

Thursday, December 31st, 2015

Gotham

The clock was ticking and we had only seconds before it was too late.

We made it to the roof of the building with literally just two seconds to go. I instantly dived into Batman's arms as the clock struck midnight and the city exploded into cheers. It was almost a full two minutes before either of us deigned to break the kiss. It was like trying to give up a drug. Finally, that all important fact of life overtook us and we both had to breathe.

"Happy New Year, Catwoman."

"Happy New Year, Batman."

"Now all the bloody snogging's over with; a Happy New Year to you both!" Alfred quipped over the comms.

"Happy New Year, Alfred!" We both answered with a slight giggle.

Friday, January 1st, 2016

Another year.

What might a new year in Gotham offer for the likes of Bruce Wayne and Selina Kyle? There would be good, but being Gotham, it would also be tempered with something bad. Things were very different than before. Bruce was no longer alone. He had a partner. He had a cause. He had a purpose. That same partner supported him in every endeavour.

All in all, I was happy.

What else could a bloody butler in Gotham want?

Sometime after ten that morning . . .

"Good morning!"

"Is it?" Selina moaned as she almost staggered into the kitchen.

"We seem to be missing somebody," Alfred commented with a smirk.

"He's still comatose . . ."

"Bacon and eggs, good lady?"

"Oh, God, no!" Selina squealed. "A glass of milk would be nice, thank you, Alfred."

"A glass of milk for the cat . . ."

Alfred winced as he heard Selina's head hit the kitchen table followed by a deep groan. The two of them had been galivanting around Gotham until the wee hours and as such were . . . what was the term? Knackered – that was it!

“Burning the candle from both ends is not going to do either of you any good,” Alfred warned seriously.

“I know . . .”

“Why don’t you two take a break and go somewhere warm and tranquil,” Alfred suggested.

“A perfect idea, Alfred!” Bruce commented as he made his way to the seat opposite the collapsed Selina who had been talking into the table. “Just don’t start lecturing about that damn double-ended candle . . .”

“Too late,” Selina moaned.

“Right!” Alfred dictated. “One holiday – by God, even if you two don’t need one, I bloody well do!”

Author’s Note: *To bring this story in line with Forsaken, a small-ish time-jump is in order. Interceding events will be covered in an offshoot story.*

A little over four months later
Monday, 9th May, 2016

Gotham City
Wayne Manor

“Master Bruce!”

“Yes, Alfred.”

“Phone call from France, for you. . .”

“France?”

“France.

Bruce reached for the nearest extension and lifted the receiver.

“Hello, Bruce Wayne here.”

“Oh, very formal, Mr Wayne!”

“Mindy!”

Twenty minutes later

“She wants us to go to France!” Selina exclaimed. “We’ve only just got back from the boat.”

“Well, it means I can get the Manor back to rights and you two can join the Mile-high Club,” Alfred chuckled.

“I . . . don’t think so?” Bruce muttered with a very red face.

“Would be a first. . .” Selina said with a straight face.

“Take-off at eleven, sir?”

“Thank you, Alfred.”

Tuesday, 10th May 2016

Early Morning

Biarritz, France

On landing, our pilot taxied our Gulfstream G280 into a cavernous Wayne Enterprises hanger.

Already unloading was a giant Lockheed L-100-30 Hercules. We both recognised Marty as he organised the unloading of the cavernous aircraft’s cargo. As we climbed down the steps, several vehicles drove into the hanger.

“Selina, Bruce!”

I turned to see both Chloe and Megan running towards us. They then gave us both enormous hugs.

“What are you *doing* here?” Chloe exclaimed.

“I needed to check on my French assets,” I explained somewhat cryptically.

“Anything, to get outta Gotham!” Selina grimaced.

“It’s good to see you guys,” Mindy said as she hugged Selina.

“It’s good to see *you*, Mindy, you too, Dave, and the others. . .” Selina replied. “A few more recruits, I see.”

“This is my eldest daughter, Stephanie,” Mindy offered. “Stephanie, please meet Selina Kyle, and her boyfriend, Bruce Wayne!”

“Mindy!” Selina exclaimed with a blush.

“I could spot it a mile away, girl!”

“Good to meet you, Stephanie; I look forward to getting to know you,” Selina said, in an eager effort to change the subject!

Mindy introduced us to some other new members, both from *Fusion* as well as those from *Vengeance*, in the UK. Selina was very pleased to see the twins who took great pride in showing off their Balisongs and Anne-Marie showed off an amazing set of Butterfly swords. It was obvious that the twins had thrived since leaving Gotham.

“It’s not often that something from Gotham turns out so well,” Selina commented.

..._...

Stephanie, and another new girl, Saoirse, brought over a young boy of maybe eleven-years-old.

“Aiden – this is Bruce and Selina; you will be safe with them and a long way away from the CIA,” Mindy said in introduction.

