



**Nightwing #13**  
Batkid

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*Nightwing*  
#13 "Ain't Never Had A Friend Like Me"  
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Dick stepped off the elevator, shuffling through a pile of papers, and trying to make sense of it all. Sloan was really piling it on. Dick didn't remember having this much work to take home with him since that substitute teacher he'd been unlucky enough to have back in the sixth grade.

"Excuse me," he apologized, looking up as he bumped into someone. Mischievous dark eyes met his own.

"Hey! Haven't seen you in a while! What's up?"

The girl smiled. "I'm fine. But the question is... how're you holding up? You know, what with having to be in the same office as Sloan all day and all."

Dick grinned. "Oh, it's going more smoothly now than at first. I'm holding my own."

She lifted a brow. "Sounds good... but isn't that a little too much homework?"

He shrugged, grinning. "Just the usual."

Tiffany groaned. "How in the world do you do it? I couldn't stand him a week!"

He glanced at her as they walked out to the street. "Ah, you get used to it." He stopped. "You know what? I'm starved. Whaddaya say we stop for a pizza?"

Tiffany grinned. "Sounds good to me."

"Great. We should carpool what with gas prices being what they are... " He gestured at his parked cycle as it gleamed in the sunlight.

Her eyes lit up.

Tiffany laughed as Dick's stomach rumbled, and she nodded at a man who held the door to the restaurant open for them. "I could hear your stomach over your bike," she teased.

He groaned. "I'm starving! I got up late, so I missed breakfast, and had time only for a quick lunch."

She mock-frowned. "Sounds serious." Striding up to the counter, she called to the employee behind it, "Large pie, with everything on it, and three Cokes, please!" She turned back to Dick. "What, you didn't find a table yet?"

The two walked over to an empty booth. "Three Cokes?" Dick asked her quizzically.

She smiled. "Ya never know who you're gonna meet up with." He scanned the restaurant. A tall, young man, who looked as if he'd played football in his college days, walked in.

"Hey, Dave!" Tiffany stood up halfway, waving an arm.

The man walked over, smiling easily. "Hey, Grayson, how's it going? Tiffany and I couldn't stand to wait any longer to see how you were liking your job, so she decided to 'rescue' you."

Dick was surprised, but had to laugh. "Rescue? At the end of the work-day?"

Dave grinned. "Well, now, we would have had trouble with our boss if we'd gone during, right?"

"And we know you have to pick up Sloan's lunch for him just about every day, so we didn't think that we could go then," Tiffany added.

Shaking his head, Dick said, "Well, I guess it's better late than never." Then he asked, "You've been spying on me?"

The woman shook her dark braids. "Not really spying... just... noticing."

"Uh-huh... " was all Dick had time to say before their pizza was ready, and after that, he was too busy eating to say anything except, 'Hand me a napkin, wouldja?'

Pulling up beside a red convertible, Dick brought his motorcycle to a stop. Tiffany climbed off the back seat and removed her helmet. She handed it to Dick, and he tucked it under his arm.

"Thanks for the ride," she said, leaning against her car.

"No problem."

She unlocked the door of her car. "Well... I guess I'll see ya later."

Dick stowed the helmet and waved. Then he revved his engine and headed for the parking garage door. Over the powerful running of his engine, he almost missed the high-pitched shriek that sounded behind him. He braked hard and swung his bike around in the dark garage, scanning the cars. Near Tiffany's car, a dark figure was standing over a motionless form on the ground. He strained to see across the dark garage even as he sped over.

"Tiffany!"

The person standing turned around, fists raised as he ducked a swing from Dick.

"Yeah?"

The teen stared. "Wha-"

"What, you didn't think that I could take care of myself? Against a pathetic punk like him?" She gestured offhandedly at the man just beginning to stir.

Dick looked at the 'pathetic punk'. The man was big- looked like he spent a lot of time in the gym. His tattooed arms bulged with muscles. Looking back at Tiffany, he quickly compared his large frame to her small, athletic one. *But then*, he thought, *look at Batgirl*.

"No, I just-"

"Well, then, what's your problem?"

"Nothing... I just... " He stopped, relieved as a uniformed security guard ran up.

"What's going on?" The older man asked gruffly. Then he noticed the thug, just beginning to crawl away. "He attack you, miss?"

Tiffany nodded.

"Sorry I couldn't get here sooner," he apologized to her, as he turned to Dick. "Thanks, son... I wish we had a few boys like you on the team."

Dick bit his lip as he glanced over at his friend.

Tiffany's eyes widened. "You think he rescued me?" She asked in an indignant tone.

