



**Detective Comics #6**  
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*Detective Comics*

Issue 6: "Grim, Part One: As Thou Hast Sown, So Shalt Thou Reap"

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Edited by Ellen Fleischer and David Charlton

*"Here let fear strike those whom earthly error binds, for their fate is shown by the horror of these figures."*

Inscription in Autun's West Portal

Slowly, he raised his arm up to his mouth, cape in hand, squinted and shielded his face from the night's harsh temperature. His muscles bunched beneath the lightweight fabric of the costume that stretched across his rock hard frame, and he took a small pain killer from a pouch around his waist and he ground it between his teeth. The painkiller masked many ills, but nothing could cure the throbbing ache that haunted his psyche. Years later he would dump the pills and switch to sugar cubes—nothing like sweetness to ward off the bitter. He closed his eyes briefly to try to forget the hurt. He closed them to remember a better time when soaring above the city and beating grown men to a pulp was not the only way to fight off the demons. But remembering the good times led to the bad, to the monsters, to the demons... He opened his eyes.

They say that when you are afraid of heights you should never look down, but for the Batman looking down always brought a grim satisfaction; the lavish architecture of Gotham City hid the evildoers who had rooted themselves deeply Gotham's once fertile soil. Here above the hustle and grime of Gotham City he could be its Dark Knight. He could be its unholy protector. Brooding high above the darkness, the Batman stretches his mouth wide into a smile, a smile he dons only when perched high above the streets of Gotham on the steep point of an old

building pinnacle. It was here that he could overlook the crime-infested filth of the Gotham City streets.... It was on these streets long ago, the streets of Gotham City, that Bruce Wayne's parents were gunned down. It was on these streets long ago that the Batman was born. It was on these streets long ago that the monsters turned into demons.

Jim Gordon and his force have been under a lot of heat lately. It seems as though the mysterious vigilante known as Batman was out of control and the same people who once praised his courage and nobility wanted him behind bars for real now. Before, the police were obligated to make efforts to bring him in while at the same time, they shone their light over the city calling for him like a sick child with a bell calling for his mother. Batman is not looking over Gotham as though laying down order. Something in him seems to have snapped, he is messy. A little less than an hour ago, Gordon got a call from a woman claiming that she saw the Batman firing at a group of drunks and torching Sully's. The ten gallons of moonshine left over from the prohibition may have had something to do with the damned place burning down so fast, but the reporters will forget that fact when they write it in their papers tonight. "Batman Commits Arson on Local Establishment" is what they are going to write. True, Batman, the Batman he once knew, would never operate like this, but as Bob Dylan said, 'the times they are a changin'.

As he drives up to the scene of the crime and steps out of his squad car, the carnage and destruction left behind makes Gordon question everything. Between the bar fire and a burning car is a trail of blood, bodies, bullets, booze, and more importantly, a line of uncut cocaine bridging the two fires, which would make any given night at Studio 54 in its heyday look cleaner than a finely polished whistle. The men along the line are bloody and broken but they are breathing, a sure sign that this is Batman's work. As Gordon walks down the line, with his men recording the scene of the crime, no matter what words might come out of his mouth, only three are running through his head:

*What the hell?*

The Batman finds himself crouched in the attic of a pitifully small Irish bar, layered in filth, peering through a loose floorboard directly over the fat hairy-backed barkeep. Sonny's bar, lit by two buzzing florescent lights and 'cooled' by a slow moving ceiling fan, is the kind of hole in the wall that is only in business because mobs and gangsters need it to be. This is a hotspot for drugs and money laundering because of its prime location, not too far off from the docks and hidden in the bowels of the projects. The Caped Crusader has heard of the place, but until tonight he has never needed to enter. Word on the street says a large amount of cocaine will be arriving today in a brown duffle bag. The word came the hard way like it often does. Two of his new informants will sadly be without the use of their middle fingers for a long, LONG time. The Caped Crusader reaches into the back of his utility belt and pulls out two long white pills, sniffs them to make sure they are the right pills, grinds them between his teeth, and swallows the scratchy bits down his throat. Waiting is the hardest part of this life. *Especially waiting in a cramped hole in the wall surrounded by rats that smells like piss.*