“Hi, Aiden,” I said as I held out my right hand. “We have a home for you. . .”

“Hi,” Aiden replied, shaking my outstretched hand.

“Selina.”

“Hi, Selina.”

“You obey Selina and Bruce; they will look after you and they will help you to adjust,” Mindy said.

“You need to talk, Aiden, then me, Stephanie, even Saoirse; we will be available if you need us.”

“Thanks, Mindy.”

The boy was nervous as we led him aboard the executive jet and when he took a seat beside a window – he actually smiled.

Somewhere over the North Atlantic

“What’s Gotham like?”

Bruce grimaced at the question and had to consider a response.

On their return to the city, they had found a virtual warzone. The city had been tearing itself apart – worse than usual, which was saying something in a city that was its own worst enemy. Some guy called Jerome had ‘come back to life’ and he was inciting mass rioting and God only knew what else. To be honest, a trip to Europe was not exactly what Selina and Bruce required at that moment as their first night out on the town after being away for four months had been hard.

Very hard.

Two days earlier. . .

Sunday, 8th May 2016

Gotham City

“What the hell. . .?”

Bruce was astounded by what he saw of his home city. Selina was speechless. Black smoke drifted across the city and the GCPD appeared to have their hands full in a major way.

That evening, after a hearty dinner, the two teenage vigilantes descended into the Bat Cave. . .

..._...

“Good evening, Master Bruce, Miss Selina.”

“Good evening, Lucius,” Bruce replied.

“Good to see ya,” Selina added.

“I have just completed the upgrades on your motorcycles and combat suits. Most will be self-explanatory but I would suggest not using anything new in a compromising situation until you have tested it before hand.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Selina said impatiently as she headed to get changed.

“Thanks, Lucius,” Bruce said quickly as he rushed off after his girl.

“Lucius. . .”

“Alfred! Good trip?”

“Lovely – the sun was perfect.”

“Anything, err – happen?”

“Oh, yeah – chronic prophylactic overuse in my opinion,” Alfred replied dryly.

Lucius Fox raised an eyebrow and he went back to his computer.

Later that evening. . .

Cobble Hill

Beaver Boulevard and North 9 Street

The gunfire was decidedly enthusiastic.

The unmarked GCPD unit, a red light flashing on the dashboard, was liberally peppered with bullet holes. Several yards away, a similarly perforated marked GCPD unit rested, one dead and one wounded officer on the ground beside it. Several men who had taken cover behind a parked van were pouring fire from machineguns and pistols at the two GCPD Detectives crouched behind the unmarked GCPD unit.

None of the participants in the gunfight saw nor heard the approaching motorcycles as they came to a halt thirty yards up the street. The two black-clad Gotham vigilantes studied the scene and took in friend and foe alike. It was eight to two – fairly good odds. After leaving their motorcycles, and Catwoman her helmet, the two vigilantes advanced on the eight examples of Gotham scum but not before one of the crouched Detectives detected their approach and one, a tall man, with short hair and a purposeful demeanour. He just shook his head and nudged his partner, a grizzled individual in a trilby.

..._...

Catwoman pounced on the van and stood on the roof looking down on the sheltering scum.

“You gentlemen having fun tonight?” she called down and several surprised faces looked up at her.

“Get her!” a voice yelled but before anybody could raise a pistol towards the cat-like individual, one of the scum caught something out of the corner of his eye and he turned to see a brief swish of a cloak then just the vague shape of an armoured fist as it slammed into his face.

The seven remaining men scrambled to handle the unexpected change in their evening’s schedule as Catwoman somersaulted overhead to land before them.

“Come and get me, boys,” she hissed.

Three went for her as the remaining four went for Batman who was smiling hugely. He spun around and kicked, putting two down directly. The next two attempted to bring their pistols to bear but Batman was ready and he smacked one pistol out of a hand and then grasped the other, twisting it savagely and the holder had no choice but to let go or lose his fingers.

"I hate to use guns, but for you, I'm making an exception. . ." Batman growled as he smashed the pistol into the man's face putting him down in a cloud of blood. "Anybody left . . .?"

"Nope!" Catwoman called out as the final piece of Gotham scum hit the sidewalk. "Here comes the GCPD!"

Batman looked over at the two GCPD Detectives as they strolled over, reloading and then holstering their pistols as they came.

"Did ya miss us?" Catwoman preened as she sidled up to the bearded, trilby wearing Detective.

Detective Harvey Bullock laughed out loud in a very raucous fashion. "I love you guys; welcome back!"

"We've been doing fine without you two," Detective Jim Gordon grumbled. "But, thanks for the assistance."

..._...

"What the fuck is that creepy laughter?" Catwoman demanded as laughter began to be heard over the sound of traffic.

"That would be our new problem," Bullock replied. "Jerome 'I'm a fucking nutcase' Valeska – he died in Arkham but now he's alive again."

