



**Batman #25**  
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Joker

## *Batman*

Issue #25: "Trauma" Part Five (of five)

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Alfred was wheezing. Like a chewed up rusty bellows. Like an unrepentant emphysema patient still sucking cigarettes through that damned hole they drill in their throat. Wheezing.

This was a young man's game. If he ever had illusions otherwise, rattle climbing up from the bottom of his lungs dispelled them with the cold dispassion of a coroner. The cowl was hot and stifling. Even the suit didn't fit right. Oh sure, it was made for him. One of Bruce's custom jobs. But the last time he wore it was four years ago during those Joker gas riots. Four years. An eye blink really. A heart beat. That's all it took for Alfred to lose some muscle mass along with his hair. Now the suit is a little big. His arms and legs slide a bit inside the body armor.

Alfred was wheezing. This was a young man's game. So said the bullets slamming into the concrete service shed he was hiding behind. Each crunch of rock that fell away said it. This is a young man's game.

He's been through worse, you understand. A lifetime spent working with Batman, and before that a lifetime in the British secret service will do that to you. Alfred's age had never really mattered before. He knew there are always those who roll their eyes and mock. Too slow. Too weak. Too old. Always made Alfred smile. Idiots. He was a dangerous man. No. Is a dangerous man.

But this was different. Harder.

So much harder.

Alfred was wheezing. This was a young man's game. Like the young man armed with twin glocks firing an avalanche of bullets, trying to swallow them all in his own grief and madness. A young man once a

boy. Once Jason Todd, Bruce Wayne's adopted son. Later Redwing, Batman's first partner. Still later a corpse burned beyond recognition. And now a masked killer who has forsaken his names and replaced them with a crude red X placed over his heart.

Jason could kill him with ease. Alfred knows this. But the boy wants to make a point first. To all of them. He's god. He's Jehovah. He's Zeus. And he could blast them all out of existence whenever, and however he chooses.

This was a young man's game and Alfred was wheezing.

"Aw, come on out Alfie! What's the matter? Afraid to face your handy work?"

"Young man," Alfred said, slowly peaking a glance around the shed, only to snap his head back when Jason fired another shot. "Young man, I'm quiet certain I raised you with better manners than these! For the last time, put the guns down!"

"Yeah, yeah Alfie. You raised me. You and Bruce both right?" he said, slamming another cartridge into one of his guns. "Until you both left me in that hands of that sick bastard! He tortured me, Alfie! Tortured me! AND YOU LEFT ME!"

Another spray of gunfire, this one taking away a chunk of concrete near Alfred's shoulder. This shed wasn't going to last.

"Master Jason, you're behavior is quiet unbecoming!" Alfred said, diving out from behind the shed, and tossing a grenade at Jason. The marksman fired, destroyed the grenade in mid-air releasing a blanket of smoke across the rooftop.

*Good*, thought Alfred. *Good*. This will buy him precious seconds. Jason wasn't firing armor piercing rounds, so Bruce should be ok. Sore, but ok. Thomas Elliott on the other hand...

"Oh I am just so impressed, Alfie. Smoke? Ha! Even those losers I've been capping put up a better fight than this!"

“Keep taking, boy,” Alfred hissed, trying to take a deep breath. “Just keep talking.”

There. Behind that vent. He could see it. The edge of a red cloak. That’s where Thomas Elliott fell.

The smoke was clearing and he could make out Jason’s form stalking closing.

“Oh, Alfie? Come out, come out, wherever you are...”

*Move!* Alfred thought. *Damnit you old goat, move!*

Alfred dove behind the vent with a hail of bullets on his heels.

“Take a breather, Alfie,” Jason said, reloading again, this time slowly and deliberately. He’s a tiger playing with his prey “You so need to hear about the time the Wrath water boarded me. Five straight days. I prayed for death every day, Alf. Every damned day. Thought I was about to die a few times there. But that Wrath. Clever bastard, always knew how to keep me alive...”

Alfred reached down for Elliott’s body. That’s when he saw it.

“My word,” he hissed between pants. He tapped the com link on his cowl. “Master Bruce? Please tell me you’re conscious...”

“Uh...barely. I’m ok...Armour held...”

“...I mean, he even had IV bags handy, you know? Pumped me full of drugs that enhanced the receptivity of my nervous system. Nice, huh? So then he brings over this live wire....”

