



Nightwing #41
Batkid

Published: 2009

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): Comics DC2 Batman Nightwing Robin Scarecrow

"Live and Let Die"

Writer: Batkid

Cover artist: Joey Jarin

Editor: Ellen Fleischer

An impossible choice. Whichever way he chose, he still lost.

He didn't stop to ponder exactly how the Joker had found a 9-year-old version of himself, or what would happen if he, say, didn't save the young Dick Grayson. He just ran.

Everything seemed to go in slow motion as his instincts kicked in. He sprinted and leaped towards... Kory. He loved her, had shared so many precious memories with her, owed it to her to protect her—

He glanced down at the woman he now held in his arms, let go abruptly and stumbled back. Wide green eyes stared up at him.

"Dick—"

He stared at her, her big eyes, her red hair... she looked almost as surprised as he was. There were two bangs, startling him. He turned around, saw the bodies and retched.

"I—" He couldn't speak. She wasn't supposed to be standing in front of him, breathing, very much alive. It was supposed to be Kory. He didn't realize he was on his knees, or that his eyes were squeezed shut, until he actually opened them and looked into her concerned eyes.

"I—" No. This was wrong. Why, oh why, had he picked Babs? It should have been Kory. But man, oh, man, was he glad it wasn't Babs' body that was crumpled on the ground in a pile of blood... Babs put her arm around him, comforting him, and he sobbed. Maybe he hadn't failed. Commissioner Gordon, his Babs, was beside him, comforting him, living and breathing. But then he was

reminded that he was sitting in the middle of the roadway, the Joker and his henchmen only a few feet away from him, standing in a pool of blood. Kory's blood. His blood. He'd failed.

And what did that make him?

He wasn't sure what to do next. Life had been bad enough lately, but it had just gotten exponentially worse. His wife was dead. He was dead. When your wife was dead, and you were dead, what was left to live for?

Nothing made sense.

He wasn't sure how long he knelt on the ground with his eyes squeezed shut against the death and the blood. At some point, he became aware of something cold and wet around his knees, seeping into his costume and he looked down.

Red. It was everywhere, blood streaming around him in a river. He squeezed his eyes shut again and groaned. This was unreal. He opened his eyes once more and saw purple pinstriped fabric. He looked up and saw the rest of the suit. The Joker stooped down so that his pasty, ever-grinning face was inches from his own.

"What next, hero? What are you going to do now?" He laughed, a nerve-grating cackle. Dick's teeth clenched.

"Go away."

"What's wrong?" the criminal mocked. Harley stepped beside him; Dick had no idea where she'd come from. He didn't really care.

"It wasn't his fault, Sweetums," Harley squeaked, sounding chipper. "It was all yours."

"He shot them!" Dick screamed. A few tears leaked from his eyes, and he ran a hand through his hair.

"You didn't save them," Joker countered.

"He's right," a new, familiar voice spoke up. Dick turned his head slightly. Bruce stood there, his hands in his pockets. He was up to his ankles in blood, and wearing a sad expression. "You could have saved them, Dick. Why didn't you?"

This was crazy. It wasn't real.

"I—I didn't do it. I mean, I didn't think—man, I... this isn't right!" he exploded angrily. He wasn't sure who he was madder at: himself for not saving them, Joker for killing them, or Batman, for agreeing with Joker and blaming Dick. "This isn't real."

"Of course it is, Dicky," Harley cooed. "Life's hard. Reality's tough."

"No," Dick responded. He stood up. Was it just his imagination, or was the river of blood getting smaller? "This isn't right. This couldn't happen."

"Poor Dick," Bruce sighed. "And you showed so much potential."

"Too bad he blew it," Joker agreed, grinning. "Maybe he could've stopped me."

"I can stop you," Dick said loudly. The blood was gone now. He pointed to Babs. "I didn't save you." Waving at the now-floating bodies, he said, "And I didn't fail them. None of this happened. It couldn't have, this isn't real."

"What are you talking about, Dick?" Bruce asked impatiently. "Of course it's real."

"No, no, no." Dick was on a roll now. Babs had disappeared, as had the bodies, and the landscape, leaving only blank white space surrounding him. "You aren't real, Joker isn't real, Harley isn't real..." he ranted. He squeezed his eyes shut tightly. "None of this is real."

He opened his eyes again, and looked around...

"You're better than I thought," a dry voice remarked. "I didn't think you'd pull through that dose."

Dick blinked and stared up at the man in front of him, who was peering

at him curiously, as though he were a specimen. "William."

"And you maintained a clear head!" the man remarked. "You truly are remarkable," he grudgingly conceded.

"You won't get away with this," Batman responded. He licked his lips; they were cracked and dry. He wondered how long he'd been there.

"Of course I will," William responded mildly. "Now, I really do think that this dose will affect you more than the last. Yes, I'm quite sure," he added, glancing at the liquid. "This will be very interesting."

"Not as interesting as this," Batman muttered, throwing all of his weight to the left. His chair teetered to the side, then collapsed. William stared down at him, amused.