The bewildered guard just stared at her. "I just assumed-"

"You just assumed that I couldn't take care of myself? That I wouldn't be able to take down a pathetic jerk like him... "

Dick swung on his cycle and headed out onto the street, leaving the poor guard to Tiffany's rebukes.

Back home, he dumped Sloan's papers onto the coffee table, to be tackled later. The teen grabbed a Coke, then sat back at his desk, tapping the hard wooden surface absently. Since he'd begun working for Sloan, the lawyer had acted strange... unexpectedly being called out of the office... claiming a work overload when Dick knew he had hardly any cases

going on... weird phone calls. Of all the odd phone conversations he'd overheard, the one at the restaurant during his date with Kory had been the strangest by far.

*"I'll have it... . Already told him... have the coke... Miss Emma ready... regular... place."*

He wrote it down on a notepad, staring at it, almost willing it to give him the answers.

*"I'll have it... . Already told him... have the coke... Miss Emma ready... regular... place."*

Reflecting on the most prevalent crimes in NYC at the moment-gang wars, drug sales, and break-ins-he wondered whether Sloan might possibly have been referring to something drug-related. Criminal slang was almost impossible to keep up with- from 'classics' such as 'stool pigeon' and 'dip' to trickier terminology like 'czar' or 'grease'. He glanced at the paper again. But wait. If he was right...

Yes. He was. He had to be.

Torn between elation at cracking the code and disappointment at his employer, Dick stood up, grabbing his Nightwing suit. It was dark already, making it the perfect time for a 'visit', and it he was ready for his nightly patrol, anyway.

He slipped his mask on, and looked at the paper one last time as he passed by the desk on his way out. He wanted to be wrong. While he had never really liked the lawyer, and trusted him only about as far as he could throw him, Dick still hoped he'd overlooked something.

He sighed and slipped out the door. He'd find out the truth soon enough.

"Get the goods yet?"

The attorney jumped at the unexpected sound.

"Who- who's there?"

Silence.

Sloan punched the remote control button, cutting Jay Leno off halfway through his monologue. He set his drink on the coffee table in front of him, and looked around warily.

"Hello?"

"That isn't the answer I came for."

The lawyer cringed and spun around. The voice was coming from a different corner of the house now.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

A shadow played against the wall, and a breeze blew the curtains gently. Both occurrences were innocent enough on their own, but to the wary lawyer, they posed an imagined threat. He backed up, closing his hand around the poker as he bumped against the fireplace.

It was snatched out of his hand. He opened his mouth to yell, only to have a gloved hand clamp firmly across it. He could feel the intruder's breath, warm on his neck.

"I think you have a good idea," the voice whispered in his ear. Sloan winced as the hand abruptly released his mouth. "N- no, really... what're you talking about?"

"'Miss Emma'... 'coke'... tell me... how much did you sell them for?"

It was hard to tell in the dark, but Nightwing was pretty sure Sloan's jaw had landed somewhere on the floor.

"I- how did-?"

"It doesn't matter how I know. What matters is that I do."

By now, the sly lawyer had regained enough composure to play innocent once more.

"I really have no idea what you're talking about." He pulled away from Nightwing, surprised that the stranger let him go. Squinting in the dim light, he studied the intruder.

"So, it's Nightwing, eh? Look, kid... I thought you were supposed to fight criminals, not harass the innocent."

The vigilante's glare silenced him. It was one of the more effective ways Batman had of intimidating... and his former protégé had learned it perfectly.

"I need to know... did you receive or sell the goods yet?" Nightwing enunciated each of the last words clearly and loudly, rising in tone steadily.

Sloan crossed his arms and leaned against the couch.

"I really don't-

Nightwing cut him off.

"You're starting to sound like a broken record," he growled, listening to the sirens outside. They were coming closer.

"Try interrogating someone guilty."

The sirens grew louder. "I tried that. It didn't work. Maybe I should try more... effective... methods." The masked teen stared hard at Sloan.

The lawyer shrank back a little as Nightwing took a menacing step toward him.

The sirens were shrieking now.

Nightwing glanced out the window at the flashing lights approaching. Sloan's house was at the end of a cul-de-sac, which gave him a clear view of the vehicles.

Sloan looked, too. The ambulances halted two doors away.

Nightwing turned back to his captive. The familiar, superior smirk on the lawyer's face irritated him, but he ignored it. He drew himself to his full height. Well-muscled and shrouded by shadows, he created an imposing figure- disturbing enough to wipe the look off Sloan's face.

"I'll be back," he promised.

