



Ultimate Gotham Girls #21
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Ultimate Gotham Girls

#21: *By Any Other Name, part 2*

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The door crashed down and alerted Renee. She jumped out of her chair, the fatigue melting out of her body in the face of the new danger.

Killer Moth was still framed in the doorway, looking around the apartment but didn't yet see Renee around the corner. She crouched in her kitchen, preparing herself mentally. He was in an armored costume, with gadgetry and weapons, although she noted that he hadn't replaced his gun yet. She was still in her pajamas, loose light fabric that at least didn't restrict her movements.

This would be interesting, she mused bitterly

Renee moved quickly, while she still had an advantage. She couldn't use any of the tricks and trinkets that she had grown so used to using as Batgirl. But she could use the heavy frying pan sitting on the stove, and she grabbed it up. *Not like this can get that much weirder, anyway*, she thought, and made her move.

The heavy metal nearly threw itself out of her hand as it reverberated with a satisfying *thunk* as it hit the back of Killer Moth's mask. Renee backed away from him, just as Moth turned his masked head to face her, and stare her down.

Batgirl or no Batgirl, she wasn't about to back down. "I wanna know what the hell it is you think you're doing in my house."

"I've waited a long time, Renee Montoya," her name spat from his mouth, and Moth charged. She ran backward as best she could, knowing

where to step and where to avoid her own furniture. He followed her, his fists up ready to fight, weaponless but still determined. "Can't you think of anyone you've hurt?"

"Save it, Walker." Renee's narrowed eyes kept a close watch on his movements. "I know who you are."

Moth paused where he stood, long enough for Renee to clear space between them. When he spoke again, the graveled voice was calm. "Well then...you know you have to die now."

"And you know you're going back to jail where you belong." Renee ducked forward with nothing but her fists, but the padded armor on his costume softened her blows.

The two had once been trained the same way, but Walker had been in prison for five years, and Renee had stayed in practice. She crisply, cleanly blocked and deflected his punches, while his strikes had become sloppy and dirty. Still, there was fierce, unrelenting desperation in Walker's strikes. He didn't let up, no matter how much noise alerted her neighbors to the right, or how strongly Renee defended herself. He wouldn't stop chasing her, crashing through her furniture, splintered wood and broken ceramic littering the floor.

"Do you think I won't take you down, Walker?" Renee shouted, pivoted on her kitchen tile and ramming her fist straight into his chest. "You don't have to be conscious when Jim gets here, what do I care?"

"You can't win!" he cried, voice slightly muffled under the mask, Renee's reflection in each compartment of his segmented eyes. "Not after all I've planned, not with all I can do!" He tapped a button on the Moth suit and a stronger coat of armor snapped into place, lightweight pieces made for reinforcement.

"You're insane!" Renee pulled her punches back and started to kick, her rough sole better suited to make impact. "You're pathetic! Listen to yourself!"

"I'm brilliant!" Walker replied with a punch from a plated fist. "I'm no fool, I'd rather destroy us *both* than go back to Blackgate," he hissed as

Renee blocked a kick with her forearm, and returned with one of her own. "Of course, I'd rather just get rid of you."

"Do you really know what you've done?" Renee asked him, her voice low and angry. "You've turned yourself into exactly the kind of person I've been fighting all my life. That mask isn't keeping you hidden—" She struck out, shattering the lenses on one eye and taking the shrapnel in her knuckles. "—it's just broadcasting how you think. How you're gonna act. How I'm going to beat you in the end."

She thought hard as he spoke, using the time to weigh her options. There was no one else in her home to be harmed if she left, so long as the neighbors knew enough to stay inside. He wouldn't be able to take her down, even without Batgirl's weapons, but she knew that fierce determination too well. He wouldn't quit until one of them was taken down, and she just didn't have enough power in her bare hands to hurt him. The other option was just to move his target.

She braced herself and turned her back on Moth, racing for her bedroom window and the fire escape below. Her legs shook and protested the impact when she landed on the platform, but Renee pushed herself onward, losing herself in the alleys and back streets that she knew so well. She glanced behind her as she turned a corner—Moth was chasing her, but limited by his bulky costume and wings, just as she expected. She was out of his sights before any more damage could be done, satisfied that for now, the fight was over.

