



Nightwing #31
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Published: 2008

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): Comics DC2 Tutankhamen Nightwing Batman Ankhesenamun
"King Tut"

Nightwing

Issue #31: Riddle of the Sphinx, part two

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Richard Grayson sat before the large bank of monitors, bleary-eyed as he held his head in his hands. One more time, he read over the reports that Tim and Alfred had managed to gather on the various people with connections to the Tutankhamen exhibit up in New York City—from which it would soon depart, and in Gotham, where it would soon arrive. He gave a hefty sigh and finally leaned back in the chair. He blinked as he stared at the screens, and then blinked again. When his eyes opened next, Alfred was next to him, and something in the air smelled delicious. His stomach rumbled and the butler gave him a bemused look.

“Your breakfast is cold, Master Dick,” Alfred stated as Dick stared at him.

“When did you bring it down? It's not time for breakfast yet, is it?” Dick looked around as his sluggish brain struggled to orient itself. His eyes popped open when he caught the time on the display panel next to the central keyboard. “Oh. Um... so, what's for lunch?”

“How droll,” Alfred answered with a slight smirk. “Get upstairs, Master Dick. There is a large, comfortable bed waiting for you. Then we'll talk about lunch.”

Dick chuckled as he snatched up the toast off the tray, and stood, stretched and let the kinks in his body crackle in response. “Right. I hope you thanked Tim for me this morning. He did great with the computer checks.

"He'll be delighted. He seemed disappointed that he failed to locate the digital equivalent of a smoking gun for you. Did you find anything useful in the files?" Alfred followed Dick upstairs and into the mansion.

"Well, my prime suspects were the McElroys. They didn't seem to pan out, but I almost wonder if the younger son, Geoff, might be my Nightwing," Dick answered with a grin.

"Oh? That would seem... fortuitous. In regard to your seeking out your would-be replacement, I mean."

"Yeah, I guess. On the other hand, former captain of the gymnastics team in college, right age and build, and most important, he's been paying a lot of his friends back on a lot of loans."

"I don't quite follow, sir," Alfred replied as he gathered the discarded apparel left in Dick's wake once they entered the bedroom.

"His friends have all been buying different kinds of survival gear for him," Dick called out from the bathroom, where he washed his face vigorously, and stared at the stubble he'd need to shave off that night. "High-quality stuff. Cutting edge, in some cases. At least, that's what it looks like, considering the list of debits and credits to their various accounts and cards. A little from one person, a little more from another. Never enough to make his buddies suspicious, but one look at his bank accounts tells me he had the money to just buy all this stuff outright. The family's not hurting for money, even if they're not quite the Waynes." He walked back into the bedroom, and tossed a damp towel over his shoulder. Alfred caught it deftly, even as he rolled his eyes upwards.

"I see, sir. So he's doing on a smaller scale what we've long done for our own crusade. Quite clever."

"Our crusade'?" Dick teased his old friend. He slipped into the bed and yawned long and hard. "Oh wow. This feels too good."

"You have a business meeting with Mr. Fox at corporate headquarters at two this afternoon. I'll see if we can't move it back an hour. Sleep well, Master Dick." Alfred walked to the door and then paused. "And

excellent detective work." The door clicked in Alfred's wake, but Richard Grayson was already beyond hearing it.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Brighton."

Cory Brighton turned in his chair and watched Nightwing's lithe form slip in through his window. He swallowed hard and reached for his phone, but the vigilante grabbed his hand first.

"No calling security, Mr. Brighton," Nightwing chided the man in a low, raspy voice. "I'm just here for some information. Hopefully answers."

"What information? What answers?" Brighton whispered back nervously.

"It had to be an inside job stealing Tut's mummy," Nightwing said as he let Brighton go, and slowly paced around the man's desk. "So is it you? Or can I maybe find this person in your personnel records?" He stopped and leaned against a file cabinet. "Well?"

"I'm no thief!" Brighton snapped back as he leaped to his feet. "I don't care who you think you are, you have no right making such wild accusations!"

"Then tell me who *you* think it is, Mr. Brighton."

"What about the university staff? Thought of that? The exhibit has been at the New York History Museum for months now, and nothing, not a peep. The same people in my office have been involved in moving it from place to place. All of the Egyptian delegation has been on this job since it began overseas. So how can it possibly be one of us?" Brighton sat back down and fiddled with a pen as he went on. "But the Gotham people... that's when it gets robbed. And let's face it, Gotham's a cess-pool. You know that better than most, Nightwing. So look at the university staff and stay away from my people."

Nightwing narrowed his eyes and pursed his lips in frustration. "I have ways of knowing that it's not the Gotham U staff. Believe me, I

kn—investigated them very thoroughly. It has to be someone else.”

“So you say,” Brighton replied as he tapped the pen harder on the desk. “I’ve got nothing to tell you.”

