



Batman #4
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Batman

Issue 4: "A Riddle Wrapped in E. Nigma, Part Two: Cluesless?"

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"Evil is, good or truth misplaced." - Mohandas Gandhi, 1869-1948

Chapter One:

"End him!"

End of passion play, crumbling away...

I'm your source of self-destruction!

Veins that pump with fear, sucking darkest clear...

Leading on your deaths' construction!

Gotham sleeps, unaware of the trouble brewing in its heart. Three cars speed towards a special tower, one cloaked in darkness, leaving a trail of blue light as it streaks through the streets. An old grey car trails behind the lines of traffic, the driver chewing his wet cigar and mumbling to himself. His passenger shakes her head as the driver screams out of his window, howling at the drivers in front. The radio blares with a mix tape of his own creation, vibrations from the speakers shaking the entire car. Harvey Bullock is as impatient as ever, as he tries to get to the Enigma building as quickly as possible. Sarah Essen shakes her head once more, and then in a fit of frustration, yanks the siren from the dashboard and sticks it on the roof. The traffic clears immediately. "Christ, Harv. Get a grip. Think things through, you big lump... And turn that music off!"

“Sorry, Ess. I just don’t want that freak Nigma getting out of our clutches before we have a chance to beat his ass down, ya know? Besides, it’s classic rock. Psychs ya up, you know?” Essen shakes her head once more, and then looks him straight in the eye.

“You are not, for the last time, going to beat his ass down. You’re a good cop, not one of the DEA, and not one of the vice squad, alright? By the book...”

“Sure, sure...”

“And Metallica isn’t classic rock. The Beatles are classic rock.” Sarah smiles.

“Don’t get me started Ess!”

The DEA in Gotham is more crooked than an old witch’s nose. The whole department knows it, Bullock was in on it, but he got out with help from Gordon... But the team... They have their suspicions. Gordon trusts him totally; Essen grudgingly respects him, but Merkel... They’re friends, partners from a couple of years ago, patrolling the streets together ridding the city of crime. The grand police ideal, not the Gotham ideal. Bullock was promoted to the vice squad and he became quite comfortable in there... How he got out? Why he got out? A story for another time.

The masked man hides in the darkness, the men and women surrounding him strapped to chairs that circle the spot in which he stands. Their mouths are covered, but they still squirm and struggle to escape. The man just smiles and watches as his prey attempt to get away. Soon it will all be over. Soon he shall have his revenge.

The building in the centre of Gotham is quiet. An unearthly chill sweeps the streets. As the roads approach the large citadel, traffic becomes non-existent, silence reigns, aside from the far off howl of the wind. Harvey Bullock flicks up his collar, and shivers, then walks over to the Enigma Tech building, gun holstered. Harv isn’t the most patient of cops, let alone one of the better ones. He knows this, takes it in his stride, and strives to bring peace and justice to the city he resides in. He sighs and looks up, a flutter of wings above him causing him to do a double take. Wings?

The Batman stands tall across the chasm that separates the Enigma Tech building and the opposite mall. He surveys the building, noting the reinforced steel that supports the building, the armoured plastic being used for windows... And then he nods to himself. This building, with its earthquake proof architecture... Something doesn't seem quite right. There's only one entrance. The windows don't seem to have any kind of opening mechanism. What the hell is going on? He throws out a line, and it connects with the tall building facing him. Only one way to find out what is going on. And that... is to get inside.

"Essen?" Gordon awaits a reply, his phone crackling as Sarah replies to the phone call.

"What's up, Sir?"

"We have the warrant, we're heading over right now. Don't move a muscle till we get there, y'hear? Don't let Harv get out of your-"

Harvey Bullock places his hand on the door of the building and his eyes light up, noticing something deep within his line of site. "ESSEN! GET THE HELL DOWN!" a spark zigzags across the façade of the Enigma building, and an explosion rips through the reception area at the front of the structure, smoke bursting out of the shattered doors. Harvey is thrown backwards into his car, his battered paintwork taking yet another attack. Batman swings down, grabs the two officers, and when another explosion rips through the street, he protects them with his own body, his cape taking the brunt of the shrapnel and debris as the smoke slowly begins to clear.

"Seems someone is a bit impatient." Batman looks down at Sarah, who has a nasty purple bruise already forming over her forehead. "Bullock, call an ambulance."

"Damn it, Ess..." Bullock looks over to Batman, his brow furrowing. "Did that Nigma creep just detonate his own building?"

"Doesn't seem like it. The explosives were inside the building, yes... But

nothing was compromised that would damage the rest of the building. This was a trap set to take out a first wave of police officers." He turns to Bullock, his voice deepening. "And you tripped the trap, Bullock." He stands up, and his cape whips behind him as he begins to walk towards the building.

Chapter Two:

*Taste me you will see,
More is all you need!
You're dedicated to-
How I'm killing you!*

Jim Gordon and Sam Merkel streak through the streets, blaring sirens and violating traffic laws. Gordon flicks his lighter open and closed, concerned that Sarah's phone call disconnected. The warrant in one hand, his zippo in the other, he looks over to Sam. Sam nods to himself and pushes down harder on the accelerator.

"Where the hell do you think you're goin', Bats?" Harvey places his hand firmly on Batman's shoulder. Batman spins around and gives him the darkest, most soul shattering look known to man. Harvey stumbles back in surprise, and then grits his teeth. "You ain't goin' in there, Vigilante. Not without me."

Batman turns in disgust, and leans in close to the large detective.

"Your partner is unconscious, that building is probably filled with traps, and I don't want someone like you slowing me down. Wait here with your partner, and then wait till I'm back. I don't want anyone else getting hurt by this--"

"Sirens are getting closer, Batman. I'm going in with you. Sarah is fine, she's waking up now. If you don't let me go in with you, I'll just hafta shoot you. Obstruction of the law. Impeding an investigation." He takes out his pistol and Batman turns away from him.

"You'd shoot a citizen in the back?" He walks towards the building only to hear the weapon being cocked.

"You're no citizen, you're a vigilante. Gordon may respect your presence in this city but I only allows ya 'cause you get the job done, so don't you dare go tellin' me how to do my job." Batman turns again, and watches as an ambulance races down the street. He looks over at Bullock, who still has the gun aimed at his chest.

