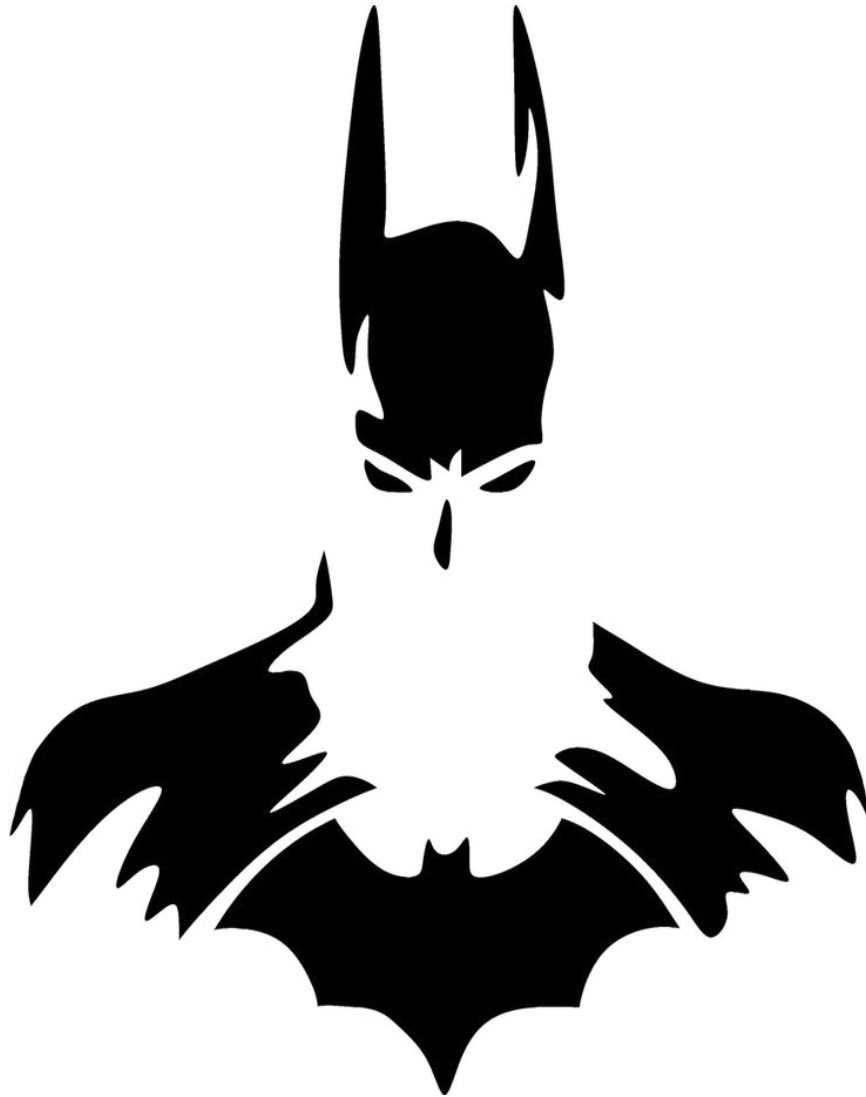




BATMAN: CREATURE OF GOTHAM

"Vanishing Point"

Written by:
Kevin Georges

"VANISHING POINT"

ACT ONE:

FADE IN:

INT. BATMOBILE - NIGHT - MOVING

The cockpit glows with blue light. High-tech dashboard. Monitors displaying Gotham's streets.

BATMAN drives, focused and silent.

TALIA sits in the passenger seat, next to him. Studies the interior with interest.

The engine HUMS. Rain patters against the windshield.

Silence. Only the sound of the road.

Talia runs her hand along the dashboard. Elegant and deliberate.

TALIA
(impressed, teasing)
Comfortable. I expected something
more... spartan.

Batman does not respond. Keeps his eyes on the road.

Talia smirks.

TALIA (CONT'D)
(playful)
You should show me around the city
sometime. I think we would both
enjoy it.

