



Nightwing #17
Batkid

Published: 2007

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): Comics DC2 Nightwing Batman Starro "Martian Manhunter"

Nightwing #17: Psychotic Reaction
Written by Batkid
Cover by Anja Dreher, colored by Kalin Field
Proofread by elohimsgirl and Keith
Edited by Ellen Fleischer

They'd been over this already a hundred times. The Teen Titans disagreed on whether the JLA was in the right. They disagreed as to whether the JL should turn themselves in, as Barry had. Even though many of them took issue with the Flash's decision, they all agreed that the Fastest Man Alive was also one of the bravest, and most honest. Wonder Girl and Kid Flash had sided with their mentors, which Dick understood, although he wished that he could count Starfire among the JL supporters.

He admitted that the video footage of the JL in the White House was pretty incriminating. But he also realized that he didn't know all of what had gone on during the JL's mission. Most of all, he thought that, at least on an outward level, the 'Capes' ought to show support for one another. The public would only see them as more of a menace if they all fought among themselves.

With a sigh, he rounded up the muggers he'd just taken down in Central Park, leaving them where the cops were sure to find them. They'd take care of them.

Hopping on his 'cycle, he started off down the road. He noticed a red Chevy that seemed to be tailing him. He laughed uneasily to himself.

C'mon, Grayson, it is New York... of course it's gonna be bumper to bumper... and of course you're gonna see more than one red Chevy. He glanced in his rear view mirror as he passed underneath a streetlight. But not necessarily a red Chevy with the same license number...

It was probably fans who saw a chance to follow New York's hero. Dick wasn't stuck-up, but he did know that that was a possibility. Not wanting to take any chances, he headed off in a different direction, towards Gotham. He'd been meaning to go there anyway to visit with Alfred... and to discuss the JL's problems with Bruce. The bright lights of New York faded into the distance behind him as he rode. The Chevy's headlights, however, did *not*. He turned onto a quieter road, keeping an eye out for the Chevy. When he saw that it too had taken the fork onto this road, he began to think about how he was going to lose it.

Dick sped up, sighing as the Chevy did the same. For the next fifteen minutes, he tried to shake it. A bridge loomed ahead of him, illuminated by his 'cycle's lights. He drove under it. Realizing that his single headlight would give him away, he switched it off, and watched as the Chevy raced by a minute later. Almost out of his line of site, the car slowed, then stopped. He could imagine the driver's frustration as the car swung around violently, and drove by Dick slightly more slowly than it had passed him the first time. The driver was obviously hoping to spot him.

After the car left, Dick waited another few minutes. He pulled up on the road, and saw the tail lights of the Chevy ahead of him. Keeping his tell-tale single headlight off, he focused on the road and the car ahead of him.

The Chevy was headed back to New York. Dick grimaced. He wasn't looking forward to trying to follow it among the other cars in the streets. He remembered how Nocturna and Night-Thief had escaped him before; he was doubly determined not to let that happen again.

As he mingled with the traffic, Dick switched his headlight on. The powerful beam seemed feeble amid the bright lights of the city. The Chevy turned into a parking garage, and Dick followed. As he pulled into a spot several rows over from the Chevy, Dick saw several men step out of the car. One of them looked familiar.

Senator Keyser?!

The men walked over to an elevator and got inside. Dick glanced at a

map posted on the wall, guessing that the senator would get off at the office floor. He jogged up the stairs, arriving in time to see the men turning the corner, the senator in the middle. Dick waited until they'd rounded it fully before he sneaked behind them.

Why would the senator be following me around? The teen wondered.

He followed stealthily until they came to the senator's office. The group went in and shut the door quietly behind them.

Dick picked the lock on the office next to the senator's. He opened the door carefully and prayed that it wouldn't squeak as he did.

He ran lightly over to the window, and threw it open, looking for handholds. The old brick building offered plenty. He climbed out, crawled along the wide concrete ledge to the window of the room next door and peeked in...

