

The Batman Who Laughs: The Full Story

If you thought the Joker was brutal, you've seen nothing yet.

Over the past few years, DC has been rocked to its very core by a new and terrifying villain. A villain with the skills and strength of the Batman, but the corrupted, insane mind of the Joker. The absolute antithesis of Earth 0's Caped Crusader. A living nightmare.

The Batman Who Laughs's horrific reign over Earth -22 came to a shocking conclusion, as Barbatos warned of its impending doom. Barbatos revealed the rest of the Dark Multiverse was about to suffer the same fate and told him he must conquer the "true" multiverse in order to survive. It didn't take too long before this evil Bat had won, creating his own multiverse, the Metalverse.

With help from his Dark Knights, Rabid Robins and Secret Six, the Batman Who Laughs has quickly become the most powerful and feared villain in DC's long history. As his story progresses with the current Dark Nights: Death Metal series, it's time for everyone to realise that this is no gimmick. This is the future of DC.

So, who is the Batman Who Laughs? Why has Bruce Wayne abandoned all sense of morality and turned evil? Let's have a deep dive on this insane new character.

The Dark Multiverse

Deep beneath the DC multiverse we've grown to know lies a dark secret. For every Earth, there is a negative counterpart. For instance, Earth 0 has Earth -52, Earth 22 has Earth -22 and so on. However, it wasn't always this way.

Originally, this multiverse was known as the "World Forge". Rich in dark matter and precious metals, it's one resident - a cosmic entity known as the World Forger - could create countless universes. If a universe was a success, it would rise to join the Orrery of Worlds, while worlds that failed were destroyed. That is, until Barbatos - the Great Dragon and destroy of universes - revolted and took the realm for himself.

Instead of destroying failed worlds, Barbatos allowed these worlds to exist, thriving on the destruction and suffering of all sentient life that lived on them. From these worlds came seven of the darkest knights ever seen. However, when he discovered the Batman Who Laughs, the Great Dragon set his sights on the "true" multiverse above them.

How He Became The Batman Who Laughs

Bruce Wayne of Earth -22 was already something of a loose cannon but he was about to be pushed over the edge.

The Caped Crusader was captured by Joker and subjected to the beatdown of his life. In true Joker style, mere physical pain wasn't enough and he let Bruce in on his new, villainous plan. While still tied up, Bruce could only watch as the Joker proceeded to recreate the night his parents were killed, shooting multiple parents and infecting the new orphaned children with Joker Toxin.

This was the breaking point for Bruce, who broke out of his restraints and finally put an end to Joker's sick life. Unfortunately, the Clown Prince had one more trick up his sleeve, as with his dying breath he released the toxin directly in Bruce's face.

The transformation was a slow one and allowed him time to plan for his inevitable demise, training up the Bat Family in the hopes they could stop him. IT was ultimately useless though, as they didn't even get a chance to try. The training session was a trap, ending with Bruce killing the entire family with a hauntingly familiar smile coming from his mouth.

The Dark Knights

On his own, the Batman Who Laughs is still an incredible force of evil, but without his team of Dark Knights things maybe wouldn't have gone so smoothly.

As the worlds of the Dark Multiverse met their end, the bats of six of them were recruited and saved by the Batman Who Laughs. These were the worst of the worst. Bats that had long abandoned any sense of morality, rebelled against the Justice League and dealt their own version of justice. Each of them has a different skill set including a speedster, a member of the Green Lantern Corps, a Bat/Cyborg hybrid and even a bat with the power of Doomsday.

The Drowned, The Dawnbreaker, The Merciless, The Devastator, The Murder Machine and The Red Death then descended on Prime Earth, destroying the cities that gave home to the Justice League members. Though the heroes would be saved, as Doctor Fate managed to pull them out of harm's way at the final moment, thus creating the Resistance.

The Batman Who Laugh's Dark Knights team has grown immeasurably as his reign goes on. We now have Bathomet, a Bat-Mage and even a Batmanasarus Rex, but what is a Bat without his Robin...

The Rabid Robins

Some of you may be wondering what happened to the orphans Joker infected, but there's nothing to worry about. They're all fine after being adopted by Bruce and cared for by Superman in Star Labs.

No, I'm totally kidding.

