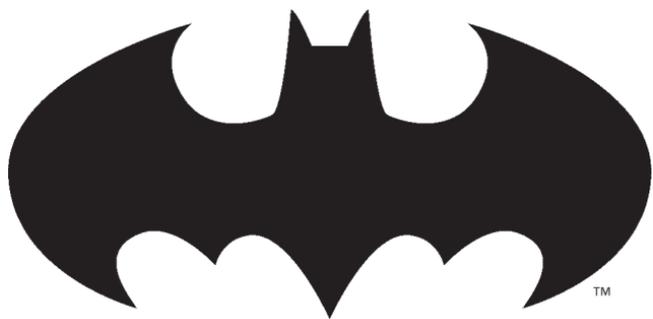


DC COMICS
BATMAN™
GOTHAM CITY'S GUARDIAN



By Matthew K. Manning
Illustrated by Steven Gordon
Batman created by Bob Kane

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Foreword

by Batman

When I was young, I lost my parents to a random act of violence. We were walking out of a movie theater, after watching a Zorro film I'd begged them to see. My mother even wore her favorite pearls, for my sake, so it would seem like a special occasion. It would be the last time she ever wore them.

Before that night, I thought I knew fear. Just months earlier, I'd fallen into the cave system that ran beneath our mansion. A bat flew out of the shadows directly at me. I cowered, hiding my head in my arms. But it never touched me. It was like I didn't

even matter. It kept on flying up and out of the cave. When my father found me, I was shaking in fear.

That night after the movies, it was like my experience in the cave all over again. Something came out of the shadows. But this time, it was a man. He pointed his gun at my parents, and there was a scuffle. Those prized pearls bounced one by one on the dirty pavement as he pulled his trigger. But he never aimed his gun at me. It was like I still didn't matter. In that moment, I became an orphan. I became another victim of Gotham City's rising crime. But if I had my way, I was going to be the last. If I had my way, I was going to finally matter.

On the day my parents were buried, I made a solemn vow. I promised to never let another innocent person suffer the same fate as my parents. I vowed to become something more than a man. I vowed to turn my darkest fears into something that would give me strength.

From that day on, my training began. I traveled the world to study with the most elusive masters of martial arts and detective work. I trained my body and mind to a level I had never thought possible. And then I returned to Gotham City and began my war on crime.

I have become much more than a scared little boy in a Gotham City alleyway. I have made myself into a frightening thing. I am the force that keeps criminals awake at night. I am the reason they look over their shoulders in fear when walking down a dimly lit street. To them, I am a creature of the shadows, Gotham City's dark protector. I am Batman.