Then

Renee looked more vulnerable than she ever had in her life. Her long hair was a black mess, tangling around her bare neck and shoulders. Her flirty shirt was ready to fall off, its single sleeve pushed down her arm to leave it straining around her chest. Beneath her, Renee's legs were shaking with pure adrenaline, her tight skirt riding up on her thighs.

Renee let her looks deceive the men. She wouldn't let this stop her.

Drury Walker stood watching as his cronies surrounded his rookie cop. "Don't make this personal," he told her, speaking under the rhythmic,

excitable music. "This is all business. Maybe if you survive tonight, you'll understand."

"You bastard, you're a cop!" Renee snarled, leaping toward him. Three pairs of hands held her back, each groping and helping himself to her soft places.

Walker shrugged and turned away. "So are you. If you're smart, you'll learn something tonight." He took one more look at the men who listened to him and nodded. "Teach her."

Renee wrenched herself out of their clutches and threw herself under the table for cover while she dug for the small cannister clipped in the heel of her boot. She could hear a few scattered shouts from onlookers, but most of the crowd were too involved in their dancing and drinking to notice the breaking fight.

"Come on, cutie, let's show you how to really have a good time," one man laughed, reaching down and dipping his head under the table. He reared up with a shout when Renee returned his advances with a shot of mace. "Bitch! Don't let her get away!"

Renee had already sprinted onto the dance floor as she threaded her way through the mob. The lights flickered and swirled, coloring the scene brightly beat by beat and helped her to hide—each change of color was a chance for their eyes to lose her. But even as she ran, Renee kept an eye on her own quarry; Walker had slipped out a back door through the chaos.

Suddenly the strobe lights stopped and the bass line petered out into nothing. "Everyone please clear the dance floor, remain calm and don't block the way!" The house lights flared to life, blindingly bright after the darkness, and Harvey Dent's firm voice rang out over the DJ's speakers. Renee's backup had arrived, only four men including Harvey, but some of the most trusted in the whole police force. By the time Renee stole a look back at her pursuers, Harvey's cops had them well under control.

Renee changed her path, zig-zagged around on the dance floor and pulling her sleeve back up onto her shoulder with a determined scowl. Harvey tried to reach a hand and catch her as she ran, shouting after her,

"Where are you going?"

"I'm gonna get him!" Renee snarled back, racing for the same door Walker had found.

As she ran, one thought remained in her mind, echoing with every foot-fall. *Walker's a traitor. Walker's a traitor. Walker...* She thought back to the image she'd had of him, the upstanding senior cop, a fixture in the police department, a steady, dependable presence. Just days ago his help had saved her life, and now... *Walker's a traitor...*

She caught up to him in an alley a few blocks away, staring the man down as he stopped to catch his breath. Walker straightened up slowly, an infuriating smile still on his lips. "Guess I underestimated our fearsome DA," he drawled.

Renee was breathless from fury. "You aren't getting away with this. I can't believe Harvey was right, I trusted you! And you're just a lowlife piece of criminal scum!"

"It's so cute, you know, the way you talk like them," Walker taunted her, still not moving to run. "A good little pet for Gordon.

"I'm nobody's pet," Renee growled. She wasn't armed beyond her mace, she didn't have anything to restrain him with. But the others were coming; at least, she hoped they were, so if she could just keep him here...

"You're so young. You'll see someday," Walker told her, still not moving, not even trying not to be caught. "It's noble of you, it is. But nobility doesn't matter. You watch carefully, Rookie. I'll be right back where it's safe before you and Dent ever start in on me. You'll be playing by the rules," he chuckled.

The lights whirred and sirens blared as Harvey's men raced down the street, the back of one car already crammed with Renee's attackers. Harvey climbed out of the other with a young beat cop, one who Renee knew to be steadfast and eager to do his job. She paused her thoughts, though; if she had trusted Walker, why should she trust any of them now?

Renee watched as Walker was taken in and shoved into the car, the smile never leaving his face. She shivered in the air as adrenaline still rushed through her veins. Walker stared right at her as the police car pulled away, leaving Harvey and Renee alone in the night.

