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Slade couldn't help but smirk inside his mask. It wasn't about taking out the guy hooked up to the machines. That was a piece of cake. No, it was the defeat of his former student and the junior bat scouts that had been the fun part of this assignment. It was almost worth giving the money back for... almost.

"It's time for your shots," he said as he walked into the hospital room of James Gordon, noticing the machine's and monitors hooked up to Gotham's newest police commissioner.

"I'm actually impressed, you've got some friends in high places, pal. Unfortunately you've also got enemies that are up there too."

He walked over to the unconscious man and put his gun up to the new commissioner's forehead. "And this time, it looks like the enemies win."

The sound of the gun echoed through out the room and down the hall, where a barely conscious Batman was struggling to get up. His head was swimming, his head was pounding, and at the moment he couldn't even see who had walked by him so quickly.

In the room, Deathstroke had staggered back at the bullet that came from the gun that had been shoved right into his gut, tore through his body armor and his body. He looked up to see a very wide awake James Gordon looking back at him, a revolver in his right hand, shaking but still pointed at him.

"Son of a... I didn't see that one coming," Slade mumbled.

He brought his gun up again, but there was another shot from another

gun as the second bullet tore into the side of his mask and clipped off a piece of his ear.

Deathstroke reeled from the impact and spun around to find a rather frumpy looking man in a dirty trench coat and fedora standing in the doorway, his revolver still smoking.

Jim Gordon couldn't speak, the tube going down his throat made that impossible, but his eyes conveyed all that was needed. He was barely conscious, but he was willing to go the distance.

Bullock spoke, "Surrender your weapons. You're under arrest for the attempted murder of Commissioner James Gordon."

"I don't think so," Slade replied as he jumped forward, right into Harvey, drawing his sword at the same time. Harvey stumbled back, his gun going off wildly and missing its target. Just as the sword was to bury itself in Bullocks skull, though, an armored gauntlet appeared and deflected the blow.

"No more death," Batman growled and brought up his other fist, smashing into the damaged ear of the assassin.

Slade let out a cry of pain that he quickly silenced, cursing himself for the outburst. Still, he moved back into the room as Batman shoved Harvey aside and bolted forward to press the attack.

The sword swung out at the dark knight but he dodged it easily, bringing his fist into Slade's gut, where he had been shot. Even with the body armor, he felt it. The odds were not in his favor, and though he knew that he would heal from both wounds, he was losing blood, and the shot in the face had disoriented him more then he would have cared to admit.

Deathstroke blocked several more blows from his former student, each time stepping precisely where he wanted the fight to proceed. Then, as Batman came in with a low kick, Deathstroke did a black-flip that brought his feet into contact with the far wall. Pushing himself off with all his strength, he flew over Batman, bringing the hilt of the sword down hard on the back of the cowl, and then landed; doing a summersalt and coming up directly in front of Harvey Bullock.

Even though Batman staggered forward he recovered quickly and spun around to watch Slade coming out of his roll and bringing the sword up with him. He watched in horror as the blade slid into Harvey's rumpled suit like a hot knife through butter. Harvey let out a gasp and collapsed.

Slade, now in the hall, turned to his former pupil. "I think we both know what you're going to do next."

Batman watched as Deathstroke disappeared from view. He then stumbled forward, his head still swimming, and grabbed an extra blanket from end of the bed, putting it onto Bullock's stab wound, and applying pressure. He looked up to see that Jim had passed out again, the gun still lying in his hand.

He barely heard Nightwing stumble towards him, the drugs that had knocked him out, still in his system.

"Nightwing, you've got to go get help. Now. I'll wake Batgirl and get her out of here, but this place is going to be swarming with police and with medical personnel. Bullock needs attention now."

Although still weak, Nightwing nodded and headed towards the room he had changed in. Another cop down, he thought as he went. At times like this, he couldn't help but realize that New York was a heck of a lot safer place to be in law enforcement.

You have depended to much on others to do your dirty work

Roman looked at the mask he had carved from his father's casket in both fear and anger. "Shut up, old man."

Too much has been left to chance. A true heir to the throne would have thought this out more. Trusted few.

"A true heir to the throne? I am a true heir, father! I am everything that you wanted me to be and more."

"Have I come at a bad time," came the voice of The Penguin from the

door to his office.

Sionis turned sharply, his eyes blazing. "How the hell did you get in here? Why didn't my men... Oh yes, I killed them, thanks to you." His face suddenly relaxed and a smile radiated his face. "I suppose I'm going to have to promote a few of my grunts. Without guards, anything could walk through my door."

Oswald walked up to the desk, his umbrella slung over his shoulder, monocle firmly in place. "You did seem to go a tad overboard in your zealotry to remove the mole, my good Sir."

"And you became rather stupid by forgetting your place in my organization and trying to blackmail me... good. Sir."

"Your organization was nothing more than a stepping stone for me. I believed that I was up front with you on this point, from the start. I am here only to collect what is mine and remove myself from your impending collapse."

A shadow covered Roman's face, "And what makes you think I won't just shoot you dead right here and now?"

"Because even you are intelligent enough to know that the copies I sent you are not the only ones around. If anything happens to me, if I disappear for more than four hours at a time, copies of those photos will be sent to Gotham's finest, the Metropolis Police Department, and The Justice League, just for good measure."

Silence filled the office for nearly a minute as both men stared at each other. Finally Roman spoke, "What is it you want, Penguin?"

If Cobblepot bristled at the name, he did not show it. He sat down in the chair across from Gotham's newest mob boss "You acquired all of Thorne's shipping rights, as well as his company, when Boss Maroni had him eliminated. I want it, all of it. Signed, sealed, and delivered within the hour. That's all. Well, and your word that you will not retaliate in any way, shape, or form. I have enjoyed doing business with you, and would prefer if we end it on a rather high note."

Again there was that silence.

"Done," Roman grumbled.