Nightwing frowned further now, unsure of his next step. Scaring people into talking wasn't going to work here. *How do the pros do this?* he wondered as he stared down Brighton. *Wish I had that miniature camera already. Then, I could just come later for these damn files.* He glanced over Brighton's desk and then snapped up a set of keys he noticed. “Fine, then. I'll let the files talk for themselves.” He fiddled with the key ring and then opened the cabinet.

“You can't just steal work records!” Brighton yelled. He stood up again and marched up to the vigilante, grabbed the man's shoulder and tried to pull Nightwing away.

Nightwing looked down at the pile of folders, and realized he had no clue which ones to take. Besides, only a small group of people at most could be responsible. Should he really pry into everyone's files to find one or two, maybe three individuals? He slammed the drawer shut angrily and spun around to thrust the keys against Brighton's chest.

“If I find out you've been protecting the crook, I'm coming after you next, Mr. Brighton,” Nightwing threatened. Then he stormed back out of the window.

“Maniac,” Brighton muttered as he stared out the window and tried to control the shaking in his arms and legs.

Theodore “Tanker” Hardy whistled a jaunty tune as he strolled away from the rundown diner. He spun his keys on a thick, callused finger and had a pleased look on his face. Decent grub and a promising job always left him in a good, whistling mood, he reflected, as he walked toward the parking lot and his truck cab.

The whistling stopped suddenly, and the keys spun off his finger as he stared up at the shadow that loomed off the top of his cab. The ears, the

wings, the blank, hollow eyes, they all made Tanker stop short, as ice water filled his shoes.

"Tell me about your job, Tanker," Batman growled as he stared down at the hapless thug.

"Oh geez, I mean, ya gotta believe me, I got no idea what yer—"

Batman perched along the edge of the cab's roof and growled now. Dick fought back the grin that wanted to leak out when he saw the big tough trucker almost sink to his knees, but that would have killed the effect, and so he managed to suppress it.

"It's some chick, she wants an ace driver, and I am, and that's all!"

"The woman's name, Tanker?"

"Um, uh, it's... um... "

"Quit stalling, Tanker! You can make a legit living from trucking... if your legs work." Dick tensed up, prepared to make the intimidation more physical, but fairly sure it wouldn't be necessary.

"I can't think! I mean, she's hot! That's what I remember most! That and that I need ta have my cab ready ta go by tomorrow, noon. She had a great rack, and legs, man, these legs... Does she really need a name?"

Batman sighed inwardly as he leaped down to the ground and loomed over the trucker. "Yes. She does, Tanker."

Tanker's eyes were wide and Dick could practically see the limited brain behind them racing for information. "Terri! Yeah, that was it, Terri something. That's all I remember—the first name—honest, Bats." He gulped and stepped back. "Batman." He grabbed his keys from the ground and stepped back again. "Sir?"

"Nice breasts, great legs. Can you describe anything more useful, Tanker?"

"Brown hair, short. Yeah, short brown hair, um... maybe blue eyes? Not

all that tall, she was maybe... er, this high?" He held his hand up to just below his own chin. "Good shape. I mean, great shape, but she was in good shape, ya know?"

"Where do you bring your truck tomorrow, Tanker? *If* you were to actually make the meeting," Batman asked as he held his position.

"To the old King-Vallee Truck Company," Tanker answered quickly. "The operation's meeting up there. I don't know for what yet, I just know that Terri chick is picking up more help for something."

Batman nodded at the information. "Get out of town, Tanker. Just go." Dick stepped off to one side, fired his grappling line into the air, and lifted up into the late evening shadows.

Tanker, to his credit, raced for his cab, brought the motor roaring to life and sped from Gotham by the most direct route he could find.

Nightwing looked out from the Decker Building in awe. The sweeping vista of Gotham spread out around him, a glittering sea of lights cast against the velvet black of night. Crisp cool wind whipped against him as he stood away from the edge cautiously. He'd been doing the rooftop travel for a while now, but he'd stayed in the residential areas, the blue-collar industrial sectors, and the grimy gutter districts of Gotham. Places where crime was much easier to pick out. The more central commercial and corporate areas were new to him. Being this high up above the city was also new to him.

"It'll be beautiful again, when she's all healed up," Dick Grayson said in the low growl his mantle demanded. He stepped from the shadows, his body shrouded in the scalloped blue-gray cloak.

"You really do that," Nightwing murmured as he took an instinctive step back.

Dick merely stared at the new crime-fighter silently, something he normally wouldn't have done. Not if he were in his own Nightwing costume.

"Th-thanks for the meeting. I think. Why did you ask me here?" the vigilante asked as he recovered from Batman's sudden appearance.

"You say you want to be Nightwing. To protect Gotham and her people," Batman replied as he stood in place, the breeze tugging at the edges of the cloak. "Fine. Let's discuss the matter."

