

BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES

"Vigil"

ACT ONE

INT. BATCAVE / INT. THOMAS WAYNE MEMORIAL CLINIC

ALFRED is working in the Batcave, dusting, putting things way; the usual jobs, which he has been doing longer than he cares to remember. The phone rings; he puts the caller on the speaker so as to continue working as he talks. We INTERCUT between him and LESLIE THOMPCKINS at the clinic. She's finishing for the night. Alfred assumes she wants to talk to Master Bruce, says he's not here. Leslie says she called to talk to Alfred -- she's got the results of his latest physical. "Your health is excellent, but you seem rundown. I'd recommend a rest. After all, most men your age, with your means, would be comfortably retired by now." She adds that she recently won a trip to Barbados in a raffle, but can't get away; would Alfred like to go? Alfred demurs, though he would like to ... he tells Leslie that he's been feeling like a bit of a fifth wheel around here. Oh, he takes care of the shopping, cleans, etc., etc. -- but how important is that, really? Leslie tells him stuff and nonsense; he's a vital part of Bruce's operation.

Their conversation is interrupted when the Batmobile comes screeching down the ramp. It's obvious something is very wrong -- the big car is weaving, barely staying on the road. It crashes against the wall, and Alfred goes running to it. The canopy slides back, and BATMAN staggers out. He collapses in Alfred's arm, manages to mutter "... Poison ..."

INT. SICK BAY AREA

Alfred helps Batman to an examining table. The Dark Knight is delirious now, muttering incoherently. Leslie, hearing something of this from afar, is demanding to know what's going on. Alfred tells her, trying to keep calm. At her request he describes the symptoms. Leslie says she thinks she knows what kind of poison it is, but she can't be sure, or know what antidote to administer, until she gets there and examines him. "I'll call Dick and have him pick me up at the clinic and get me there as soon as possible," she instructs Alfred. "Meanwhile, whatever you do -- keep him conscious. I don't care if you have to tap dance for him, just don't let him pass out. If he does, he'll never wake up!" She hangs up.

Alfred rushes to Batman's side, pulls his cowl back to see his face.

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Bruce is conscious and coherent, but barely. He says weakly, "Get Dick ... tell him ... he'll have to take over ..." "Rubbish!" Alfred says. "You've come through tougher scrapes than this! You can't give up now, not after all these years." "Face facts," Bruce mumbles, half-delirious. He starts to fade. "You made a vow, remember?" Alfred says, desperately, trying to keep him awake. "A vow of vengeance, a vow of dedication. A vow that was to last a lifetime. Don't you remember, years ago ...?" And, as he asks the question, we segue into:

EXT. CRIME ALLEY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Police cherrytops strobe the night. The coroner's wagon is here as well. Cops and crime scene techs mill about. A YOUNGER LESLIE comforts YOUNG BRUCE as A YOUNGER ALFRED stands beside them, not sure what to do. We see the boy look up, eyes now dry of tears, his grief replaced by a look of determination somehow unsettling in one so young. Alfred's V.O.: "Remember, Master Bruce? Remember at it was like ...? You went into that alley a normal, contented little boy, and came out ... something else. Something forever changed ..."

INT. YOUNG BRUCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Young Bruce lies in the bed, Alfred and Leslie beside him. Alfred's V.O.: "Remember how Leslie and I cared for you while the lawyers sorted out the estate? You were in shock, of course." Leslie bends, kisses Bruce on the forehead. "I know it seems like the hurt will never go away," she says gently. "But you have to believe that one day it will." Alfred and Leslie leave, and the boy lies alone in bed, staring up at the darkness, clenching a small, white-knuckled fist and whispering, "I won't let it go..." as we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WAYNE MANSION - HALLWAY AND BEDROOM (FLASHBACK)

Alfred stands outside Bruce's bedroom door, wearing a catcher's mitt and holding a bat and ball. He knocks on Bruce's door. There's no answer. Alfred's shoulders slump and he goes downstairs.

In the bedroom we see Bruce, now TWELVE YEARS OLD, studying books with titles like "Fundamentals of Criminal Psvchopathology" and "Introduction to Law Enforcement", scowling in concentration.

INT. WAYNE PRIVATE GYM (FLASHBACK)

The teenaged Bruce works out with grim intensity, doing kips, press-ups,

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etc. On the parallel bars, vaulting from there to a rope which he climbs using only his hands. Alfred holds a stopwatch, timing him. Alfred's V.O.: "There is a quote by your favorite philosopher which you made your motto at an early age: 'That which does not destroy me makes me stronger'." Another scene in the gym; Alfred teaching Bruce to fence. "I hated to see you grow up so grim, Master Bruce. But it was not my place to say anything. It was my job to do no less than what you asked of me, but my duty to do no more." DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BATCAVE - SICK BAY (PRESENT)

Alfred leans over Bruce, who's still breathing, eyelids fluttering as he hovers on unconsciousness. "Remember, Master Bruce?" Alfred says urgently. "Remember how you became what you swore you would be? Don't give it up now. Don't ..." and as Alfred entreats Bruce, we go to:

