

BATMAN: THRONE OF NIGHT, PART I (Sample)

Narrative Outline / Beat Sheet

J. D. Ford

- ❖ Setting: Gotham, 1937.
- ❖ POV character: Richard Liu Grayson (aka "Dick" Grayson, "Robin", "The Boy Wonder")
- ❖ Dick is a member of the "Flying Graysons", an acrobatic troupe formed by his father that specializes in Chinese-style tumbling, balancing acts/wire walking, juggling, Kung Fu/Wushu exhibition, and American trapeze.
 - Dick's mother, Mei-hua, is Chinese and his father, John, is an American, who traveled across China to learn their form of acrobatics. Dick's maternal grandfather (Chiang) was originally John's Chinese acrobatics teacher and mentor. He also began teaching Dick Kung Fu, personally, with John taking over after Chiang's death.
- ❖ Dick's parents argue over performing at a charity event in Gotham, which has become the most violent city in the world, attracting all sorts of vicious criminals (and rumors of one mysterious vigilante). Even the city's government is notoriously corrupt.
 - The Graysons are facing serious financial troubles after the worst of the Great Depression. Mei-hua does not want to go to Gotham but relents when John confesses that without this show they'll have to disband the troupe and seek other employment, for which both are ill suited.
- ❖ The Flying Graysons travel to Gotham by train, where the Wayne Foundation has organized a charity circus event to benefit the many orphanages in Gotham.
- ❖ Every major Cosa Nostra (Mafia) leader and their families are on the guest list.
 - We later learn this was by design, so Bruce Wayne could gather intel on them.

- ❖ The Joker has been challenging the long-entrenched mafia's grip on the city, intent on supplanting them entirely. Unknown to everyone involved, he has planned a meteoric rise in the hierarchy of Gotham's criminal pantheon.
- ❖ The Joker instigates a confrontation between Cosa Nostra's most powerful families (Moroni vs Zucco) at the Circus, kicking off a vicious gun battle, then sets fire to the big top, which quickly burns out of control.
 - The audience (and Dick) do not realize this until years later, but the Joker was actually one of the clowns performing at the circus, and personally sets it ablaze.
- ❖ Bruce Wayne saves Dick from the collapsing circus tent after he tries to go back in after his parents and collapses from smoke inhalation. Every member of the Flying Graysons is killed, except Dick.
- ❖ Dick meets Detective James Gordon. Some of the other officers are clearly a bit prejudiced against this "half-breed kid", but not Gordon.
- ❖ 14 year-old Dick becomes a ward of the state and is absorbed into the system while his case is processed.
- ❖ Dick immediately begins tracking down those he believes are responsible for the deaths of his parents and friends, and has a real problem with authority in general, suffers from terrible nightmares. He tries to escape from all orphanages they put him in.
- ❖ Dick's path inevitably crosses that of the Batman, who is collecting evidence against the surviving members of Cosa Nostra so the district attorney (Harvey Dent) can prosecute them.
 - Batman is also attempting to track down the Joker, whose unpredictably savage behavior is beginning to take a real toll on the citizens and law enforcement of Gotham. Unlike the Mafia, Joker has no compunctions about killing cops.
- ❖ Dick ambushes a low-level henchmen of Salvatore "The Boss" Maroni's outfit in an attempt to get information. He is overconfident and is outwitted by the mobster and two other thugs, and beaten badly before Batman intervenes.

- ❖ At first, through Dick's eyes, we see Batman as the world and all of its criminals see him...a terrifying shadow, an avenging angel, an otherworldly specter of both mystery and violence. Superhuman.
- ❖ Batman admonishes Dick to let others handle the investigation (the police, himself).
- ❖ Dick bitterly replies that Batman can't understand, that nothing anyone says will make him relent. He is going to bring down those responsible for his parents' murder. Nothing will stop him. He'll die trying.
- ❖ Batman realizes that Dick is going to keep running headlong into harm's way until he ends up getting himself killed.
- ❖ Bruce Wayne petitions to become Dick's guardian the next day.
- ❖ Dick runs away from Wayne Manor, is quickly tracked down by Alfred.
- ❖ Batman is injured while going after the Joker, forcing Alfred to retrieve him. Left alone at the mansion, Dick discovers the Batcave, watches Alfred and Batman return.
- ❖ Dick sees Batman unmasked.
- ❖ Batman quickly realizes Dick is there. Alfred is against revealing the entire truth to him, but Bruce has already decided that to save Dick from himself he must take the risk. Only the truth will be strong enough to convince Dick he must learn discipline before he can take on his enemies.
 - Batman's ulterior motive is to prevent Dick from blindly stumbling down the path he walked as a child, and he feels responsible for what happened to Dick's parents due to his involvement in organizing the circus to investigate criminals.
- ❖ Dick agrees to stay away from Moroni and the other families if Batman will train him, help him bring them to justice. Batman agrees, but only if he decides when and where Dick is permitted to act.
- ❖ Dick's training begins. He is already a skilled acrobat and proficient in Kung Fu, but Batman's range and depth of experience far surpasses anything Dick has encountered before.

- ❖ Batman does not start with gadgets and hand-to-hand combat, contrary to Dick's expectations. He starts by training Dick's mind. Alfred tutors Dick relentlessly on concepts of criminal justice and typical high school curriculum.
- ❖ Bruce also takes Dick's physical training to a whole new, albeit seemingly mundane, level. This is enormously frustrating for Dick, who wants to learn how to use Batman's bag of tricks.
- ❖ Now we begin to see Batman as the World's Greatest Detective. He has amassed and continues to amass a vast database of evidence (he even has a rudimentary cryptanalytic machine similar to those developed by Alan Turing in the 1940s).
 - Batman's goal is to supply the DA's office with sufficient actionable evidence to keep all the criminals he captures behind bars once they've been turned over to the police, and to break the hold of corruption on the city.
 - Batman is not a mere brawler. He's a surgeon, cutting the cancer out of Gotham one cell at a time.
- ❖ Dick is fed up with schoolwork and seemingly pointless physical conditioning. Bruce surprises him with a trip to a waterfall deep inside the cave system below Wayne Manor. There they practice Bushido meditation beneath the thundering water, and Bruce begins training him in Jujitsu, Ninjutsu, and various other martial arts.

END OF SAMPLE