"Sure. Okay. Yeah, I'm serious about this. You can't do it alone, and that's obvious," Nightwing replied. He could feel his blood race and his heart pound as he tried to stare back at the Dark Knight. "And now Nightwing's vanished, so why not have someone step back up? I mean, whatever happened to him, we can't let the criminal element think the capes can be brought down, right?"

Dick suppressed a smirk at the argument. All of this restraint was beginning to hurt now, and he hoped he wouldn't frighten Alfred later tonight, when he returned to the cave and burst out like a hyena. "What you say makes sense. But Nightwing isn't gone. He's... chosen to... focus on the Teen Titans for the foreseeable future. But he's not gone, and I can't have you running around in his name and suit."

Nightwing smiled at the news. He looked both relieved and happy to hear that his hero was alive and well. "You mean it?"

"Yes. You really think highly of him?"

The vigilante nodded earnestly. "He's such a good guy. I mean, he does the right thing, and he fights some really bad people, but he's always so full of energy. He bounces around and he has a funny quip regardless of whatever terrible danger is around, and always seems to have a smile." He took a moment to stop and looked away in embarrassment at the gushing. "Well, I mean... when I read about him, or see clips of him on the news. I think his optimism is important. More than ever these days."

Dick stepped back into the shadows as he felt his cheeks flush. He didn't know what to make of it. He was just another guy in a mask doing the best that could be done. It was Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman who were the role models. He wasn't prepared for this. Silently, he fought to regain his composure.

"Well, you can't be Nightwing. But maybe there's potential in you," Dick replied at last. "If you want to prove yourself to me, then we'll run together tonight. You can show me if you have the skills and the heart to do this." As Nightwing's smile grew wider, Dick stepped up to him quickly and pointed a finger menacingly. "But you do what I say. Follow orders, no questions asked, got it?"

"Sure thing, no problem, you got it, boss!" Nightwing grinned and snapped a salute.

"Good. Because one step out of line, and you're finished," Batman added as he spun around and stepped up to a ledge. With his back to the newcomer, Dick spared a moment's smirk at the excellent job he did of channeling Bruce. "Take this." He handed a spare grapple gun to Nightwing without looking back at him. He fired his own into the night sky and stepped out into nothing, the cloak spread wide to form the legendary silhouette.

With a hard swallow at the greater height, Nightwing fired his gun and then swung out after the Caped Crusader.

"A to B. A to B," Alfred said as he tapped lightly on his earpiece from ingrained habit.

"B here. What do you have, A?"

"First things first, sir. How was your meeting?"

"I have my shadow with me now," Batman replied. "He seems willing to go with the program for now. We'll have to see how it goes."

"Understood. Our little bird has pinned down the identity of your mystery woman based off of the rather salacious description provided," Alfred stated as he looked up at the central monitor that lit up the Batcave. "A Miss Terri Eckhart. Noted member of the Gotham criminal sub-culture. Properly lengthy record of petty crimes, most often working as an assistant for other, more visionary criminals."

"Sounds like our target," Batman answered after a brief moment of silence. "No, I'm not talking to you."

"B?"

"Talking to my shadow," Dick answered. "Do we have an address?"

"316 Victor Avenue, apartment 32," Alfred read off the file.

"I'm on my way, B out."

Beatrice McElroy scoured the large, two-story house. Each door she opened revealed an empty room. Finally she stopped at the door to her husband's study and knocked lightly on it. "Bill?"

When there was no answer, she opened the door and stepped inside the darkened room, which was as empty as the rest of the house. "Where is everyone?" she murmured as she walked over to the desk and looked at his appointment book. There was no indication on its pages of where her husband could have gone. She gave a quiet "ha-rumph" and continued to wander the house.

She returned to Albert's bedroom and walked in. She gave a sigh as she looked around aimlessly, and her thoughts turned to the comforting fact that her family still all lived under one roof. It was a large roof, sure, and Geoffrey and Albert had sections of it all to themselves. Almost like nice apartments, but in the end, they both still lived at home. She shook her head as she looked at his collection of Egyptian art and relics. Then she walked out of the room and down the hall, back to the main portion of the house.

Nicer than Bill's even, she mused to herself as she paced slowly. Since he was a kid, he loved this stuff. So much like his father. She finally arrived back in the parlor and took a seat. She stared across the large space toward the fireplace mantle, family pictures littered across the marble. She sighed sadly as she stared at the framed memories of happy times.

We've been so careful over the years. So careful. Too careful, maybe? Have we been too protective of the boys? Her thoughts took a darker turn, as they sometimes had in the past, when a safeguard had slipped and the family had to work hard to put things back in order. Is that why they're still here? Is that why you're out there, somewhere, wherever, Bill? Is it Geoff? Is it Bert? She closed her eyes and leaned back in her chair as her eyes became moist. Is it you? Is it going to fall apart, after all this time?