Now

Cameron van Cleer anxiously waited for Killer Moth's return, just praying that it could all be over now. He had thought it was over years ago, but then Walker had been released, and it was quite the favor that van Cleer owed him. And it would be a ruinous scandal if the details of that favor were ever made public. If it would all just be over with for good, it would be greatly appreciated.

He could tell as soon as Walker came into the room that it wasn't over yet. Moth ripped the broken mask off of his face and threw it into the corner, with a loud crash as it hit the leg of an end-table that held an ornate vase. Van Cleer winced at the noise, and forced himself to focus on Walker.

"I thought I told you not to come here in that get-up. What if someone saw you?"

"It'll be the least of my problems," Walker grumbled, kicking roughly at the Persian carpets. "I need a gun and I need it **now!**"

Van Cleer gulped, his fists clenched and watched as Walker, still in his stupid over-dramatic costume, destroyed his living room. "I...no. I've already given you your costume, those weapons, that technology, that's dangerous enough without my dealing firearms! What on earth do you need a gun for that you can't do now?" he demanded, bolder with every word, but his courage failed at the withering glare that Walker gave him.

"Need one. And it isn't up to you to know why, is it?" Walker stepped right in front of van Cleer, his face only an inch away. "Or did you forget the deal you made me? Are you so ready to risk your reputation?" he asked, a dirty finger on van Cleer's silk shirt. "All this nice stuff...after the way you begged and pleaded for me to help you keep it safe?"

"Please, don't make me give you any more," Van Cleer gulped, and took a step back. "This is crazy, it's already cost so much!"

Walker snorted and kicked another chair leg. "And that's all you care about. Which is why you're paying for this ride in the first place, remember? Do I have to go talk to the papers? Even five years down the line...sure there's plenty who'd still love to hear a scandal about good old Councilman van Cleer. Make every headline in the city, I bet, if they all found out how corrupt you were...how you went right along with the broken force, bailing out your buddies so they'd owe you, so they'd have to go along with your plans....and you're going to complain when I turn that back around?"

"I'm begging you to reconsider!" van Cleer gulped. He wanted to convince Walker to give this up, he had tried again and again, but the fear always quashed his protests. "This is unnecessary, it's stupidity, it's utter madness! If you had just gone back to your life in the first place you'd have a job again, you'd have free time, you'd have all you need."

"I needed revenge," Walker growled. "And too late now...she knows. I can't stop now. Too risky. But soon...soon, you'll have it just like it was. Safe with your nest egg and nothing to worry about but your own skin."

Van Cleer spoke softly, "I don't think I deserve to be tarred with that brush. I've been helping this city for years. More than you ever did."

"Right," Walker snorted. "Which is why you've turned me in, stopped a dangerous criminal taking out an ex-cop."

Van Cleer's head fell, and his tensed arms dropped to his sides. "Alright...okay, you'll get your weapon. Just...how much longer is this going to take? How much more are you going to drain out of me?"

"Whatever I need, Councilman. That was the deal." Walker bent to pick up his broken mask, and threw it into van Cleer's hands. "You had a spare for me, didn't you?"

"You know where," van Cleer sighed. "Just tell me how much longer. How much more needs to be done before you can forget this silly thing?" He held up the mask, and placed it on a side table as if it were no more

than a piece of garbage.

Walker stopped on his way to the hidden room, turning back to face his unwilling benefactor again. "Silly?"

Van Cleer swallowed again, holding his hands up in front of his chest. "I only meant...well, you're a giant moth."

"Moths were good enough for Hannibal Lecter," Walker replied in a quiet voice. He had made the claim before, and van Cleer was not foolish enough to ask whether Walker had really watched the movie he was so inspired by. "But it's not about the moth...it's all about the mask." He crossed back to the side table, tracing his fingers along the shattered lenses. "I know how this city treats masks."

"They send the Bats after them," van Cleer muttered.

"They're afraid of them...because under the mask, it's safe." There was a strange note in Walker's voice, an anxiousness that van Cleer wasn't willing to ask about. "You put it on and you're someone else...you take it off, and you're done. You can hang it up and put it away...so when all the work is done, Moth doesn't have to get caught. And I move on with my life. And nobody's any the wiser...at least, no one stupid, or no one left alive," he added and looked back over at van Cleer.