The poor children have transformed into a gruesome troupe of pint-sized Jokers - with the addition of a newly Joker-fied Damian Wayne - known as the Robins. Acting as the Batman Who Laugh's minions, they're more annoying than terrifying as they claw and bite where they are told to. The braindead bunch can only communicate with the word "crow", to which the Bat King replies "bar" in reference to Jason Todd's grizzly demise.

The group have recently found themselves with a king. When Batman Who Laughs takes on his new form (more on that later), he appoints one of them the "Robin King". To keep this spoiler free, check out Death Metal: Legends of the Dark Knights for more on the Robin King, but it's safe to say this new King is about to play a huge role in the Death Metal series.

Powers & Weaknesses

For so long since his introduction, readers had wondered what the deal was with the strange helmet/visor/crown thing. It wasn't 'till The Batman Who Laughs #4 that we finally got an explanation,

but it was more sinister than anyone could have imagined. This wasn't just a fashion statement; the iconic headwear had a purpose.

Concerned for Bruce's health and sanity, Alfred attempted to take the visor off him, revealing his damaged eyes. Eyes that could now see through to the Dark Multiverse, as well as see people's fears and desires. Bruce explains that the visor is made of dark metal and can filter out the dark energy, allowing him to focus on what he wants to see.

Aside from the visor, the Batman Who Laughs prefers lethal weapons, while also having the strength of Batman to dish out vicious beatings when he needs to. His horrifically brutal style has earned him a certain level of respect but despite his reputation, he's not unbeatable.

Like all creatures of the Dark Multiverse, he is weak to Nth Metal and could theoretically be taken out in a similar fashion to Superman, that is, if his psychotic mind doesn't fail him first.

Gotham Takeover

Before its untimely destruction, The Darkest Knight ruled over Earth -22. However, the citizens tried to revolt against him, leaving him no choice but to destroy everything. Having a planet with no-one to rule on it, the Batman Who Laughs is more than willing to take up Barbatos' offer when it comes to taking over the "true" multiverse above them.

In order to travel from the Dark Multiverse to the light, The Court of Owls trapped Prime Earth's Batman, infecting him with the final metal needed to make him into a portal. They expected Barbatos to emerge, as the texts prophesied, but they were instead greeted by Robins who tore them to pieces before making way for Barbatos and the Dark Knights.

Gotham became home to villainous mob as a mountain emerges in the middle of the city. They hand control of the districts to former Arkham inmates as they oversee proceedings from the mountain. By the time Superman gets there, there is nothing left of the city, leaving him to go it alone against the Dark Knights.

The Secret Six

During 2019's Batman - Superman run, the Darkest Knight needed to create dark versions of the six people he needed in order to open another portal to the Dark Multiverse. He created six batarangs infused with a serum of his own creation and Nth Metal, before setting out to find his victims.

While he was being held prisoner, the villain had a back-up plan already in motion. He had already infected Shazam, Commissioner Gordon, Blue Beetle, Donna Troy and Hawkman who followed our heroes to the Fortress of Solitude and launched an attack. The only person left that needed to be infected was Superman, but that part of the plan was about to take an unexpected turn.

As Superman tries to bring down the Fortress, trapping the infected deep under the rubble, Supergirl arrives to break up Hawkman and Batman. Unfortunately, her presence would be the Earth's downfall as she saves Superman from being wounded by the batarang. The blade slices her hands and infects her, completing the Secret Six and opening a portal to the Dark Multiverse, through which The Batman Who Laughs could bring more Dark Knights to Earth Prime.

Dark Nights: Death Metal

We have only just scratched the surface of this incredible new villain and his tale is far from over. In June of this year, Scott Snyder returned to the Batman Who Laughs' story with Dark Nights: Death Metal. If you thought Dark Nights: Metal was extreme, just know that you've seen nothing yet.

The Darkest Knight now rules over Prime Earth, having sculpted it into his own design. He has control over the heroes left on earth as well as the Bats from nearly all of the 52 universes and most terrifyingly, he has a new form. Couple that with his Bat-Army and Rabid Robins and we are talking absolute devastation of everything in the DCU. Unless the Resistance can stop him.

Wonder Woman, Wally West and what's left of Swamp Thing manage to find the Crypt of Heroes, where the first Justice Society are hiding out with Barry Allen, Hex and Bruce Wayne. They are the only ones with the ability to end this, but they don't yet know about the Darkest Knight's new form.

As far as they know, they're winning the fight. How wrong they are.