Batman tightens his jaw slightly. Remaining silent.

Talia studies him, waiting for a response. Dead silence.

She turns to look out the window, taking a look at Gotham's streets.

TALIA (CONT'D)
(softer, sincere)
You still don't trust me.

Beat.

BATMAN
(quiet, measured)
I trust that you're here for a
reason.

TALIA
Believe me. My father-

BATMAN
(cutting her off)
I'll speak with Ra's. Right now, we
have a murder to investigate.

Talia nods. Accepting his negotiation.

They both remain in silence for the remainder of the trip.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A massive medical complex. Brutalist architecture. Cold and institutional.

GCPD CRUISERS are parked outside. Lights flashing. OFFICERS securing the perimeter.

The BATMOBILE pulls up. Sleek and predatory.

Batman and Talia exit.

COMMISSIONER GORDON (trench coat, exhausted) stands near the entrance with DETECTIVE HARVEY BULLOCK (rumpled suit, fedora, scowling).

Gordon sees Batman, nodding in acknowledgement.

He then notices Talia with Batman. His expression shifts into a more guarded one, questioning her.

GORDON
(to Batman, cautious)
Is she with you?

BATMAN
She's helping with the
investigation. Her name is Talia.

BULLOCK
(skeptical, to Batman)
Since when do you bring guests to
crime scenes?

Batman ignores him. He turns to Gordon.

BATMAN
Where's the body?

Gordon gestures toward the entrance.

GORDON
Third floor. Room 312. We've kept
the scene intact. No one's touched
anything since we found him.

They walk toward the hospital entrance.

Bullock lingers behind with Gordon.

BULLOCK
(low, to Gordon)
You trust her?

GORDON
(quiet)
I trust Batman's judgment.

BULLOCK
(unimpressed)
Of course you do.

INT. GOTHAM CITY HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sterile. Fluorescent lights. The smell of antiseptic.

Batman, Talia, Gordon, and Bullock walk down the hallway.

OFFICERS stand guard outside Room 312.

GORDON
Cameras were disabled. All of them.
Whoever did this knew exactly what
they were doing.

BATMAN
How long was he alone?

GORDON
About twenty minutes. Nurse checked
on him at 11:45. Found him dead
at 12:07.

They reach the door. Gordon pushes it open.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 312 - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Small. Clinical. A single hospital bed.

MAYOR HILL lies MOTIONLESS. White bandages covering his lifeless head. A white sheet pulled up to his chest.

On the BANDAGES: A drawing of a Chinese dragon. Black ink. Intricate.

Batman and Talia are in shock. Batman approaches the bed. Talia follows.

Gordon and Bullock stay near the door.

GORDON

The coroner says it was a gunshot
to the chest. Point-blank range.

Talia pulls out a small HANDHELD SCANNER from her belt. She activates it.

A blue light sweeps over Hill's body.

BULLOCK

(to Talia, suspicious)
What's that?

TALIA

(without looking up)
Biomolecular scanner. Detecting
residual toxins.

She studies the readout. Frowns slightly.

TALIA (CONT'D)

No trace of Joker's laughing toxin
in his system. He was recovering
from the initial exposure, but it
didn't kill him.

BATMAN

The gunshot did.

Talia moves the scanner to Hill's chest. The sheet is stained with blood.

TALIA

It punctured his lung. His death
would have been within minutes.

Batman leans closer, examining the dragon drawing.

BATMAN

(to Gordon)
What could this mean?

GORDON

It could have been left by the
killer. Some kind of message.

Batman's eyes narrow. He studies the symbol carefully.

The dragon's design is FAMILIAR.

FLASHBACK - BRIEF (BLACK AND WHITE):

INT. THORNE'S ESTATE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Batman and CATWOMAN in Thorne's office.

In the corner sits a large CHINESE DRAGON STATUE. Cold and
ornate.

Batman's eyes linger on it.

BACK TO THE PRESENT:

Batman straightens. Turns to Gordon.