The pills worked like a charm, even after a long night of having a rib cracked, a thumb broken, a dislocated shoulder, two herniated discs, several teeth knocked out, a torn meniscus, and what would amount to over 57 stitches and countless yards of bandages. Over 57 stitches... Alfred was every worth every penny. True, in his younger days he had looked at Alfred as a friend, perhaps even a father, but now he realized that Alfred was much more. Alfred had become his only anchor to sanity. Without Alfred he would be much worse. He was able to be reckless now; he could make mistakes. Alfred was more than just a butler, he was a safety net that Batman could rely on to catch him when he fell. Doubtless, he mused, over-analyzing his relationship to his butler was a direct result of the painkillers.

As it had been at the beginning, the Bat was chasing low-rent criminals tonight. When he had first started watching over the streets of Gotham, his foes had been mainly low-rent crooks, more apt to knock off a grocery store or traffic drugs for the mob than to hold a building hostage and threaten to blow the damned thing up with explosives shaped like giant rubber ducks or to carry around colorful guns. When the Bat had come into town and threatened to clean up the bad guys, that's when the "fun" had started.

The “super villains”, the ones who wear tights and have themed lairs and leave clues at the scene , these are the real bad guys. For all he knows, the low rent thugs go home to families and watch the Thanksgiving Day parade. Those who preferred giant gaudy tacky traps and riddles instead of something to conceal their identities, those were the ones to watch out for...

Then again he himself resided in a “bat cave” so he was in no position to judge. Actually the whole “bat-everything” was more Dick’s speed. As a child he had liked to give nicknames to everything even to the point where, at sea, they would carry bat shark-repellent. That was not the only thing that changed when the young boy had come to illuminate his dark life. Dick had been the reason that, for a short time, Batman had adopted a yellow insignia and utility belt; putting a young man in harm’s way was one thing, letting him run around as a moving target in bold bright colors while Batman wore stealthy blacks was another matter entirely. The yellow circle had given them something to hit, something that had made them wish they had went for the boy. Now he was gone, Batman was alone; Dick had gone off to New York to start a new life with his peers. Not Dick... Robin... his chum... Lamenting on the recent departure of his ex-partner, indubitably another random thought train attributable to the painkillers.

Two men walk casually over to the bar wearing cheap oversized suits. They order their drinks and sit down at a table laughing and shoving pretzels into mouths. He can smell the stale pretzels on their breath and tightens his fists ready for whatever pain he or they are about to inflict. He focuses in on the men’s thick Boston accents to make sure he hears the deal going down. They make small talk at first. Batman looks around the room, there is a reason they decided to make the deal in this crappy bar and it’s not because of the ambience or friendly staff. In the corner, a large man tugs at his waist in irritation; he’s packing heat, it’s obvious. He prioritizes the big one with the gun as second on his list. He sees another built man in the opposite corner; number three. He peers down to see a group of 4 men playing poker. One of them has a pant sleeve riding up his leg to reveal a holster: four five and six. Finally from what he can tell there is one more guy that is small, real small, with a face like a rat and long stringy hair. This one is wearing a trench coat and is standing like he is twelve feet tall; he has the big gun, and he is first priority.

One of the men at the poker table takes a seat by the two at the bar. It's time. He follows their gestures and sorts through their dialect waiting for an indicator of the deal. They never say it directly, they try to be clever in case an inside boy is wearing a wire. They talk fast and slur their speech but haven't had hardly enough of the watered down beer to be drunk yet. Then, he sees one slip an envelope to the other and a man in a dark plaid suit walks into the bar. He's laughing hard and putting on an act, trying to take the attention off of the brown duffle bag on his shoulder. Trying. The dark avenger waits for his opening, the men put on an act like they are old friends and the plaid suit puts down the bag and slides it gently underneath a stool next to him and goes and greets the other bar patrons. Now it's time.