"Oh, and one other thing," Cobblepot said leaning forward in his chair. "I want The Iceberg Lounge in my name only. That debt is paid in full. You have no claim over it anymore."

"You're playing a dangerous game," Roman whispered, his hand absently stroking his mask.

"My dear fellow, I've been playing dangerous games since before you could reach the gas peddle on your daddy's sports cars."

"Fine, but you listen good, Oswald. If my secret is revealed, I'm coming after you with everything I got, and there isn't a person alive who will stop me from taking your umbrellas and shoving them..."

"Yes, yes, vulgar threats, I get it. You have my word that I shall carry your secret to your grave. Have one of your men send over the contracts to *my* club within the hour. I bid you farewell, young man. Good luck in all your future endeavors, and if you ever need a favor from me... just call."

Sionis leaned back in his chair, "Goodbye Penguin. I'd advise you never to walk through my doors again, for anything."

The Penguin rose from his chair and gave a short bow, tipping his hat, before he turned and left the room.

This is exactly what I'm talking...

"SHUT UP OLD MAN!" Roman screamed at the mask. His face was beet red, the veins on the side of his neck sticking out. "Just shut the hell up."

"Babs, you okay?" Dick Grayson asked as he watched Barbara Gordon coming around.

Barbara opened her eyes to find herself lying on a table, back in a hospital gown. A doctor was working on her leg, applying the necessary

amount of stitches.

“What...?”

“It’s alright,” Dick said quickly. “They’re just stitching up your leg and then you’ll be free to go. That assassin took a nice slice out of you.”

It all came back to her, “Dad! What about Dad?”

“He’s fine,” Dick said laying a hand on her shoulder, “He’s better than fine. He’s awake, and can’t wait to see you.”

Barbara felt relieved until she saw the look on Dick’s face. “There’s more, isn’t there?” She asked.

He nodded, “There’s no easy way to tell you this, but Black Mask tried to kidnap little Jimmy earlier this evening, but something went wrong. The getaway car had a bomb in it. Barbara, I’m sorry.”

For the second time in less than two days it felt like the rug had been pulled out from under her. She held onto the end of the examination table, trying desperately to hold onto her sanity as well.

“Does Dad know? And what about Barbara?” she asked, referring to James’ wife.

“Yeah, they just told your dad, and Barbara is heavily medicated and in her own room on the second floor. You should also know that someone slipped your father a gun. He fended off Deathstroke on his own. Well, actually with a little help from Harvey Bullock. Harvey got stabbed, but they say he’s going to be okay.”

“My god, Dick, this entire city is going crazy.”

The doctor finished his work and cautioned her to stay off the leg as much as possible. After he had walked away, she looked around cautiously and then returned to the conversation.

“Where’s Bruce?”

“He’s finishing up business. Seems that the account he was working on didn’t slip through his fingers after all. Come on, let’s go see your father. I think he needs you right now.”

He helped her down and she put her arm over his shoulder, allowing him to help her cross the corridor. She couldn’t look at him, not like she wanted to. She had to stay focused. Her father needed her now, more than ever.

There wasn’t a knock at the door, this time. It just blew off its hinges and Deathstroke marched in just as Roman had finished putting on his mask. He turned, a bit startled.

“Doesn’t anyone knock anymore?”

“I did knock, knocked the damn thing right off the wall.” Slade replied as he marched into the office, his uniform still wet with the blood of the bullet wounds.

“Looks like you had some trouble. I do hope you were able to finish the job.”

“Not yet, but I’m very close. Once I leave here, my job is finished.” He walked over to the obscenely large fireplace in the corner of the great office and leaned against it.

“I don’t understand?”

“Easy enough. I’m a mercenary, Mr. Mask. I’m the best at what I, well I’m sure you’ve heard *that* before, but with me, it’s true. However, a true mercenary goes to whomever makes the best offer, and that, pal, turns out not to be you.”

Roman grabbed the edge of his desk, “What the hell are you talking about?”

“I went to recoup, before trying a second assault, and received a better offer. One that I just personally couldn’t pass up. So your money is

being returned to you. Well two thirds of it, anyway. Expenses were still necessary."

"You walk out of this room and you're a..."

Deathstroke, who had been heading back to the door, turned sharply, "What? A dead man? Think about that statement before you make it, pal. Ask yourself if you're a smart man, or a very stupid one."

The Mask said nothing, just watched as the assassin turned from him and walked out of the room. After he disappeared, Sionis grabbed a paper weight and threw it into the fireplace. This was turning into a disaster. Everything he had worked for was starting to crumble. At least the big picture, but he also wasn't a stupid man, and he knew he always had back ups.

One of his underlings walked in to find Black Mask staring up at his father's portrait that hung over the mantel.

"You called for me, boss?"

"Yes, I want the Falcone and the Maroni interests hit again, and this time harder, but the main rule still applies; Carmine and Boss Maroni are not to be harmed. Is this understood?"

"Sure boss, you got it," and the man left, relieved that he was still alive.

Roman leaned against the mantel, burying his mask into his arm. Gordon was still alive, and for now that would have to be enough. At least he had killed Gordon's son. Lost a few more good men, but it was a sacrifice worth making. If he couldn't take the new Commissioner down permanently, then he would have to break him, like he planned to do with Falcone and Maroni... and Thorne. But somebody else had taken out Thorne, and had ruined it for him. He'd find out who that person was, too. He'd make him pay.

He raised his head up and out of the corner of his eye he saw a glimpse of something very small and shiny, just under the mantle. He took a closer look. What was that? His eyes refocused and then he realized that shape he was looking at. It was a bat!

Oh know, he thought to himself. This is not good at all...

Dawn was right around the corner, but Batman was not done. He had been following the tracking device he had planted on Deathstroke for some time now. It was moving across town, and then just as suddenly, it had stopped. At best, he was hoping Slade would lead him to Black Mask. At the very least, he would take care of Slade once and for all.