BATMAN

Rupert Thorne.

BULLOCK

(confused)

The crime boss? What's he got to do
with this?

BATMAN

Thorne and Hill have a history.
Hill was investigating Thorne's
operations before the election.
Thorne wanted him out of office.

GORDON

So you think Thorne had him killed?

BATMAN

I've seen that exact dragon at his
estate.

Gordon considers it, but remains skeptical.

GORDON

Fascinating. But we'd need more
than a little sketch to bring
Thorne in.

BATMAN

I'll get you more.

He turns toward the door.

GORDON
Batman, wait. If Thorne's involved,
we do this by the book. I can't
have you-

BATMAN
(over his shoulder)
I'm not asking for permission.

He walks out. Talia follows.

Gordon and Bullock exchange looks.

BULLOCK
(sighing)
Here we go again.

GORDON
(quiet, to Bullock)
You know, that might be the first
time I've ever seen him leave
through the door. He usually just
disappears.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Batman and Talia exit the hospital. Rain still falling.

They walk towards the Batmobile.

TALIA
I'm unfamiliar with Thorne.

BATMAN
The dragon connects him to Mayor
Hill's murder.

TALIA
I trust you.

Batman's eyes narrow. He still does not fully trust her.

They climb into the Batmobile.

The engine ROARS to life.

The car SPEEDS into the night.

EXT. THORNE ESTATE - GOTHAM OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

The sprawling mansion. Dark. Imposing. Security lights sweep the grounds.

The BATMOBILE pulls up outside the gates. The engine idles.

INT. BATMOBILE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Batman stares at the estate through the windshield, calculating.

Talia sits beside him, watching.

BATMAN

Stay here.

TALIA

(surprised)

What?

BATMAN

This is my investigation. Leave it to me.

TALIA

Bruce, I can help.

BATMAN

You did your work. Let me do mine.

Talia's eyes flash with frustration, but she recognizes the tone and accepts it.

TALIA

(controlled)

Alright.

Batman exits the Batmobile. Door hisses shut.

Talia watches him disappear into the shadows.

EXT. THORNE'S ESTATE - GROUNDS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Batman moves like a shadow. Silent and efficient.

He scales the wall, then drops into the courtyard.

Two SECURITY GUARDS patrol nearby, carrying standard assault rifles.

Batman waits, timing their movements.

When they pass, he GRAPPLES to the second-floor balcony. He lands without a sound.

INT. THORNE'S ESTATE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Plush carpet. Expensive art on the walls.

Batman moves down the corridor. He stops at a door, pulling out Lucius's CRYPTOGRAPHIC SEQUENCER.

He points it at the electronic lock. The device WHIRS. Algorithms running.

BEEP. The lock CLICKS open.

Batman enters.

INT. THORNE'S ESTATE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Lavish. King-sized bed. Fireplace crackling.

RUPERT THORNE (50s, expensive silk robe, cigar) sits in an armchair reading a FINANCIAL REPORT.

He does not notice Batman entering.

Batman steps out of the shadows.

BATMAN

Thorne.

Thorne JUMPS, startled. The report flies from his hands. He drops his cigar.

THORNE

(startled, angry)

Geez! What the hell-BATMAN?!

He scrambles backward, knocking over a glass of scotch.

Batman approaches, slow and menacing.

THORNE (CONT'D)

(panicking)

How the hell did you get in here?!

What do you want this time?!

BATMAN

(cold)

Mayor Hill is dead.

Thorne's face goes pale.

THORNE
(stammering)
I-I know. It's terrible. But if you
think I had anything to do with-

Batman GRABS him by the collar, slightly lifting him.

BATMAN
(fierce)
Don't lie to me.

THORNE
(terrified)
On my mother's life, I'm NOT lying!

Batman SLAMS him against the wall. Not hard enough to injure,
but just enough to terrify him.

BATMAN
The killer sketched a dragon on his
head. You have that exact dragon
statue in your office.

