



THE DARK KNIGHT (2008)

Screenplay by Jonathan Nolan and Christopher Nolan

Story by Christopher Nolan & David S. Goyer

Directed by Christopher Nolan

Running Time: 144 minutes

BASIC STORY MAP

PROTAGONIST: BRUCE WAYNE/ BATMAN, 30s, crime fighter and billionaire

Skill: Physical strength and incredible technology

Misbehavior: Stubbornness; pure loner, will not accept help or advice

Achilles Heel: His love for Rachel

EXTERNAL GOAL: To save Gotham City from destruction

INTERNAL GOAL: To be with Rachel / To preserve the hope of Gotham's people

MAIN DRAMATIC CONFLICT: The Joker

THEME: Desperation and fear lead to destructive actions.

CENTRAL DRAMATIC QUESTION: Can Bruce Wayne retire Batman and let Harvey Dent clean up Gotham?

ENDING: Bruce Wayne decides to let Batman take the fall for Harvey Dent's murders to maintain Dent as a hero to save the spirit of Gotham's people.

ARC: Bruce Wayne goes from believing he can end all crime in Gotham City as its hero to sacrificing Batman's good name to save Gotham City from destruction.

LOGLINE

Bruce Wayne struggles to position Harvey Dent as Gotham's white knight as the Joker reigns terror on the city, forcing Bruce to either reveal his identity or to kill The Joker to preserve the peace in Gotham City.

FULL STORY MAP

STORY ENGINES

ACT 1: Bruce fights organized crime in Gotham City with the aid of District Attorney Harvey Dent.

ACT 2A: Bruce puts away the mob, but must fight the new, more deadly threat: The Joker. Bruce decides to turn himself in to protect innocent lives.

ACT 2B: Bruce's use of force cannot stop the Joker, leading to Rachel's death and Harvey Dent becoming Two-Face.

ACT 3: Bruce must stop The Joker and Two-Face and make a final sacrifice to preserve hope in the people of Gotham.

THE BEAT SHEET

(note: this is not a complete scene list)



ACT ONE

1-5 – Opening sequence: a team of masked crooks robs a mob-owned bank. A suicidal move. The “silent Robber” kills off the last member of the bank heist crew.

6 – The silent Robber removes his mask: he is THE JOKER. He brilliantly escapes in broad daylight with all of the money.

10 – INCITING INCIDENT, EXTERNAL “A” story (Batman saving Gotham City): Batman catches The Scarecrow and key members of Maroni's mob.

11 – INCITING INCIDENT, EXTERNAL “B” story (Batman vs. Joker): Batman pledges to Police Lieutenant JIM GORDON that he will stop The Joker.

13 – INCITING INCIDENT, INTERNAL (Rachel, love story): RACHEL is dating HARVEY DENT, the new District Attorney. Bruce is jealous.

13 – Alfred tries to get Bruce to accept his limits. Bruce replies “Batman has no limits.” (Subtheme of Identity: Can Bruce live without Batman?)

18 – LUCIUS FOX, CEO of Wayne Enterprises (and Batman’s tech genius) considers a business deal with MR. LAO, a possibly corrupt Chinese businessman.

20 – STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD, “A” story: Bruce crashes Rachel and Harvey’s date. Bruce is convinced Harvey is legit, offers to throw him a fundraiser.

Key dialogue: Harvey: “You either die a hero or live to become the villain.”

22 – Lao is working with Maroni’s mob crew; he has moved all their money to Hong Kong, where he currently sits, protected from extradition.

23 - 25 – The Joker crashes the mob meeting, tells them he’s their only chance at killing Batman. In exchange for him killing Batman, he wants half of all their money. They put a bounty on his head.



27 – END OF ACT ONE TURN: Batman offers to bring Lao back from Hong Kong so Dent can prosecute Lao and Maroni’s crew.

28 – DECISION: Bruce begins his plot to get Lao.

30 – Joker kills Gamble and starts to take over the mob.

ACT TWO-A:

38 – FIRST TRIAL: Bruce extricates Lao and drops him off at the Gotham police station. Rachel interrogates him; she and Dent come up with a plan to prosecute the entire mob.

40 – Gordon arrests Maroni’s entire crew. They are all prosecuted by Dent.

42 – FIRST CASUALTY: The Joker’s first public murder: he has killed the copycat Batman vigilante (seen earlier); The Joker releases a chilling video clip to the media.

43 – Joker’s threat: Batman must reveal his identity or Joker will kill more people. Bruce dismisses the notion.

45 – COMBAT (Internal): Bruce’s penthouse fundraiser for Dent: “I believe in Harvey Dent.” Bruce tells Rachel that he will retire as Batman since Harvey Dent is Gotham’s true hero. She feels pressured.

47 – Gordon and his cops figure out that The Joker is targeting three victims: Police Commissioner Loeb, the Judge and Harvey Dent.



48-49 – Harvey asks Rachel to marry him. She doesn’t have an answer yet. Judge and Police Commissioner assassinated. Joker shows up at fundraiser.

52 – COMBAT (External): Batman fights Joker. Joker throws Rachel out window. Batman saves her.

56 – Joker’s next target: Mayor Garcia.

59 – Bruce’s technology finds a clue and he speeds to the funeral parade site on his motorcycle.

62 – Joker attempts to shoot Mayor, hits Gordon, KILLING HIM.

67 – Dent goes over the line and tortures the henchman. Batman stops him. Bruce decides to give up his identity, tells Harvey to hold a press conference. Harvey objects.