"I'll be waiting," came the classic reply, spoken with an only slightly quavering voice.

But the comment was spoken to the air. The open window and Sloan's own memories were the only evidence of Nightwing's visit.

The lawyer went off in search of a Valium.

Walking through the door to his apartment at the end of his patrol, Nightwing peeled his mask off and threw it on the couch. He took a shower, and felt some of the stress of the night melt away as he did. Too tired to eat, he climbed into bed and fell asleep almost immediately.

On his way to the office, he reflected on his meet with Sloan. It had been practically useless, he thought disgustedly. He was no closer to learning anything new than he had been when he'd heard the first phone call. It would be hard working beside someone he strongly believed to be criminal.

He was early; Sloan hadn't yet arrived. Unlocking the door, he stepped in, and set about readying the computer for use later in the day. The printer, he noticed, was nearly out of toner. He stepped into the supply closet to search for an extra cartridge. He heard the office door open, as someone stepped in. He was about to greet Sloan, when he heard the familiar beeps of a telephone number being punched. He listened carefully to the noises, committing them to his memory. Sloan began to speak in

hushed tones, and Dick strained to hear him. He couldn't hear much, but gathered that the attorney was reporting on the visit Nightwing had paid him the night before.

"He knows... mentioned ... Emma... and the Coke; the whole shipment... just snuck in... didn't say... thing... "

Dick smiled grimly as the lawyer agreed several times to something the person on the other line said, then ended the call. Hearing the door to the inner office close, he looked around, and, seeing no one, walked out. He waited a few minutes, and then walked over to the office door, opened it, and shut it loudly.

"Yo, Mr. Sloan!"

"You're late!" Came the reply from the other side of the shut door.

"Yeah, sorry about that... the traffic was awful down on Main Street."

The door opened, and the lawyer stepped out. Although he had his ever-present swagger and general superior attitude, the man's eyes were bloodshot, and heavy bags were under his eyes. His socks were mismatched, and he hadn't shaved.

"Hey, are you sick or something, Sir?" *Looks like I spooked him more than he let on.*

"Now why would you ask me something like that?" The lawyer asked sarcastically. "You should have called in sick last week, Grayson, when you had that cold. I was up all night with a headache, and my nose was completely stopped up. I thought you had more sense than to come in spreading sickness around the building."

Dick's eyebrow shot up in amusement, but he kept a poker face. "Sorry, sir, it won't happen again," he apologized as convincingly as he could.

The man only grunted. "I hope not. And, I hope you learned something from this. How I'm ever going to get any work done like this is beyond me." He walked into his office grumbling, and left Dick to try to smother his laughter.

Dick found the ink cartridge he'd needed earlier, and installed it in the printer. After a few hours of quiet work, Sloan came in.

"Grayson!"

Dick looked up.

"I need you to run out and pick up a bottle of aspirin. That cold you gave me is giving me a splitting headache," he said, somewhere between accusingly and pathetically.

"Sure thing." Happy to get out of the office, Dick left. He got to the elevator when he remembered he'd left his wallet in the pocket of his coat-which was resting on the back of a chair in Sloan's office. Heading back, he found the fax machine just beginning to spit out a paper. Glancing toward the closed door to the office where Sloan was, he slipped his coat on while he waited for the paper to come through. When it did, he grabbed it and scanned it quickly. His eyes widened. No wonder Sloan had wanted him out of the office. On the single sheet was a list of drugs and numbers.

Dick thought fast. He didn't have a lot of time before Sloan came out to get the list. Quickly, he ran the page through the copier, hoping that the lawyer wouldn't hear it. As soon as it was done, he grabbed his copy, stuck it in his coat pocket, and replaced the original back on the fax machine. He practically tiptoed out of the office, relaxing only when he was standing beside his cycle.

Pulling the list out of his pocket, he read through it more carefully than before. Many of the drug names were slang, but he recognized most of them. Narcotics, stimulants, marijuana... It looked as though Sloan was a busy man. The list seemed to be a recording of sales and receipts for illegal drug transactions. He folded the paper up and stuck in his wallet-he'd work on it later.

Not wanting Sloan to suspect that anything was amiss, he hurried to buy the aspirin. He returned to the office to find the lawyer in one of his worst moods yet-and the paper gone from the fax machine. Putting up

with the man for the rest of the day was nearly impossible, but at last the day was over.

He wanted to get to work on his new lead, but first had to stop at the Laundromat to pick up his jeans. When he got home, he fairly flew up the stairs to his apartment. When he arrived, he was surprised to find the door already unlocked. He entered quietly, hoping that his home hadn't been broken into while he'd been gone.