“Bruce, I’ve reached Mr. Elliott’s....well, where he fell sir. Thomas isn’t the Wrath...”

“I know, Alfred,” Batman said, his breathing starting to come more naturally. “Figured it out as soon as I saw him in the suit. It was a just charade.”

“....and sticks the wire right into the water! Right into it, Alfie....”

“That’s not the whole of it, sir,” Alfred said, peaking around the vent long enough to see Jason still hadn’t moved, but was loading a cartridge from his utility belt by hand. “There’s no body here. Just the Wrath costume and clumps of clay....”

Vicki Vale was bleeding. She could feel the hot, thick, liquid running down her arm.

*No! She thought. No. No. No. Not like this. He cut my right wrist. I’m bleeding out. Oh god, not like this!*

She snapped her head to one side when she heard the hiss. There he was again. Stooped over. Shuffling. The long, curved blade of his knife was painted in blood. Her’s. The Wrath lifted the blade slowly to his mouth. She saw a black tongue dart out and lap of a drop from the knife-edge. His body shuddered for a moment and he let out a long, satisfied hiss.

He seized her left arm and placed the blade against it. Then he leaned his death’s head to hover right above Vicki’s face. His breath smelled of rancid meat. That tongue snapped out again to lick her nose.

CRACK! CRACK!

Guns shot from somewhere above them. The Wrath leap back from Vicki, straightening up and staring at the skylight in the museum ceiling. For a long moment he didn’t move just stared. Vicki heard another shot. Then several more. The Wrath hissed, reached into his robes and pulled something from them. He grabbed Vicki’s right arms and the photographer screamed through her gag when he put pressure on her wound.

Vicki passed out a moment later, not knowing the bleeding had stopped.

“Don’t think I don’t know why Bruce brought you here. The old man is as predictable as clockwork Alfie. Strength in numbers right? But leaves

Nightwing behind because he's afraid the Wrath might get his claws into the little guy. So I guess that makes you expendable huh? How's that make you feel, Alfie?" Jason asked. "By the way, Nightwing is a pretty sad, I gotta say. Too easy to take out. Frankly, I expected more from Redwing-lite."

Alfred knew Jason was close. He pulled two batarangs from his belt and steeled himself. If he could make it to the roof service entrance just ten feet away, he'd be ok. Just ten feet. But he was wheezing. And this was a young man's game.

He lunged forward, but the first shot caught him in the edge of his thigh. It was an armor piercing round and took a chunk of meat with it. Alfred went down hard, smashing his nose on the roof's gravel surface. He rolled over and threw his weapons. One missed completely, the other catching the edge of Jason's mask. The boy didn't even flinch.

"Nice try, Alfie. But this party had to end for you some time, right? So don't move, I'll end this and then I'll wake up the old man...."

The zip line wrapped around Jason's wrists like a vice, forcing him to drop his guns. He felt the cord start to pull to his left, so Jason yanked his arms hard to his right. The tug of war lasted a few moments before it hit a stale mate. Both men pulling back on the line, neither moving.

"Jason."

"Bruce."

They said nothing for a long, empty heart beat. The chasm of a mere five feet held them worlds apart.

Crime fighter and killer. Master and apprentice. Father and son.

For one long, empty, hollow, heart beat.

Jason blinked first.

"You can drop the creature of the night routine, Bruce. It didn't scare me when I was thirteen, so it sure as hell isn't going to scare me now."

"It's over, Jason," Batman said, with no hint of human feeling in his voice.

"Naw. Its just starting, old timer. The game is just starting," Jason said, that damned cocky, heart-breaking smirk glued to his face. "I'm going to fix Gotham. Fix her like I fixed your old school chum."

"Thomas Elliott isn't the Wrath, Jason."

"Oh newsflash! Of course he isn't, Bruce. You didn't raise a moron," he said. "But anyone stupid enough to wear that suit has to die. And don't call me Jason. He died. He died over four slow years of beatings and torture at the hands of that son of bitch..."

"Jason," Batman said with a calm, deliberate tone. "I didn't know you were alive. There was a body..."

"YOU DIDN'T LOOK!" Jason screamed, tugging on the cable hard enough to nearly make Batman lose his footing. "What did you drill into me over the years, pops? What? Never assume anything. Look past the obvious. Get behind the evidence! Over and over you lectured me! What did you do? You took his stupid, side show gag and fell for it!"