"Let's go. Don't step where I don't step. And above all things-" He leans in close to Bullock once more, and grimaces. "-Stay quiet."

Ding Dong.

Alfred Pennyworth answers the door to Wayne Manor with a smile, even if he is a bit worried about the events transpiring in the city.

"Wayne Manor, how may I be of... oh..."

"Hello Alfy, it's been a while, hasn't it?"

"Indeed..." Alfred smiles to himself, and runs his fingers over his chin. "I had forgotten you're penchant for calling me that though... Even if I could never forget you!" The two laugh.

"What are you doing in our fine city, may I ask? Last I heard, you had moved to Philadelphia..."

"I'm here on business... And I was wondering if Bruce was in..." The person smiles slightly, embarrassed. "I haven't seen him for so long, and I was wondering if it wasn't too late to have a catch up..."

Alfred pauses for a moment, saddened at the truth of the matter, and having to cover it up with a lie. "Master Bruce is currently on holiday in The Alps, skiing I'm afraid. Would you care to join me for a drink though? I haven't heard from you since that accident with your mother...How is she by the way?"

The person stiffens slightly at the words, dredging up a memory from the past.

"She... recovered quite well, actually. She and father are retired in Florida."

Brzzt - Brzzt.

"Damn phone. Sorry about this, Alfy." The individual turns slightly, and speaks into the small mobile. Whatever the party on the other end has to say, it is clearly upsetting to the person standing before Alfred. "I'm so sorry, but that was my office... They need me back home on the next flight... Damn... I really wanted to catch up with my old friends..."

"Maybe next time, eh?" Alfred smiles and bows slightly.

"Oh shut up, Alfy." The person leaps at Alfred, taking him totally by surprise, and hugs him tightly. "I've missed this, y'know..."

Alfred hesitates for a moment, and returns the embrace. "I have too... Next time, please, phone ahead... I'm sure Master Bruce would fly back especially... Or even not go in the first place..."

"I'm sure." The figure moves down the steps to the waiting taxi, and Alfred closes the large door to the past.

"Detective! Detective Essen!" Two paramedics run over to the drowsy detective, and help her to her feet. She rises shakily.

"Where's Detective Bullock, ma'am?"

"Saw both of 'em... run into the building..."

Two uniforms motion towards the crater where the entrance doors once were, but Essen grabs the collars of their jackets, pulling them back. "Nuh uh, guys... Booby traps... No one else... go... iiiin..." She collapses to the ground, and the paramedics instantly lift her onto a stretcher, and move her into the ambulance.

Sam slams on the brakes as they reach the perimeter of the building. Sam rummages in the back of the vehicle for his shotgun, as James runs over

to his comrade in arms.

“Sarah... Can you hear me? Sarah?” He places his hand on her shoulder and she stirs slightly.

“Fubb... Gah... Gah... Gordon?” She turns to him, her eyes hazy, unable to focus.

“Yeah, its me Sarah... What happened here?”

“Booby traps! The Batman and Harv... I think they went into the building! Said something about more booby traps... Don’t go in...”

“Right Sarah... You get some rest now.”

Chapter Three:

*Come crawling faster,
Obey your master
Your life burns faster,
Obey your master -
Master!*

The Batman and Bullock, quietly sneak into the building. When they reach the end of the first corridor, a large elevator meets them. “Going up?”

“Wait. Look.” Batman points at a charred piece of paper stuck to the lift doors. He can make out the drawing of a green top hat with a purple question mark on the front. A big black arrow points down from the top of the page, and the hat is covered by a red cross. “What does that mean?”

“It’s a picture puzzle. There’s a meaning to it.” Harvey scratches his head and takes his cigar out of his mouth. “We’ve got to go to the top of the building. Take away the hat, and what’s left?”

“The top.” Batman smiles to himself. “A bit obvious, but when you take

the 'hat' out of 'top-hat', you leave 'top'. Diabolical... Hrm." Batman presses the button on the side of the wall and the door slowly opens.

Harvey is about to step inside, when Batman pushes him back. "Bullock, wait! That lift is probably wired to explode if anyone steps in it. Look." Batman points to the bottom of the lift, and shows Harvey a small pad that takes up the entire floor of the elevator. "Pressure pads."

"Well there sure ain't any stairs, Detective..." Harvey tips his hat down, over his eyes, and sighs. "What ideas you got then, mister?" He turns to look at the Dark Knight, but he's not there... "Bats?!" He catches a flutter of cape inside the lift and stumbles back, half-expecting the entire shaft to erupt in fire and smoke. "Did he... Fly?"

The entire elevator shudders and moves down so that the top of the lift is level with the first floor. Batman stands atop it, holding onto the large cable that pulls the small metal box up and down. "Now you can say it, Bullock."

"Going up?"

Edward Nigma smiles to himself and taps his foot against the floor, as his two bodyguards stand beside him, waiting patiently. "What's happening Query? Echo?"

"What you've planned, Eddie."

"I don't... What?" He looks up, his eyes wide and innocent, confused at what is occurring around him.

Echo looks at Query, and leans in to her, whispering into her ear. "He's getting worse."

Query nods at the statement, looks down at Eddie, and pats his shoulder. "Don't you worry about anything, Eddie. It'll all be done soon."

Nigma nods slowly and smiles. "What's on the agenda today?"

“Relaxation.” Query moves her hand through Eddie’s hair and kisses him on the forehead. The doors burst open.

“It’s time.”

Harvey and Batman stand atop the lift. The masked vigilante grabs the large officer around the waist and smiles slightly. “Don’t get any ideas.” Harvey opens his mouth to protest when his soggy cigar falls from his lips and Batman’s eyes widen.

“Great-” He fires off a grapnel that shoots high into the elevator shaft, and the duo fly up, as flames and metal race up to catch them. Bullock notes the pain and tension on Batman’s face, as they are both yanked forward, onto another floor high about the reception area. Bullock rolls to one side, then springs up, gun drawn, ready for a fight. Batman leans against the wall, pressing his outstretched fingers against the plaster and metal. “I’m detecting vibrations. Movement.”