"Where are we?" Nightwing asked as they dropped down onto a rooftop in a middle-class area of Gotham, lined with brown and red brick apartment buildings, of varying ages, but possessing an almost uniform look of depression and exhaustion.

"Victor Street, near the intersection with Dozier Boulevard. Don't often have to come here anymore, it's gotten very quiet over the years, but occasionally there's trouble," Batman answered quietly as he crept to the edge of the building and slipped binoculars from his belt.

"You okay? Your voice lost its edge," Nightwing noted as he walked up until he stood next to the Caped Crusader. "Something to worry about?"

Dick winced inwardly as he stared across the street. "No. Fine." The growl returned to his voice, while as the young man wished he could grab a drink of water for his throat. "That window, three floors up and second from the right, is the apartment of our would-be "queen". She's been recruiting muscle and other talent for a job tomorrow, most likely for King Tut. We're going to find out."

Nightwing's smile grew wide with excitement and anticipation. "Glad to hear it. I want to get that freak, and I've had no luck with my investigation earlier."

"Oh?" Dick half-turned his head to the new vigilante.

"Yeah. Visited Brighton up in New York earlier today. I thought maybe the inside man might be from his department, but he just got all huffy at the notion. He really seemed to think that it had to be the Gotham U people. Said all museum and exhibit crews had been on the job for too

long to be trying something now.”

“True. It has to be the university. Astute man,” Batman replied as he turned to look at his partner, who looked quite startled by the comment.

“I know them! It can't be... I mean, I checked them all out closely! If only I could have gotten those files, but I couldn't get Brighton to spill anything, he just wasn't afraid of me.” The vigilante slapped one fist into the palm of his other hand in frustration as Batman narrowed his eyes.

“Not afraid of Nightwing.”

“Right. Me.”

“You can't be Nightwing, remember? We talked about that. So don't associate yourself with the mask, or it's just going to be that much harder to let it go when the time comes.” Dick winced inwardly again as he thought of how accurate those words would be if said into a mirror.

“But... ” The man paused and shook his head, brow furrowed, eyes closed tight. “Right. Right. I know. You're right.”

Dick raised his hand to his earpiece. “B to A. Come in.”

The neophyte Nightwing stared up, watching his mentor talk to the mysterious Letter, and wondering who it might be. Wondering if maybe, he might be let into the circle closely enough to learn.

“Check into the medical history of the McElroy family,” Batman said in a concerned tone that made his partner stare. “Especially psychiatric. I'm getting a bad feeling about something.”

“McElroys? Albert? You think *Albert* could be involved?” Nightwing almost yelled. He hastily added, “Or Geoff... rey? Certainly not the father, he doesn't come close to the... ”

Batman put his hand out to stop the vigilante's rambling. “I know it's not William. And I'm nearly positive it's not Geoff. Right?” He folded his arms across his chest.

"Right. So let's go check out this apartment," Geoffrey Columbus McElroy suggested in a muted tone. "While you wait for this... 'A' to find your answers?"

Batman pivoted, and fired his grapple, launched himself out into the sky and swung to the target window. Moments later, both crime-fighters had entered the apartment and begun their search. The dwelling was simply furnished: five well-lived-in rooms, which at first provided no answers.

"Terri Eckhart's apartment," Batman confirmed as he checked through the woman's bills.

"I know this woman," Nightwing whispered as he stared at a picture that showed her with several friends at an amusement park.

Batman stepped up quietly, and peered over Nightwing's shoulder. "She's not Terri. I know her as *Sherry*. Sherry Watts. She's dating m... Albert. Albert McElroy."

Batman put a hand on Geoff's shoulder for a moment. Then he returned to investigating the apartment. "She's keeping it very quiet here. No sign of a double life, or any criminal activity," Batman replied. "Except for the different names you're aware of."

As the pair retreated to the window, they both noticed a car pull up to the curb, and their target step out briefly. Nightwing tensed, and prepared to leap, but Batman put his arm up to block him. "No. Wait. This works out nearly as well." With that, he casually flipped a batarang behind him to strike a light switch. As the light flared suddenly behind him, he filled the window and spread the cape out.

The reaction he got was exactly the one as he wanted. Terri Eckhart saw the bat-shaped shadow fall over the street and stared up at the Dark Knight staring down at her. With a cry of fright, she recovered her senses and dove back into the car, and hurriedly screeched away, unaware of the tracer, which Batman fired onto the back bumper.

"She's headed to her King. We can follow, and put an end to this." Then Batman straightened his head up and cupped his earpiece. "Right. Got it. Thanks, A. Give the little bird a cookie."

"Learned the big McElroy secret?" Nightwing drawled in a disdainful voice.