He quickly creeps his way over above the florescent light positioned above the heads of the men making the trade. He hears them talking and he raises his knees to his chest, lifting his feet and then suddenly stomping them down, crashing through the wooden floorboards sending splinters, phosphorus and glass flying and shutting out the bar's only light source. He reaches into his belt and pulls out a handful of batarangs and, before his targets can reach for guns, he launches them. They all hit. Not all where he would like them to, but they all hit nonetheless. In priority number one, it digs into his right cheek and he drops to the floor throwing his gun aside to hold his wound. In his second, it hits his chest, had Batman thrown harder it may have done crucial damage but this was just enough to break skin after ripping up two layers of shirts and his leather coat. His third priority was far less fortunate. The batarang that should have went at his left hand flew about half a foot to his right landing square between the legs. Batman delivers several crushing blows with his forearm to the squirming men beneath him before he spins to the men playing pool.

The split seconds it took him to disarm his first three priorities allowed the men at the pool table to draw their weapons when, all of the sudden, Batman caught a glimpse of something he hadn't noticed when he was sitting in his hole in the wall. A door behind the pool table obscured by the group of men. Before he could think of what was behind that door, the answer came out, firing. Half of this deal must have not trusted the other and hid some backup. He rolls sideways underneath the table and crouches, taking a quick breath before the men realize where he is. He

launches upwards breaking through the table and sending two men leaning over it on the floor. He tries to throw accurate punches but in the flurry only three of the five land, and not well. The men surround him and in the corner of his eye, he sees the little rat faced gangster pick up his submachine gun. And it was all going so well.

Batman drops to the floor and covers his head to regain his composure. Above him he feels the mobsters taking their shots at him while they can, and he realizes the mistake of not seeing the door was one that might cost him the whole damn night. He hadn't planned for this. As the men beat down on him he didn't think about a way out or of trying to stop his attackers, he was thinking about what he did wrong. Then suddenly something seemed familiar about the floorboards. The floorboards were set in a pattern so that if needed, it could support the floor in certain spots. The floor of the place was built so it could hide basements. The men continue their pounding for agonizing seconds. The Batman raises his fist and elbows, catching an attacker in the mouth as he cocks them back. Violently he begins pounding the loose floorboards and his fist begins to ache. The men are flung back by the force of his elbows lifting to pound the floor. Batman was lucky he was hated enough not to be killed or he'd be dead right now by a bullet. Or twenty. The hoods rush him and he gets lucky, finally the floorboards give in and he and the group of hired thugs go crashing down into a vat of dirty rotten moonshine left over from the prohibition.

As he had suspected there was a basement. He hadn't taken it into consideration that the damn thing would have booze over 80 years old rotting away in said basement. The men began throwing up and splashing around trying to capture the Batman in complete darkness. *There has to be a way out*, he thinks to himself. If his grappling hook works at all, the line may be too long for the relatively short distance he needs to get out. He will have to climb, but that means letting them take even more shots. One comes up and catches him across the back with a forearm. The disgusting alcohol fills his mouth and he reaches for some sort of breathing apparatus but instead pulls a flare. That will do.

When he resurfaces he punches the goon in the mouth and lights the flare illuminating the basement pool. The thugs lay eyes on Batman glowing in the burning red light and all back away for a brief second. The sound of a car starting up is heard in the distance and it reminds

him he has to work faster. The men rush and he drops the flare and it sets the alcohol ablaze as he is able to barely clear the wave of men and roll back to the floor. He pulls out a line and scales it in three pulls. The men above are assessing their wounds and getting up when they see the Batman pull himself over the newly created gap in the floor. The musclemen are burning about twelve feet below them and his window of opportunity is wide open.

The men below ground are screaming in pain and Batman walks slowly forward, his gruesome silhouette moving closer and closer to the men. They try to run but Batman answers by sending batarangs into their calves. He is focused now. They can't run. There is no one to help them. Batman looks back at the blazing hole and throws a small canister of tear gas in. It explodes in the heat, and vapors begin to fill the small dark bar. He looks back at the men screaming on their knees and he begins his assault. He dives into one of them and cracks their skull into the floor. The second the sickening thud rings out he is onto the next one. He is a surgeon, he is careful, precise, and thorough as he delivers each blow, completely aware of the pain it is inflicting. He slams the door open and tosses one of the dealers out onto the pavement.