Alfred greeted him as he ran up the front steps of the mansion

"Why, Master Dick! I wasn't expecting you this evening!"

Grinning, Dick asked, "Do I need an invitation?"

The old man chuckled. "Of course not. Let me fetch Master Bruce... if you'll wait here just one moment."

Several minutes passed before Bruce came in.

"Dick! What brings you here?"

"Hey, Bruce. I need to talk to you about something... it's kinda important."

Bruce gave him a searching look before saying, "Fine... actually, I need to finish something in the cave. Join me if you like."

Dick followed his mentor down to the Batcave. He sat down next to

Bruce at the computer.

"What's on your mind?" Bruce asked as he keyed up files.

"The Star Conqueror," Dick said. "I found a parasite on Senator Keyser. I managed to freeze it off, just like you said to, and it shriveled up, but what else can you tell me about it?"

Bruce tapped at his keyboard, and a second later a picture of a Starro parasite came onto the screen. "Not much. I'm still gathering information on it. But here's what I've discovered so far." He clicked on 'Side Effects'. "The victim's reflexes will deteriorate initially as the Conqueror's clone bonds with its new host. This soon passes. Often, the victim is unaware that he has been infected. He will probably feel groggy as the Star Conqueror gradually takes over his thinking." He zoomed in on a picture of the dangerous parasite. "There is a short time between infection and mind control." Bruce glanced at Dick. "Rather than tear them off the victim by force, use the freezer I gave you to remove them."

Dick stared at the picture of the parasite. It looked exactly like the one he'd removed from Senator Keyser.

Bruce glanced over at him. "What was the senator doing when he was infected?"

Dick frowned. "He had something."

"'Something'? What 'something'?"

"I don't know... "

Now Bruce frowned. "How many men were with him, Dick?"

"A bunch... "

"Dick!"

Unfazed, Dick glanced at his mentor. "What?"

Bruce started to put his hand on Dick's shoulder to turn him around, but

his protégé swatted it away.

"Lay off, Bruce."

"What is *wrong* with you?" Batman demanded. "Turn around, Dick. NOW."

Shaking his head, Dick backed up a little. "No... leave me alone." Dick's leg shot up in a high kick, but Batman, expecting it, knocked it away.

He easily blocked a flurry of blows from his former trainee, then tried to land a few of his own. Batman ducked and rolled, watching from behind the giant penny as Dick backflipped onto a ledge, nearly missing it.

"Dick... come here."

He received only a smirk.

Batman grabbed a batarang off his worktable. It was one of the training models, duller than the ones he used on Gotham's streets. He whipped it at Dick, ducking behind the table as a nightarang flew a few inches from his head.

And I don't even have a cowl on for protection, he thought as he dove for the butler who was coming down the steps.

"Master Bruce-!"

"Stay down, Alfred."

"What's happening?"

Batman growled, "Dick's gone mad. I don't know what happened yet for sure, but believe me, I'm going to find out."

Dick advanced toward them, wielding a batarang. A *sharp* batarang. In his other hand were several more. Batman scowled. Dick must have grabbed them while he had been rescuing Alfred.

"Go, Alfred... GO!"

The elderly man started up the stairs, then turned hesitantly back. The pain in his eyes was clearly visible.

"GO!"

Alfred looked back over his shoulder sadly at the two men he thought of as his sons, then slowly climbed the stairs. "Be careful, Bruce."

Batman barely had time to register what his butler had said. Instinctively, he grabbed a nearby board. He swung it up barely in time to bunt a flying batarang. He glared at the metal weapon embedded in the board. Ripping the Batarang from the two-by-four, he threw the weapon at his son, closing his eyes as Dick screamed in pain.

When the boy's scream died off, Batman opened his eyes, and walked slowly over to his supply closet. Grabbing a couple of pairs of handcuffs, he put the rings around Dick's wrists and ankles. His protégé glared up at him in hatred. Batman looked down uneasily at Dick's shoulder and breathed a sigh of relief. His aim had been true... the batarang had hit Dick squarely between his neck and shoulder, leaving a gash that luckily was longer than it was deep.