"Yes. A tendency of the family to develop a kind of dissociative fugue," Batman answered as he stared at his partner. "In other words, without medication, they have a tendency to take on the identities of other people. People they feel strongly about. Right... Geoff?"

Nightwing flinched at the sound of his name. Then he nodded glumly. "I'm on my meds. I'm fine," he added tersely. "Don't look at me like that!"

"But your brother?"

"He likes being Pharaoh. As a child, he'd play Ancient Egypt games the way other kids would play knights, or 'Cowboys and Indians'." Nightwing sighed softly. "He'd play it too much. He'd slip into that game and not come out of it. At least, that's what I found out from Mom. It took a lot of wheedling on my part, too. Mom and Dad, they never want to talk about it. Honestly, I thought my medication was for blood pressure until about five, maybe six, years back, when I asked my new doctor about it. That's when I talked to Mom."

"We have a car to follow," Batman said as he aimed his grapple gun and fired into the night. "Come on, then. Let's see if we can round your brother up before it's too late for him."

Albert Lincoln McElroy drove his car up to the Stafford House. Old and abandoned, but in reasonable shape, it sat near one of Gotham's older cemeteries, which offered it some measure of isolation in the middle of the sprawling city. He pulled a small suitcase from the trunk of his car. He was headed for the main entrance, his cane tapping insistently with each step, when a second car pulled up quickly.

"Albert!" William Omaha McElroy shouted as the elder man pulled himself from the car and dashed after his son. "Albert, please, talk to me, talk to your father."

"Father? Don't you know, oh portly vizier, seer of the past? My father's identity is unknown to me. To all. And certainly my lineage does not lie with one such as you!" Albert replied as he pulled his cane up and jabbed the ball-shaped handgrip into the Egyptologist's midsection, and let the built-in stun-gun bring the man down hard. "Such hubris." He paused, and his eyes flickered with momentary confusion. Then he heard another car roar toward them.

He looked up to see the third vehicle screech to a halt and his beloved queen jump out. "Al! Al, we gotta go! We're in big, big trouble!"

"Now, now, my dear," he said in an attempt to calm her. "Here, in our palace, we use our real names, and speak in the proper, educated ways."

"Al, you're not listening," she said again as she reached him and then stopped short. Her eyes took in William's unconscious body lying between them. "Is that your dad? Did you zap him? Doesn't he have a bad heart? You can't be zapping old guys with bad hearts!"

"Dear queen, again I must bid you, proper elocution, as befits your royal status. This man, this false father, indeed attempted to speak treason to his Pharaoh," Albert explained. "We shall leave him, and if he recovers he may depart with his life or enter and make proper apologies." He turned and began to head back to the house. "Let us get properly attired, Ankhesenamun. We have much to prepare for."

Terri Eckhart grabbed his arm and spun Albert back to face her. "You're not listening, Bert! All the costumed criminal stuff is fun for a lark, but it's over now. We gotta get out of here. Batman's wise to us. He was at my apartment!"

"You no longer need such a common residence anyway, my love. And after tomorrow, we'll be living in a proper fashion in a proper mansion again," he assured her as he started to lead her to the house. Terri resisted, however. "I will not argue this anymore, my queen! We must change into royal attire. I will not stomach seeing you in those low-born rags anymore."

"Geez Louise!" Terri's eyes bulged out as the realization hit her. "You're

bughouse! You really think you're... and I'm... oh hell!"

"Ankhesenamun? What's wrong? Has the bat-creature bewitched you in some way?" He glowered and stepped up to her, his arms protectively wrapped around her shoulders. "My poor queen. I'll see this monster pay!"

"Go ahead, make him pay, just leave me out of it, you nut!" Terri tried to pull away, but just as his fingers slipped away from her, a passing shadow made her freeze. "Damn it!"

The bat-shaped silhouette enshrouded the pair of criminals. and Then Batman landed on the roof of Albert's car, as Nightwing dropped down to the ground and stared at his brother.

"Professor!" Batman gasped as he saw the unconscious William and quickly leaped to the man's side. He checked the man's vitals as his peripheral vision caught movement from both Terri and Nightwing.

"Aw Hell, Albert! It *is* you! Why? Why did you let yourself come to this? And what have you done to Dad?" Geoff asked as he stepped up to his brother, fists clenched, and eyes locked with the insane criminal.

"You are no kin of mine, false priest!" Albert insisted as he dropped his suitcase to one side and brought his cane up defensively. "You follow this demon from the afterlife, and I'll see you executed and that thing dispatched back to Set's dark realm!"

Nightwing nimbly jumped back away from the sweep of the cane and shook his head. "No, you don't get it, Albert. It's me. It's Geoff! Your brother!" He pulled his mask off, hoping it might help his brother shake off the delusion. "We can help you! Just put the cane down and help me help Dad!"