Shots ring out again as the getaway car was half full with guns. He rolls again dodging the majority of the bullets. One grazes his shoulder as he hits the pavement hard. He reaches into his belt for something to stop that car, as the men look out to see if the really did just kill Batman. As one man looks out the window he is met with a batarang to his mouth, stuffing four of his front teeth down his throat. Batman somersaults toward the car and blasts his grapnel at the car before the men begin to move. As they start to drive, the momentum flings Batman with them and he launches into the air hoping that when he comes down he doesn't smack the pavement and kill himself. He tightens his muscles and pulls on the nylon rope as hard as he can. The car speeds up. As he begins to fall he pulls again and prepares himself for the impact of the speeding automobile. Finally he slams into the roof of the car. The roof collapses on impact and he and the men begin to scream as they careen into a car parked a block away from the bar. The gaudy black getaway car folds up like an accordion and Batman is lucky enough to get out before he sustains any more injury. He was lucky, tonight. And there were too many nights like this.

The bar begins to go up in flames and as the men pull themselves out of the tangled heap of steel, Batman rushes back to the pack of gangsters left in the fire. They scream in agony as their flesh is eaten up by the flames. Batman gives the struggling men shots to the throat with his forearm and pulls them their flaming bodies out of the fire. He looks around at the mess he has made and the pain growing in his body hides deep down. One man runs out cradling something in his arms tightly and he also receives a quick hit. When he hits the concrete, Batman pries it away, the object the man risks his life for is a deteriorated duffle bag, on the inside is the bundle of cocaine the men were planning on distributing... He will have to just have to distribute it for them it seems. With the edge of his batarang he stabs the semi-melted plastic holding the cocaine and lets it fall to his feet. He begins to walk, creating a line. He hears sirens in a distance. Some men crawl toward the long line and he ducks out into a small alley where he finds a pothole. He lifts the lid and limps into the dark hole. At first he holds tightly onto the rungs of a ladder, but the pain catches up with him after the adrenaline fades away and in a quick stab of agony, his grip loosens and his foot slips on a wet iron pole. He falls down into the darkness of the Gotham City sewers.

Gordon was wrong. The damn papers didn't talk about how Batman was an arsonist or that he had burnt down a local bar, no they didn't talk about it in a scathing article. They obsessed about it. The whole front page showed the bar in flames, the neighbor hood drunks mourning their loss, the pools of blood, the lines of cocaine they accused the Batman of snorting. If Gordon knew one thing about Batman it was that Batman doesn't do drugs. The press was on this thing like a swarm of locusts eating away at a good man's name. But they had probable cause on this; the pools of blood, the massive line of cocaine, and the towering flames he left behind made him look like a nightmare. Worse than that, the rags kept bringing up one name that haunts the annals of Gotham City's history: *The Reaper*.

Jim had heard little about The Reaper but from what he heard and read was that the guy was certainly grim. It was the 1950's and heroes were living in the Golden Age. They wore bright colorful costumes with large

insignias decorating their chests, ankle length capes, and domino masks. They had sidekicks, lunchboxes, and syndicated radio shows. In retrospect all that Ozzie and Harriet crap really didn't brighten society so much as it repressed all those who needed outlets. The anger and hatred in America didn't disappear for a decade when the Big Red Cheese showed up in his tights, cape, and Colgate smile; it just hid for a while. The Reaper for example, he was not a psychotic madman; he was a good man that needed an outlet. He used to wear bright red and purple and appear in the magazines with the rest of the mystery men of the time, but times change, and people change. Something festering inside him grew and spread like a cancer. He started killing and torturing people before the police knew they had committed a crime. He was obsessed. The Batman may be relentless, but not obsessed.