Even so, it pained Batman to see it.

He cleaned the wound, frowning as Dick struggled fiercely against his restraints. Batman had chained the handcuffs to a ring on the cave wall that had been installed for just these circumstances.

Well, not exactly these circumstances. After all, Bruce had never dreamed that he would end up chaining his son to it.

Grabbing Dick's head, he peered behind it at the ugly parasite that was stuck there. He picked up a gadget he'd been working on designed specifically to remove the starfish, and set to work. Once the parasite was off, he dropped it into a jar, and sealed it tight.

Dick now unconscious, but Bruce left the chains on him.

He set to work analyzing the starfish. Hours later, he pushed his chair back from his computer, glancing uneasily over at the unconscious Dick. According to his computer, the DNA of this parasite was slightly different than those of the original ones he'd faced at the White House.

They're mutating, he realized grimly.

He didn't know what had caused his specimen to change. Had it gone near something radioactive? Was it trying to adapt to Earth? Or was Star Conqueror trying new methods as the JL destroyed the early versions?

Well, Dick was still unconscious, and no matter whether Bruce yelled, slapped, or set off flash-bang grenades-the boy did not wake up. Perhaps the mutated parasite, his fight with Batman and the infected thugs at the senator's office had simply worn him out.

There was a way to check that theory...

Ten minutes later, the Martian Manhunter appeared.

"I came as fast as I could, Bruce. How is he?"

"Not good."

Bruce and Martian Manhunter walked over to where the teen was propped up against the wall. He was just beginning to stir. His look of bewilderment turned to one of total rage when he saw his captor.

No emotion was betrayed by the half of Batman's face that was visible the cowl.

"Let's see what we can do," J'onnn said.

Martian Manhunter walked over to where Dick was chained, struggling against the bonds that held him. Batman was quiet, so that J'onnn could concentrate on his task as much as possible.

A small smile twisted the corner of the Martian's lip. "He has a strong mind, difficult to break into." His brow furrowed, and the smile disappeared to be replaced by a deep frown. "It's also clouded by rage." The Manhunter's eyes closed as he finally connected with Dick's mind. "Sifting through the memories... " He winced once, then smiled a moment later. A sad expression came next. Batman wondered what the alien was seeing in his son's mind.

"I'll now tell you what he experienced in his own words," the Martian said without turning to look at the Dark Knight who stood anxiously beside him. His voice sounded somehow younger as he watched Dick's memories, relating them to Bruce.

"The group I was following went into the senator's office suite and locked the door. I picked the lock of the office to the left of it and went in. Then I opened the window and climbed outside and peeked into the senator's office next door. The senator was seated, and flanked by his 'buddies'. Of course I couldn't hear what they were saying, and they were at an angle where I couldn't read their lips. One of them grabbed some papers and a pen, and put them in front of Senator Keyser. He grabbed the pen, and, started signing the papers. He didn't read them first. That was when I realized that I should have been recording everything. I grabbed my mini-camera and set it up. And by setting it up I mean I held onto the wall with one hand, while I dug through my pouch for the adhesive tape with the other. I got the camera stuck on the brick wall and pressed the 'on button'. Then I watched as the man who'd given the papers to Senator Keyser pointed to something behind the senator. It looked like he was asking a question about it. The senator turned, and as he did, I saw a Starro starfish on the back of his neck. Ditto for the others in my field of sight.

"I wondered what kind of documents the senator was signing. These people-and aliens and parasites-had gotten the President, so I knew I had to put a stop to whatever they were doing with the senator.

"I smashed the window in and swept into the room. Everyone seemed startled when I burst in, but they recovered quickly-too quickly-and attacked. I was having the same trouble the JL had, fighting Starro: I didn't want to hurt its pawns-they were innocent victims. I had the little freezer gadget Bruce gave me, and tried to use it to freeze their starfish off. I

wasn't making any real headway, what with trying to beat, but not harm, the people. I ended up with a busted lip for my troubles, so I decided to do the unexpected-I rushed through, grabbed the senator, and leapt out the window.