Batman stood, searching for the woman, secure in the knowledge that William would be fine. He fired a batarang, line attached, and watched as it wrapped around Terri's legs and pulled her down hard to the ground. He held her in place as he stalked toward her, the line wrapped around his hand as he approached. "Going somewhere?" he snarled.

Terri rolled onto her back and stared up him with a weak, weary smile, visibly shaken. "Thanks for not dragging me and showing my goodies off to everyone," she said in a feeble attempt at a joke as she tucked her shirt down over her stomach and straightened her skirt.

"You're welcome. You're also going to jail."

"Yeah. I know. No hitting?"

He released her legs and dragged her back up to the house, his eyes watching Geoff and Albert closely, unsure how to proceed next.

"I am Tut, god-king and Pharaoh of this land, and I will not listen to your lies anymore! Do you hear me, Geoff! No more!" He roared and charged at Nightwing. Albert's shoulder jammed into Geoff's midsection and he bore them both to the ground hard. Desperate to avoid the taser-tipped cane that the insane brother jabbed repeatedly at his face, Nightwing grabbed the razor-sharp batarang Batman had given him earlier in their patrol. With an adrenaline-powered swing, Geoff sliced through the cane, causing it to explode in a shower of sparks.

Albert screamed in pain and stumbled away. He clutched one hand in the other, and then he brought up a raw, burned palm to cover the burned streaks of flesh along the side of his face as he collapsed onto his side. "Treason! Treason! I'll see you drawn and quartered!" Albert screamed.

Geoff sat and stared in shock as Batman and Terri merely watched in awkward silence.

"You did good, considering the circumstances."

Geoffrey Columbus McElroy stared up at the Dark Knight and huddled in his jacket. It hid the costume he wore, for now, and he turned to look back up at the departing police cars and ambulance. "I'm glad Dad will be okay."

"Your brother will get the best help available," Batman stated as he took

a step back from the younger McElroy.

"He's going to end up in Arkham. I know what that means," Geoff replied bitterly. "I'm not Nightwing, not much of a partner, and I've supplied you a new freak for the city."

"Albert's problems are not your fault. He's still got hope. He's not yet beyond recovery."

"You almost sound like Nightwing, saying that. At least, that's how I've always imagined him talking, to the Titans or to... you know, whoever's around. When a case ends." Geoff turned back to Batman. "I can't even imagine doing this anymore." He handed the Nightwing mask over. "I have to take care of my family. Dad's hurt, and Mom... Mom's going to be a basket case over this."

Batman took the mask and slid it into a pouch. "Maybe it's for the best. Even though he seems to be all energy and optimism, even Nightwing has to have a goal, a... purpose to his activities. You can't live this life without it. And being someone else is not a good enough focus."

"I never want to be Nightwing again. Never. Geoff's more than enough for me." He turned and started to walk to his father's car. "Thanks for everything, Batman." He reached the door and never looked back. He knew full well that he was already alone.

The End.

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Justice League #9 (2007)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow.

Why are there hawk soldiers of Thanagar on Earth? Who are the strange new superhumans appearing around the globe, testing and probing local governments? What exactly is the Justice League facing when a quartet of self-proclaimed heroes declares Earth "their last stand?" It's the beginning of an epic threat wrapped inside two strange mysteries that will leave the Justice League hoping that Earth survives "To See Tomorrow!"

Justice League #10 (2007)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow, Part Two (of Four).

"To See Tomorrow" continues as the stakes only get higher and secrets slowly start to unravel. Hawkman and the Martian Manhunter are caught between the Thanagarian invaders and their own satellite! The rest of the League is caught between Mon-El and Wandjina! And in the big picture, it's all symbolic of the Earth being caught between the enigmatic Overmaster and a still-hidden mastermind with dreadful intent!

Danger Trail #5 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Verdant Darkness Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

What connection lies between la Llorona's kidnapped children and Nyola's captured heroine Rima? What is drawing the natives of Central America and Mexico together? Speed Saunders, King Faraday and Midnight are joined by Doctor Occult to learn the truth before an Empire of Blood washes over the land!

Weird Western Quarterly #11 (2008)

Johnny Thunder: Steel Heart Iron Soul.

As Johnny Thunder, John Tane has evaded the deathbed oath to his mother never to do violence, and become Mesa City's great protector. Now he's about to be challenged on a whole new level when a powerful land baron makes a grab for greater wealth and glory, and the enigmatic renegade, Madame .44, has Johnny Thunder's heart in her sights! What might be his most dangerous

mission yet will also be the first chapter in a ballad of love and gunslinging like the Wild West has yet to see!

Danger Trail #6 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Man in Stitches Affair, Part 1 (of 2)

Danger Trail #7 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Man in Stitches Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

The Revenant Program proceeds apace as Saunders and Midnight must struggle with former ally King Faraday to find the evidence that can shut down Doctor Zero for good! Maybe, just maybe, newcomer Argent St. Cloud can help out!