"Then you'll be finished soon?" he asked again as he drifted toward the secret room himself now, just wanting Walker out of his home, just so no one could see what was going on.

Walker grunted, then nodded. "Soon. Yes. Just one kill." He turned his back and left now, into the chamber he had ordered prepared.

Cameron van Cleer stood in his lush living room, slowly starting to straighten the rugs and pick up the pieces of broken vase. This had only started a month ago—a letter from Walker with all of his orders, schematics for the costume, and a copy of the letter he had already written to the press in case van Cleer did not cooperate. Walker's first stop when he left prison was his new secret hideout, to be sure that all was going according to plan. It had been easy, then, for van Cleer to be selfish. Whatever Walker felt he needed to do, van Cleer would allow so long as

it didn't hurt him.

He sighed as he picked up the ruined ceramics, and slumped back into a comfortable chair. It was getting harder and harder to take.

Then

Renee had traded her nightclub attire for a business suit, feeling more at home in her slacks and dark jacket. She had spent the whole month waiting for this day, and finally it had all come together. The trial of Drury Walker was still hours away, but since she had taken a personal day off, Renee might as well spend it waiting here, where she could see everything that went on. So she stood in the hall with her arms folded over her chest when they brought Walker in.

He still had that same smile on his face, as if it had never once left in thirty days. He walked with dignity despite the officers on either side. "Good to see you again, rookie."

"I can't wait to see how long you rot, Walker," Renee shot back.

"I suppose that makes two of us. Of course, I'm in a much better position than you know," he added.

Renee scoffed. "I can't believe I ever trusted you. Don't go getting cocky and stupid now, that'd make me look even worse."

"It won't be me doing it." She had hoped that Walker would be be-draggled or otherwise hurt from a stay in prison, but even before it had happened she knew he'd find a way to make his bail. His well-tailored suit and freshly-washed hair just made her more sure than ever of his crime and connections. "Judge Fields will be the one you should complain to when I'm free again."

One of the guards tapped Walker's shoulder, and Renee watched with a growing grin on her face. "Didn't get the memo, did you? His Honor took himself off the case a couple days ago. Judge Kent is on the stand today."

“What?” The bit of color that drained from Walker’s cheeks was enough reward for Renee. “Why wasn’t I told? I...give me my lawyer, where is he?”

The other guard shrugged, looking like he was trying not to laugh. “Well, ah, he called in last night. Late last night. You’re gonna have to have a public defender, Mr. Walker. Sorry, sir.”

Renee stepped forward, her arms held confident across her chest. “Yeah, all that nice shiny money that was going to get you out of jail? We took care of that. You’re on your own, Walker. Just you and the facts.”

“You...when this is over I swear I’ll—” Walker tried to lunge forward, but the guards grabbed hold of an arm each, leaving him to flail unimpressively in the air. “You’re going to pay, Renee Montoya. You’re going to pay for screwing with me!”

“I can’t wait to see you try.” Renee gave him her sweetest smile, stealing it off of his face as she watched him snarl. “In the meantime, maybe they’ll be nicer if you plead guilty.” With that she turned away, cheered herself on and passed the time until the trial finally came.

Drury Walker was sentenced to ten years in Blackgate penitentiary, with hope of getting out earlier on good behavior. Renee Montoya looked him straight in the eye when they marched him out in chains. It was a memory she would keep in her mind for years to come, to bring out when she needed faith in the system.

Now

Batgirl took a long, deep breath as she rounded the corner toward the mansion. She still had a few aches and pains from the morning’s fight, but it was nearing sunset now and most of the pain had faded. Barbara’s attentions had helped clean the hurts and ease the pain, and the spare costume hidden away in the clocktower had her suited back up and ready for her re-match. All she’d had to do was find Moth.

“Well what have we found?” she had asked Barbara, leaning over the

other woman's shoulder to look at her computer screen.