Tossing his sweatshirt on the couch, he glanced around, looking for the intruder. Peeking around the corner, he saw a dark head bent intently over his desk, reading something. He sneaked up behind, then tapped the intruder on the shoulder with one hand, while forming a fist with the other.

"Tiffany!"

The girl's eyes, which were normally impish, now blazed with fury.

"Dick! I thought you knew better than this!"

"Better than what?" Still shocked by her unexpected 'visit', he was confused and angry.

"How could you get mixed up in something like this? I thought you would have understood the dangers of it!"

Had she found his vigilante costume or mask? He'd hidden it as best he could, but at the moment, nothing she did would surprise him.

"The dangers of what, Tiffany? And you'd better have a mighty good explanation as to why you broke into my apartment."

Her eyes flashed. "I did come over to see if you wanted to grab a bite to eat with me and a few of the guys from the office, but forget about it. And for your information, I didn't 'break in'- some jerk saved me the trouble", she continued sarcastically. "Several units on your side were burglarized. The police caught the prowler while he was in the middle of

robbing your place. If it's any comfort, I don't think he had time to get anything."

Dick considered. He remembered punching in the codes for his alarm... but had he actually hit the enter button?

Tiffany still ranted on. "I just wanted to make sure you weren't hurt. Since you weren't home yet, I decided to write you a quick note and came over to the desk to get some paper, when I found this." She held up a small piece of paper. It was the same one as he'd written Sloan's phone conversation on.

He glanced at it. "So?" He asked her coolly.

"So? So, how long have you been into drugs, Dick?"

Surprised that she'd recognized the terminology, he bit his lip. "What're you talking about?"

"C'mon, Dick- 'Miss Emma'... 'Coke'... Duh! Morphine and cocaine. Don't you that that junk'll kill you?"

*Oh, great... now she thinks I'm a fence or a junkie. Good luck getting out of this one, Grayson.*

"Look, Tiff- I'm not really into all that. I got an offer from someone I know, and was thinking about reporting it to the cops." He let just the right amount of hesitation creep in. "But I've known the guy for years, so I keep putting it off," he said guiltily.

*Lame... if I were her, I wouldn't buy it.*

But Tiffany considered, her astute eyes studying him carefully.

"I believe you," she said, much more calmly than before.

He raised an eyebrow. "May I ask why?"

She shrugged. "Partially because I trust you, but mostly because your eyes are normal-your pupils aren't constricted, you don't have bruises to

indicate injections, you're not underweight." She gave him a small smile.

"And I'm just hoping that you aren't a dealer."

No bruises? Dick fought not to smile. It was a good thing Tiff hadn't had a look at his *back!* Or that he hadn't had to block a crowbar with his ulna this week...

"But if I were taking morphine, there wouldn't be any marks from injections-it's sniffed."

"No... actually, it's taken either by injection or oral-" She caught herself. "Or so I've heard," she added hastily.

"Hmm. You seem to know a lot about the subject."

She smiled slightly. "No, not really... just what I've heard or read."

He nodded, but said nothing else on the topic, knowing that the woman wouldn't offer any more information.

Taking the paper from her hand, he tossed it back on the desk.

"So... about that food you were talking about... " He prompted.

She hesitated, glancing at the paper, then smiled, the old impish look returning to her eyes. "I know this great place that has the *best* Peking duck."

Chinese cuisine? Dick groaned inwardly as he followed her out.

Back home that evening, Dick studied the paper carefully. He glanced at his watch. Really, he should already have been out on the streets as Nightwing over an hour ago. But if he was going to be a P.I., he'd better get to work analyzing his evidence.

... Of which he had nothing concrete. He'd be laughed out of any courtroom. Even if he managed to gather evidence as Nightwing, it

wouldn't be admissible in court. Anything that Nightwing could get Sloan to reveal might be useless against him.

He'd been able to trace the fax number to a disconnected line-whoever had sent it hadn't lost time in covering up his tracks. The list, although it gave him a good idea about the majority of the drugs on the streets, supplied no solid leads.

Which meant he was back to square one. Darn.

*Or maybe not...*

He ran to his desk , grabbed his phone, then plopped back on the couch. Closing his eyes, he did his best to remember the tones he'd heard when Sloan had reported on Nightwing's visit and interrogation. Dick began punching buttons, trying to duplicate the sounds he'd heard dialed that afternoon.

Ten minutes and fifteen wrong numbers later, he had it.

As soon as he'd tried the combination and the tones sounded, he knew it was the right set of numbers. He grabbed a piece of paper and wrote it down.