“Employees?” Bullock raises his gun, still ready, slightly tense, finger around the trigger.

Batman rises up his free hand in silence. “No. Heavy... vibrations, servos... Whirring...” His eyes open wide, and he pushes Harvey back, just as a large metallic fist crashes through the wall. Rubble pours everywhere, as dust and plaster shower the area. A massive metal thing steps through the hole, fists raised.

“Holy...” Harvey raises his gun and discharges four shots, only to see the bullets ricochet off, and embed themselves in the opposite wall .

The device turns. It seems to be a large robot with long hydraulic arms... Below its right hand, something resembling a cannon begins to whiz around.

“Gun!” Harvey dives around the corner of the office floor, as bullets shoot past his head, nearly hitting him.

Batman is up already. With two batarangs in his hands, he jumps atop

the monstrosity, digging the metal blades into the mechanism of the robot. "Harvey, you alright?" As he utters these words he' is thrown over the robot, and showered by a flurry of bullets that catch his cape and graze his arm. Still, he reaches Harvey in time, and they both take cover. "Damn. That's top of the line Luthor Corp equipment. Digging mechanism used for high pressure mining..." Batman shakes his head. "And the only way forward now is the stairwell, behind that thing..." He clenches his fist. "It has some weak points, the links between arm and body, for example, but Luthor reinforces his weak points..."

"What do we do...?" Harvey looks over to the vigilante. "And how the hell do you know so much about Luthor Corp equipment?"

"No questions. Just..." Batman dives out of the corner and rolls to the side, throwing a batarang with expert precision at the arm link. The metal blade strikes its mark, digs itself into the body and then the machine falls silent. "Just... actions."

"What did you do..." Harvey inches out of cover and looks over at his partner.

"Absolutely nothing that would-" A blast of fire engulfs the dark knight and he stumbles back into the partition between the offices.

Harvey draws his weapon and runs straight for the distracted machine, then leaps on its arm, discharging his weapon directly inside the gauntlet where the flamethrower lies. The fire splutters out and stops, and Harvey slams the barrel of his gun into the crack the batarang had formed. He fires off his weapon once more, and the device goes wild for a moment, its arms flying everywhere, as it tries to dislodge its attacker, but it slowly winds down, and collapses to the floor. A small pod opens out of the main chassis. "God damn!" he watches as a man in a security uniform pulls himself out of the device, blood gushing from a nasty bullet wound to the arm.

"Argh... Bastards! Trespassing!" Bullock looks on in amazement.

"Trespassing?! You... You're a security guard? IN AN ARMoured SUIT!?" Harvey shakes his head. "WHAT ARE YOU, DENSE?! ARE YOU RETARDED OR SOMETHING? WHO THE HELL DO YOU

THINK WE ARE?" He slaps the man in the head and picks him up. "I'm Detective Bullock from the GCPD. That... That pile of ash is Batman. This entire building is booby trapped to hell and you tell us we're trespassing?!" He shakes his head once more, fists clenched in rage. "How the hell did you get up here if this place has pressure pads and sensors beyond anything I've seen before?"

"Elevator from the parking lot... I'm on this floor... There are others scattered near the stairwells..."

"Dammit man, you just burst through a wall, in an armoured suit, in a place you're supposed to be guarding... What is this building supposed to be then?"

"Bullock. They were hired to keep people out this very day, weren't you Spike?"

Harvey spins around to see Batman, smouldering still from the flames, his cape burnt and blistered, chunks missing and the ends smoking. "Buh... Batman? Spike?"

"David 'Spike' Wallis. Rent-A-Con in the Gotham underworld. Last seen in Blackgate prison after the Dr. Death fiasco." Batman whips his cape so the ash flies off, then grabs 'Spike'. "Two years has it been, Spike? Out a bit early, why is that?"

Spike is shaking as a hand pins him against the wall, but he tries to put on a brave face. "G-Good behaviour..." Batman moves his hand over the bullet wound, smiling slightly.

"Looks painful, Spike." He puts his thumb over the wound, and Spike begins to shake in fear. "Tell me what I want to know."

"A'ite, a'ite! I'll spill, just don't hurt me anymore..." He shakes his head. "I was approached when I was out on parole, seriously, good behaviour!"

Batman nods.

"And this guy calls me up, tells me he knows about my experience..."

Harvey presses his hand over the bullet wound in anger. "Your experience in being a third rate con? And yet he trusted you with a £\$%^&^ armoured suit?" He shakes his head. "Am I still the only one who sees a problem in this?"

"No, Harvey... No you're not." Batman picks up Spike and pushes him against the wall. "Who else is here? What else can we expect?"

"Ahh! I dunno! I dunno!" Batman pulls him close. The criminal's feet dangle above the floor.

"TELL ME."

"Crap! Argh... Uh... I..." He looks at Bullock, who has reloaded his gun, and has his hand over his holster, ready and willing to do whatever it takes. "Some group... They hired these out of towners from Hub City... These goateed sons of bitches who never stop laughing... Freaks if I ever saw 'em... That's all I know Batman... Please... Guys... Don't hurt me..." Batman drops the crook and grabs his arm. The man squirms at his touch. The vigilante removes a small vial from his utility belt, and presses a button. White paste sprays over the bullet wound. "In and out, Spike. You'll be staying here till we come pick you up." He grabs some handcuffs from the back of his belt and attaches one end to a heavy desk and the other to the man's uninjured hand. Then he turns to Bullock.

BABOOOOOM!

The building shakes, and the two men look at each other. "Hell was that, Bats?"

"Explosions. Floors below us... Another booby trap... We'd better press on."

Chapter Four:

*Master of puppets I'm pulling your strings,
Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams!*

*Blinded by me, you can't see a thing,
Just call my name, 'cause I'll hear you scream-
Master!
Master!
Just call my name, 'cause I'll hear you scream-
Master!
Master!*

"Any idea who he's talking about Bats? These laughing men?" Bullock and Batman creep up the stairwell, ready for anything.

"'From the Hub' means only one thing there, Harvey. Nigma has hired the Madmen."

Bullock scratches his stubble-covered chin and looks up. "The Madmen?"