69 – Rachel tells Bruce not to give in, but she will be with him if he goes legit; they kiss.

70 – Bruce has Alfred burn all of Batman’s records. Alfred tells him not to give up his identity, but he respects Bruce’s decision.

72 – MIDPOINT: Bruce is about to give himself in when Harvey steps in, says he’s Batman. Harvey is arrested.

73 – MIDPOINT (Internal): Rachel gives Alfred a letter for Bruce for “when the time is right.”

ACT TWO-B:

76 – Joker attacks convoy with Harvey Dent inside.

78 – Batman saves Harvey and chases The Joker on the BATPOD, his new motorcycle that ejects from the Tumbler.

83 – Batman refuses to kill Joker, skids out. Gordon, ALIVE, catches The Joker.



88 – DECLARATION OF WAR/ASSUMPTION OF POWER: Batman loses control and begins to torture Joker by beating him. It doesn't work. Joker tells him that the people of Gotham will turn on themselves.

89 [Standard length Turn*] – Joker has Dent and Rachel. Batman must choose whom to save.

90 [Standard length Decision*] – Batman chooses to save Rachel; Gordon rushes to save Dent.

**Note: although this Act Two is longer than a "standard-length" feature film and will not end until minute/page 106, it's interesting to note that there is still a Turn and Decision in the exact same range as in a standard-length feature film, which is done to adhere to the audience's expectations of traditional pacing/structure.*

96 – Rachel is killed. Dent's face is burned. The Joker escapes from jail with Lau.

97 – Batman at the ashes. Alfred reads Rachel's letter: she said she was marrying Harvey Dent.

Key Dialogue: Rachel V.O.: "I believe the day will come when Gotham no longer needs Batman, but I don't think the day will come when Bruce Wayne doesn't need Batman."

98 – Bruce believes that Rachel was going to wait for him. Alfred refrains from giving him the letter.

100 – Dent wakes up in hospital, goes mad. His coin has become scuffed on one side.

103 – The Joker burns his money, completes his take-over of the mob and readies his final assault on Gotham.

104 – END OF ACT TWO TURN: Joker calls in to the TV show with an ultimatum: kill Reese (guy blackmailing Bruce Wayne) in 60 minutes or Joker will blow up a hospital.

105 – DECISION: Bruce goes into action to protect Reese.



ACT THREE:

107-112 – Joker has infiltrated the hospital in disguise, visits Harvey and begins to recruit him. Harvey becomes Two-Face. Bruce saves Reese. Joker blows up Gotham General hospital, escapes once again.

113 – Joker’s threat: get out by nightfall or the city will burn.

117 – TRUE POINT OF NO RETURN – Lucius tells Batman the sonar system is wrong; “This is too much power for one man. Spying on 30 million people is not part of my job description.” Lucius will help him one more time, then resign. Bruce accepts his resignation.

119 – Prisoners and civilians are being evacuated on separate ferries.

120 – Ferries taken over by Joker’s plan; rigged to explode. Joker has given each boat the detonator for the other boat.

122 – The two boats start to fight over detonating the bombs.

124 – Batman ignores Gordon’s orders and charges into Joker’s location to take out his men and save the civilian hostages they are holding.

129 – Batman finds Joker. Joker gets upper hand, beating him with a lead pipe.

130 – On both boats, a man volunteers to detonate the other boat.

132 – Joker holds Batman at bay, promises him the boats will explode when one person pushes the button. They don’t; the Joker’s test of human nature in the face of fear has failed.

133 – Batman apprehends The Joker. The Joker monologues, comparing himself to Bruce, how they are both freaks, misunderstood by normal society (subtheme of Identity).

134 – The Joker has a back-up plan: Harvey Dent/Two-Face. Harvey’s corruption will break the soul of Gotham’s citizens.

139 –Batman saves Gordon’s family from Two-Face. Two-Face killed.

141 – Gordon’s spirit is crushed; Dent killed five people, so the city will give up hope and the joker’s evil plan will have come to fruition.

142 – CLIMAX (EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL): Bruce decides to take the fall for Harvey’s killing spree. Dent will remain Gotham’s hero and Batman its outlaw. Batman will let himself be hunted, once again a criminal, SAVING GOTHAM CITY FROM DESTRUCTION.

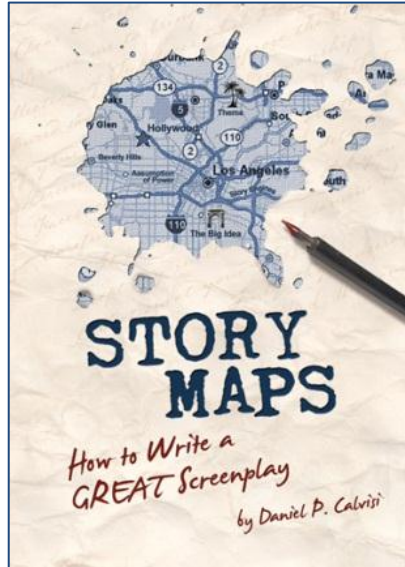
143 - 144 – EPILOGUE: Gordon tells media about Harvey Dent being Gotham’s knight, but we know he’s really talking about Batman. Alfred burns the letter from Rachel. Lucius Fox resigns, destroys the sonar spy system. Batman runs from police.



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Dan Calvisi

Senior Story Analyst

Act Four Screenplays

actfourscreenplays.com