Jason slumped to his knees and the cable went slack. Batman didn't move.

"At first, I knew you'd figure it out. You'd come for me. All that time I took it. The slow torture. The starvation. The beatings. I took because I knew you'd figure it out and come for me. But you didn't," Jason said, his breath becoming labored, his hands shaking.

Batman took a step forward, letting the cable drop. "Jason...."

The former boy wonder rolled to his side and threw three short bladed knives at Batman with his now free hands. The dark knight rolled trapping the blades in his cape, and threw a barrage of his own.

Jason flipped away easily, the cocky grin now gone from his face.

“Jason is dead. The man that escaped the Wrath is someone else,” he said. “I’m going to do what you couldn’t. What you can’t. I’m going to put an end to the cancer of this city so one else suffers as I have. And if I have to go through you, I will.”

“You won’t go through me, Jason.”

“Aw, whatcha gonna do Batman? You don’t have the guts for these kinds of choices. You and I both know the note from the Wrath was legit. He’s downstairs ready to kill your little sweetheart. You’re more than ready to come to her rescue aren’t you?” Jason said, pulling a pistol from his boot. “If you go after her, I’m just going to kill again, maybe shoot you in the back. Maybe kill Alfred. Maybe your boy Friday. Stay up here and dance with me, and Vale bites it. Checkmate, pops. You don’t have any moves left.”

Batman rose to his full height, pulling his cape around his body. “Checkmate, Jason? No. I have one move left.”

Jason laughed. Not the bright laugh Batman remembered in his private moments. Something darker. Tinged with something like his own laugh.

“Oh really? That’s rich. But amuse me, old man. What’ca got?”

“Castling.”

“What?”

“Chess, Jason. Where the king and rook switch places.”

“Aw crap...”

Jason tried to spin around but it was too late. Two boots drove into his upper back from above, sending him tumbling across the roof, his face skidding across the gravel.

“Look, punk, maybe the Wrath did mess you up. Maybe Bruce should have hugged you more as a kid. Or maybe you’re just another idiot

trying to make a name for himself in Gotham,” Nightwing said, cracking his knuckles. “I don’t know and I just don’t give a damn. Either way, it doesn’t matter. Either way, I’m going to kick your ass!”

“Alfred,” Batman said over the com link. “Get down to the car. Start it up and wait for my signal.”

“But Nightwing...”

“Can handle himself and you’re leg is injured. Get to the car,” Batman said. “I’m going for Vicki and we’re getting out of here before this gets further out of control.”

Batman pried open the museum sky light and slowly slipped inside. The inside of the building reflected the gothic architecture of Gotham itself. Vaulted ceiling. Gargoyles. Several monolithic statues and obelisks from ancient Egypt circled the main hall. Getting down to the ground unseen was going to be easy.

He crept down long the wall, dropping behind a replica of the façade of the Parthenon. Noiselessly slipped behind the bust of Epicurus and saw her. Lashed to a marble table, Vale was unconscious. Pale. Almost with a gray pallor Batman recognized at once. She’d lost a lot of blood. The pool of crimson liquid on the ground and the bandage hastily plastered over her left wrist told the tale. Batman felt a sharp twist in his stomach. He wanted to rush to Vicki, pull her out of here. Where he not what he is, he surely would.

But he is what is he is.

Staying back, Batman scanned the dimly lit room for the Wrath. He must have stopped killing when the gunfire started on the roof, Batman thought. The Wrath need everything to go just so and he likely backed off to assess what was happening.

Then he heard it. About five feet to Batman’s left. A sharp, penetrating hiss.

Batman dove to the floor, rolling underneath a barrage of razor sharp knives thrown at his head. He pulled his grapnel from his belt with his right hand, and fired it the neck the statue of Ra, while throwing his own cloud of batarangs toward the Wrath.

The Wrath lunged forward under Batman's blades, and drew his own grapnel and fired it at the statue. The device pulled his body upward and the Wrath hissed in panic. It was too late. Batman was coming back down.

The Dark Knights heels drove into the Wrath's face, sending the killer spinning backward, crashing to the marble floor in the middle of the hall. Batman landed noisily a few feet away, spun and leapt into the air toward his fallen prey.

The Wrath rolled aside, pulling his head out of the way of Batman's incoming fist. The blow crushed the plating that reinforced Batman's glove and cracked the floor. Before he could turn around, Batman caught the Wrath's knee under his chin.