"What good did that do you?" he remarked drolly. "I say, you are quite—*oof!*"

Batman rolled onto his stomach, knocking the man over. Taking advantage of the split-second that William was stunned, he moved his arm as much as the ropes would allow, severing one of the cords with his gauntlets. Flexing his arms outwards, he loosened the remaining ropes and shot an arm outwards into William's jaw.

He was pretty sure he'd knocked a tooth loose, but didn't get the opportunity to find out as William threw his own punch. Batman smirked slightly as William winced in pain—the cowl wasn't exactly soft. His arms felt numb, but he threw his fist anyway. William swerved his head so that the blow only grazed him, then caught Batman's wrist and twisted painfully. Batman drew his arm back quickly, then lunged forward and caught hold the man's fingers. He swung with his other arm, and heard a crunch and a scream of agony as William's nose broke.

Bending as much as he could, Batman again used his gauntlet blades to slice the ropes around his legs. While his opponent was down, he quickly rubbed his calves, trying to restore circulation so he could stand up. After a moment he stood, and William slowly staggered to his feet. Taking a step back, he reached into his pocket. Batman didn't give him a chance to grab his weapon. Instead, he launched forward.

There was a gunshot, and pieces of plaster scattered over them. Batman twisted the man's wrist until he heard a snap, then grabbed the gun and tossed it away.

"Get up," he spat.

William glared at him from the floor, gripping his wrist as blood streamed from his broken nose. Hatred gleamed in his eyes. "With pleasure," he responded venomously. More quickly than Batman expected, the man leaped to his feet and produced another gun. He pointed it at the Dark Knight. Batman lurched forward to tackle him, hearing the bang as the gun fired. He expected to feel pain, but instead felt... nothing. Hitting the man solidly in the chest, he didn't feel the expected resistance. Instead, the man staggered back weakly. Batman glanced at his face and took a step back.

William's eyes widened in shock before his body slumped forward. As he fell, he revealed a woman standing behind him. She calmly dropped her hand to her side, her tiny Beretta Bobcat against her thigh. Then she turned and started down the hall.

"Stop," Batman growled.

She glanced back at him with an expression he couldn't read. Her mouth twisted. "Look, Bats, you can either take me in now and do the goody-two-shoes hero bit, or we can go save your sidekick." She held her hands out palms-up, offering the gun, and shrugged. "Your choice, hon."

He stared at her as he ran through his options. He inclined his head slightly. "Let's go." As she turned to leave the room, she called quietly over her shoulder, "You going left or right?"

Batman considered. Splitting up wasn't his preference, but there wasn't much of a choice. "Left," he decided gruffly. He would be at the front of the house, and the criminals had left their vehicles parked out at the street. That was where they would head to make their getaway.

They won't get away, he thought resolutely. He stopped and sniffed the air.

“Smoke,” the woman answered his unspoken question. “One of the Scarecrow’s men must’ve dropped a cigarette on the rug or something; the whole upstairs is full of smoke. We’ve got to move fast.”

“Who are you?”

She didn’t answer, but continued down the hallway and disappeared around the corner.

Heading up the stairs, Batman came across a locked door. With one kick, the door fell over and hung, suspended by one hinge. Another kick, and it was flat on the floor. He was in the room. The smoke was thicker in here, though the fire itself was in the next room over. Scarecrow was at the far wall, his white hair spiking wildly and eyes gleaming with insane rage. In front of him, three men stood and raised their guns. Near him, seven others abandoned their weapons and ran out another door.

Batman swooped low, his cape swirling behind him. In the darkness, his night-vision goggles gave him the advantage. Screams filled the room as he quickly made his way through.

Scarecrow raised a large metal flashlight and shone it at the dark shadow in front of him, but it didn’t slow it down.

As silently as he’d attacked the others, Batman leapt toward Scarecrow. The criminal brought the heavy flashlight down hard, on Batman’s already-spinning head.

He dropped down, then surprised Scarecrow with a low, sweeping kick, knocking him to the floor. The smoke was much heavier now as the fire raged, and Batman couldn’t see anything at all. He heard a thud as Scarecrow dropped beside him, and he reached out and grabbed him by the arm and stood up. He dragged his foe through the smoky room, feeling along the wall with his other hand for the door. Strange apparitions floated before him and he struggled to ignore them.

The door, he thought, focussing on his objective. He could recover later. If

he didn't find the door... He didn't find Robin.

The wall he was brushing his fingers along suddenly dipped in three inches, and he realized that he was in a doorway. Scarecrow was still struggling, and Batman fought to keep him—and the mental apparitions—under control. He finally pinched a nerve on the villain's neck, and Scarecrow instantly went limp. Batman opened the door and barreled through to find Tim strapped in a chair, unconscious.

Dropping the Scarecrow to the floor, he worked on the ropes for a moment, loosening them enough to slide Robin out. Then, picking up the Scarecrow again, he turned back the way he'd come.

