too: suddenly mass-murdering became passé and petty larceny was au courant. Take this goon: Joe Coyne, the Penny Plunderer, and his "crime symbol." In Gotham's underworld, ya gotta have a gimmick.



In the '50s, Batman's supporting cast swelled with masked hangers-on. First came Ace, the Bat-Hound . . .



Après dog, le déluge: Next came Batwoman (seen here stuffing her charm-bracelet handcuffs, lipstick telescope, and tear-gas perfume into her sensible Bat-purse), Bat-Girl, Bat-Mite, and, perhaps most awesomely, Mogo the Bat-Ape.



Batman's look got tweaked in the early 1960s, but he remained a duly deputized do-gooder at home in broad daylight. These are the comics that the creators of the TV series used as grist for their groovy, Pop Art mill. Compare to . . .



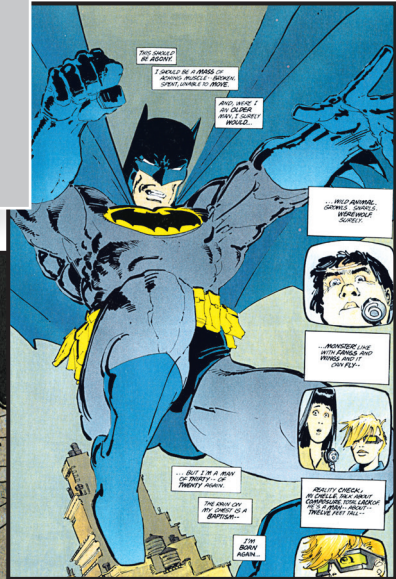
This was Batman, five years later. What happened in between? Adam West is what happened. Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams ditched anything that would remind fans of the TV series and transformed Batman from a superheroic cipher into an obsessed, angry loner.



12

*Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*: In Frank Miller's steroidal saga, decades of Bat-canon got amped up: His Caped Crusader shattered femurs, his Batmobile was a tank—and the bat that flew in Bruce Wayne's open window, inspiring his Batman identity? This time it came with property damage.

(From the same issue.) This is the first real glimpse Miller gives us of his Batman, looking iconic, if juiced, in the familiar blue and gray. Miller's use of splash pages like this one would, like everything else about *The Dark Knight Returns*, influence how superhero comics were made for many years.



13

In *Batman: Year One*, Miller reminded readers that Batman was more than a fat wallet, some pointy ears, and an attitude. He's about striking fear—and to do that, he needed a flair for the dramatic.

14

Nineteen eighty-eight was a tough year for Batman. The fans' appetite for grim-and-gritty superheroes, whetted by *The Dark Knight Returns*, became ravenous. In sequences of surprisingly grisly on-panel violence, the Bat-family shrank. First, Barbara (Batgirl) Gordon, paralyzed by the Joker's bullet.



**ROBIN WILL DIE BECAUSE THE JOKER WANTS REVENGE, BUT YOU CAN PREVENT IT WITH A TELEPHONE CALL.**

I - (900) 720-2660      I - (900) 720-2666

Joker fails to kill Robin lives  
 Joker succeeds Robin dies

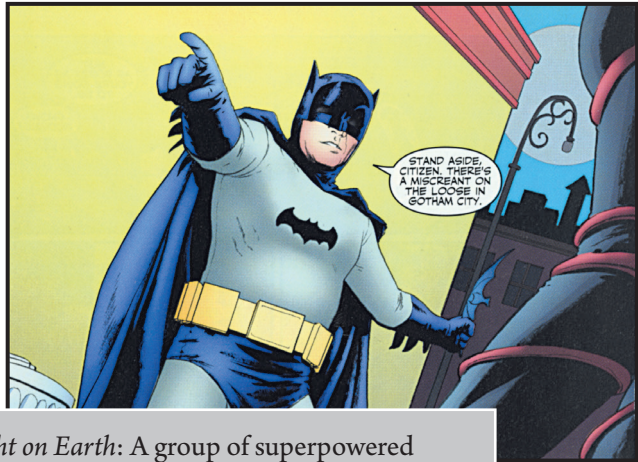
**These numbers will work only in the U.S.A. and Canada, between the following hours on September 15th and September 16th.**