With a hiss, the Wrath pulled a long, curved blade from his robes, swinging it at Batman's head. The detective stooped under it and sprang away. The blade only sliced through part of Batman's cape.

Now facing each other, the men slowly circled without a word. There was no need for banter or threats. They both knew. This was the end for one of them. Maybe both.

*BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.*

Batman and Wrath both snapped their head to the side and saw it. A small blinking red light on a black box strapped to the knee of a statue of Horus a few feet away.

"Damn it," Batman muttered as the bomb went off.

"Is that all you got Grayson?" Jason Todd said, wiping the blood from his nose. "I guess I shouldn't have expected more from Redwing-lite."

Nightwing pulled the cowl he was wearing off before the acid Jason had thrown on it could eat its way through to skin.

"I'm sorry. I must have missed the part where I'm supposed to be impressed," he said, pulling a pair of collapsible batons from his belt. "I've had harder fights with the Penguin."

Jason laughed that Batman-laugh and drew a machete-like knife some scabbard on his back.

"Never bring a stick to a knife fight, loser."

They charged at each other, both grinning. Nightwing struck first, throwing one baton into Jason's side, causing him to stumble and fall. But Jason got his hands out in front him and flipped forward, slamming his feet into Nightwing's chest.

Both men bounced to their feet, only to fall over again as the building shuddered. A column of flame and debris burst through the roof separating Nightwing from his foe.

"Master Richard!" came Alfred's voice over the com link.

"I'm ok, Alf. I've lost sight of Todd," Nightwing said. "What the hell was that?"

"I don't know. I cannot raise Master Bruce..."

Another blast, this one, blowing out most of the windows on the east side of the museum. The corner of the roof Nightwing was standing on began to buckle. He fired a grapnel line to a building across the street and swung away as the roof shuddered and slid toward the street.

He dropped down a fire escape into the alley where Alfred had the Batmobile started up.

"We've got to get in there," Nightwing said.

"Sir..."

A dark figure slumped against the alley wall. It was Batman. The left side of his cowl was shorn away, and the surface of the body suit off revealing the armor plating underneath. Over his shoulder, wrapped in tattered remains of his cape, was the unconscious form of Vicki Vale.

Before either Alfred or Nightwing could reach him, Batman collapsed.

*A week later:*

Arnold Etchison was ready. Hell, he was born ready for this. The future was his and all he had to do was reach out and steal it. This would be his last night in this one room fleabag apartment. He was going to hit a big score tonight. The biggest.

One armored truck robbery and everything would change.

"All I need is a name," he said to his shadow. The doctors said the shadows didn't speak back but Arnold knew better. "Something catchy. Like...oh, like what? The Abattoir. Yeah, you're right. Yes...that will work."

"That sucks."

Arnold spun around in time to eat the first shot. For more pounded into his skinny frame before he hit the floor. Jason Todd emptied his clip into Arnold's body, pulling the trigger four more times before he realized he was out of bullets.

He sat back on the squashed mattress Arnold had called a bed and tossed a small card on the body. It was marked with a red X.

After a long moment he got up and crossed the floor of the apartment no bigger than a jail cell to a crusty mirror hanging on the wall by a single, rusty nail.

Jason Todd pulled his mask off and looked hard at this own reflection. After several minutes, a single tear began to slide down his cheek and Jason drove his fist into the glass.

*Two weeks later:*

"No change?"

"None, Alfred."

Bruce Wayne had been at Vicki Vale's bedside at Gotham General for nearly two weeks. In those nearly fourteen days, Vale hadn't so much as opened her eyes. The only sound that ever echoed in the room was the breathing machine that was keeping her alive.

It wasn't just the blood loss and smoke inhalation that sent her into the coma. The Wrath has pumped her full of drugs, some of which the doctors were still trying to identify.

"Sir," Alfred said. "Loath though I am to point it out, Bruce Wayne is due at a mayor's luncheon in an hour. And Master Richard is waiting for you in the car downstairs."

Bruce kissed Vicki on the forehead and left the room. All he wanted to do was smash something. Someone. Anyone. If he could have escaped that explosion, so could the Wrath.

In the back of the limo Bruce and Dick said nothing for several minutes. Dick had tried to talk to Bruce about Vicki a few times, but got nowhere. Bruce was angry and his rage always took time to simmer.

"So, I did some digging around," he said, clearing his throat. "And you were right. No one has any idea where Thomas Elliott is."