"Crazed junkies with adrenaline to spare. I know of them, and I know better than for us to rush in and face them head on." Harvey grimaces as they finally reach the next floor.

"Here they come."

"Who come?"

"They come."

"Who they?"

"The vigilante and the dumb ass cop."

"The vigilante and the dumb ass cop who?"

"Shurrup. Busy now. We got work to do."

The floor is dark, the lights shattered and the windows blocked. Batman switches to night vision, hoping to get a glimpse of the Madmen, but he gets nothing, apart from a sense of dread that creeps up from his spine and spreads throughout his body... Something isn't right. He flicks off

the lenses and before he can react, something punches him hard. He stumbles back into Bullock, and they land in the stairwell, not knowing what just hit them.

“What in Hell-” Batman is struck by some sort of glass ball. As he gets up to see what it is, another one hits him, and then another.

Green gas spreads over him. It’s a nerve gas of some kind, he can taste it at the back of his throat, a strong, noxious odor that clings to his airway. Before he can inhale any more, he slaps on his respirator, covers his face, and then before Harvey can feel the effects he pinches him the neck, knocks him out and covers him in his cape, to protect him from any further damage. And then...

And then...

The Madmen are upon him.

Fingernails scratching, cloth shredding, teeth gnashing, they are upon him. He can’t move as dozens, swarm him, clawing at his skin, ripping at his grey uniform and tearing at his cowl. Batman thinks of his parents, the punches and kicks shaking memories out of his head as though it was a salt cellar. He swings an arm but is yanked back, hands held behind him, so he can do nothing save be a punching bag. He swings his body to the left , trying to shake off his enemies but to no avail, they cling to him like a bad smell. Batman tries to get to his belt but he feels it torn off by taloned fingers, he’s being taken apart by these freaks! He can’t get any space and the fetid smell of these sweaty tricksters is making the toxic gas clinging to his skin affect him worse than it should! He presses a button on his palm with his index finger, and his suit erupts with crackling electricity, a handy device in a scrape like this, but as soon as he gets one wave off of his body, another takes their place. Now, however, he has enough room to manoeuvre...

He parries the first blow, his exposed flesh blistering from the gas that clings to his skin as he tenses his muscles. Behind him, wrapped in his cape, is the officer whom he unfortunately included in this terrifying ordeal. The attackers... laughing like the madmen they are, trying to take the place of their fallen comrades whose twitching bodies litter the floor below. Their bodies are covered in multicoloured body armour, which protects them from most of the effects of the

noxious gas, but still, Batman fights on, his bruised knuckles once more knocking out one of the men attacking him. Parry, parry, uppercut! He needs to fight on, fight through the pain, and save Gotham City's citizens' lives while he still can! Parry, parry, uppercut! He goes down hard, sliding along the floor, blood pouring down the gash in his face, nearly blind, sword drawn and slammed down against his chest-

"End him!"

Bang.

Metal shards spray everywhere, light reflecting off the shards of sword.

Bang.

Bang.

Bang.

Bang.

Bullets fly everywhere, hitting the Madmen and dropping them like flies. Harvey Bullock squeezes the trigger once more, again and again until the clip is empty and half the Madmen are down. Without missing a beat he whips out another clip, reloads, and fires repeatedly as the junkies rush him. They leap and prance, trying to get out the way of the barrage of bullets, but he keeps shooting. Their echoing laughter slowly dies out as bullets riddle the Madmen's jerking bodies. He yanks the cape off his shoulders and looks around for more of his enemies. He had to do it. He had to save The Batman's life.

Didn't he?

Chapter Five:

*Needlework the way, never you betray
Life of death becoming clearer
Pain monopoly, ritual misery*

Chop your breakfast on a mirror...

*Taste me you will see,
More is all you need!
You're dedicated to-
How I'm killing you!*

He watches through the lens Batman sees through, a direct live feed from the cowl to the computer on his lap. His fingers dig into his leg, terrified at what he has just witnessed. Alfred Pennyworth shudders, watching Harvey prop up the near-dead masked vigilante against a nearby wall. Alfred hurriedly pulls out a microphone from the side of the laptop, and waits.

“Wake up, Bats...” Bullock slaps him across the face, and feels himself go slightly red. “Shoot... Come on, ya winged bastard...”

“He’s losing a lot a blood.” Harvey spins around at the crackly voice, and then looks down at Batman. “Move away from him.” Harvey scratches his head and stumbles back, confused at the words emanating from the cowl of Batman.

“Who is this?” Harvey grimaces. “Who am I talking to?”

“Brother Knight.”

“Holy Hell, ‘Brother Knight’ ... I think Batman’s dead...”

Alfred knows he was right to build this security system into the cowl of his adopted son’s uniform, and he knows that his communications system is a work of genius. He runs over to the desk where he works when he is not needed by Bruce, and presses his thumb on to the forehead of a Shakespearean bust. The head pops open, splitting in two at the jaw. This was a good idea too. He presses the red button inside, and nods to himself.

Data streaks through the roof of Wayne Manor, through the atmosphere, and into the orbiting satellite placed above Gotham City by Wayne Enterprises to support their broadcasting endeavours, among other things. As the information reaches the circuits of the machine, it triggers a switch and a beam of information shoots back down into Gotham City.

The information wave bursts through solid concrete and glass... It hits Batman and electricity streaks across his body, his every nerve and fibre pulsating with energy, his heart once again beating as... He jerks up, eyes open, memories swimming to the forefront of his mind and then he's back, back with a vengeance.

Thank you, Alfred... I owe you my life once more...

He turns to the portly cop beside him. "Harvey. We're on the executive floor. That means the boardroom is over there." He motions with a broken hand to an open room, and Harvey nods in understanding. "And through there is Nigma's office. Be ready for anything." Harvey nods again.

Krshh.

"What's that?"

"M'radio! I've had it on all this time!" The two look at each other for a while.

"Then answer it."

"Oh... Yeah!"

"HARV! HARV?"

"Jim! Yeah, it's Harv here, we're at the top floor of the building."

"SWAT followed you up, but we lost contact with them five minutes in... And we've been hearing explosions, did they ever catch up with you?"