Speeding Bullet #4 (2008)

Bulletman: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 4 (of 4): Man Made Gods. This is it! The mystery is revealed and the gloves come off as Bulletman duking it out with the Murder Prophet and his god of murder, the Nihilist! Can he come through his baptism of fire and blood intact? And even if he wins, does the Prophet truly get the last laugh?

Danger Trail #9 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Nation of Murder Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

As Speed Saunders and King Faraday join Argent St. Cloud to search for Michael Gallant, a wave of murders leaves the city of New York reeling as the heat rises, tempers flare, and Rue Morgue revels in the bloodbath!

Danger Trail #8 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Nation of Murder Affair, Part 1 (of 2).

Gangsters want Thomas Dewey dead at all costs, bringing Michael Gallant onto the case, Argent St. Cloud at his side! But when Murder, Inc. steps up to the challenge, can even he call on enough reinforcements to save the day?

Danger Trail #10 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 1 (of 3).

It begins here! Threads woven from the start of the series, put into play centuries beforehand, all start to come together in this issue, as familiar faces return to the scene, dark forces gather for the

attack, and the secrets of the Trail yawn wide and threatening! All this and a special guest-star...the Queen of the Amazons!

Danger Trail #11 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 2 (of 3).

Things heat up for our heroes as the Dragon Queen and the Queen of Blood unite to betray Vandal Savage; Savage raids Washington, D.C. to acquire the Ineffable Libram; and King Faraday and Speed Saunders face off with Queen Hippolyta and Rima the Jungle Woman! Things couldn't get any worse than this, could they?

Danger Trail Annual #1 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Savage Sins Affair.

As the Stolen Myth Affair heats up, as a covert war rages on the Danger Trail, take a peek inside the history of the man who has set this all into motion...Vandal Savage! Balloon Buster Steven Savage is doing just that as he uncovers threads and connections surrounding the many figures of the age that all lead back to this diabolical mastermind, some stretching back centuries! If the truth about him can't be unraveled soon, those threads will choke the present day and continue into the future!

Danger Trail #12 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 3 (of 3).

Vandal Savage begins his plan to bring the world into his control! King Faraday, Speed Saunders and Midnight, along with their assembled allies, make their bid to stop him, but there are three queens in this game, and each one has their own vision for how the endgame should play out! It's the end of the first year on the Danger Trail...is it also just the end?

Speeding Bullet #1 (2008)

Speeding Bullet, Part 1 (of 4): Modern Gods.

James Barr has developed a special device that allows him tremendous powers! Now he steps into a new world of masked men and heroic deeds, but is he really ready to take his place among the world's newest gods? Will the Murder Prophet usher in an age of blood first?

Speeding Bullet #2 (2008)

Speeding Bullet: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 2 (of 4): Deepest Secrets.

James Barr steps into costume for the first time, and Bulletman is on the case of the Obermyer murders. But so is another person...the actual killer, a mysterious being called the Murder Prophet, who is paving the way for his master, and the police and the rookie hero struggle to catch up and stop him!

Speeding Bullet #3 (2008)

Speeding Bullet: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 3 (of 4): Bleeding Truths.

The race is on to uncover the real killer as Detectives Farley and Doherty try to dig through the murder mystery, Martin Obermyer meets the killer and Bulletman stumbles in a critical way, leaving him to face the fury of his wife!

Mightiest Mortals #4 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Wielding Fists of Virtue.

Captain Marvel is caught between a throwdown with Ibac and Sivana launching an all-out assault on our hero and the Fawcett itself! As bad as that is, though, it gets worse for Kit Freeman...much worse! Meet Sabbac!

Mightiest Mortals #5 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Scenes of a Day

Mightiest Mortals #6 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Between Opposing Forces.

Freddy finds himself having the most startlingly worst day of anyone's life! Can it be worse than losing a close relative? What about the dark secret within another relative? Or the secrets being held by his best friend? It all comes crashing down on him in a terrible avalanche of revelations! All this while the city moves on without him!

Mightiest Mortals #7 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: From the Shadows of Twisted Minds.

Get ready for action and excitement! Freddy buries his cousin, Christopher Freeman, and has another showdown with his stepbrother Tim Karnes. And we discover just how fiendish Sivana

can be when he pushes Captain Marvel's every attribute in an issue in which the World's Wickedest Scientist...doesn't even appear! All this, and the fate of Beautia!

Mightiest Mortals #8 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: To the Truth of the Matter.

Billy and Freddy have their confrontations on secrets kept, power hoarded and relations hidden, all the while the forces of the law struggle to keep Lady Justice apart from her new champion and Miss Minerva asserts her innocence!