He slowed down as the signal was at its strongest. He looked up at the building in front of him, and although he should have been surprised, he was not. Janus Cosmetics. Now a subsidiary of Wayne Enterprises. Beneath his cowl, Bruce Wayne's furrow creased. Things were starting to make some sense, and the answers were here, with Sionis, and he was getting all of them before he dragged Roman off to jail.

It took scant minutes to park the car in the back alley and fire his cable up to the floor that housed the big office of the "big man". Although still injured, with the possibility of a minor concussion, he prepared himself for what he was about to face. If Slade were here, he would probably have to go through him to get to Roman.

But as he peered through the window he saw only one figure. He knew it was Sionis, although he was wearing the mask... the black mask. It was true. He looked closer to see that Roman was holding the transmitter that he had slipped into Slade's boot, as he made his final leap for freedom at the hospital.

Should have known he'd find it, Batman thought to himself as he took a deep breath and prepared himself.

Then, covering his body with his cloak, he threw himself against the window, the glass shattering inward and all around the desk. Black Mask took a step back, his curses flying freely.

Batman stood up and shook the glass from his cape. "It's over, Sionis. Your little enterprise is over before it even really began."

"You think so?" Black Mask said with a bit of musing in his voice. "I

think you, like everyone else, have underestimated me. My reign is just beginning, Batman. I'm here to stay."

Batman clenched his fists and began to walk forward, "We'll see about that."

Babs Gordon limped into the hospital room, to find her father and Officer Sarah Essen talking quietly. The new Commissioner's face, although still pale, was now puffy, and his eyes were bright red and still wet. They both turned towards the door when they heard her enter.

"Barbara," Jim choked out as he tried to open his arms to her, still being somewhat constricted by the wires that were attached to him.

Sarah moved out of the way as Babs limped towards her father, the tears now flowing freely.

"Oh Daddy," she cried as she buried her face into his chest and he enveloped her.

Sarah Essen and Dick Grayson, both in the room, gave each other an understanding nod and walked out together; giving the Gordon family time to be alone in their grief.

"Has the doctor been in," Dick asked the pretty officer as they closed the door.

She nodded. "Seems he may be out of the woods. They weren't able to remove the one bullet, though. Said it was too close to the spine. He has the option for surgery to remove it, or not. If not, it could stay in there forever without any problems, or it could someday shift, and that would paralyze him. It's his call, but my gut tells me he's going to go without the surgery."

They walked down the hall in silence for a moment. "Can I ask what happened?" Dick finally said. "I heard that Batman and others helped save his life from an assassination attempt, but I also heard that Gordon was awake. Rumor says that he somehow got a hold of a gun and was able to defend himself. Is that true?"

Officer Essen studied the young man for a moment. She knew of him, the heir apparent to a billionaire's fortune. She was also aware that he was close to the family, especially the daughter. Sarah always trusted her instincts, and they were telling her that this kid was alright.

She nodded, "Seems that Commissioner Gordon had awoken before his unwanted visitor. At the time, he only had one visitor, someone who wanted to make sure that he had his own protection... just in case."

Dick nodded as if in understanding. "Bullock," he stated.

"No." Sarah replied and couldn't help but show a bit of a smile at Mr. Grayson's shocked face. "Harvey was roaming the halls, staying in the shadows, from what I gather, but he wasn't the one who slipped Gordon the piece. The gun came from Harvey Dent."

"Dent!"

Sarah nodded, "Seems he was one floor down, visiting Officer Allen. He came up to find the Commish awake, and although still groggy, gave him his own personal hand gun to hold onto... just in case."

"Wow that's a shocker."

"You're telling me. Well, I better get back to the squad house. I know I don't know you very well, but I also know you're a friend of the Gordon's, and with everything that's happened, they're going to need friends like you." She clapped him on the shoulder and walked away.

Dick stood in the hall, three things racing through his mind. He really should contact the Titans and check in, or try to contact Bruce and see if anything was going on, or go back to the room and check on Babs. He took a deep breath and turned around, heading back to where he had just come from.

Black Mask watched Batman come towards him, not moving a muscle. He wasn't about to back down, not now, not ever. Sionis' don't back down!

“You killed Commissioner Loeb, Garfield Lyons, and Rupert Thorne. You’ve done everything in your power to take down every major crime boss in this city. You are under arrest for each one of those murders.”

“I didn’t kill Rupert Thorne, and you know that, Batman. Boss Maroni did that, and I will not be accused of a crime I didn’t commit. I want all the crime bosses on their knees in front of me, not six feet under. Where’s the fun in that, I tell you! Loeb and Lyons were flaking out on me, they became a liability, but Thorne... oh Maroni will pay for taking out Thorne without my permission.”

Batman smirked, “Thanks for the confession, Mask. Now tell me why? Why did you do all of this?”

“You are, for all your great detective skills, the stupidest man on the planet.” Roman chortled. “You flap your cape and vow to rid this city of crime, but it just keeps coming, doesn’t it. You do nothing more than stoke the fire. You’re a goddamn magnet for crime! Gotham City is the capital of crime, and the only one who doesn’t see it, is you! There is more money and more power to be had in the underworld of this city than any corporation could think about making! People like Bruce Wayne and Roman Sionis are nothing more than bit players in this town. You want real power here, then you have to take over the biggest market this city has going for it.”

“Doesn’t matter now,” Batman growled through clenched teeth. “You failed in your attempt, and now your going to prison for a very long time.”

Black Mask began to laugh, the sound strangely hollow from inside the mask. “Okay, send me to prison you moron. You just don’t get it, and you never will. I can run this city no matter where I’m at. While I’ve had you and this police force running around and ducking for cover, I’ve been working my way quietly into so many different area’s of this city, that I’m everywhere now. Drugs, guns, black market items. I’m here to stay, Mr. Vigilante. The other bosses will kneel to me, eventually, and I will be on top. You can’t win! You never could! I’ve already accomplished what my father said I never could. I’ve taken over Gotham, and

nobody can stop me!" Roman was beginning to shout now, clapping his hands in glee.