Batman looks at Harvey, and they recall the explosion earlier. "No, boss-man... They... They never did. Didn't Essen tell you not to send anyone up?!"

"Commissioner Loeb was adamant. He doesn't especially care for our little unit, or for the Batman. So he totally disregarded the fact that we had suspicions that the entire place is booby trapped... And he sent up the SWAT team... The entire team. Damn him to hell!"

"We haven't located the hostages yet, but there was a clue on the lift... That exploded... About them being on the top of the building. So we're there now."

"Alright, alright... We can't do anything till the bomb squad gets here, and we figure out a way to get through the elevator shaft. You're on your own, Bullock. Good luck."

"Luck? Ha! I've got Batty here with me. We can't fail."

"Gordon out."

"Harvey, you dropped this." Batman passes Bullock a magazine for his gun. "You don't want to be weaponless if something big happens... Even though I don't approve of the weapon you use."

Chapter Six:

*Come crawling faster...
Obey your master!
Your life burns faster...
Obey your master!
Master!*

Batman bursts through the doors of the office, to find three women inside, all tied to chairs. The women look like they haven't slept for days. The blonde woman's eyes light up as Batman enters, and she motions him over with her head.

"It's... Nigma's old partner..." She says. "He came up to the building a couple of months ago, said he knew the truth about it all, said he was going to ruin him, and then he left... He wanted revenge on Eddie making something of himself... he's going to blow up the building..."

Batman cuts the ropes off the woman, and looks her in the eye. "How

long have you been here?"

"I... I don't know... A couple of days... I feel like hell..." Batman nods and looks down at her thin pale wrists, then looks her in the eye.

"I have to go save your boss. Get your friend free and wait here. I'll be back."

"But what about... Brown is trying to destroy the entire building! He'll kill us all!"

The Dark Knight shakes his head. "He won't succeed." He turns around. Where the hell is Harvey Bullock?

The room is quiet, unearthly quiet, and the only light is a small lamp at the end of the chamber. Harvey loads his gun and walks onto the highest floor of the building, accessible only from the private elevator in Nigma's own boardroom. There are about thirty crates, all covered by sheets of white cloth, and a loud ticking noise comes from the floor, where a question mark is spray painted down. "Who the hell..."

"You've finally made it! To the grand finale of surely the greatest crime committed in Gotham's history!" A man in green and purple waves his arms around, his cane grasped surely in one hand, a timer in the other. "In my hand I have a timer that will detonate a nuclear weapon in this very building!" The man smiles wryly, pointing with his cane at the device. "The payload isn't as destructive as some of the others that were available from The Weapon Master's stock... but surely, this will cause a winter that will freeze the hearts of Gothamites all round!"

"What the hell are you on, idiot? You detonate a nuke... You'll kill everyone. You, me, those two gals downstairs... Get over yourself Nigma, you ain't got the guts..."

The man pauses for a moment, and his head slumps down his shoulders, seemingly exhausted and done. "Nigma. Nigma. EDWARD NIGMA! He's not a real person! He's make believe and smoke and mirrors! You were all fooled but not me... I'm always here, always knowing what has

to be done... 'Eddie' wouldn't have the guts, you're quite right but I... I would." He lifts the timer and smiles, and Harvey doesn't dare raise his gun... "So shut the hell up pig cop."

"Right, right, calm down then... What's in your other hand?"

"A trigger. One death for an entire city's lives... Would you play those odds...?"

"Why ask me? I'm not..." Harvey looks at his gun and then looks up. "I would play those odds. Yes." The man in front of him smiles.

"Ok then." He presses the button atop his cane and a Plexiglas divider slams down between him and Bullock. "Here's how we play, pig." He presses another button, and a small section of the floor separates in half, a small chair rising from the darkness. "Kill this man, and we'll be done here. I'll vanish, promising on my life and yours never to take part in a crime anymore. You will be the hero cop... Or will you? You're suspected of being dirty. IA is currently searching for evidence to support the allegations. Merkel's rolling over on you to get himself out of a predicament... You'll be a killer Bullock. And my security cameras will show the world."

Bullock flinches at the words. "Who's the guy?"

"Secret."

"Get bent then. Tell me who, and I'll sure as hell do it."

"I give you a chance to save lives, and you want something in return... That's not how it works, pig cop."

"Hhrn." Harvey points his gun at the man, and fires off a shot. The man flies backwards out of the chair. "Done." He puts his gun down, kicks it away, and scratches his head. "What now?"

The man in front of him smiles slightly, then laughter echoes from the chamber he resides in. He removes his green bowler, and frees his blonde hair, then yanks off the green jacket with a large question mark on the left breast. "Done my job for me."

"And you've helped me do mine."

Tock.

Tock.

Tock.

Tock.

"What is that? What's that noise?" The man spins around, trying to figure out where the clanging noise is coming from.

Tock.

Tock.

Tock.

Tock.

He grips the cane, yanks out a thin sabre from inside the long shaft and readies himself. The shadows laugh at him as he spins around, searching, screaming, rattled by the noise that surrounds him.

"I'm here."

"Who the... What... COME OUT! I'LL KILL US ALL! YOU, ME, EVERYONE HERE!"

"You couldn't if you tried."

"I have my finger on the button! I'll kill us all!"

"You're just a second rate man. Never the front runner. Never special."

Click.

"Click'? Where's the boom, BROWN? Where's the earth shattering, city

decimating BOOM?"

"I... Uh... What did you do, WHAT?!"

"It seems that you've been screwed over. And now that you're disarmed and alone..."

Arthur Brown feels his body twitch and shudder, fear overwhelming him... Why can't he see his attacker?

"Time we meet."

Darkness engulfs Arthur Brown, and he starts to scream.

Harvey Bullock turns away from the shrieks and looks at the body of the man he just shot. His eyes narrow. No blood. He frowns slightly, arches his eyebrow and picks him up, the man's eyes darting every which way. "Bloody hell... Nigma?" He yanks off the gag covering the man's mouth, and then looks up at Batman, who stands above Arthur Brown, a triumphant smile on his face. He looks down on Nigma, who smiles slightly. "What happened here, Ed?"