Barbara's fingers flew over the keys and she nodded. "Plenty. Walker had a lot of...contacts, but most of them were lowbrow. Other cops, drug dealers, security guards, judge and jury, but nobody with the kind of money for what he's up to now. Except for one, who I guarantee you he thinks no one knows about." Barbara moved to give Renee a better view of the screen, and a smile. "Councilman Cameron van Cleer. Through my technical expertise, I think I've got just enough evidence to fake it. Could get a confession if we needed one. But I don't think we do. He had a whole big campaign set up for his re-election those years ago, and then vanished when Walker got arrested."

"You think he's funding him now?"

"Think it's the best lead you've got."

So Renee made her way to the mansion, ready for whatever she was going to find. It took a lot of money to get a place like this in Gotham, and no one who had this much stayed hidden. Cameron van Cleer had been a respected part of the city for years, and now Batgirl was in his backyard. She dropped down onto the grass and stole around a few trimmed bushes, her trained eyes finding the likely spots for a secret door. Several minutes of frustrated tapping on the wall, and she was in. The wall slid away into a small hallway, and a room large enough to store anything that Walker needed. There was a spare costume now hanging mask-less on the wall.

Batgirl slipped inside and kept to the shadowy walls, glad to have time to prepare while the room was still empty. The secret room wasn't large, and seemed new, quickly-constructed. It wasn't secret enough for Renee to have trouble finding the entrance to the rest of the house, and she snuck her way inside slowly. The man sat in an armchair in a side room, only a few feet away from her.

Van Cleer had a drink in his hand, and as Renee crept closer she could hear his sighs. He muttered to himself, oblivious to Batgirl's presence, "... something...has to be something...too far...going too far."

"How far?" Renee folded her arms, standing strong behind the plush

armchair. Van Cleer jumped and tangled himself in his robe as he tried to turn to look at her. "If you'd like to confess something it'd make my job a lot easier tonight."

"You...what are you doing here?" Van Cleer cleared his throat, visibly shaken by the surprise. "What do you want, how did you get inside?"

"Stop." Batgirl didn't even move. She only had to give him a glare through the mask, and van Cleer fell silent. "I know everything. I want Moth."

Van Cleer's eyes moved past Batgirl's cowl, and widened. "Then turn around. Now!"

She did, just in time to dodge the armored punch that was coming for the back of her head.

"You again!" The mask from the spare costume was on Walker's head, a shining new set of bug's eyes staring at her.

"Yeah, me." Renee didn't waste a moment this time around. She drew a batarang out of her belt, playing it between her fingers to add some weight to her punch before throwing it hard into Killer Moth's side.

Moth crashed into one of the soft living room chairs, knocked it backward and landed with his legs tangled over the edge of the seat. He scrambled back to his feet, but not before Batgirl could move closer to him and ready her weapons. A long line of rope was coiled on her belt, and her fingers spun the grappling hook at the end of it.

"So you found me...too bad. I'm not finished yet." Moth reached for the nearest side table and his hands found a lamp, ripping the socket out of the wall and tossed it at Batgirl's head.

She ducked and stood straight again in a fluid movement, her eyes narrowed under the mask. "This ends here." She threw her line at the moment that Moth expanded his wings, looking toward a large window for escape. *It figures he worked out how to fly*, Batgirl thought. The grappling hook closed around his knee and Batgirl pulled him back down, fighting the strained, whining motor on the costume. He labored still, lifted just

high enough off the floor to have a hope of flying away.

Behind the fight, Van Cleer couldn't move. He just watched as Batgirl continued to trash his living room, and couldn't help notice as the shallow thoughts raced through his mind. The lamp had belonged to his great-grandmother. The table that Batgirl was tying her line onto was solid oak. When this was over, he was going to be ruined. And still, Cameron van Cleer watched, backed up to the wall instead of fleeing.

The oak table did the trick as well as possible, and the motor sputtered and died on Killer Moth's wings. He fell with a crash that shook the floor, but he wasn't beaten yet. He tugged and ripped at the cord around his leg, reaching for a piece of jagged broken lamp.

"You're going down. Again. For good," Batgirl declared, taking a leap forward to land on his wrist. She missed only slightly, pinning his elbow to the ground with her foot; Moth had just enough movement in his wrist to slash into her ankle. Batgirl leapt back again, wincing as she landed on the wounded foot.