Mightiest Mortals #9 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Abyss of Blood Relations

Fawcett City goes on despite the gang war, despite the debut of new heroes, despite it all, Fawcett City goes on. Come and see how it does, as Chief Kitchens deals with the presence of Captain Marvel and what it means for his police force! And has Miss Minerva over-played her hand?

Mightiest Mortals #11 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Tide of Heroism.

The beginning of the stunning two-part finale to Captain Marvel's first year! Sabbac has gone on a rampage, and Ibac is taking advantage of the chaos! Bulletman struggles to intervene, but everyone wants to know where Captain Marvel is! All this and more (and boy, do I really mean it this time)!

Mightiest Mortals #10 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Punishment of Good Deeds.

Amazing origins issue as we discover the secret behind the magic words, and the history of Sabbac and Ibac! Freddy walks into a deathtrap, Victor Craize starts to feel the power of the people, and the police make a startling discovery about Miss Minerva!

Mightiest Mortals #12 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: By an Act of Love.

This is it! Sabbac is on a rampage! Ibac sends his men out against the leaderless forces of his gangland opponent! Into the middle of this stands Captain Marvel and his allies! When the smoke clears, who will stand triumphant?

Nightwing #30 (2008)

Nightwing: The Riddle of the Sphinx.

Just when you'd think Dick's got enough trouble juggling Titans duties as Nightwing, solo duties as the Batman, and mentoring duties with Tim, things get harder. There's a new villain hitting the streets, one with a dangerous delusion, and Dick's not happy to see that Nightwing is apparently on the case, without Dick's permission! Come and join us for "The Riddle of the Sphinx!"

Justice League #11 (2008)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow, Part Three (of Four).

Things are falling into place at a rapid pace now... for the villains! With the League stretched thin across the globe, friends come racing to the rescue and the action only heats up! Watch Hawkgirl lead the storming of the JL satellite; witness Superman confront Mon-El over his mysterious mission; and thrill to the throwdown between Wonder Woman and the Persuader, as the master villain behind it all draws closer to his goal! All this and more!

Danger Trail Vol. 1 (2009)

This volume collects Danger Trail #1-12 as well as Danger Trail Annual #1. This is the complete first story arc in which our pulp heroes confront the treachery of the Blood Queen, the Dragon Queen and their mysterious backer. Stay tuned for Danger Trail #13 coming soon!

Danger Trail #13 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Brown Lady Affair, Part 1.

In the wake of the battle with Vandal Savage, Speed Saunders has set his sights on finding the Sigil of Seven; that quest being his only remaining link to the missing (and treacherous) Harriet Cooper! His friends Argent St. Cloud and Michael Gallant, along with ally Doctor Occult, want to know what his intentions are, but first they must untangle a dark scheme involving the ghosts of Great Britain!

Mightiest Mortals #13 (2009)

Mightiest Mortals: Opening Passages.

As Fawcett City recovers from the fall of Ibac and Sabbac, our heroes find more things to be worried about. Susan Barr must prosecute the bloodthirsty Tim Karnes while reassessing her stance on costumed crime-fighters; Dudley must wrestle with what he should reveal to Billy, and Billy must deal with the fact that Freddy refuses to return to his crippled body!

Danger Trail #14 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Brown Lady Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

Speed Saunders must deal with the fact that the artifact Harriet had been searching for, the Sigil of Seven, is Doctor Occult's primary weapon against supernatural evil! In the wake of her treachery, what can that mean? And none of our heroes can take the time to figure it out now, as they struggle to save Michael Gallant from the Dagger of Koth!

Danger Trail #15 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Falkenstein Affair.

Once rivals of the air and enemies at war, now the Enemy Ace and the Balloon Buster must work together to penetrate the secrets of Castle Falkenstein and the strange mad scientist ready to bring two worlds together to fuel his rise to power!

Danger Trail #16 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Blood of Templars Affair.

Danger Trail #17 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Blood of Templars Affair, Part Two.

Things heat up for our heroes as they head into an ancient Knights Templar castle as one of three groups desperate to unlock its secrets and find a powerful relic that will decide the victor in the opening battles of a far greater war, one that has the attention of the enigmatic Sanguine Father! A far greater war that echoes across the decades!

Danger Trail #18 (2009)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and Fate, Part Two: The Angel of Death!

The strangest crossover of all times continues here, as Rose Psychic, Eel O'Brien, Speed Saunders, Midnight, Trin Dee and Andrew

Bennett find themselves caught in a holy war between the forces of the Order of St. Dumas and the Sanguine Father, who offers a glimpse into a terrifying future for the world!

Danger Trail #20 (2010)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and State, Part 6 (of 6).

Danger Trail #19 (2010)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and State, Part 4.

Weird Western Quarterly #18 (2010)

Weird Western Quarterly: Lust Faith Love Treachery.



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