**Eastern** 9:00 a.m. 9/15/88 through 8:00 p.m. 9/16/88  
**Mountain** 7:00 a.m. 9/15/88 through 6:00 p.m. 9/16/88  
**Central** 8:00 a.m. 9/15/88 through 7:00 p.m. 9/16/88  
**Pacific** 6:00 a.m. 9/15/88 through 5:00 p.m. 9/16/88

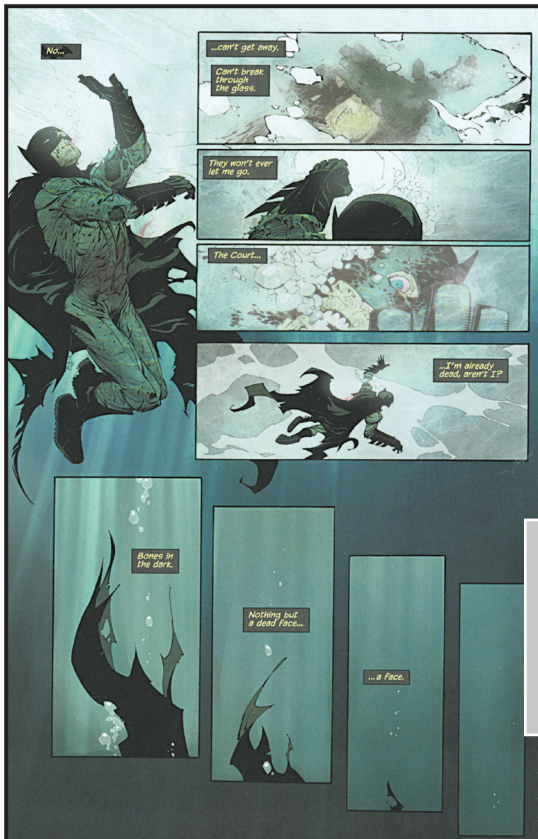
You will be charged 50¢ for each call, which will be connected to an acknowledgement message.

Soon after, readers were invited to call in to determine whether young Jason Todd (Robin II) lived through his brutal beating by the Joker. By a margin of just seventy-two votes, the little twerp bought it, further darkening the Dark Knight.





*Planetary/Batman: Night on Earth:* A group of superpowered investigators meet alternate-universe iterations of Batman. The gang's all here: Original-Recipe Bat-Man, O'Neil/Adams's Caped Crusader, Frank Miller's Dark Knight, and—in a surprising move that proved surprisingly moving—the Adam West Batman.



"I'm already dead, aren't I?" In a harrowing and unprecedented sequence, the "New 52" Batman finds himself overmatched, and he literally sinks into despair.

# IMAGE CREDITS

1. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #27 (May 1939). Art: Bob Kane. Script: Bill Finger.
2. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #33 (November 1939). Art: Bob Kane. Script: Bill Finger.
3. From *Batman* volume 1, #1 (June 1940). Art: Jerry Robinson, Bob Kane. Script: Bill Finger.
4. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #475 (February 1978). Art: Marshall Rogers, Terry Austin. Script: Steve Englehart.
5. and 6. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #38, (April 1940). Art: Jerry Robinson, Bob Kane. Story: Bill Finger.
7. From *World's Finest Comics* volume 1, #30 (September–October 1947). Art: Bob Kane, Jack Burnley. Script: Bill Finger.
8. From *Batman* volume 1, #92 (June 1955). Art: Sheldon Moldoff, Stan Kaye. Script: Bill Finger.
9. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #233 (July 1956). Art: Sheldon Moldoff, Stan Kaye. Script: Edmond Hamilton.

## Photo Credits

10. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #341 (July 1965). Art: Carmine Infantino, Joe Giella. Script: John Broome.

11. From *Detective Comics* volume 1, #395 (January 1970). Art: Neal Adams, Dick Giordano. Script: Denny O'Neil.

12. and 13. From *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* #1 (February 1986). Art: Frank Miller, Klaus Janson. Script: Frank Miller.

14. From *Batman* volume 1, #405 (March 1987). Art: David Mazzuchelli. Script: Frank Miller.

15. From *Batman: The Killing Joke* (May 1988). Art: Brian Bolland. Script: Alan Moore.

16. From *Batman* volume 1, #427 (December 1988).

17. From *Planetary/Batman: Night on Earth* (August 2003). Art: John Cassaday. Script: Warren Ellis.

18. From *Batman* volume 2, #7 (May 2012). Art: Greg Capullo, Jonathan Glapion. Script: Scott Snyder.