THORNE
(heavy breathing)
That doesn't mean-I didn't-

BATMAN
(tightening grip)
You wanted him out of office. He
was investigating your operations.
Now he's dead. Convenient, isn't
it?

THORNE
(desperate)
YES! I wanted him gone! But through
legal channels, not MURDER dammit!

Batman studies him, searching for deception.

BATMAN
I know how you run the city,
Thorne. You do a lot to make sure
you're not behind bars.

THORNE
OKAY, OKAY! I do things in silence,
but killing the damn mayor brings
too much heat. The GCPD, the Feds-
everyone would be on me. I'm not
stupid!

Batman releases him. Thorne falls back into the armchair, gasping.

BATMAN
So what do you know about the
killer?

THORNE
(shaking his head,
stressed)
Nothing! It wasn't me. I swear on
my LIFE. I'm being used by a
supplier, and now I'm being falsely
accused of murder! What is going
on!

Batman steps closer, looming over him.

BATMAN
(low, dangerous)
If I find out you're lying, or I
discover you had ANY involvement in
Hill's death or these weapons, it's
going to get a lot worse for you.
YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!

Thorne nods frantically. Terrified.

THORNE
I understand.

Batman turns towards the balcony.

BATMAN
(over his shoulder)
Stay in Gotham. If you run, I'll
assume you're guilty.

He fires his GRAPPLING HOOK, ascending into the darkness.

Thorne runs to the balcony, watching down, looking for
Batman. But Batman has vanished.

EXT. THORNE'S ESTATE - GROUNDS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Batman glides to the ground, using his cape as a glider. He
moves towards the Batmobile.

He reaches the Batmobile. He climbs inside.

ACT TWO:

INT. BATMOBILE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Batman steps into the driver's seat. Talia watches.

TALIA
Did he confess?

BATMAN
(frustrated)
No. He's either innocent or a very
good liar.

He starts up the engine. The engine ROARS.

TALIA
You believe him.

BATMAN
I know how he runs the city. He's
not stupid enough to kill a mayor
and leave his own signature.

TALIA
Then who could it be?

Batman does not respond. Lost in thought.

The Batmobile begins to move. They get on the road in quick
speeds. Talia feels the speed.

He taps a button on the dashboard. A HOLOGRAPHIC SCREEN
appears.

TIM DRAKE (civilian clothes) appears on the screen. He is in
the BATCAVE.

TIM
(concerned)
Bruce, did you find anything?

BATMAN
Thorne denies involvement. I
believe him.

TIM
So what now?

BATMAN
The dragon is a signature.
Someone's sending a message. I need
you to dig deeper.
(MORE)

BATMAN (CONT'D)
Cross-reference the design with
known criminal organizations. Check
international databases.

TIM
On it. What about you?

Batman glances at Talia.

BATMAN
I'm going to meet with Ra's.

Talia looks at Batman, pleasantly surprised.

TIM
Be careful. You've told me some
crazy stories about that man.

BATMAN
Oracle will be assisting me. As
always.

The screen FLICKERS off.

Silence. Just the hum of the engine.

BATMAN (CONT'D)
Where's Ra's. Can I meet with him
now?

TALIA
Of course. He's beneath the old
sewers of Gotham. The League has a
hidden lair there.

Batman's eyes narrow.

BATMAN
Ra's has been operating under my
city? For how long?

TALIA
Years. He's kept it a secret. Only
a select few know its location.

BATMAN
(cold)
You've told me.

TALIA
(meeting his gaze)
Because he trusts you.

Batman studies her, weighing the truth of her words.

BATMAN
Take me there.

TALIA
Head toward the East End. There's
an entrance near the old Robinson
Park drainage system.

Batman adjusts course. The Batmobile turns sharply.

They drive in silence.

INT. BATCAVE - NIGHT

The cavernous space is illuminated by the glow of the
BATCOMPUTER.

Tim (civilian clothes) sits at the console. Multiple screen
around him-databases, image searches, forensic reports. He
types on the BATCOMPUTER, searching for information.