"Normally, that would seem strange," Batman commented. "However, this is Gotham."

"That's exactly what I said," Gordon chuckled before he turned serious again. "He has followers – they've been around ever since Galavan killed him on stage."

Batman froze, remembering that event.

"Those followers think it's all a fuckin' game," Bullock complained. "They don't care who they hurt, who they kill – they're just plain wacko."

Just then, a pair of GCPD units appeared and skidded to a halt. Uniformed men jumped out and began to quickly take control of the scene.

"Time to get back to business," Gordon said. "You two . . ."

He was talking to thin air but he smiled as he heard the two motorcycles powering away.

The adrenalin was still surging through their systems, so, for no other reason than they both wanted more action, they headed east . . . towards The Narrows.

Earlier in the evening, they had given The Narrows a wide berth, not wanting to dive into any action too early. Now, as they crossed Trillium Street, they felt foreboding as they neared the stinking cesspit. Fox's description of the island echoed through Batman's mind: *'The Narrows. You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.'* The description was very apt.

They were both, very quickly, reminded of why The Narrows was deemed the most dangerous part of Gotham as bullets flew in their direction out of the darkness.

..._...

“Fuck!” Catwoman breathed as she took cover behind a parked van while several men ran down the street towards them.

“We’re in trouble,” Batman acknowledged as he scanned the controls on his motorcycle.

He touched a soft-button on the touchscreen which had appeared during their absence. The button was labelled ‘**AA-12**’ and sounded vaguely familiar in his mind. A pulsing red button illuminated on the hand grip, under his right thumb and he pressed the button. . .

The roar of shotgun shells detonating echoed around the buildings of Hickory Street and four men went down under the onslaught, the others diving for cover as Batman sped past. He applied his brakes and came to a rapid halt several yards down the street. Catwoman dropped the last two men with her pistol as she rode down the sidewalk towards her friend.

“You appear to be embracing this darker side to Batman!” Catwoman commented dryly as she examined the four dead men on the street.

“I had no idea that I had goddamn shotguns!” Batman retorted angrily.

Catwoman took a moment to examine her own motorcycle.

“I’ve got them too!” she squealed in extreme happiness.

“I am so pleased for you and your shotguns,” Batman replied sarcastically as he indicated The Narrows. “Can we *please* move on?”

“With pleasure,” Catwoman chuckled as she ran back to her motorcycle.

They crossed over the waterway and they entered The Narrows.

The Narrows was the heart of everything that was bad about Gotham.

Violent crime was commonplace and the GCPD avoided the area unless they were in numbers. Nobody who valued their lives dared to go out into the Narrows after dark. Many people still lived on the island – mainly those who could not afford to live anywhere else. Those people were virtual prisoners in their own homes after dark while the streets below would echo with shouting, screaming . . . and worse.

..._...

She had had to go out. Her young son needed milk before he would go to sleep. She had no choice but to leave the five-year-old girl with her twelve-year-old daughter and head outside, two blocks, to the nearest late-night store. She tried to ignore the usual cacophony of noise and kept to the shadows – until two men stepped out of some darker shadows.

“Well, well, what have we here?”

“Please, leave me alone.”

“She looks nice – hows about some fun, Hank?”

“I could do with a nice bit of juicy pussy, Jimmy.”

The woman tried to run – she got about twenty feet before she ran into what seemed to be a brick wall. She looked up into . . . into blackness, darker than the night.

“Hey!” Hank yelled out. “That motherfucker is ours – go find your own bitch!”

“Yeah!” Jimmy added as he drew a large knife and raised it – then he screamed.

The knife clattered to the ground and Jimmy stared at what was embedded in the palm of his hand. It was metallic and non-reflective in the limited street lighting. The device appeared to be shaped into a bat shape – a bat with outstretched wings. Hank stared at his friend before he scowled and drew a pistol. The woman screamed as she was enveloped by something black and all-encompassing. She sensed several bullets striking the covering and then nothing as she heard the thud of a body hitting the ground.

“You can come out now.”

The voice was electronically enhanced and scary but somehow, the woman knew that she was safe. She looked up as what turned out to be a cloak was removed from around her and she came face to face with the Batman. She looked over at the two men – both were on the ground. A woman stood over them – Catwoman. The two Gotham vigilantes were rumoured to haunt the streets at night – not many had ever seen them, but there they were, having saved her life.

“What are you doing out after dark,” Batman enquired.

“I had to get milk for my son – he’s at home with my daughter.”

“Let’s go shopping!” Catwoman hissed as she kicked the second man into unconsciousness.

If the clerk at the late-night store had been surprised to find Gotham’s two active vigilantes in his store buying milk, he did not show it. Batman and Catwoman escorted the woman all the way home, only leaving her once she had gone inside and locked her doors.

The woman’s last sight of the two vigilantes outside her home was a swish of the cloak and both quickly faded into the darkness.