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM - NIGHT

Where ROBIN roars up to the clinic on a Batcycle. Leslie is waiting. Robin explains he had a spare costume and cycle stashed at GSU -- he thought he might be able to get her to Bruce's side more quickly on the Batcycle than in his sports car. He hands her a helmet and Leslie gamely climbs on, noting that she hasn't ridden a motorcycle in thirty years. They roar off, weaving through traffic. We travel with them as Robin expertly pilots the cycle around cars. But then -- as so often happens in Gotham -- a car full of gangsters shooting at a pursuing police car careens around a corner, heading straight for them! It looks like a collision is inevitable as we FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

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ACT TWO

EXT. GOTHAM STREET - CONTINUOUS

The car swerves, seeking to avoid the cycle, and Robin veers as well. The car goes up on two wheels and Robin and Leslie pass under the tilted car's undercarriage and narrowly avoid the police car giving chase. The gangsters' car collides with a lamp post and, looking back over her shoulder, Leslie sees the cops surround the gangsters. Then they're out of sight and zooming down the dark streets toward the city's outskirts

INT. BATCAVE - SICK BAY

Alfred leans over Bruce, talking to him. "You can't give up. This city depends on you. Master Dick is too young to take over yet. You can't leave him." Bruce rallies, says weakly, "I was ... his age ... when I started." Alfred agrees that this is true. "I remember how hard you worked, how you pushed yourself to become a fighting machine ..." and off that, we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WAYNE MANSION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Alfred holds a newspaper and watches as Bruce (EARLY TWENTIES) works out, smashing a makawara dummy with edge-hand blows. We see the headlines on the paper in Alfred's hand, something about a mysterious ski-masked vigilante averting a holdup, but the crooks got away. Alfred's V.O. continues: "You thought that righteous rage and superb conditioning would be all you'd need. But after your first attempt at fighting crime, you realized that something more was required -- something that would strike fear into the criminal heart." CUT TO the bats boiling up out of the crevice. "And then you found your destiny ... and your curse ..."

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF GOTHAM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Robin and Leslie shoot down the road on the Batcycle. Suddenly a highway sign appears in the cycle's headlight: ROAD FLOODED AHEAD. Robin swerves the cycle. "Hope you're into offroad biking, Leslie," he says as they go roaring through the woods, swerving to avoid trees and rocks. Leslie hangs on for dear life as the batcycle jumps a crevasse. The cycle's superb shocks keep her from being injured, but her nerves aren't enjoying this.

INT. BATCAVE - SICK BAY

"You remember that first night, don't you?" Alfred asks Bruce. "That first night, when you stalked the streets of Gotham City to aid those who were victims as your parents had been. I certainly remember it -- even though I wasn't there for the most part. From what you've told me of it it seems as vivid to me as it must be to you ..." DISSOLVE TO:

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INT. MAIN CAVERN (FUTURE BATCAVE) (FLASHBACK)

This is essentially the scene from the feature in which Bruce dons the costume (the old style) for the first time. Alfred picks up the cowl from the dressmaker's dummy and hands it to the shadowed figure of his employer, who puts it on with his back to us. Then he turns, eyes glowing, demonic -- and even the imperturbable butler is taken aback. We play Alfred's reaction -- deeply disturbed and concerned -- as this as yet unnamed creature of the night moves past him.

INT. BATCAVE GARAGE (FLASHBACK)

The look should suggest that they are just beginning to prepare the cave as a headquarters for Bruce -- stairs are roughly carved from the rock, electric bulbs strung on wires ... Alfred overtakes Batman as the latter approaches the first version of the Batmobile. Alfred bars Batman's way, tells him that he made a promise years ago to Bruce's father to watch over Bruce and guide him to maturity "should anything ever happen" to the elder Waynes. "Now," says Alfred, "you are an adult, and I am no longer bound by that promise. And there are certainly no guarantees that no harm will come to you if you persist in this folly. And so, sir, if you cannot be dissuaded, I must request that you accept my resignation." Batman stares at him for a long moment, then says curtly, "Do what you have to do." He roars off in the Batmobile as Alfred clenches his fists in frustration.

INT. BATCAVE - SICK BAY / EXT. BACK ROAD (PRESENT)

The phone rings, interrupting Alfred. It's Leslie on the cycle's cellular speakerphone while Robin concentrates on piloting the cycle. Intercut with the cycle roaring along back roads, dodging and weaving potholes. "How's he doing, Alfred?" "Marvelously," Alfred says with false cheer. "We've been having a jolly chat about old times." "We'll be there soon," Leslie promises. "Keep him conscious -- he's got to hang on just a little longer." Alfred looks over at Bruce during this, and to his horror sees Bruce's eyes close and his body slump. The butler dashes to Bruce's side, shakes him -- and gets no response. "Master Bruce! Master Bruce, wake up! You've got to wake up!" But Bruce is still, limp and unresponsive as we FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. BATCAVE - SICK BAY - CONTINUOUS

Leslie's voice crackles over the speakerphone. "Alfred, what's wrong?" Alfred is frantic with worry. Robin starts to shout into the speaker, "Bruce, snap out of it! C'mon back, partner! You can do it!" For a tense moment there's no response; and then Bruce's eyes flicker open. Relieved, Alfred keeps talking, trying to maintain the connection. Asking Bruce to remember with him that night when Batman first appeared in Gotham City ...