On the main screen: the dragon symbol from Mayor Hill's head.
Rotating. Analyzed from every angle.

Tim rubs his eyes, frustrated.

TIM
(muttering to himself)
Come on... there has to be
something.

He types rapidly. Another database query.

RESULTS: NO MATCHES FOUND.

Tim SLAMS his fist on the console.

ALFRED descends the stairs from the Manor. Carries a heavy
mahogany tray. Contains a teapot, a cup, and cream.

Alfred approaches Tim.

ALFRED
Some green tea, Master Tim?

TIM
(respectful)
Of course, Alfred.

Alfred lifts the teapot, pouring in the tea in the cup
elegantly. Places it near the keyboard of the Batcomputer.
Right next to Tim.

Tim continues to type, researching and trying to cross-reference the dragon design to possible suspects.

ALFRED

Any progress on the killer?

TIM

None. This guy hasn't left a print. You think it's that Qayin guy Talia was warning us about?

ALFRED

For a global terrorist, a mayor seems like the least of his problems.

TIM

You're right. Red Claw wouldn't make sense either.

A beat. Then Tim switches the subject.

TIM (CONT'D)

(to Alfred)

You know, Alfred, I'm getting a little concerned over Bruce working with Talia. Especially if he ends up working with Ra's.

ALFRED

Him and Ra's go back a long way. I trust Master Bruce's judgment if he's willing to work with him.

TIM

And that's what concerns me. How does he know this isn't some kind of game? Ra's uses extreme methods for overcoming corruption in the world. Ones that go against our moral code.

ALFRED

(wise)

You are right to be concerned, Master Tim. But Master Bruce believes in reform. He saw good in others. One of them being Master Todd, rest his soul.

Tim looks down. That hits close to home.

TIM

What if he's wrong?

Alfred smiles sadly.

ALFRED

He will handle it. As he always
does.

Tim absorbs it, nodding slowly.

Alfred squeezes Tim's shoulder gently. Then returns upstairs.

Tim turns back to the screens, determined.

He continues searching. Never giving up.

EXT. ROBINSON PARK - DRAINAGE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Overgrown. Forgotten. A massive DRAINAGE PIPE leads
underground.

The Batmobile parks nearby.

Batman and Talia exit.

Rain pours. Thunder strikes.

They approach the entrance.

TALIA

This way.

She pulls aside a rusted GRATE. It reveals a hidden staircase
descending into the darkness.

Batman activates a LIGHT on his cowl. A beam cuts through the
shadows via his eyes.

BATMAN

After you.

Talia descends. Batman follows.

INT. LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS STAIRCASE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The staircase spirals down. Extremely deep.

The sound of WATER dripping. Echoing.

At the bottom sits a corridor. Stone walls. Ancient. Gothic.

Torches flicker along the walls.

TALIA
(quietly)
Welcome back to the League of
Assassins.

Batman's hand moves instinctively to his utility belt, ready for the mission.

They walk deeper into the lair. The darkness swallows them.

They continue to walk down in the darkness.

Batman scans the scene for suspicions.

After walking down the stairs, they meet a WALL. A supposed dead end.

But Batman does not believe so.

BATMAN
Secret entrance, isn't it?

TALIA
I like your way of thinking.

Talia places her hand on the wall, activating a secret entrance.

INT. LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS LAIR - GRAND HALL - NIGHT

Massive. Opulent. Ancient architecture meets modern luxury.

Stone columns rise to a vaulted ceiling. TORCHES flicker along the walls. A long DINING TABLE dominates the center, set with fine china, crystal glasses, candelabras.

Batman and Talia enter from the corridor.

At the far end of the table sits RA'S AL GHUL (60s, regal bearing, white robes with green accents, commanding presence)

Beside him stands UBU (massive, muscular, scarred, silent). He watches Batman with cold hostility.

Ra's STANDS. Arms wide. Welcoming.

RA'S
(warm, theatrical)
Welcome, Detective.