"Arthur... Arthur Brown was trying to frame me for these attacks! He was attacking my future employees, using them to cover his true crime..." Eddie slows himself down, and looks up at Harvey. "He placed a hypnotic suggestion into their heads, to induce them to flood to this building... And, once he had them under his control, it was a simple task for him to tie them up and place them where no one would look..."

"And that is?"

"Here! This room!" He motions to the covered crates surrounding them, and Harvey sees them move, people breathing beneath the sheets.

"Damn!" Harvey smiles and runs over to them, pulling off the sheets, to reveal people tied to chairs. There are question mark scars on their bare necks. "DAMN!" He laughs to himself. "Nigma, what was the trigger then?"

What triggered them to all come here?"

“What else, officer? *A riddle.*”

“Bloody hell... One thing though... How the hell are you still alive? I shot you square in the chest...”

“Uh...” Nigma blushes slightly at the words.

“Check your magazine.” Harvey turns at Batman’s voice, and then takes out the clip from his pistol.

“What the... Huh. Rubber bullets.”

“I’m not going to give you back a loaded magazine, am I Bullock?”

Chapter Seven:

*Master of puppets I’m pulling your strings,
Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams!
Blinded by me, you can’t see a thing,
Just call my name, ‘cause I’ll hear you scream-
Master!
Master!
Just call my name, ‘cause I’ll hear you scream-
Master!
Master!*

Arthur Brown is taken away in a straight jacket, drooling and twitching, driven insane by his own inadequacies and lack of strength. The image of a big black bat swooping down and engulfing him doesn’t help either. James Gordon stands in an alleyway, and talks to the shadows. Harvey Bullock’s comrades have proclaimed him a hero, and the Batman isn’t saying otherwise.

“What happened here, then?”

“Arthur Brown was the attacker. He drugged the men and women so

that when he sent a riddle to their homes they'd come here. Quite clever actually... But there's one thing... No... Two things that are getting at me."

"And those are?"

"He's no villain. He's just a man with a grudge... He couldn't do this himself... And he needed help. He mentioned The Weapon Master... He thought he had a nuclear weapon... It's all insane, even more so than what we've seen already in this city."

"Hmm. Well maybe this is where it all changes then... Organised crime being driven out of the city and being replaced by costumed crime. Insanity reigns and all that, eh?" Gordon smiles.

"You could be right, Captain."

"What was the second thing?"

Batman turns slightly. "The women in Nigma's office. One said they'd been tied up for days... Yet their wrists... Untouched. Nary a mark on them."

Gordon shakes his head. "Hmm. I'll look into it Batman... Damn, here comes Loeb. I'll talk to you later."

Batman fires a line into the sky, and then vanishes into the fading darkness of the night.

Epilogue One:

"The Riddler and the Clue Master... One and the same person. What use is a riddle if there are no clues?" He sits in the large chair in his new office overlooking Gotham. His fingers rest against each other as he thinks silently to himself. This Batman... He could have ruined it all. Could have destroyed everything he was working toward. His friends, his Society comrades, they were relying on him to get a certain job done in this city, and if that man, if that Dark Knight had come any closer to the truth, it would have fallen apart immediately. He scratches his head, just

above the site of his tumour , and smiles slightly, as he thinks of how easy it is to feign insanity and to trick an old acquaintance into becoming a master criminal. He picks up the phone, remembering a name from his time in hiding. A drinking buddy one might say. The call is encrypted, sent through five dummy receivers and left at a secret location only one man knows. He dials the number, and a hissing noise pierces his ear as someone picks up. There's the sound of laughter, eerie laughter and then an awkward silence. Nigma feels his hands shake, as he slowly speaks. "Hood... It's Eddie... I might have a job for you... In Gotham..." The laughter begins once more, louder, more hysterical than before.

"Eddie, Eddie, Eddie... Anything for an old buddy..." The laughter continues as Eddie begins to share his plans...

*Master, master, where's the dreams that I've been after?
Master, master, you promised only lies...
Laughter, laughter, all I hear or see is laughter
Laughter, laughter, laughing at my cries...*

Epilogue Two:

Bruce Wayne lies in bed, his wounds bandaged, painkillers finding their way through his system, as he feels his injuries from the night before.

"Master Bruce, are you awake?"

"Unfortunately... What is it, Alfred?" Bruce pushes himself up in bed, wincing as a twinge of pain travels down his left arm.

"While you were asleep, an old acquaintance arrived at the manor." Alfred smiles slightly, and Bruce's brow furrows.

"A Miss Julie Madison, sir... An old acquaintance, to be sure, Master Bruce."

"Julie... From..." Bruce feels a smile rise up inside of him, remembering this girl... This woman from his childhood. "Julie. What was she doing in Gotham, Alfred?"

"I'm afraid she was just in our fair city for the night, sir... But she

certainly was disappointed that you were busy on holiday in the Alps..." Bruce tenses his fist for a moment, disappointed in himself. His mission... must remain paramount. Still... Memories flood to him, memories of his childhood, before the event that stole his parents from him... Julie.

Awful shame they didn't get to meet again.

Epilogue Three:

HB: You're information was correct. He was on the top floor... The only complication was the Bat.

Harvey looks up at the screen at what he had typed.

KF: Everything has to start somewhere, be it now, in six years or in ten. Everything has to start somewhere, and here is where we begin.

HB: I have the hair sample and the blood sample.

KF: Will you be sending it along?

HB: No way in hell, KF. You aren't getting this information. These men and women you believe to be threats to mankind's existence? They're heroes. You're just paranoid.

KF: What? You want to entrust the world to people who guard their little cities because of their good will? What happens when they decide that their good will means they should kill every man, woman and child they can set their eyes on? Some of these people can shoot fire from their eyes and exhale ice. Some can deflect bullets with their wrists. It's not paranoia, it's common sense. So I guess this is your official resignation?

HB: Obviously. Stay out of my life, KF. We always said that when we parted ways, we'd leave each to our own.

KF: I'll be seeing you, HB. It's been a pleasure.

Harvey Bullock logs off the computer and looks at the blood sample he

acquired while Batman was unconscious. He places the lock of hair and the blood into a small box and places it in his fridge.