Deathstroke walked onto the roof of the building to find his friend waiting for him. Friend. Actually the only person in the world that he even remotely trusted.

"Wintergreen, I assume everything is ready?" Slade Wilson said as he peered over the edge of the building and looked towards the Sionis building.

"Yes sir, our employer has provided you with what you needed and is awaiting confirmation."

"Good, let's get this over with. I take no joy in this one, Wintergreen, as you know. However, our new employer has more than what that whack job, Sionis could ever provide me."

Slade turned to the case in front of him and opened it. He put the parts together with lightening speed and lifted the rocket launcher onto his shoulder, taking aim with his one good eye.

"Too bad, really," he mumbled to himself. "This really isn't the way I wanted to end things between Bruce and I. It would have been so much better to see his face, when I killed him."

"Yes sir," Wintergreen said with a small sigh.

Deathstroke waited for a moment, until he caught the movement. Yes, Black Mask was in there, and yes, so was Bruce. With nothing more to say, he squeezed the trigger and launched the rocket directly at them.

"It's men like you that don't get it," Batman said. "You don't own this city, and you never will. And there will always be someone to stop you, if not me, then the GCPD. You might think that crime runs this city, but it doesn't, it falls, all the time. Brick by brick it's taken apart. You're just too pathetic to see it The police are already on their way."

“Oh, you keep thinking that, you... what the hell...?”

Every instinct told him to turn and look, and Batman did. He saw, just before it came careening into the office, the rocket that was headed straight towards them both.

“Damn.”

Slade Wilson watched as the rocket hit its target, and just as the sun rose over the skyline of Gotham, the side of the building blew up causing stone and mortar to fly everywhere. What was once the office of Roman Sionis was now a burning piece of rubble. He sat the weapon down and prepared his rope, to double check the bodies, when he heard the sirens, and saw the helicopter in the distance.

“They must have been on their way. Ah well, it was a clean shot, neither one of them could have survived. And if they did, by some miracle, survive the blast. There’s no way they’re getting out of that inferno alive.”

“Yes Sir. Shall I contact your employer to inform him that the deed is done?”

“Yeah, go ahead. Tell him that since I can’t double check my work, I’ll forgo the monetary reward, and just take the information he promised. Also tell him that if the information I receive is false, his head is mine.”

“Very good Sir.” Wintergreen stood there for a second and watched the man he had known for so many years, now. “If you don’t mind me asking you, was it worth it? You do have a rather strict code that you’ve muddied a bit.”

Slade Wilson was already heading toward the exit from the roof top, “If the information leads me to Adeline, and the answers that I seek, then yes. Yes, it was worth every bit of it.”

The employees of the Iceberg Lounge had just finished up for the night and were heading out the door. Oswald Cobblepot had seen them all go, and would count the days receipts a third time before he returned to his

penthouse for a couple hours of uninterrupted sleep.

He entered his office to find the phone ringing. After he answered it, he listened to the British accented voice on the other end, giving him the news he so wanted to hear.

“Very good,” Oswald replied. “Inform your employer that the information is already on its way to the requested address. Also inform him that it was a pleasure doing business with him.”

The man called Penguin hung up the phone and began to dance around the room, his eyes twinkling with glee. It was done, and now the city would be his oyster.

There was a knock at his office door.

“Yes?”

His right hand man opened the door, “Everyone’s gone and the place is locked up, Sir. Anything else before I leave?”

Cobblepot grinned. “Oh yes, my dear boy. It seems that we will not be getting any sleep anytime soon. I want you to call the local news stations and have them meet me at Gotham General. Then go to the orphanage and pick up the package that was received there last night. It is time, my friend, to put the final piece in place.”

His man nodded and closed the door quietly behind him.

Oswald Cobblepot went to his mirror and straightened his tie. He wanted to make sure he looked good for the cameras.

The parking garage of the hospital was quiet as Dick and Babs walked out to his motorcycle. He didn’t want to leave, but Alfred had not heard from Bruce in a while, and they were both worried. He had to go find him, make sure he was okay.

They stood at the bike in an uncomfortable silence for a minute.

“I want to thank...”

“If there’s anything I can...”

They both had spoke at the same time and then became quiet again. Suddenly Barbara started laughing.

“What is it?” Dick asked, a bit puzzled.

“It’s nothing. I’m just tired. Drained, actually.”

“It’s understandable, Babs. What your family is going through, it’s a lot. I hope you all get through it, and please, Barbara, just call me if you need me. I’m just a phone call away.”

Barbara nodded, “Right now, you need to find Bruce. Find out what’s going on. Let me know as soon as you hear anything.”

“I will, I promise,” Dick said as he turned to his bike.

“Wait, Dick,” Barbara said, grabbing his arm.

He turned back and she smiled at him, her eyes becoming wet again. She suddenly embraced him, holding him tight, and he wrapped his arms around her for the comfort that he knew she needed.

“I don’t know where I’d be without you, sometimes,” she said through her silent tears. “You’ve always been there for me, always at the right times, when I needed someone the most.”

He squeezed her tighter, “We’ve been through a lot together, haven’t we? And we’ll get through this, too, Babs... I promise.”

She looked up at him and couldn’t help but smile, he was always so reassuring, so positive. He smiled back at her as well, and then it happened.

They moved together, suddenly, without fore thought. Both of them meeting in the middle as their lips came together. It lasted for less then ten seconds, but at that moment, it seemed to go on for an eternity.

But as quickly as they had come together, they stopped, both of them breaking contact at the same time, just as they had come together a moment ago.

“Oh God, Dick, I’m sorry...”

“No, Babs, it’s okay. It’s my fault, I shouldn’t have...”

They heard the roar of the engine and it broke the uncomfortable exchange that was going on. The Jaguar pulled up next to them and Bruce Wayne got out, he did not look well. His hair was singed off on one side and he was limping as he walked up to them.

“Bruce!” Dick exclaimed. “What happened?”

“Roman Sionis was Black Mask. He orchestrated the whole thing. I’ve got it on tape. I was getting ready to bring him in when some one launched a rocket from the next building over. I pulled Sionis into the fireplace at the last second and used the cape to try and shield us both. The blast, though, threw us across the room. The place became an inferno. I tried to search for him, but the flames were too intense, I had to get out of there.”

“Any idea who shot the rocket?” Barbara asked.

“Theory is Deathstroke, but I’m not sure. Didn’t get a good look across the street. My uniform is nearly ruined, so I changed into the extra cloths and hid the Batmobile underneath Wayne Tower. Grabbed the Jag. I wanted to check on your father before I went back out. That’s when I heard the report.”

“What report?” Dick asked.

“There’s to be a live press conference outside the hospital in about twenty minutes. Cobblepot is putting it together.”

“What? Why?”

“Don’t know, for sure, but I wanted to be here for it.”

"Then let's get downstairs," Babs said as she limped towards the stairway, the two men following close behind.

James Gordon lay in his hospital bed, watching the news, only half listening, when the door opened and his wife walked in. He was shocked at how she looked. Her cloths and hair were disheveled and she walked to him as if she were not all there.

They've medicated her, he realized. For a split second he thought of the zombie case, and how much, at that moment, his wife could have passed for one of them.

"Barbara..." He started, but then the words failed him. She came to him slowly and the tears came down his face. His son was dead, his wife nearly catatonic, and there he was in a hospital bed, a bullet lodged near his spine.

"We lost him," She said in a voice that was as dead and hollow as a three day old corpse. "Our son is gone."

"I know, I know. I'm so sorry, Barbara. I'm so sorry for everything."

She looked at him with those dead eyes, "I know that. I know you are, and I'm relieved that you are going to be okay, Jim, I really am, but..."

The voice on the television interrupted them and caught their attention.

"This is Bethany Snow with a GNN breaking news story. We're about to go live to Gotham General where one of Gotham's most influential entrepreneurs is getting ready to make a statement that sources say will have a large impact on the events of the recent mob war, and the violence against Gotham's newest commissioner, James Gordon."

"What the hell..." Jim Gordon said as he turned up the television.

On the street below, a rather large crowd gathered in front of the hospital, with reporters in the front. Oswald Cobblepot, dressed in an

expensive Armani tux, monocle firmly in place, as was his top hat, came walking out the front door.

Bruce, Barbara, and Dick all noticed that the woman beside him was carrying some kind of bundle, wrapped in blankets.

“My fellow citizens of Gotham, I come to you today with tidings of comfort and joy. It came to my attention not too long ago that the newest mob boss, a man who went by the name of Black Mask, was preparing to do harm not only to our new Commissioner, but his family as well. Not sure what to do with this information, and afraid of who I could trust within the Gotham City Police Department, I did what any upstanding citizen would do. I risked my own life in an attempt to save the life of James Gordon, Jr.

“My men and I arrived at the brownstone where the family was staying, after the horrific attack on James Gordon Sr., and prepared to warn them and whisk them away, only to find that the attack had already begun. With very little time, my employees and I were able to get little James from his crib and switch him with one of the many dolls that were in his room. When Black Mask’s men grabbed the swaddling bundle, they believed they had the child, but they did not.”

“Wait a minute,” one of the reporters interrupted. “Are you telling us that the child isn’t dead? That you have the Commissioner’s son?”

“Yes,” Oswald said proudly as he was handed the baby. “I hid him in the orphanage that I sponsor for safety, until I knew for sure what was happening with his parents,

and with the Black Mask. I felt it best to keep quiet, until I could confirm that his mother had survived the attack, and that the Black Mask was either captured or dead. It seems, by all reports, that it is the latter.”

“Why are you announcing this in front of everyone,” another reporter shouted out. “Are you expecting some kind of reward?”

“Good heavens, no,” Oswald replied. “Making this a public announcement was two fold on my part. First, by announcing it in public, I would

hope that it would detract from any other corrupt men, be it within or outside of the system, to try and harm this innocent child. Secondly, and most importantly, I wanted to show the citizens of Gotham that if we are to make the streets of our city safe again, it will take all of us to do it. The police can only do so much. This city belongs to all of us honest citizens, and we must stand together and be brave and courageous in these dark times. Now, if you'll excuse me, I am going to take this child and place him in his mother's arms, where he belongs."

There were more shouts, and more questions, but Oswald Cobblepot ignored them as he entered the building with the worker from the orphanage.

"You did a wonderful thing today, Mr. Cobblepot," she said, beaming at him.

"I know," he smiled humbly at her. As he reached the elevator, his mind was working overtime. This had been his greatest achievement, thus far. He had all of Thorne's ships and control of the major shipping lanes. He owned the Lounge outright, and Black Mask and Batman were dead. The city was even closer to being his.

As the elevator door closed, a wicked smile crossed his face. Perhaps the next step would be something in politics. Mayor Oswald Cobblepot. He liked the sound of that.

"Gitchee, gitchee, goo," he said to the little child as the elevator doors closed, and The Penguin began to rise upward.

Two Weeks Later

It shown in the night sky like a beacon, but this time it was not calling for Batman, it was calling for two others. They had received the message and James Gordon, using a cane, and Harvey Dent found Batman standing next to the signal, waiting for them. At his feet was a gentleman tied and gagged.

"Who do you have here?" Gordon asked.

"Call it a congratulations gift for becoming Commissioner," Batman

replied. "His name is Gerald Devin and he's the assassin that took out Thorne's killer. He's ready to confess. He'll tell you everything you need to know, to make a solid case against Boss Maroni, the man who orchestrated Thorne's murder."

Dent grinned and Jim nodded in way of a thank you.

There was a beat before Batman spoke again, "Jim, I was sorry to hear about you and Barbara. I know it can't be easy."

Jim was taken back by the sudden change. This was a side of Batman that he had only shown once or twice before, and if he were honest with himself, it was the side that seemed to creep him out the most.

"Thanks, Batman. It wasn't an easy decision, but Barbara and I both agreed that with my new position, it would be better if they moved out of the city. I guess in the end, this city won. Barbara knew that, and I guess I did too."

Jim turned to look at Devin, "But it's times like these that make the pain a bit easier to live with. Thank you Bat..." but as he turned back, he found that the dark knight detective was gone.

Harvey Dent looked around. "I don't know how you get used to that."

"I'll let you know when I do."

Harvey grabbed the hit man and pulled him up. The guy was sporting a black eye, but otherwise seemed fine, albeit, terrified.

"You going to tell me everything I need to know?" Harvey demanded in his question.

The hit man nodded vigorously.

"Good. Maybe I can have an arrest warrant for Boss Maroni by morning. Then I can finally show the crime bosses what Harvey Dent is really made of."

Jim smiled at his friend. "It's about time for you to shine, my friend."

With you in charge, Boss Maroni won't know what hit him."

They walked back into the building, dragging their captive.

Epilogue

He was cursing and swearing as the hole was being drilled into the face mask. His men stood around him, not wanting to look, but afraid not too.

"Boss, why don't you just go to someone and have them remove it?"

Roman Sionis turned toward the thug, "Because, you idiot, I will be arrested, and I do not want to be in jail at this time. It would be counter productive to my goals. The fire seared this onto my flesh, you idiot. It would take years for me to rebuild my face. No, this is how it's meant to be. Roman Sionis is dead, but Black Mask will rise from his ashes, and continue in his quest. Now bring me the feeding tube and leave me alone. I'll call you when I need you."

The False Face Gang exited and Black Mask brought the feeding tube through the hole and into his mouth.

Even with the pain pills, his face and much of his body, was still in pain from the explosion and the fire. But the pain was nothing to him. His destiny was still out there. This was just a minor inconvenience. He was still going to be the king of this city. Even if he had to burn it all to the ground and start over. This *would* be his city, someday... someday soon...

The End.

For now...

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

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copyrights is intended. Support DC Comics by buying their monthly comic books and graphic novels.

From the same author on Feedbooks

All-Star Comics #4 (2006)

All-Star Comics: Plastic Man.

A day in the life of DC2's most malleable hero. Join him and his partner, Woozy Winks, Jr. as they stop a bank heist, confront a mad scientist, and rip on Booster Gold!

New Outsiders #3 (2006)

New Outsiders: The Full House.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

Introducing the all new Royal Flush Gang!

When the New Outsiders bust up a seemingly routine drug shipment, they find that the weapons being used on the street are anything but normal. Can they discover who is behind this new technology before every mob family becomes acquainted with the new weapons?

New Outsiders #4 (2006)

New Outsiders: Nothing Beats a Royal Flush.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The New Outsiders and The Royal Flush Gang clash for the first time. Lines are drawn, enemies are made, searches continue, and Joker makes his presence known in a big way!

New Outsiders #5 (2006)

New Outsiders: To the Victor...

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The New Outsiders vs. The Animates

The Royal Flush Gang vs. The Animates

The New Outsiders vs. The Royal Flush Gang

The Royal Flush Gang vs. The Joker

When the dust settles, who will be left standing?

New Outsiders #6 (2006)

New Outsiders: Broken Arrows.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The search for a fourteen year old runaway sends Green Arrow, Black Canary, and guest star Speedy, into a dark, disturbing, and

all to real world that will open old wounds and takes Ollie and Dinah's relationship to a new level.

New Outsiders #7 (2006)

New Outsiders: Preludes and Nocturnes.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

A day in the lives of Batgirl and Zatanna as they are confronted by old friends, lost family, and the dangerous mob enforcer, Skorpio, who has arrived in Las Vegas to work for a new employer.

New Outsiders #8 (2006)

New Outsiders: For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The Scarapellis...

The Bertinellis...

The Huntress...

Two shocking revelations...

One crucial decision...

...and Adrian Chase's world will never be the same again...

New Outsiders #9 (2006)

New Outsiders: On the Horizon.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The gang is back together as they discover exactly who Mr. Wonderful really is. Does he have anything to do with the looming Crisis? You better believe it! What role do the New Outsiders have in the big event? It all starts here, folks!

New Outsiders #10 (2006)

New Outsiders: Riders on the Storm.

Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 4!

As the war rages, the Outsiders find themselves stranded on Apokolips, searching desperately for a lost teammate. But as the Hunger Dogs rise in revolt, will it be too late for one of the Outsiders, trapped in the clutches of Darkseid's depraved torturer, Desaad?

New Outsiders #11 (2006)

New Outsiders: Aftermath, Part 1.

The Crisis may be over, but The New Outsiders find that the aftermath will be just as devastating as they return from Apokolips to find that Las Vegas is under martial law, and the Joker is spreading chaos everywhere.

New Outsiders #12 (2006)

New Outsiders: Aftermath, Part 2.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE!

The New Outsiders and The Teen Titans join forces to bring down The Royal Flush Gangs!

Meanwhile, Nightwing and Batgirl hunt down The Joker, but to confront the Crown Prince of Crime, they must first confront that horrific night that still haunts their memories.

New Outsiders #13 (2006)

New Outsiders: Forsaking All Others.

You are cordially invited to attend the wedding of Oliver Jonas Queen to Dinah Laurel Lance. But where is Adrian Chase, and why won't he be attending the wedding?

Justice League #6 (2007)

Justice League: Public Enemy Number One.

Aquaman is wanted by the American Government for crimes against America. He has been branded a terrorist and President Maxwell Lord has demanded that the Justice League bring him in. What will they do?

You don't want to miss this one! This year's Crisis starts here!

Detective Comics #22 (2007)

Detective Comics: Opening Salvo.

As three of Gotham's most powerful underground figures begin their rise to the top, Batman faces three seemingly unrelated mysteries; but are they as random as they appear to be?

Detective Comics #18 (2007)

Detective Comics: The Two Faces of Harvey Dent, Part 2 (of 2).

Detective Comics #14 (2007)

Detective Comics: Boiling Point.

Gotham is becoming a war zone! Mob bosses are looking at each other with more than a little suspicion. The GCPD is stretched thin, and a new Commissioner is needed. Who will the Mayor choose? Who is pulling all the strings? Who is trying to take over Wayne Enterprises? Revelations abound. With an ending that will leave you speechless.

Detective Comics #15 (2007)

Detective Comics: Masks, Part 2 (of 4).

With James Gordon's life hanging in the balance, and Gotham City in an all out war, three heroes gather together to keep him alive. But can even Batman, Nightwing, and Batgirl keep James safe from the assassin that Black Mask has hired to finish the job?

Detective Comics #17 (2007)

Detective Comics: The Two Faces of Harvey Dent, Part 1 (of 2).

Detective Comics #20 (2007)

Detective Comics: The Enemy of My Enemy.

Detective Comics #19 (2007)

Detective Comics: Helpless

Detective Comics #21 (2007)

Detective Comics: First Impressions

Bruce Wayne meets Tim Drake! James Gordon meets Renee Montoya! And just wait until you see who Two-Face meets...

Detective Comics #23 (2007)

Detective Comics: The Falcone and the Snowman.

Detective Comics #24 (2007)

Detective Comics: Would You Like Fries With That?

Batman's battle with Mr. Freeze continues, and the mysteries of Karen Walker and Jack Todd intertwine. The dangerous trio of Two-Face, Penguin, and Black Mask make a bold move, and before it all ends, betrayal will lead to murder!

Detective Comics #25 (2007)

Detective Comics: Wheel in the Sky.

Is Alfred dead? Are Penguin and Two-Face dead? Why is the DEO in Gotham? And who murdered Karen Walker? Questions begin to be answered as we focus our attention on Detectives Renee Montoya and Crispus Allen. Also a confrontation you never thought you'd see in the DC2 Universe: Chloe Sullivan vs. James Gordon!

New Outsiders #20 (2007)

New Outsiders: Shattered.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

As the Checkmate Super Soldiers are taken over by a deadly threat, it's up to Batgirl and Zatanna to find a way to switch them off and help the Justice League and the rest of the Outsiders. But what Zatanna finds at Cadmus will send her reeling, and the rest of the Outsiders face the fact that they may never be together again.

Justice League vs. America #4 (2007)

Justice League vs. America: Fade to Black.

The penultimate chapter of this year's huge event! The secret of the super soldiers is revealed, but can they be defeated? Martian Manhunter sends a small force to face the threat that has put America on the brink of destruction, and, when all hope is lost, help comes from the most unexpected of people... but is it too late? An ending that's guaranteed to send shivers down your spine!

New Outsiders #14 (2007)

New Outsiders: Same Thing In Reverse.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

Sister vs. Sister

Black Canary vs. Black Canary

Secrets are revealed. A year-long plot is exposed. And two Outsiders' lives will begin to spiral out of control.

Justice League #3 (2007)

Justice League: Mystery in Space, Part 1.

With the threat of destruction looming over the citizens of Thanagar, Carter Hall's son has come looking for his long-lost

father. The Justice League stand ready to aid him, but will they be able to help save his home planet?

New Outsiders #15 (2007)

New Outsiders: Eye for an Eye.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The truth is out and Adrian Chase is determined to make the people who were involved with his wife's death pay. Meanwhile, Huntress searches for her man, all the while being hunted by a mob informant with a grudge of his own. Can the rest of their team find them before tragedy strikes?

Justice League #4 (2007)

Justice League: Mystery in Space, Part 2.

The Justice League has been divided! While one team races to aid Thanagar, another team helps Katar Hol in preparing his people for the inevitable. And the only thing standing between Despero and the great planet of Thanagar? The Martian Manhunter!

New Outsiders #16 (2007)

New Outsiders: And So It Goes.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

This is it! The story of Huntress and Vigilante ends here. And when the dust settles, nothing will ever be the same for this group of heroes.

Justice League #5 (2007)

Justice League: Mystery in Space, Pt. 3 (of 3): Sacrificial Lamb.

The final battle between the Justice League and Despero is here! But exactly how will they defeat the alien powerhouse? And how much sacrifice will one hero endure to end the threat? Action and intrigue abound in this pulse-pounding conclusion!

New Outsiders #17 (2007)

New Outsiders: Divergences.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The tragic events of last issue are felt by all as each remaining member of the team consider where they are going to go from here. Zatanna returns, and a new mystery begins.

New Outsiders #18 (2007)

New Outsiders: T.O. Morrow Never Dies.

The mystery surrounding The Red Tornado's origin comes to an explosive conclusion as he and Batgirl discover the truth surrounding his "birth".

Justice League #7 (2007)

Justice League: Laying the Foundation.

Like a phoenix from the ashes, the Justice League rises from the Crisis, stronger then before, and with more members... but who?

New Outsiders #21 (2007)

New Outsiders: That's a Wrap.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

The crisis is over, and so are the New Outsiders, by the looks of it. Who will stay, and who will go? And who lurks in the shadows, waiting for the right time to strike.

Plus, a turning point in the life of Kate Spencer!

New Outsiders #24 (2007)

New Outsiders: Letting it Simmer.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

Kate Spencer's world is turned upside down in more ways than one when she meets her real mother, and finds out what has happened to The Squealer. What exactly is going on with Batgirl? Who are the mysterious hooded figures?

Plots thicken and the final member of The New Outsiders is revealed! A new threat is revealed! All this and a battle royal between Manhunter and Huntress!

New Outsiders #22 (2007)

New Outsiders: Red or Black.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE.

Roulette is back! Huntress and Black Canary face off against their mentors in a battle for Batgirl's life. Kate Spencer comes to a very big crossroad in hers, and Grace stumbles upon some unexpected help from a very unexpected hero.

New Outsiders #23 (2007)

New Outsiders: Breaking the Rules.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A MATURE READERS TITLE

As Black Canary and Huntress fight for their lives as well as the life of Batgirl, help is about to come from three very different heroes... in fact you could even call them... outsiders.

Detective Comics #26 (2008)

Detective Comics: When One Door Closes...

The thrilling conclusion as Batman faces off with Two-Face for the first time! Tim learns the full truth about his father and his mother. And the fate of Black Mask and The Penguin! With an ending that will... well... you'll see!

Detective Comics #27 (2008)

Detective Comics: The Remains.

Bruce Wayne is the main focus of this issue as he deals with the newest member of his household, the news that the Clown Prince of Crime has become a... mob boss??? And with Vicki Vale gone he finds a new companion by the name of-- Selina Kyle. All this and the fate of the Penguin!!!

Detective Comics #28 (2008)

Detective Comics: In the Still of the Night.

Batman finds that control over his city is slipping away from him as Gotham's underworld continues to be flipped upside down, and unbelievable alliances are being made. But who's pulling the strings?

Detective Comics #29 (2008)

Detective Comics: Walking the Line.

As things begin to go from worse to critical in Gotham, Batman reluctantly turns to help from the most unlikely of sources. But just how far will the Dark Knight go to bring down one of his greatest enemies?

Plus, The Demon loses his most powerful pawn, and all of Gotham may pay the price!

Detective Comics #30 (2008)

Detective Comics: The Punchline.

The Joker has been used... and he's not happy! The battle between Batman and The Demon may be for nothing, if The Joker has his

way! A double sized explosive issue that will end as all Joker tales end... in death and destruction!

Detective Comics #31 (2008)

Detective Comics: Beneath the Rubble.

After The Joker's massive destruction, Gotham City is under Martial Law! Villains and mob bosses are making last ditch efforts to solidify their positions, and James Gordon must stand alone against one of his former friends and allies.

Detective Comics #32 (2008)

Detective Comics: Cape and Cowl.

This is it, folks! Tim Drake puts on the mask, the cape, the uniform! His first official appearance as Robin, the new Boy Wonder! Just don't let Alfred and Dick find out...

Guest Starring: The New Outsiders' Batwoman!

Teen Titans Annual #1 (2008)

Teen Titans Annual: Thicker than Water.

A picnic between Nightwing and Starfire on a sunny New York afternoon turns into a nightmare as some very familiar aliens appear to take their Princess, and Kory and The Titans come face to face with Starfire's sister!

Teen Titans West #1 (2008)

Teen Titans West: I Left My Heart...

Not seen since the Teen Titans Annual #1; Bumblebee, Risk, Golden Eagle, and Speedy are now joined in San Francisco by Omen, Hawk & Dove, and Aqualad as a new chapter in the history of the Teen Titans begins.

An adventure that will reveal not only the origin of at least one member of this new team, but also change the life of someone else in the DC2 Universe!

Teen Titans West #2 (2008)

Teen Titans West: United We Stand.

Continuing where it left off, the team of heroes continue to battle the creature in the San Francisco Bay, and all seems lost... that is until Golden Eagle and Aqualad show up to help save the day!

Action Comics #39 (2009)

Action Comics: Kon-El, Part Three

There's a new, and younger, Superman up for bid, but which insane genius will get his hands on him? Lex Luthor? Dr. Ivo? Dr. Sivana? Or will Superman, Supergirl, Captain Marvel, and Mary Marvel be able to stop this potential weapon from falling into the wrong hands?

Action Comics #40 (2009)

Action Comics: Kon-El, Part Four

This is it! The conclusion to DC2's first appearance of Superboy! Featuring: Dr. Ivo, Amazo, Captain Marvel, Supergirl, Lois Lane, Lex Luthor, Dr. Xadu, and uhhh, oh yeah... Superboy!

Rogues Gallery #16 (2009)

Rogues Gallery: ?

He knows not who he is, or where he came from. Fragmented memories envelope him, but only to the point of confusion. A scar that he does not know how he received is his only clue to his past. He is an enigma wrapped in a mystery, and he's about to be... reborn!

Wonder Woman #35 (2009)

Wonder Woman: A Parting Gift, Part One (of Two).

The Gods are gone, but for Diana, there is still one more little detail that has been left behind. Wonder Woman is in for the surprise of her life - possibly a very short life!

Wonder Woman #36 (2009)

Wonder Woman: A Parting Gift, Part Two (of Two).

Who is Cassandra Sandsmark and why does she want to kill Wonder Woman? Who is Dr. Doris Zuel and why does she want Cassandra so badly? Join us for the conclusion to the story that introduces not one, not two, but three new characters to the DC2!

Teen Titans West #3 (2009)

Teen Titans West: The Enemy of My Friend.

What is Speedy's mission for Checkmate? This issue reveals that, as well as the nemesis that the TTW are up against! And if that's

not enough, there's a revelation that will have lasting effects for two major DC2 characters!

Teen Titans West #4 (2009)

Teen Titans West: When Doves Cry.

The Thanagarians and the Rannians battle over the city of San Francisco while the Teen Titans West (with the help of Katar Hol, Cyborg, and Starfire) try to stop the plans of Kanjar Ro. By the time this issue is over, a shocking revelation will rip apart two members of this non-group group!

Teen Titans West #5 (2009)

Teen Titans West: And Away We Go.

The stunning (and really long-awaited) conclusion to the first arc of the West Coast Titans! Hawkman and Golden Eagle have just discovered they're brothers; but will they embrace as family? And the machinations of Kanjar Ro and Byth come to a head! Will The Titans West survive their first adventure together!

The Flash #36 (2010)

The Flash: Impulse Control.

With the historic first meeting of Tim Drake, Conner Kent and Cassie Sandsmark having happened during the holidays, it's no surprise that Bart Allen would finally appear in the DC2. But it may come as a surprise when we reveal just how long he's been here...



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