Batman stops ten feet from the table. Talia beside him.

BATMAN
(flat)
Ra's.

RA'S
You haven't aged a day. I'm sure
you haven't been using my Lazarus
Pits.

BATMAN
Not at all.

RA'S
(amused)
I'm jealous.
(gesturing to the table)
Please, Detective. Take a seat.

Batman doesn't move.

BATMAN
I'm not here to eat. I'm here for
answers.

Ra's' smile doesn't fade.

RA'S
And you shall receive them. But
first... hospitality.

Beat. Batman weighs his options.

Finally, he walks to the table, sitting across from Ra's.

Talia sits beside Batman.

Ubu moves closer to Ra's. Overprotective. His eyes never
leave Batman.

SERVANTS in robes enter. They place plates of food. Middle
Eastern cuisine, expertly prepared.

Ra's raises his wine glass.

RA'S (CONT'D)
To unlikely alliances.

Batman doesn't touch his glass.

Ra's drinks anyway, unbothered.

RA'S (CONT'D)
You do not drink, Detective?

BATMAN

I want to know about the mission.

RA'S

I see. It may be a mission in which the three of us find ourselves as allies. It may too be my last mission, for should I perish in this endeavor, the Lazarus Pit may no longer be able to restore me.

BATMAN

Mayor Hill's been murdered. How do I know it's not you?

RA'S

I can assure you, Detective. I was in no way involved in the Mayor's death. Indeed, the rendering useless of such an intellect is distasteful to me.

BATMAN

I have to be certain about this, Ra's. With your resources, you can do nearly anything you set your mind to. I'd suspect Talia if I had a logical reason, but she was with me when the Mayor was murdered. I suspect a third party involved in this...

RA'S

(settling in)

You wish to know about Qayin.

BATMAN

Everything.

Ra's leans back. His expression darkens.

RA'S

Very well, Detective. Qayin is the murderer of my wife.

BATMAN

(shocked)

Your wife?

TALIA

(head down)

My mother. I barely remember her.

RA'S
 (reassuring)
 She remains so, in our hearts.
 Never forget that.

FLASHBACK - 1945

TITLE CARD: "AUGUST 6, 1945 - HIROSHIMA"

INT. RA'S' COMPOUND - YEARS AGO - DAY (WARM TONES)

LIEUTENANT LANDOR (30s, military uniform, idealistic) stands before RA'S (younger, darker hair).

MELISANDE (30s, beautiful, kind) is present. Ra's' wife, Talia's mother.

YOUNG TALIA (child) plays nearby.

A BABY (barely one year old) in Ra's' arms. This is QUINLAN, before he became Qayin.

RA'S (V.O.)
 During the last World War, I had an organization of my own. One that would combat the axis powers. Years earlier, my trusted lieutenant, Landor, had been blessed with a son, and I had been made his godfather.

Young Ra's holds Baby Quinlan.

RA'S (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I cared for the young Quinlan when his parents went on missions... such as the mission I sent them on to the Japanese city of Hiroshima... on August 6th, 1945. A date of historical significance, Detective.

YOUNG QUINLAN'S PARENTS (in uniform) walk through the city. August 6, 1945.

A BLINDING FLASH. The atomic bomb.

Quinlan's face TWISTS in anguish.

EXT. HIROSHIMA MEMORIAL - FLASHBACK - DAY (RED/ORANGE TONES)

Qayin stands before a memorial. Haunted. Broken.

RA'S (V.O.)
 Young Quinlan had come with me to
 meet his parents. I had to
 physically restrain him from
 joining them.

INT. RA'S' COMPOUND - NIGHT (DARK RED TONES)

Quinlan, now OLDER, more hardened, argues with Ra's.

RA'S (V.O.)
 From that day forward, he became
 moody, fatalistic, obsessed with
 the subject of death. He demanded
 we call him Qayin, after a
 variation on the name of the first
 murderer... Cain.

QAYIN STORMS out.