"I'm not going to be stopped now!" The line snapped and Moth pulled himself free, knocking the heavy table onto its side. Batgirl rolled out of the way in time to dodge the wood, but had to throw her cape over her eyes to dodge everything that had been on it—coasters flying through the air, several small glass sculptures shattered and shards flew everywhere. "You can't do it!"

"Why? Because you're so unbeatable?" Batgirl dragged herself back to her feet, jumped over the table legs and threw a hard punch. "Do you think all these gadgets are all there is to it? You think that's all you need? I've got news for you," she continued, kicking out hard and feeling Moth's reinforced armor shake. "Half the city must have seen you make your way back to this place. Your costume looks ridiculous. You're not going to be able to hurt me, and you're not going to be able to stand against me. You're *bad* at this."

"I don't have to be good!" A snarling Killer Moth barreled into her, still brandishing the bloody makeshift blade, and the sharp strip of china bit into Batgirl's leg. "It just has to work!"

Van Cleer winced at Batgirl's shout, swallowing hard. He should have run a long time ago. If he wanted to save his own skin, he shouldn't be here watching this fight. He should have been upstairs packing as soon as it started, and at the airport by the time it was done. But that ending played through his mind, and something about it was wrong. He would run away, cut his ties, escape his punishments....and always look over his shoulder, for the rest of his life. It would never end.

The wound was serious, but Batgirl ignored it. She ducked around her opponent, kept her weight on the better leg and threw punches. Killer Moth spread out his wings again, useless to fly with, but he had another plan. In the moment after Batgirl struck out at him, she was vulnerable. And in that moment, he tore the wings from the back of his costume and shoved the fabric over her head.

She was blinded for just a few seconds, just enough time for Moth to get behind her while Batgirl struggled to get the stiff wings to move right. There was a hungry grin on his face as he reached behind him, confident that the room was stuffed with enough useless knick-knacks to serve his purposes. His hand found the mantle over Van Cleer's fireplace, and a heavy stone carving. Killer Moth actually laughed as his arm swung back, ready to bash in her skull as the cowl came back into view.

"NO!" When Moth's hand came down, it was only his knuckles that grazed Batgirl's cowl. The heavy carving was in Cameron's hand, the man standing behind Killer Moth and shaking as he swallowed to get his voice back. "Enough...enough! I won't help you do this!"

Moth turned his furious face toward his benefactor, and away from his opponent. Batgirl threw the clumsy wings away, and all it took was one strong jab to the back of Killer Moth's neck. Before Walker could get in one more strike, or one more comment, he crumpled to the ground.

Batgirl took several long breaths, kneeling down to take off Walker's mask and check his pulse. She stood again with some difficulty, a hand drifting toward the slice in her leg. When Van Cleer extended a hand to help her, she waved it away. "You know that's not going to get you out of charges?"

Van Cleer sighed, his chin dropping onto his chest. "I...Don't know how

you know already. It was years ago...Walker was a cop—“

“I know all about Drury Walker,” Batgirl cut him off. “You took advantage of his corruption. Took money? Took bribes?”

“Yes.” Van Cleer’s voice was low and steady, calm and resigned. “When he went to jail and no one came after me, I thought I was safe. But he came to me just before he got out...he would have exposed me if I didn’t give him the money for the suit. I gave him weapons...It’s my fault...I thought I could hide from it but...not anymore. Please, I...I just want it to be over. I’ll take what I deserve.”

He could feel the weight of Batgirl’s gaze, and she nodded slowly. “Call the police. Tell them what you told me. And you believe me. If you don’t, I’ll know about it,” She added. Her leg buckled as she turned and walked out of the mansion. A quick message to Oracle to tell her to listen for Van Cleer’s call, and her work was done for now.

The windows in Renee’s apartment were thrown open to let in the breeze. Barbara was visiting here for a change, despite Renee’s protests. “You’re new to that hurt, I’m used to mine,” the redhead had insisted, and navigated her wheelchair up. For now, the two women were still and stretched out on Renee’s sofa, both doing what could be done for the cut in her leg.