Batman's back slams against the wet shallow floor of the sewer line. The pain rolls up his spine and he lets out a harsh grunt. In the darkness, he reaches for his white long pills again sloppily spilling them out of his pouch, putting one into his mouth. A red light offers a small bit of hope as he drags his tired body over to it and presses down. The light blinks and slowly the ground beneath him opens up. As he slides down the diagonal plane he reaches out and holds onto a bar. Warily he attaches a line of rope from his belt onto the bar and he begins to descend slowly until he reaches yet another floor. He repeats the process again without thought and he gently reaches a third level underneath Gotham. Now in total darkness he taps a button on a device from inside his utility belt and a beep sounds, followed by the glowing of two bright blue lights. Ah ... right where he left it.

The sleek Batmobile he had hidden miles under Gotham City. Last summer when Alfred and he had been re-examining the plans for Wayne Manor they had stumbled across some interesting land development ideas from Gotham's first major economic boom. Apparently before the first subway was built in New York (though technically not a "true" subway) Gotham had major plans for an underground public transportation system. The year was 1870 and while the rest of America was recovering from the Civil War, Gotham grew prosperous shipping goods out of its harbors. The people flooded the streets and demanded Gotham's city counsel ease the traffic congestion. In a response they began spending all

their wealth on creating elaborate tunnels designed by genius engineers. They planned for it to run throughout all of Gotham neighborhoods but the problem wasn't the tunnels. It was the train cars. They burned fuel. With no ventilation the passengers complained they get to work making new cars. Half way through development something happened that no one ever would have expected. The "big one" hit Gotham. An earthquake shook Gotham so bad the failure that was the subway was long forgotten. The papers called it "No Man's Land" and all the people that could get out did including those engineers who were paid to design the non-coal burning railroad cars. The engineers did one thing right though. The foundation was solid. Real solid. While the tectonic plates shifted the whole thing downwards miles and miles the support beams stayed intact and the tunnel survived. Everyone thought it crumbled beneath his or her feet but amidst the crisis, no one even cared about a billion dollar building project. All the money was spent getting Gotham back on its feet. Cut to more than 100 years later when Alfred and Bruce tunneled and found out that the subway tunnel was indeed still intact. Spending one weekend to go through and check that they were still complete and to make sure there were no massive gaps in the tracks, they re-inforced the beams and created a single car that could ride those tracks. They called it the Batmobile. Other cars held the name but only this one was worthy. It moved in silence stopping at a time where Bruce needed, with outlets planned around sewage, gas and electric lines so that from miles below, the Batman could get from one side of Gotham to the other in a matter of seconds.

Now he needed to do so fast; he hasn't had the time to assess his wounds since the fight, but he was failing fast. He lay back in the Batmobile, clenching his fist and biting down hard on a piece of his thick cape. "What just happened back there?" Batman asks himself. He had just got taken to hell by a group of hired muscle in a drug deal. That could not have been easier. It should have been smoother. He pulls down hard on a tourniquet wrapped around his arm and the Batmobile stops. A concerned voice calls out from outside the walls of his black car. Great, time to deal with Alfred.

*The crows beat on my windowsill in the pale moonlight. I gradually walk over and pluck one from the pack and caress its firm strong neck. I caress it until it*

*passes into another realm. In my refrigerator I have several. Two rats, four ravens, a stray dog, and my prized possession, a small child I found abandoned on the streets, all stuffed in small pickle jars filled with formaldehyde. I open up one and sniff the remains of the dead. In Arkham they thought I was done with my thirst for death, the taste, the texture, the beautiful rotten smell of it, but they were wrong. Such a hunger, such a desire, can never be satiated. Years they tried to kill my need to quench my never-ending appetite in that small concrete prison but oh... how were they wrong. All they did was give me time to want it more. They stuck me in with murderers, rapists, and psychotic thieves after all I had done for them. All I did for THEM... and they stick me in a cell after one night when I had my revolution. I had my reawakening. I stared into the abyss with my ghastly visage all those years ago and felt what it was like to be God. I came in a worm and left a God. And after all I did for Them, they stuck me there. I was a God for them. I was in paradise and I descended to be with them. And after all I did for them...*