"What did you find out?"

Dick tossed a file folder onto Bruce's lap and continued. "Ok, so it seems that before you and Vicki saw him at that party, Elliott hadn't been seen for six months."

"Six months?"

"Yeah. Check out the third page there. See those bank records? About

eight months ago, Elliott starting investing heavily into something called Dinjin Enterprises. He sinks most of his fortune into it over a couple of months and then closes his clinic and sells his mansion. After that, there's no trace of him until that party."

"And Dinjin Enterprises?"

"A dummy company. I was able to trace it back to several numbered companies in Europe and the Middle East, but the trail goes cold," Dick said. "Someone covered their tracks really well."

"Money laundering then?"

"That's what I thought. But check out page nine..."

"Huh. Dinjin was only incorporated six days before Elliott starting sinking money into it."

"Yah. If that was set up to launder money, it was just set up to launder Dr. Elliott's."

"Good work, Dick," Bruce said, putting the folder down and staring out the window.

"Bruce, what the hell is going on? None of this makes sense."

"Not yet it doesn't," Bruce said, without turning from the window. "We're being played, I know that much. Whatever this is it's all connected. Thomas Elliott. The Wrath. Jason. The Joker. All of it. It's like playing a jig-saw puzzle without knowing what the picture is supposed to look like..."

"Figure it's done?"

"No," Bruce said. "Not even close."

### *Elsewhere:*

The Red Warriors are a known and feared biker gang among known and

feared biker gangs.

Well, they like to think so.

Truth is they're small time. Tiny. Almost microscopic. Their big claim to fame is that Black Mask sometimes uses them for muscle. And only then for dime store crimes. Kid stuff really. Strictly amateur.

Didn't matter Truman "Bones" Clavel. Working for Black Mask meant the gang was moving up. And that made him, president of the Red Warriors, a big man.

Well, a big man in a little gang. Tiny. Microscopic.

The club house still stunk of stale beer and cheap smokes when the Red Warriors got in. The night was young. Soon the girls would be coming by and the fun would real start.

Bones hit the light switch in the main room. Nothing happened. He tried again. Nothing. Again.

Nothing. And there was something else in the air. Something other than the stale beer. Something like rotten meat.

"Man, you losers didn't pay the 'lectric bill or what?" Bones said to the five bikers behind him. "And what's that smell? You stupid fu..."

"Now, now, such language," said the voice from the dark. "I've disconnected the power for dramatic effect. These sorts of the things work so well in the dark don't you think?"

Bones pulled his knife and wandered into the room lit only by the moonlight. He could make out the thin figure on the couch wearing a hat with a wide, round rim.

"Let me tell somethin' to you, jefe. You jus' made a big mistake comin' into our house," he said.

"Yeah, a big mistake, jefe," said a fat biker standing behind him.

"Oh I don't think so. This is it for you boys. The big time. The jack pot.

The Publisher's Clearing House grand prize. No purchase necessary!," the man in the dark said, slowly getting to his feet and doing a pirouette. "You're going to the show, Bingo."

"My name is Bones, man. Don' you forget it," Bones said, pointing his knife at the man. "Now you gots, like, two seconds ta tell me you name before I gut you like a freakin' fish."

"I'm sorry, Bingo. Introductions must be made," said the man who stepped deliberately into the moonlight. The bikers all felt a chill run down their spines. They all knew who belonged to the chalk white face and green hair.

The Joker began to cackle and pulled a small hand gun from his jacket pocket.

"You know, the last time I left old Arkham I really didn't amass the kind of body count that really says JOKER WAS HERE! And now that cheap knock off the Wrath is running about grabbing all the headlines...so I was thinking, Bingo, it's time to really take this town by storm. Don't you?"

"My name is Bones man..."

The Joker lost his grin at once, pointed the gun at Bones' face and fired. The biker's skull spilt in two as his body slumped to the ground like a sack of wet cement.

The clown turned the fat biker and pointed the pistol at his head.

"Now, sonny, what's your name?"

"M-m-m-my n-n-n-ame," he said, his legs shaking. "Its uh, Fran—fran...my name is B-b-b-ingo..."

"Bingo! Old pal! It's been too long!" the Joker said, sliding up beside a tall skinny biker with a mullet. "Oh you'll have to the hair cut, chum. And what's your name?"

"Uh...Bingo?"