“Harvey, come to bed...” Harvey smiles at the words, and turns to where the voice emanated from.

“Coming honey...”

The Beginning of the End...

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

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From the same author on Feedbooks

Tales of the Green Lantern Corps Special: Facets (2005)

Tales of the Green Lantern Corps Special: Facets.

There are 3600 Green Lanterns in existence throughout the universe and there are the seconds, the people ready to take on the mantle of Green Lantern when their predecessor falls. Moving away from Sector 2814 with this one shot, we focus the spotlight on Jar Kell, Green Lantern of Sector 3598, who is having the worst day of his tenure in the Corps!

Batman #0 (2005)

Batman: Shadow of the Bat.

Meet Bruce Wayne. Business man. Playboy. All public masks... But the one beneath it all, the one, true mask... is cloaked in the shadow of the bat!

Meet Batman. Masked vigilante, master of the rarest disciplines of martial arts that grace this earth, mysterious protector of Gotham's streets.

Live his earliest years in this book!

In this issue, Bruce Wayne takes to the streets in the guise of Batman for a quiet night of patrol, and gets more than he bargained for...

Jim Gordon, Harvey Bullock and Sam Merkel investigate seemingly random, but seriously violent, attacks on computer programmers all hired by Enigma Corporation...

Batman #1 (2005)

Batman: The Smoking Gun, Part 1.

Something stirs beneath Metropolis and Batman comes a-calling for the first meeting of the worlds greatest heroes!

Batman #2 (2005)

Batman: World's Finest?

The Worlds Finest team unite to defeat the unstoppable monstrosity discovered last issue, and to defeat it, Batman must join forces with... Lex Luthor?

The Flash #0 (2005)

The Flash: Time Flies, Prelude.

Barry Allen was struck by a bolt of mysterious lightning, and then discovered he had the power of super speed! Follow this series to read the trials and tribulations of the Scarlet Speedster! See the Rogues gallery form and a mysterious villain put into motion a scheme that could destroy the history of the Flash!
Blood will run!

The Flash #1 (2005)

The Flash: Time Flies: Ice Cold Man...

Barry Allen is the happiest man alive! Oh sorry... Barry Allen is the fastest man alive! Everything 's falling into place for the scarlet speedster...

So obviously...

Something has to go wrong!

The Flash #2 (2005)

The Flash: Time Flies: Whispers.

It's Flash Day in Keystone city, and the entire city has come out to celebrate!

And what better time for a Rogue to pop up his head and try and kill them all?

Secrets will be revealed, new mysteries will be woven and one character is going to be changed forever in the latest part of Time Flies!

The Adventures of Superman #4 (2006)

The Adventures of Superman: Black Zero, Part 2: War on Solitude. Second in the biweekly crossover running through Adventures of Superman and Action Comics!

In the rebuilt Fortress of Solitude, Superman battles his greatest, most evil foe... It's not General Zod, Lex Luthor or Metallo and not even Braniac or Parasite... Who exactly?

Action Comics #2 (2006)

Action Comics: Black Zero, Part Three: Fearful Symmetry.

Third in a biweekly crossover running through Adventures of Superman and Action Comics!

Now that the threat has been revealed, and the Man of Steel has been removed from the picture, just what does the evil villain have in mind for Metropolis?

You won't believe the answer!
And is the man who defeated Superman just a pawn in a much greater game?

The Adventures of Superman #5 (2006)

The Adventures of Superman: Black Zero, Part 4: Men of Steel.
Fourth in a biweekly crossover running through *Adventures of Superman* and *Action Comics*!

Superman and Green Lantern Jar Kell reach Metropolis, but an evil lurks on the inside as well as on the outside, awaiting the two heroes and setting a deadly ambush.

Action Comics #3 (2006)

Action Comics: Black Zero, Part 5: Endgame.

The fifth and final chapter of the biweekly crossover running through *Adventures of Superman* and *Action Comics*!

Superman learns the true nature of his people in the conclusion of **BLACK ZERO!**

The Adventures of Superman #10 (2006)

The Adventures of Superman: Doomsday.

THIS IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 1!

This is it! The greatest crisis the world has ever faced is upon the heroes of the DC2, and nothing will be the same ever again!

The plans of the evil god Darkseid have come to fruition at last!

It's all-out war as Apokolips invades Planet Earth: heroes will rise-- and some will fall before it's done!--- and unlikely allies will be made! And not even Superman is safe when Darkseid sets his sites on the Man of Steel! You won't believe how this one ends!

Action Comics #4 (2006)

Action Comics: Must There be a Superman, Part One: Fragments and Facets.

Superman has left Metropolis? Lex Luthor targeted for death?

Metropolis invaded by aliens? The return of a threat from the

past? A revelation that will leave you reeling and... Joey from *Adventures of Superman #3*?

Action Comics #5 (2006)

Action Comics: Must There Be A Superman? Part 2 of 2: War Crimes and Amnesty (Or, the One with all the Action).

Tomar Re will make sure Lex Luthor stands trial for the murder of Jar Kell if it's the last thing he'll do! The only man standing in the way of his fury? A Superman wracked with insecurity, who must overcome his fear of the unknown once more to save his arch foe! Will he pull through to save the day?

Action Comics #6 (2006)

Action Comics: Full Circle and the End.

A forgotten hero, kidnapped in his hey day and trapped in an inescapable prison is released by a freak accident after the death of one of his wretched captors... How will this man react to a world not his own?

Batman #3 (2006)

Batman: A Riddle Wrapped In E. Nigma, Part 1 (of 2).

He's here! The Count of Conundrum! The Prince of Puzzle himself... The Riddler! Edward Nigma has arrived in The Batman's world, and Gotham City won't ever be the same again! Continued from the events of #0, Batman is about to have the worst night in his short career...

Detective Comics #9 (2006)

Detective Comics: Escapism.

Someone has arrived in Gotham, someone who's very existence could bring about the end of humankind as we know it. So when someone is sent from his home to pursue and drag him back to the fiery hell he escaped from... You can bet Batman will be on the scene!

Batman #8 (2006)

Batman: Half [A] Life.