*The crow's neck and wings break as it enters the jar. That's the sound I lust for. When I hear it and feel life pass through my hands, that is what I desire. The second I take from them what they have taken from me. Cobwebs fall on an old skipping record in the corner of my small apartment in the heights. The violins haunt me. The record plays Ode to Freud. I turn it up and close the small pickle jar and put it on the top shelf of my fridge for a rainy day.*

*But there is another. He knows not the follies he engages in. He hops around the building tops of Gotham City like a madman and no one is there to point their fingers. He is the son of the Reaper, he grew up in the filth and decay of the city like I, yet they keep their grubby little fingers to themselves. There will be a reckoning. There will be a confrontation. The moonlights view is disrupted when a small bat eclipses it. I snatch it using the reflexes that haven't failed me. Like a grand inspiration it came to me. The bat in the moonlight. Of Course. I open the small rodents rib cage and devour its soul. I need its strength. I need to be a God once more. I need to face into the abyss and come out a god. I need to reach out and grab the bat in the moonlight.*

The bat signal had been activated and Batman had answered the call. But Gordon is nowhere to be found. Batman wanders around the rooftop cautiously, knowing full well something is not right. When Gordon and Batman had reached an agreement years ago about the usage of the

signal it was that Gordon used it and Batman answered only when necessary; it wasn't a dog whistle, and it wasn't supposed to be used to test his loyalty or keep him in check. Gordon was a man of his word, he wouldn't press it without reason and he wouldn't forfeit the key that was used to activate it either. No, someone else did this.

"Batman... " A voice echoes out followed by a thud. Gordon hits the floor tied up and unconscious, "I found this laying around."

Batman reaches for his utility belt and the voice begins to laugh menacingly.

"No, no, no. Toys are for children. If I wanted that I would be in New York with the young one."

Slowly a dark figure draped in a black cloak steps out from the shadows.

"You should not be alive." Batman says staring into the man dressed in red with a skull mask.

"Interesting observation, do you know who I am?"

"Judson Caspian, you used the name Reaper in the fifties" Batman says reaching again into his utility belt slowly. The Reaper pulls from behind his back a chromed scythe connected to short handle. Perhaps he should have let Alfred tie proper tourniquets before leaving.

"Wrong"

The Reaper raises his scythe into the air and Batman flings a batarang. The two pieces of steel bang against each. As his scythe is knocked out of his hand, the Reaper spins and drops to his knee and pulls out a gun firing blindly in Batman's direction. Batman drops to his knee throwing himself over a still unconscious Gordon as he feels three bullets dig into his shoulder, back, and leg. He tries to ignore the pain as he feels a boot slam into his ribs. The boot comes down in a flurry as he tries to protect his head.

The Reaper laughs and he hears an empty clip drop onto the floor.

"Wrong Batman, I am your savior, I am *death*."

**To be continued!**

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*The Adventures of Superman #9 (2006)*

*The Adventures of Superman: Return to Happy Fun Time.*

Superman has faced intergalactic menaces, mad scientists and super-powered psychos--- but he's never faced an evil as insidious as... the Prankster. With all his powers, are there somethings that even the Man of Steel can't face...?

*Detective Comics #8 (2006)*

*Detective Comics: Grim, Part 3: Bang Bang. You're Dead.*

Two men die, one lives, and one is reborn. The action packed conclusion to the three part Grim arc is finally here and that is not a good thing for one man.

*Detective Comics #7 (2006)*

*Detective Comics: Grim, Part Two: One Long Night.*

It's out of the frying pan and into the fire as Batman hunts down the psychotic ex-vigilante known as the Reaper---and you know what they say, what goes around, comes around! But how far will Batman be willing to go to put an end to the madman hell-bent on taking as many lives as possible? Watch as we see Batman pushed even farther to the edge no coming back from!

*Powers, Inc. #1 (2006)*

*Powers, Inc.: The Official Title.*

San Francisco is about to meet its newest team of protectors! From the office of Josiah Powers comes the second... Third... Fourth greatest super team of the DC2 universe, as Powers. Inc explodes onto the streets in this first thrilling issue!



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