The smoke was black and thick, and he trusted to memory to help him get out. After bumping into what had to be every piece of furniture in the room, he made it into the hallway. He'd gone ten feet, when he heard someone coughing violently. Turning, he saw a shadow behind him in the smoke. He hesitated a split second, wondering if this shadow was real. That was when the silhouette bolted out of the smoke and shoved him.

"What are you standing here for?" the woman coughed. It was the same woman who'd shot William. "Go!"

Over one shoulder, Tim moaned. "Hang on, Robin." Batman gasped. He wasn't sure how bad the aftereffects of the fear serum would be for the teen; William had bragged earlier about experimenting with different strains.

Doubled over coughing, the woman glanced up at Batman. "Need help?" she asked when she could breathe.

"No," he replied shortly. Feeling a window along the wall, he took a step back. He kicked the glass and heard it shatter over the roar of the fire. Dropping Scarecrow to the floor, he grabbed his grappling hook from his utility belt, and aimed it across the narrow street. The other end of the rope disappeared into the smoky darkness, but after a moment he felt it tighten. After testing his weight on it, he shifted Robin over his shoulder and reached down to grab Scarecrow.

“Crane!” Batman called, when he realized the man was gone. He stopped to cough and then drew a ragged breath. “Crane, you won’t make it out alive!” Pieces of the ceiling were collapsing now, and he was forced to turn his attention back toward the task at hand. With one arm firmly around Robin and the other hand grasping the grappling hook, he turned to the woman. “Grab on.” As soon as she complied, he swung out the window and into the darkness.

Sirens were wailing, and a few emergency vehicles were already parked outside. One medic dashed over to Batman as the Dark Knight descended.

“Need any help?”

Batman shook his head but couldn’t speak from coughing. “I’ll take care of Robin,” he gasped when he could draw a breath.

The medic glanced at the woman, who shook her head.

“I really think—”

“No.”

The medic walked away reluctantly. Batman turned and headed toward the Batmobile. The woman followed. Once he got there, he gently dropped Robin into the passenger seat of the Batmobile.

“Is he okay?”

Batman didn’t turn, he simply punched a button and opened a compartment in the floor of the car. He pulled out a loaded syringe and slid the needle into Robin’s exposed arm. “He will be.”

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked, “What are you going to do about Crane?”

Over his shoulder, he asked, “What’s it to you?”

"He's a dangerous criminal and he's loose right now," the woman replied. She stopped to cough, then continued, "I thought you'd care about that."

Batman ignored the comments. "Who are you?"

There was a brief pause. Then, "Lillian."

"Lillian what?"

"Just Lillian."

Batman finally turned to face her. "What interest do you have in Crane?"

She considered, eyeing him as though deciding how much to divulge. "I was more interested in his partner."

"William," Batman said. His head was still swimming from the fear serum, and he found himself wishing desperately that it would clear soon. He glanced at Robin, and then back at Lillian. "And your interest was... not romantic."

"Decidedly not," she responded coolly.

He didn't have time for this. "Why did you kill him?" he asked bluntly. "You don't just go around shooting people." The hint of a smirk pulled at the corner of her mouth.

"Assassin?"

"I don't go by that term," she shrugged, "but in short... yes."

He glanced at her again. With her shoulder-length hair, black cotton dress and Converse sneakers, she looked like any cute twenty-something woman he might see at the mall. Not like any stereotypical representation of an assassin, but...

"Why William?"

Her expression became an unreadable mask. "You have your secrets. I

have mine.”

Violent coughing from behind him made him glance down at Robin. He crouched so that his face was level with the teen’s. The boy’s eyes were a little red and glassy, but they were not dilated, and he responded when Batman asked him a question. Satisfied that he would be fine, Batman stood and turned.

The woman was gone. The only people there were firefighters, police and medics. “Did you see where the woman went?” Batman asked an officer.

The small smile on the man’s face implied that he had, in fact, seen her, but he only shrugged unhelpfully. “Sorry, man. I ducked into the car to answer the radio, and she was gone when I turned back. She was a looker, though,” he added contemplatively.

Batman didn’t respond. Instead, he walked back toward the Batmobile. Strangely, he didn’t feel too pressed to find the woman. With a pang of guilt, he wondered if it had anything to do with the fact that she’d killed the man who’d tortured him. He also had a funny feeling that this wasn’t the last time he’d see her...

“You okay?” he asked Robin, coughing.

Robin blinked. “I’ve been held captive, made to live my worst nightmares, and watched Batman work with a gun-slinging chick in a skirt. But I’ll be okay.”

Batman smirked. Tim looked around.

“Where’s Scarecrow?”

Batman’s smirk changed to a frown. “He disappeared in the building.” Glancing at the still-burning house, he shook his head. “I couldn’t go after him. I was... busy.”

Robin nodded but didn’t say anything. He was staring at the house. Then, “Do you think he got away?”

Batman shrugged slightly. "Anything's possible." Abruptly he was reminded of a certain beautiful face with big green eyes, the only bright spot in his horrific nightmare. "Anything."

The End?

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 comic books 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 #17 (2007)

Nightwing: Psychotic Reaction (A Justice League vs. America tie-in)

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 #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