INT. RA'S' BEDROOM - NIGHT (DARK RED TONES)

Ra's has a conversation with his pregnant wife, Melisande.

RA'S (V.O.)
 My beloved wife, Melisande, and I
 could do nothing to relieve his
 melancholy. Melisande, who was at
 that time, carrying Talia, begged
 me to expel him from our household.
 But I could not do that.

INT. SECRET CHAMBER - NIGHT (SHADOWS)

Young Talia (born child), sees Qayin in a forbidden room.

Melisande enters. Catches him.

RA'S (V.O.)
 One night, when Talia was only a
 child, Melisande caught Qayin
 prowling about the secret room
 where I kept my earliest version of
 the Lazarus Pit.

Qayin turns. Eyes cold.

Melisande GASPS. Horrified.

RA'S (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He was horrified. For that room was
forbidden to all. Qayin fled. And
in doing so, pushed my beloved into
the pit.

Qayin STRIKES. Melisande falls.

Young Talia SCREAMS.

RA'S (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Her death was instantaneous.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS LAIR - GRAND HALL - NIGHT

Ra's stares into his wine. Haunted.

Talia's face is stone. But pain flickers in her eyes. She
stands near Ra's now, who comforts her.

Batman processes this. His expression softens just slightly.

TALIA
(holding back tears)
But Qayin escaped that night, and
virtually disappeared. For years we
could find no trace of him. But
now... we have good reason to
believe he's back. And I wish to
kill him. Not only to avenge my
mother... but to also prove to my
father that I still love him.

RA'S
(comforting, to Talia)
There is no need to prove your love
for me, Talia.
(to Batman)
However, with the threat of Qayin
looming on the horizon, perhaps it
is time I took an ally to defeat
him. You, detective.

Batman leans forward.

BATMAN
What's his plan?

Ra's stands. Walks to a WALL DISPLAY. Taps a panel.

A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION appears. A WEATHER SATELLITE orbiting Earth.

RA'S

Qayin has developed a weather manipulation system. Attached to a military satellite, it can generate catastrophic storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other natural phenomenon. Anywhere on the planet.

Batman's jaw tightens.

BATMAN

How does he plan to use it?

RA'S

Hiroshima. As revenge for his parents' death. A storm so powerful it will erase the city. Millions will die.

BATMAN

When?

RA'S

The satellite is set to launch from Cape Canaveral in three days. Qayin will be infiltrating the facility. We must stop him before the launch.

Batman stands.

BATMAN

What about Red Claw?

Ra's switches the projection. Red Claw's face appears.

RA'S

Qayin's partner. A familiar foe to do, I believe. She supplies him with resources. Weapons, funding, personnel, in exchange for access to the satellite.

TALIA

She plans to hold Gotham hostage. One billion dollars or she destroys the city.

BATMAN

She's been arming criminals to weaken Gotham's defenses.

TALIA
Precisely so.

Batman paces. Thinking.

BATMAN
We stop the launch, capture Qayin
and Red Claw, and end this.

RA'S
Agreed. But Detective... this
mission goes beyond Gotham. Are you
willing to leave your city behind?

BATMAN
I go where the mission takes me.

Ra's smile, impressed.

RA'S
Spoken like a true warrior.

He makes his offer.

RA'S (CONT'D)
Do you accept my offer, Detective?

Batman studies Ra's. He finally makes his decision.

BATMAN
I do.

Ra's smile widens.

RA'S
And with this position comes the
hand of my daughter. To accept the
first is to accept the second.
There is no middle ground.

Batman's eyes widen slightly. Talia looks down.

RA'S (CONT'D)
Do you still accept my offer,
Detective?

A beat.

Finally, Batman makes the ultimate decision.

BATMAN
I do.

Talia finally looks up, meeting Batman's eyes.

There's hope there. And fear.

Ra's is satisfied.

RA'S

(nodding)

Very well, Detective. Talia will
show you to your quarters. We will
speak again in the morning.

Batman turns, walking toward the exit.