The Joker put the gun in the man's ear and pulled the trigger.

"Oh my that was messy," he said, wiping the clumps from his face. "There is only one Bingo, silly boy!"

The Joker clapped his hands together and the lights in the club house came back on. Several of the bikers in the door way started to vomit. The room was filled with their dead brothers. Their arms torn off. Their faces ripped away. Blood coated the floor and the walls.

The Joker laughed. And laughed. The walls seems to shake with his voice.

"It's a brave new world for you chums! The Joker's going corporate and you losers get to join in on the ground floor? Any objections?"

No one said a word.

### *Elsewhere*

Thomas Elliott was unusually pleased with himself. It had all worked out as planned, despite the intransigence of both Red X and the Wrath. The real work could now begin.

Soon there would not be a need for this underground layer, hiding from the city like a common rat. No, soon it would all be different.

"Master," said the large man who appeared behind Elliott to take his coat. "All is well then?"

"Indeed. Your explosive worked particularly well."

"Still, master, was it wise to interfere with the Wrath like that? He is resourceful and will do doubt connect you to the blast."

Elliott grinned and reached back to grab the back of his hair. With a strong tug, the wig came away revealing a long mane of black hair with

a long white streak running down from his temples to the back of his head.

“As will the detective. But by then it will be far too late for either of them to do anything about it,” he said. “Besides, it was a necessary risk. There is no guarantee Batman would survive a direct confrontation with the Wrath and that is something I just can’t have. Our agenda is all that matters Ubu.”

“Yes, master.”

“Pity about Dr. Elliot however. He was a useful pawn and guise. It won’t take Wayne long to figure out his son didn’t kill the good doctor on that roof,” he said, casting off the three piece suit he was wearing, and wrapping himself in a long, emerald robe. “By the way, Ubu, I trust Clayface has been appropriately punished for his pathetic performance?”

“He has, Master.”

“Good. Had he done his job properly, Batman would have believed the Wrath dead and there would have been no need to destroy that wonderful museum. I so do regret the loss of such priceless art.”

Ubu handed his master a glass of cognac. “And now?”

“Now my chess pieces are all in play and its time for the game to begin.”

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## From the same author on Feedbacks

Lobo: Dirty Deeds - Done Dirt Cheap (2007)

Hey you! Get yer greasy paws offa my space hog! Naw, I don't care that ya didn't touch it yet. Ya might have later and ain't but nobody touches my ride!

Aw, yer a human ain't ya? No offense, but the Main Man thinks you ain't nothing but a pack of naked monkeys. Yes he does. Hell, 'bout the only thing ya ever done right was AC/DC. Righteous that is. Cranked up on my space hog whenever I'm on the road....what's that? Ya can't hear hard rock in space? Why not? Cause ya can't hear in space? Stupid monkey! Don't push yer luck! I'd probably kill ya right here, right now, but I got a business-type appointment. Can't figure why a soft skinned chimp like yerself would dare walk into a place like Vogon's Cantina. But I'm in a forgivin' mood, chimp. So ya can come along and watch the action. And there's always action at Vogon's. Just stay outta my way and keep yer head down.

My name? Ya better not forget it ya fraggin bastich. It might be the last name ya ever hear.

Lobo!

Batman: City of Crime #5 (2007)

Batman: City of Crime, Part 5 (of 5): Wrath

Batman: City of Crime #4 (2007)

Batman: City of Crime, Part 4 (of 5): Knight Fall

Batman: City of Crime #3 (2007)

Batman: City of Crime, Part 3 (of 5): Towering Heights.

Batman: City of Crime #1 (2007)

Batman: City of Crime, Part 1 (of 5): Shadows.

Gotham. The city with its soul on fire. A city of victims. A city of villains. A city of heroes.

For years Gotham Gazette reporter Marv "Mickey" Fynn has allowed the dark corners of Gotham to ruin him. Once a reporter who rivaled Lois Lane and Clark Kent, Fynn has become a lost in an alcoholic haze.

With his job hanging by a thread, the jaded Fynn takes on one last story. One last chance to see his name on front page. But when he investigates a murder that would turn even the Joker's stomach, Fynn enters a world he never thought he would.

The world of The Batman - a mysterious vigilante that has only just begun to appear in Gotham City.

Neither Fynn, nor Gotham will ever be the same again.