"They didn't try to follow."

"Once in the street," he continued, "I dragged Senator Keyser into the alley. The last thing I wanted was video footage or pictures of Nightwing 'attacking' the Empire State's senator.

"Managing only one Starro victim was relatively easy, and in no time flat, I had him held down on the ground. He struggled, but I managed to use Bruce's freezer gadget on the starfish. A minute later he went limp in my arms, and I dragged him into one of the other government buildings. Security's been high since Lord's been in a coma, but I got in. I dropped Senator into a chair in an empty waiting area and left.

"The Starro-infected thugs were still at the office, and they looked nervous. Guess they didn't have a back-up plan for what to do if someone rescued the senator!

"It was harder, taking down the crowd of parasite-infected muscle men who were waiting for me, but after a good half hour of hide-and-seeK on the sixth floor, I was able to take them down, one or two at a time. I emptied somebody's lunch out of a container that was in an office fridge, dumped the parasites into it and stuck them in the freezer. They tried to infect me, but on their own, they weren't nearly so threatening.

"I made a mental note to ask Bruce if the parasites might infect some of the more dangerous animals on earth. Think of it: a mob of tigers, grizzlies, lions, venomous snakes... all of them directed by an entity with the sole intent of destroying or enslaving mankind. Or-sharks and whales-attacking swimmers... boats even!

"I ached all over from the brutal game of hide-and-seeK I'd just been playing-I could make a list as long as my arm of the bruises I was feeling just then. But I forced myself to collect all of the thugs who'd tried to kill

me off the floor.

After all, it wasn't really them that had been attacking me. It was the Star Conqueror.

"I dumped the bunch into Central Park, figuring that they would either wake up and find their way home or else the cops would find them. Either way, it didn't really matter-they were no threat without the starfish.

"After that, I remembered the video camera that I'd left at the senator's office. It had footage from right before I'd jumped into the office up till the time I went to retrieve it from the window I'd left it at, where it was faithfully recording an empty office. Man, that Super Stik tape sure did its job... it took a few good hard yanks to get the camera loose. I'd had it aiming directly into the room, but now as I ripped it free, the lens scratched on the bricks. Darn. And it was so soon after Roy accidentally shot my last one...

I had my grappling hook up, and I was reaching over to grab the recorder. I felt dizzy, for some reason. That was strange. First, I don't get vertigo attacks, and second, I was only six stories up! I hurried, snatched the recorder, and made my way to the roof. All of a sudden, I got this massive headache; I had to sit down for a minute.

"It was a little embarrassing, but when I was, three... or maybe four or five? stories down from the roof, I had to break in through another window and find the elevator. I got to the sub-level 2... or 3... parking garage and retrieved my 'cycle. I got on and headed for... "

Here, Dick looked confused. He blinked up at his captors helplessly.

Martian Manhunter glanced over at Batman. "Bruce... ?"

Gotham's vigilante abruptly headed back to where the weakening parasites were trapped in a jar, his jaw set.

"I need to find out if there are any other effects from that... monster... that I need to be aware of. It infected Dick how many hours ago?"

The alien from Mars glanced at the boy. "Bruce, that's just the thing." He severed his mental link with Dick. "It's been so long... he seems to be getting better. He wasn't even conscious an hour ago. I think it's safe to assume that there were no permanent problems from the Star Conqueror's parasite."

"J'onn—" Batman began to protest. He looked over at Dick. The teen was looking at them, the bewildered expression just beginning to leave his face. He walked over to him.

"Dick," he said clearly. "How do you feel?"

Shaking his head as though to clear away the bad memories that J'onn had forced him to relive, he glanced up at his mentor. He grinned. "Just fine, boss."

Bruce heaved a sigh of relief and hurried to unlock the cuffs. Stiffly, the boy stood, stretching his arms.