VARIOUS QUICK CUTS - BATMAN'S FIRST NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Showing him busting up a mugging, stopping a robbery, preventing a carjacking ... a shadowy avenger who appears out of the night and then vanishes the second his job is done. Play peoples' reaction to this creature of the night.

INT. WAYNE MANOR (FLASHBACK)

Alfred is packing his bags. The TV is on; a live camera crew has captured one of the mysterious crimefighter's exploits on tape. The NEWSCASTER reports that the police believe the man to be the mysterious vigilante figuring in a number of recent violent conflicts with petty criminals. Perhaps a quick interview with BULLOCK, as a patrolman, expressing fear that this costumed nut is dangerously out of control, and a red-haired GORDON saying he's just glad this "Batman" appears to be on our side. Alfred's V.O.: "I feared for you, Master Bruce, but I told myself it was not my problem any more. You had chosen your course." He continues packing some old theater props from his thespian days in England -- including a prop pistol.

EXT./INT. CHEMICAL PLANT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A gang is knocking over the safe in the payroll office, and Batman is going in after them. This is our rousing third act setpiece -- Batman takes out the crooks one by one, swinging from catwalks over roiling vats of chemicals, sending batarangs flying. Ricocheting bullets' sparks in flammable chemicals cause a fire to start. Fire alarms are tripped.

INT. WAYNE MANOR (FLASHBACK)

Alfred is packed, and leaving a note for Bruce. The live coverage of a four-alarm fire attracts his attention, and he sees Batman silhouetted

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For an instant against the flames. Emotions war in his face, finally giving way to grim resolve as he opens one of the suitcases, takes something unseen from it and then races out.

EXT. ALLEY / EXT. STREETS (FLASHBACK)

Batman has wrapped up all but one of the criminals, and is chasing him through an adjacent alley. INTERCUT with Alfred in a sports car, racing through the streets, past barricades and fire trucks spraying water on the plant. Batman corners the last crook in the alley and closes in on him, disappearing into the shadows, terrifying the crook, who fires futilely into the darkness. "Who are you? What are you?" the crook screams. "Vengeance," Batman hisses, and a fist rockets out of the darkness, hammering against the crook's jaw. Alfred runs into the alley in time to see a heavily breathing Batman holding up the unconscious and bruised crook, fist cocked to deliver a final blow. The sound of a gunshot brings him to his senses. He stiffens, whirls -- and sees Alfred, standing in the alley entrance with a smoking pistol held upward.

"That's enough," he says quietly. His V.O. continues: "It was an old prop pistol, a memento from my acting days. But it was all I needed to get your attention. The years of training, of preparation, were finally over -- ended as they began: In an alley with the sound of a gun ..."

Batman steps up to Alfred. "Another lecture?" he growls. Alfred shakes his head sadly. "Your father was a great man, Master Bruce. I would not presume to replace him." Batman turns away, shrouded in darkness, troubled. "Then -- what are you, Alfred?" "What I have been all these years," Alfred says with the barest trace of irony. "I am -- the help." A moment of silence; then, in a shaking voice, Batman says, "Then, for god's sake, old friend -- help me. Help me to grieve." He turns back to Alfred and the two embrace, and we SLOWLY DISSOLVE BACK TO:

INT. BATCAVE - SICK BAY (PRESENT)

Bruce still lying, semi-conscious, with Alfred taking his pulse. "Together we built a legacy, Bruce. And you became someone that any man would be proud to have for a son." Then he realizes in shock that he can't find a pulse. He shakes Bruce, calling his name. No response. He slaps him, trying to bring him out of it. Finally he climbs onto the table, begins to pound on his chest, trying to start his heart, screaming: "I won't let it end like this ... not after all we've gone through ... not after all the sleepless nights and senseless pain I've endured because of you! Live, blast you, live!" A tense moment -- and then Bruce gasps. His eyelids flutter. At this moment Leslie and Robin come roaring in on the Batcycle. Leslie dashes to Bruce's side, goes to work professionally and efficiently as Alfred slumps into a nearby chair, exhausted. Leslie gives Bruce an injection, monitors his

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reaction. She nods. She turns to Alfred. "You did well. He'll live."

"You can find someone else for those tickets to Barbados," Alfred tells Leslie. He looks at Bruce fondly. "My place is here." He takes his place beside Leslie and Robin, looking down at Bruce as the latter opens his eyes ... and the longest night of our heroes' lives comes to an end.

THE END