Set during the first years of Batman's career, Marv "Mickey" Fynn tries to keep his job by investigating a murder that is ghastly by even Gotham City's standards. Convinced he knows the dead woman, Fynn starts his investigation in the roughest part of Gotham, in it's roughest bar. The only person who might keep the jaded reporter alive is the mysterious underworld figure, Matches Malone!

Batman: City of Crime #2 (2007)

Batman: City of Crime, Part 2 (of 5): Into the Inferno.

Reporter Mickey Fynn's investigation into the ghastly murder of Nancy Hartigan takes him to the one place he knows he shouldn't go - the lair of the Penguin! Oswald Cobblepot might provide a critical lead on the case...if Fynn lives long enough to hear it.

Batman #20 (2007)

Batman: Partners.

The Justice League's world is coming down around them, so they desperately need their key strategist ready for action. Only Batman hasn't been seen in weeks! Superman is dispatched to find his long time partner - only to find he is in no mood to help the League!

Batman #21 (2007)

Batman: Trauma, Part 1.

Batman #22 (2007)

Batman: Trauma, Part 2.

Batman frantically tries to hunt down the Wrath, who has kidnapped Vicki Vale! Meanwhile, when another Gotham villain turns up dead, Batman is forced to come face to face with his greatest failure as a crime fighter.

Batman #23 (2007)

Batman: Trauma, Part 3.

Finally, the fate of Batman's first partner is revealed! What happened to Jason Todd, aka Redwing, after the events of City of Crime? Why doesn't Nightwing know who Redwing was?

Batman #24 (2007)

Batman: Trauma, Part 4 (of 5).

In the second to last story in Batman: Trauma, Batman, Nightwing and Alfred go on the offensive against the Wrath. But in doing so they find themselves trapped in the cross fire of lethal agendas. The ultimate fate of Jason Todd is revealed and stakes for Batman and Gotham are raised.

Batman #27 (2008)

Batman: A Mirror, Darkly Part 1.

Gotham City is under assault. Crime has changed and the old rules of the game no longer apply. Before Batman can even adjust to his new status quo, a ghost from his past returns threatening everything the Dark Knight has ever built or cared for. Be prepared for the DC2 debut of Batman's most lethal enemy.

Batman #26 (2008)

Batman: Agoge.

Things in Gotham are changing. A strange new twist to the Joker's behavior leaves Batman puzzled, but he isn't the only one keeping tabs on the homicidal clown. As Batman past and present collide we learn for the first time how Jason Todd became the Dark Knight's first partner.

Batman #28 (2008)

Batman: A Mirror, Darkly; Part 2.

The history of Ra's Al Ghul's connection to Bruce Wayne is revealed while Batman tries to protect Gotham from his former master. An unlikely alliance is formed under the city streets and the Joker comes face to face with...himself?

Batman #29 (2008)

Batman: A Mirror, Darkly Part 3.

War! The battle between Batman and Ra's spills onto the streets of Gotham City, causing Jim Gordon to question the actions of his

long time masked ally in the war on crime. As Ra's makes a hard final push to take control of the city, Batman's new allies led by Black Mask strike back. And as if that wasn't enough, the Joker has decided it's time to go wild.

Batman #30 (2008)

Batman: A Mirror, Darkly Part 4.

It all ends here! The war between Ra's Al Ghul and Batman comes to a head as Gotham city burns! At stake is nothing less than the future of Batman and the fate of the city of crime! Nothing will ever be the same for DC2's Dark Knight after this!

Batman #31 (2008)

Batman: My Kingdom for a Horse.

During the climax of Ra's Al Ghul's attack on Gotham City, Batman's criminal allies led by Black Mask, Two Face and the Penguin were tasked with defending City Hall from the League of Shadows.

Batman #32 (2008)

Batman: The Grey Ghost.

Gotham's new Batman is determined to follow in his mentor's footsteps....if he survives. Dick Grayson is about to learn the cost of wearing the cape and cowl as he faces his most lethal enemy while being chased by the ghosts of Bruce Wayne's past. Meanwhile Black Mask and Harvey Bullock are forced to come face to face with their own demons....and each other.

Batman #33 (2009)

Batman: Sins of the Father.

As the Grey Ghost continues his assault on the criminal element of Gotham City, Dick Grayson learns about the price to be paid for wearing the cape and cowl. Meanwhile, on the run from Killer Croc, Black Mask and Bullock come face to face with a new player in Gotham!



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