Talia follows.

Ubu watches them go, his expression unreadable.

ACT THREE:

INT. LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS LAIR - PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

A lavish bedroom. Silk curtains. Ornate bed. Candles
flickering.

Batman enters. Talia behind him.

She closes the door. Silence.

Batman removes his cowl, becoming Bruce. He turns to face
her.

BRUCE

There's never been any room in my
life for a woman... that's what
I've told myself. Maybe that's what
I wanted to believe. I've tried to
forget you... but I can't. I never
could. I never will.

Talia leans closer.

TALIA

I accept your apology... my
beloved.

They kiss deeply. Passionately.

She wraps her arms around him. They pull each other close.

The camera PULLS BACK through the curtains, toward the door.

Candle flicker. Shadows move.

EXT. THORNE'S ESTATE - NIGHT - LATER

The mansion. Dark. Foreboding.

Security lights sweep the grounds. Guards patrol with rifles.

INT. THORNE'S ESTATE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rupert Thorne (suit, disheveled, paranoid) frantically packs a SUITCASE.

Expensive suits. Cash. Passport.

His hands shake.

A KNOCK at the door.

THORNE
(jumpy)
What?!

The door opens. A BODYGUARD (40s, armed, professional) enters.

BODYGUARD
Sir, the truck's ready. We should
move now.

THORNE
(agitated)
Did you check the perimeter? All
exits?

BODYGUARD
Twice. It's clear.

Thorne looks around the room one last time.

THORNE
(muttering)
Why couldn't we do this in the
morning? If Batman finds out...

He follows the bodyguard out.

EXT. THORNE'S ESTATE - GARAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A large CARGO TRUCK idles, engine rumbling.

SIX ARMED THUGS stand near the back. Military-grade weapons.

Thorne approaches. His paranoid eyes scan the shadows.

THORNE
Everyone accounted for?

THUG #1
All here, boss.

THORNE
Good. Let's move. Fast.

The thugs climb into the back of the truck. Thorne follows.
The BACK DOORS SLAM SHUT. Locked from the outside.

INT. CARGO TRUCK - CAB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The DRIVER (50s, grizzled, professional) shifts into gear.
He checks his mirrors.
He pulls out of the estate.

EXT. GOTHAM STREETS - NIGHT - MOVING

The truck drives through empty industrial roads.
Rain falls. Streelights flicker.
The city is eerily QUIET.

INT. CARGO TRUCK - BACK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Dark. Cramped.
Thorne sits on a metal bench. The six thugs sit around him.
Weapons resting across their laps.
Silence. Just the hum of the engine.
One thug shifts. Nervously.

THUG #2
(low, to Thorne)
Where we headed to, boss?

THORNE
(tense)
Off the grid.

THUG #2
You really think Batman's coming
after you?

Thorne doesn't answer. He just stares at the floor.

More silence.

The truck RUMBLES over a pothole. Everyone jostles.

Then... stillness again. Too much for Thorne to handle.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

The truck pulls up to a decrepit warehouse. Isolated, with no other buildings nearby.

The engine SHUTS OFF.

INT. CARGO TRUCK - CAB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The driver climbs out the truck. Stretches.

He walks to the back of the truck.

Unlocks the doors.

DRIVER
(calling out)
We're here. Everybody out.

Silence.

He's confused.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
(louder)
Boss? You hear me?

No response.

He pulls open the doors.

The interior is PITCH BLACK.

The driver clicks on a FLASHLIGHT. The beam cuts through the darkness.

And he FREEZES.

All six thugs are SLUMPED. Motionless. Head lolling, eyes open, staring. DEAD.

The driver's breath catches.

He moves the flashlight across the bodies... until it lands on Thorne.

Thorne sits back against the wall. Eyes wide. Mouth open in a silent scream. DEAD.

On his FOREHEAD... ARABIC WRITING. Freshly carved in blood.

The driver STUMBLES backward, dropping the flashlight.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
(horrificed)
Oh God... oh God...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE.