

Two weeks later
Saturday, June 11th, 2016

Beneath Wayne Manor

It had been his first night out.

He had survived, barely!

"Cat - you are certifiable; you almost got me killed!"

"Stop overreacting, Aiden. . ."

"He has a point, Selina."

"Okay, you boys stick together; I'm off to shower . . . *alone!*"

"I think she's on her . . . you know . . . the monthly thing," Bruce muttered as his cheeks turned pink.

"Her period? Okay . . . explains a lot."

"How's your leg?"

"A little tender, but I've had worse - much worse!"

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Aiden headed upstairs to get out of his brand-new combat suit.

Before he did, however, he stood before the full-length mirror and he examined his reflection. His suit was primarily matt black with blue markings running down his arms from shoulder to finger tips. His chest and back were heavily armoured, while the rest of his suit was more lightly armoured. His lower arms were encased in more armour, leading to his armoured gauntlets. His left wrist bore a five-inch touch screen which connected with his communications equipment. His may black utility belt held his communications equipment, spare ammunition magazines, and various other items of equipment.

On his right thigh, he bore a SIG Sauer P320 TACOPS Carry in nine-millimetre. His left thigh bore a six-inch combat knife. On his back, he bore a pair of 26-inch aluminium and carbon-fibre bastons. His feet, were clad in matt black boots which came up to his knees. To protect his identity, he wore a cowl-style mask with the face portion shaped like a bat, covering his eyes, temples, and cheek bones.

"You are one bad-ass, motherfucker, Nightwing," Aiden whispered to himself.

"You did well, kid."

Aiden turned to find Selina standing in the doorway. The girl was clad in nothing but a towel which extended from just above her breasts, to just below her. . .

"Thanks."

"I'm sorry I got you hurt - I wasn't thinking. I was showing off and . . . well, it's Gotham; I forgot that. It won't happen again."

Aiden nodded as Selina vanished. When he pulled off his mask, he took a moment to consider the past couple of weeks.

Two weeks earlier

Friday, May 27th

The Study, Wayne Manor

"Aiden, what we are about to show you is secret, but we want to trust you, can we?" Selina asked.

"Yes, you can," Aiden had responded, not really knowing what he was signing up for.

Selina then strode over to one of the large bookcases behind the desk and she pulled out a certain book, from a certain shelf, and she opened it. Selina passed the book to Aiden. He looked at where the book had been opened. Inside, he saw a small device, little bigger than an iPod.

"Press it," Selina suggested.

Aiden stood up as he pressed the button on the remote after he had removed it from the book. Music began to play; he frowned in confusion as he heard grating and to his immense surprise, the fireplace sank backwards into the wall. He handed the device back to Selina and he walked over to the fireplace. The boy caught sight of the short passageway to the right and then the rough-hewn stone staircase that vanished steeply downwards. There were numerous modern LED lights, which provided bright illumination of the steps and it was obvious that they descended quite a distance.

The boy's face showed amazement as he looked down into the depths beneath Wayne Manor.

"You want to know where we go at night?"

Aiden nodded dumbly in reply to Bruce's question. Selina reached for the young boy's hand and she led him towards the stairs

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The boy had been totally stunned by what he was witnessing. His eyes darted around so fast that they almost became disconnected.

"Bats?"

"Yeah - nice aren't they," Bruce commented without much enthusiasm.

"He hates them," Selina expanded.

"Those motorcycles - they're yours?"

"Oh, yeah," Selina grinned.

"Holy vigilantes!"

Selina and Bruce grinned.

"You two are Batman and Catwoman!"

"Maybe he *is* as bright as he looks," Alfred chuckled.

Aiden grinned.

"Why are you showing me all this?"

"Stephanie tells me that you never received your codename from the CIA."

Aiden nodded gloomily.

"Well, they did give you a codename, however, we are not going to use it as a codename, it is going to be your vigilante name."

"Welcome, Nightwing."

The next few days had been like a whirlwind as the boy was shown the 'Bat Cave' - Alfred's suggestion - and then whisked off into central Gotham where he found himself deep beneath Wayne Tower and face to face with a grizzled looking man who smiled down at the boy.

"I have just the thing for you, young man," Lucius Fox commented before he led the boy past many weird and wonderful items. . .

"Is that an armoured helicopter?" Aiden asked in awe.

"Airbus H130 - she's being prepared for another client," Fox mentioned casually as he continued past the helicopter, three partially disassembled motorcycles and several other forms of transport in various stages of a rebuild. "Aaah, here we are. . ."

Aiden stared at a table where various sections of what appeared to be body armour were laid out.

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Over the space of four hours, the boy had been stripped and re-dressed in his new body armour before weapons and equipment were hung on his combat suit. The end result while awesome was heavy but nothing that he could not handle. The suit, itself, was much lighter than he had expected, but amazingly fluid - as a result, none of his movements were restricted in any way.

The pistol was neat and way better than anything which he had used in *Urban Predator*. It was then, at that point, when he realised that he was being invited to join an elite organisation. An organisation that had resources. An organisation that looked after its members. He thought back several weeks to when he had found himself swimming for his life in the Bay of Biscay.

The organisation which had rescued him had been the same organisation which had previously stormed the same yacht which he had recently abandoned minutes after that same organisation had blasted it apart with missiles and heavy weaponry. He had been scared to death at that moment, but he had recognised an organisation which was highly skilled and obviously related to Batman and Catwoman.

Thoughts had crossed his mind as he had enjoyed the comforts of Wayne Manor. He had considered heading out on his own; he had skills, but no resources. But he had needs - he enjoyed fighting, he enjoyed killing . . . to a point. After meeting a young girl, known as Psyche, he had realised that it was possible to use his skills for something other than bad, for something other than just being ordered to kill people who probably deserved to live.

Having witnessed the scum of Gotham at first hand, he knew that there were people out there who *deserved* to die - his conscience was clear.

The present

Saturday, June 11th

West Side, Midtown

"Well, well, the Bat and the Cat have been breeding - who do we have here?"

Batman growled as he glared at 'Penguin'. The strange man had a twinkle in his eye and a crooked smile on his face as he stood facing the three Gotham vigilantes. The man was creepy, or so Catwoman thought. He had got worse ever since Fish Mooney had been beheaded by Hit Girl. He had taken over much of her empire. He was also at war with Maroni as they fought over the remains of Falcone's crumbling assets.

In general, the GCPD had left them to it - if they were killing each other, then they weren't damaging the city; a warped reasoning, but perfectly valid in a place such as Gotham. Yes, that other freak, the self-styled 'Joker' was rampaging around Gotham, but he was slowly being whittled down as his 'worshippers' were removed.

"I am Nightwing and don't you forget that you little worm!" Nightwing growled through his electronically enhanced voice.

"My apologies, little man," Penguin chuckled. "I meant no offence, I just like to know the names of the people that I am about to hurt."

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The three vigilantes were spaced out, evenly, across the street to allow them to each make use of their weapons without fear of hurting their fellow vigilantes.

"I really am sorry, but you two - and now him, you just upset things . . . and that means that you just have to go. See you soon."

Penguin slunk back behind his thugs like the coward he really was and the fighting began as the first four thugs came forward and Batman threw the first punch. The adrenalin surged within Nightwing and he found himself relishing the fight as he drove his fists into anything which came close. The thugs were large but Nightwing was a fast mover and he kept moving and dodging. Moving and striking. One thug went down at his fists and he punched the man viciously in the face ensuring that the bastard stayed down.

"Nightwing - move!"

Nightwing rolled out of the way as another thug tried to shoot him with a pistol. Batman threw one of his razor-sharp bat-shaped frisbees at the man, badly cutting his wrist and forcing him to drop the pistol. Nightwing took the opportunity to kick the wounded man to the ground before the criminal could draw another weapon. He felt no remorse for putting down the Penguin's men - they were evil and they deserved everything that they got.

As the boy turned for another target, he saw Catwoman facing off against a pair of men. She was fast and she was able to dodge their powerful punches without a lot of outward effort. Catwoman saw it all as a bit of fun which Batman tolerated but hated. There were times when her lack of seriousness got in the way and put them both at risk. Even at that moment, when she should have been watching Nightwing, she was off on her own, taking on more than she could safely handle.

Batman knew that she would never learn until something bad happened. That night, something bad almost happened as Catwoman showboated with Penguin's goons. Being a well-rounded female in a catsuit, she attracted more than her fair share of attention, but she welcomed it, loving the attention. Nightwing, being new on the scene, had also attracted his own fans. They all wanted to know how good the new kid was.

The boy was tiring fast and the additional attention was beginning to panic him as he fought for his life. He called out to Catwoman, but she was too busy and there was no way for her to easily disengage from the mini skirmish that she had brought upon herself. Batman was on the far side of Catwoman - he could hear Nightwing's calls for help - struggling with his own fighters. However, seeing that Catwoman was fully occupied, he swiftly disengaged from the fight and he ran past his female colleague and on towards Nightwing.

Nightwing's attackers were too intent on having ago at the youngster to properly notice what was going on around them. That was *their* mistake: Hit Girl had taught Batman and Catwoman situational awareness and that the lack of it could be deadly. Batman took down two men before anybody even knew that he was there. Nightwing was very relieved to see Batman tearing into his attackers and a burst

of adrenalin helped him to put down the closest man - the rest decided to make a run for it, like the cowards that they were.

"All done!" Catwoman breathed as the last attackers fled.

There was no sign of Penguin - he had vanished back into the darkness which was Gotham.

The following morning

Sunday, June 12th

Wayne Manor

Bruce and Aiden walked out onto the veranda outside the study.

Selina was studying something which neither of them had seen before. The tan coloured object was coiled up and held in Selina's right hand. With a flick of her wrist, the object uncoiled in a flash, and her right arm came back, behind her head before coming down hard and fast. The whipping sound, followed by the supersonic crack as the loop broke the sound-barrier was crisp and sharp. The tip cut through the air at over 1,500 miles per hour.

"A new toy?" Bruce enquired.

The bullwhip was ten-feet in length and made of tan leather. Selina coiled it back up again before executing another ear-splitting crack.

"You going to be using that in bed?" Aiden quipped.

Selina grinned.

"Oh, Bruce has more than enough marks on him already. . ." she replied with a fiendish grin and a wink.

"I'm about to *crack* some eggs and *whip* up an omelette," Alfred called out. "Anybody interested in a spot of lunch?"