"Ow!" He cried out. Glancing down at his bandaged shoulder, he frowned, then looked back up at Bruce. "I didn't get that fighting an infected thug."

Bruce shook his head. "No. That happened right after you lost your memory."

"What?"

As his eyes swept the room, the teen observed the batarangs strewn over the floor, and quickly guessed the problem.

Dick's eyes widened. "I- I'm sorry, Bruce, I- I didn't-"

Bruce chuckled, feeling some of the night's stress leave him. "That's alright. Gave me a bit of a... " he glanced casually over at J'onn, who was going upstairs to comfort the distraught butler. "You startled me."

Dick was quiet for a moment. "I guess I picked that parasite up when I was fighting with those thugs. It's funny, though-I counted all of the parasites... there was one starfish for every guy I fought."

Bruce nodded, not wanting to bother Dick any more. "I think you'd better go upstairs and talk to Alfred."

Dick laughed. "Give me some fresh clothes before I go up, though. I don't want to upset him any more than he already is, and my suit has blood all over it." He pretended to give Bruce an accusing glare.

Bruce threw his hands up. "Fine. Next time I'll just let you kill me."

Dick laughed, but looked more thoughtful as he headed upstairs. The Martian Manhunter followed. Bruce remained below, taking advantage of the brief solitude to collect himself. J'onn appeared again at the top of the stairs.

"Dick seems to be feeling better. Alfred's overjoyed. He has a pot of chicken noodle soup on the stove, and he's already hustled Dick off to bed. Dick fell asleep almost immediately after telling Alfred his choice between chicken noodle and tomato soup."

Bruce nodded, then looked grim. "Dick said that he thought that the thugs didn't have a back-up plan if someone rescued Senator Keyser."

J'onn nodded, taking the abrupt change from Bruce Wayne to Batman in stride.

Batman continued. "Infecting whoever rescued Keyser was the back-up plan, I'll bet."

J'onn nodded again, considering Batman's words. "Or maybe that was the plan all along."

Batman frowned. "I've thought about that. But even the most amateur crook would know that Nightwing would pick up on the tail and turn the tables on him."

J'onn shook his head. "It was a trap."

Batman slapped the table in frustrated. "Yes." He glanced over at the Nightwing suit that Dick had draped over a chair, and in the vigilante's

eyes, J'onn saw... was that *tenderness*? Yes, definitely. He could sense it in the Dark Knight. It was rare for Bruce to allow his innermost feelings to become so intense that J'onn could pick them up that easily.

But only for a second. Batman had more important priorities than emotions at the moment...

Like beating the monster who had done this to his son.

"He wasn't lying." Martian Manhunter spoke quietly.

"What?" Bruce asked sharply.

"Those were his actual memories. He handled the situation just as you would've. You've trained him well, Bruce."

Bruce's back was to J'onn-something for which the Dark Knight was thankful. Underneath the suit, Batman shrugged. "He was a good student. But it didn't help him any in this situation, did it?" Underneath the cowl, Bruce had the faintest of smiles.

J'onn gave a quiet laugh. "He is obviously good... the Star Conqueror singled him out for this elaborate trap, didn't It?"

Batman turned slowly. "Yes. It did."

The Crisis continues throughout the DC2 Universe this month in Justice League Vs. America and other titles bearing the "Justice League Versus America Tie-In" logo.

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more tales of your favorite DC heroes at DC2 Universe.

All characters are (c) DC Comics and no infringement upon their copyrights is intended. Support DC Comics by buying their monthly comics and graphic novels.

From the same author on Feedbooks

Nightwing #10 (2006)

Nightwing: Black Friday Blues.

When terrorists take hostages at a busy superstore, it's up to Nightwing to save them. He dodges bullets and battles ruthless terrorists while racing the clock, coming face-to-face with a murderous madman who has no reservations when it comes to killing anyone in his way.

Nightwing #21 (2007)

Nightwing: Kiss in the Night.

They're back! Night-Thief and Nocturna are back in action after breaking out of prison, with Nightwing hot on their trail. But Dick had better watch his back--Night-Thief has a score to settle with him.