Staring at the phone in his hand, he took a deep breath, and dialed the number.

*Ring...*

*Ring...*

*Ring...*

**To Be Continued!**

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## From the same author on Feedbooks

Nightwing #10 (2006)

Nightwing: Black Friday Blues.

When terrorists take hostages at a busy superstore, it's up to Nightwing to save them. He dodges bullets and battles ruthless terrorists while racing the clock, coming face-to-face with a murderous madman who has no reservations when it comes to killing anyone in his way.

Nightwing #21 (2007)

Nightwing: Kiss in the Night.

They're back! Night-Thief and Nocturna are back in action after breaking out of prison, with Nightwing hot on their trail. But Dick had better watch his back--Night-Thief has a score to settle with him.

Nightwing #22 (2007)

Nightwing: To Catch A Night Thief

Nightwing is hot on Night Thief's trail... who is hot on Nocturna's trail... But finding a man who doesn't wish to be found is tricky when the usual wellsprings of information run dry...

Nightwing #11 (2007)

Nightwing: Lawyers and Other Slimy Things (Part 1).

Meth, crack, cocaine... they're on the street, and Dick, as Nightwing, is trying to make sure no one else gets hurt. In addition to that, he has to convince Rachel Green to let him become a P.I.... but runs into trouble with his supervisor. And what about the mysterious phone call his boss takes...?

Nightwing #15 (2007)

Nightwing: Hopelessly Devoted to You

Nightwing #16 (2007)

Nightwing: Beauty and the Mess.

Nightwing #17 (2007)

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

Nightwing #18 (2007)

Nightwing: Heart of a Champion.

Just as Nightwing starts to close in on the drug gang, more problems arise. He and Tiffany will have to move fast if they're going to crack the case, but the team ends up with more than they bargained for! Can they solve the case before the crooks get away and before one character is written off—forever? Find out as the adventure continues in this exciting issue!

Nightwing #19 (2007)

Nightwing: Little Boy Lost.

Jake has disappeared and Nightwing's on his trail! But will he be too late?

Nightwing #20 (2007)

Nightwing: Be My Escape.

We pick this up right where Nightwing #19--left off-- with Nightwing in the gang's hideout! Dick is finally face-to-face with the mysterious Marty, and confronts him, Sloan, and the rest of the gang in this action-packed conclusion!

Nightwing #23 (2008)

Nightwing: Behind the Mask

A HUGE twist on Nightwing's case in this action-packed issue! Nightwing, Nocturna, and Night-Thief meet again--but with what consequences?

Nightwing #32 (2008)

Nightwing: More Than Useless

Robberies, shootings, and break-ins are all a part of daily Gotham life... Luckily, so are the crimefighters who stop them! That is... until now...

Nightwing #33 (2008)

Nightwing: Vengeance Served Cold.

When a Wayne Enterprises vice president is found dead - apparently by suicide - Batman becomes suspicious. He and Robin must piece the clues together to find out exactly how the man died - and who killed him.

Nightwing #14 (2009)

Nightwing: Something Wicked This Way Comes

Nightwing #37 (2009)

Nightwing: Dance of Death.

When a ballerina unexpectedly collapses during a performance, Batman and Robin dive into the investigation to find out who killed the dancer... and why.

Nightwing #39 (2009)

Nightwing: Living Nightmare

There's a villain loose in Gotham, and it's up to Batman and Robin to stop him. They may be in for more than they've bargained for, however, because the tables can be turned in the blink of an eye!

Nightwing #34 (2009)

Nightwing: A Scent of Danger.

A lead on a case takes the new Dynamic Duo to California... with horrifying consequences! Now the Boy Wonder is determined to make good--even if it means taking on Batman... and Alfred!

Nightwing #35 (2009)

Nightwing: Volatile Villainy.

Why is one of Nightwing's old enemies trying to draw him out? And can he be trusted?

Nightwing #36 (2009)

Nightwing: Over a Barrel and Under the Gun.

As the threat level rises, Nightwing races against the clock to find-- and stop-- whoever's out to get Sloan. Every second counts!

Nightwing #38 (2009)

Nightwing: Curtain Call.

Nightwing #40 (2009)

Nightwing: Formula for Fear.

Caught in the Scarecrow's trap, Batman comes face to face with his darkest terrors!

Nightwing #41 (2009)

Nightwing: Live and Let Die.

Nightwing #44 (2010)

Nightwing: Murder by Midnight.

With Bruce back where he belongs, Dick Grayson strikes out in a bold new direction! Brace yourselves for murder, mayhem, thrills and chills!



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