“I can’t believe he didn’t think he’d be caught,” Renee said for the hundredth time since finding out Walker’s plan. “He was never brilliant, but I swear he wasn’t this stupid last time.”

“Obsession can do that,” Barbara replied. “From what I heard on the police channels, he didn’t think of anything else since you put him away. Van Cleer gave them all these letters and blueprints, it was ridiculous. I think if you spend that much energy, you kind of have to believe the plan is foolproof. Otherwise there’s just too much more work to do to make it perfect.”

“Good to know we can count on your criminal psyche,” Renee chuckled. “At least when I was a cop, I could shunt all the crazies off to you guys.”

Just muggers and politicians for me to chase.”

“Yeah, but this is more interesting, isn’t it?” Barbara winked.

Renee leaned back with her hands behind her head. “Yeah...I don’t regret it. Not even with the crazies coming after me. Didn’t pay off the way I hoped at first,” she added, a dose of painkillers making her speech freer than usual, “But I’d do it all again.”

“What do you mean by ‘paid off’?” Barbara turned toward her friend with a sly smile, and laughed when Renee went red.

“Well, that’s a terrible way to word it,” Renee insisted, tried to breathe deeply and found herself laughing instead. “I wanted to be Batgirl, it was never *just* this. But I had the biggest crush on you,” she admitted. “And this was finally a way we could spend time together.”

Barbara was smiling too, reaching her hand to touch her friend’s shoulder. “I didn’t want to say anything then in case I was wrong. But I kind of thought so.”

“You did?” Renee’s voice dropped low in exaggerated surprise.

“Yeah, a bit. But it didn’t hurt anything, right? I mean, you never seemed like you weren’t happy being friends.”

“I’m just glad I get to know you,” Renee smiled, taking Barbara’s hand and giving it a squeeze. “Friends is great.”

Barbara returned the gesture. “Right back at you. I’d go nuts in this job without friends doing it with me. It’s people that matter, you know?”

Renee thought back to a phone call she’d had the other morning, and nodded. “Yeah...I know.”

With a glance at her watch, Barbara hefted herself off of the couch and into her chair. “I should get going. You take it easy, change that bandage in a couple hours and you’ll be healed up in no time.”

“Thanks, Babs.” Renee touched her wound gingerly and watched her

friend leave. The room was too quiet with only Renee and her thoughts, and after a moment's reflection, she picked up the phone.

"Hi Mama...No, nothing's wrong. Lou just said you wanted to hear from me....yeah, I promise I'm fine, mama. How are you?"

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more alternate universe tales of your favorite DC heroes at [DC3 Multiverse](#).

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Ultimate Gotham Girls #20 (2009)

By Any Other Name, Part One.

Five years ago, there is corruption in the GCPD. Fresh-faced Renee Montoya and DA Harvey Dent are on the trail, but can they find their traitor and expose him, before any more injustice is done? There's a new costume making his way through Gotham City, going by the name Killer Moth. Who is the man under this strange costume, and why is he gunning for Renee Montoya?

All-Star Comics #14 (2009)

All-Star Comics: Birds of Prey, Part 1 (of 3).

Sometimes when there's darkness threatening the world, it takes a woman's touch: a hard-hitting, take-no-prisoners, determined and strong-willed woman, leading a group of super-heroines who intend to take the world of crime by storm! Hawkgirl may have left the Justice League, but now she's about to become a leader in her own right, while detective Jonni Thunder must come to terms with what it means to step into the world of super-powers! Who else will join the Birds of Prey as they tackle a hard world with their own style?

All-Star Comics #15 (2009)

All-Star Comics: Birds of Prey, Part 2 (of 3).

Jonni Thunder, Manitou Dawn and Hawkgirl try to get a handle on the advanced weapons used by rebel insurgents in Nigeria, and instead run headlong into a dangerous society of anarchists, and possibly worse...Zenobia, the renegade Amazon! Whose side is she on? And within the ranks of SPIDER itself is a woman who might change the balance of power for everyone involved!

All-Star Comics #16 (2009)

All-Star Comics: Birds of Prey, Part 3 (of 3).



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