Nightwing #22 (2007)

Nightwing: To Catch A Night Thief

Nightwing is hot on Night Thief's trail... who is hot on Nocturna's trail... But finding a man who doesn't wish to be found is tricky when the usual wellsprings of information run dry...

Nightwing #11 (2007)

Nightwing: Lawyers and Other Slimy Things (Part 1).

Meth, crack, cocaine... they're on the street, and Dick, as Nightwing, is trying to make sure no one else gets hurt. In addition to that, he has to convince Rachel Green to let him become a P.I.... but runs into trouble with his supervisor. And what about the mysterious phone call his boss takes...?

Nightwing #13 (2007)

Nightwing: Ain't Never Had A Friend Like Me

Nightwing #15 (2007)

Nightwing: Hopelessly Devoted to You

Nightwing #16 (2007)

Nightwing: Beauty and the Mess.

Nightwing #18 (2007)

Nightwing: Heart of a Champion.

Just as Nightwing starts to close in on the drug gang, more problems arise. He and Tiffany will have to move fast if they're going to crack the case, but the team ends up with more than they bargained for! Can they solve the case before the crooks get away and before one character is written off—forever? Find out as the adventure continues in this exciting issue!

Nightwing #19 (2007)

Nightwing: Little Boy Lost.

Jake has disappeared and Nightwing's on his trail! But will he be too late?

Nightwing #20 (2007)

Nightwing: Be My Escape.

We pick this up right where Nightwing #19--left off-- with Nightwing in the gang's hideout! Dick is finally face-to-face with the mysterious Marty, and confronts him, Sloan, and the rest of the gang in this action-packed conclusion!

Nightwing #23 (2008)

Nightwing: Behind the Mask

A HUGE twist on Nightwing's case in this action-packed issue! Nightwing, Nocturna, and Night-Thief meet again--but with what consequences?

Nightwing #32 (2008)

Nightwing: More Than Useless

Robberies, shootings, and break-ins are all a part of daily Gotham life... Luckily, so are the crimefighters who stop them! That is... until now...

Nightwing #33 (2008)

Nightwing: Vengeance Served Cold.

When a Wayne Enterprises vice president is found dead - apparently by suicide - Batman becomes suspicious. He and Robin must piece the clues together to find out exactly how the man died - and who killed him.

Nightwing #14 (2009)

Nightwing: Something Wicked This Way Comes

Nightwing #37 (2009)

Nightwing: Dance of Death.

When a ballerina unexpectedly collapses during a performance, Batman and Robin dive into the investigation to find out who killed the dancer... and why.

Nightwing #39 (2009)

Nightwing: Living Nightmare

There's a villain loose in Gotham, and it's up to Batman and Robin to stop him. They may be in for more than they've bargained for, however, because the tables can be turned in the blink of an eye!

Nightwing #34 (2009)

Nightwing: A Scent of Danger.

A lead on a case takes the new Dynamic Duo to California... with horrifying consequences! Now the Boy Wonder is determined to make good--even if it means taking on Batman... and Alfred!

Nightwing #35 (2009)

Nightwing: Volatile Villainy.

Why is one of Nightwing's old enemies trying to draw him out? And can he be trusted?

Nightwing #36 (2009)

Nightwing: Over a Barrel and Under the Gun.

As the threat level rises, Nightwing races against the clock to find-- and stop-- whoever's out to get Sloan. Every second counts!

Nightwing #38 (2009)

Nightwing: Curtain Call.

Nightwing #40 (2009)

Nightwing: Formula for Fear.

Caught in the Scarecrow's trap, Batman comes face to face with his darkest terrors!

Nightwing #41 (2009)

Nightwing: Live and Let Die.

Nightwing #44 (2010)

Nightwing: Murder by Midnight.

With Bruce back where he belongs, Dick Grayson strikes out in a bold new direction! Brace yourselves for murder, mayhem, thrills and chills!



www.feedbooks.com
Food for the mind