Two villains make their DC2 debut in this issue, as one reflects on his life before villainy in Arkham, and another emerges from the shadows to destroy the city! Will Batman stand a chance against this deadly double threat of devilry? Not without a little help from the one man he wouldn't expect assistance from!

Batman #9 (2006)

Batman: Crooked Smiles.

There are rumors circling in Gotham that the Crown Prince of Crime has returned! Are the whispers true? Or is someone trying to scare the inhabitants of the city? Batman intends to find out...

Batman #10 (2006)

Batman: Apokolips History X.

Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 3!

The hordes of Apokolips continue to overrun the planet, and in Gotham City Batman protects the one man that Darkseid wants the most, the only man to ever escape from his clutches: Scott Free, Mister Miracle! As Jim Gordon and the GCPD form a desperate last line of defense, the Dark Knight makes his plans to get the son of the Highfather out of the city before its inevitable fall!

Detective Comics #10 (2006)

Detective Comics: Duel.

Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 12!

Battered and besieged, Gotham City is occupied by the forces of General Steppenwolf, as the rag-tag forces of the GCPD lead a guerrilla resistance and the Dark Knight Detective himself is stalked by Darkseid's own master assassin Kanto! It's a battle royale in the Batcave, the winner take Gotham!

Batman #11 (2006)

Batman: From the Pit, Part 1 (of 2).

As The Batman patrols the night, an old friend rolls into town, and an old foe escapes from Arkham Asylum and begins to wreak havoc in Gotham City!

Batman #12 (2006)

Batman: From the Pit, Finale.

The body count builds as Batman and his new ally fight through the night, and as the Dark Knight finds a survivor from Zsasz's killing spree, he hands the dying victim over to the one woman he thinks can save her, but then paints a target on her back! That woman? Leslie Thompkins!

Batman #13 (2006)

Batman: Too Many Santas Will Kill You.

Batman uncovers a deadly plot to kill one of the wealthiest businessmen in Gotham... Bruce Wayne! And on Christmas Eve of all nights, with a legion of assassins after him, all with murder on their minds, how will the Caped Crusader save the day?

The Flash #3 (2006)

The Flash: Time Flies: A Conversation with my Predecessor...

After the events of last issue, Barry Allen is confronted by Jay Garrick, who has many things to tell the new Speedster...

And not all of them good!

And behind the scenes, new Rogues are born!

The Question Quarterly #1 (2006)

The Question Quarterly: The Death of Vic Sage, Part 1.

Vic Sage is a unique entity in Hub City... A famous journalist who tells the truth in a city of lies and deceit, who becomes an enemy of every criminal in the city with his latest expose! So when corruption and evil crawl beneath the skin of the Hub, and only one man dares fight the never-ending battle for justice, when Vic Sage dies... Who is The Question?

The Question Quarterly #2 (2006)

The Question Quarterly: The Death of Vic Sage, Part 2.

Everything is falling apart in the Hub. Lives are ending, lies have been revealed and the truth... Is the one thing that keeps one man, our 'hero', going. But when the truth is at last revealed, and the implications of that fully understood... The one sane man in Hub City might conform to the general taste in insanity...

The Question Quarterly #3 (2006)

The Question Quarterly: Desolation Row.

For our final issue we have a change of pace as things get dark and gritty in Arkham Asylum. Think you've seen Vic Sage at his lowest? You'd be wrong. Think this is the end? Only for now, as The Question faces a darker threat than he has ever before, as Arkham Asylum suffers a jailbreak at the hands of two dastardly DC2 villains who make their debut in this issue... So when the inmates run free... Where is The Question?

The Flash #7 (2006)

The Flash: Time Flies, Conclusion! Part One: Everyone, Run Fast! Flashback! We return to the past, two months since Issue Three, and The Flash is facing one of his greatest challenges... The Rogues have formed before their time, a leader clad in yellow showing them the way to destroy Barry Allen's life... With a loved one lying paralyzed in bed, and his friends falling all around him, what hope has The Flash got?

The Flash #8 (2006)

The Flash: Time Flies, Finale.

Professor Zoom, The Reverse Flash, stands revealed to Barry Allen and Jay Garrick... Who is he? How is he? And why?

The Flash #9 (2006)

The Flash: Speed Demon.

A malevolent figure appears in Titans Tower, confronting Wally West AKA Kid Flash, and then vanishes, leaving the young speedster with a foreboding prophecy that comes true almost as suddenly as he appeared! With Kid Flash taken over by some mysterious entity, who you gonna' call?

The Flash #10 (2006)

The Flash: Flashes of Lightning.

Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 10!

The body count continues to rise!

The hellbores are falling and soon the earth will be remade in the image of Apokolips! But not if the Flash can help it! It's a battle to the death as the despicable Desaad and Darkseid's own bastard son Gravyn plant the doomsday device called the Infernal Machine in Keystone City. Can the Flash outrace destiny--- or will the Black Racer be waiting for him at the finish line?

The Flash Annual #1 (2006)

The Flash Annual: Eulogies.

Jay Garrick, the Golden Age Flash, is dead, and two months later, with the world healing, it's time for his funeral. 'Nuff Said.

The Question #1 (2006)

The Question: The Devil's Fingers.

The Question #2 (2006)

The Question: See No Evil.

The Question is still heading for Las Vegas when he drives into the wrong city at the wrong time, where the citizens are gripped with terror as a new, horrific serial killer is murdering women left and right with no discernible pattern... Until the right pair of eyes gaze onto the problem...

The Question Annual #1 (2006)

The Question Annual: Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.

The Question is in Las Vegas and a mystery has caught up with him from a friend of the past (is there any other kind?) and two heroes in his way.

The Question #3 (2006)

The Question: A Night In Their Arms.

The lights of Las Vegas welcome a lone traveler onto its streets. Yes, after so many months, The Question has arrived. Why is he here? What is so important to him? What is so important to the whole DC2? The conspiracy continues here.

Powers, Inc. #6 (2006)

Powers, Inc.: Life During Wartimes.

Steel wakes up a new man in the first part of this story, and in the second, Prysm discovers her true identity among the stars, and everything falls apart for her new life as her father is betrayed!

Action Comics #17 (2007)

Action Comics: The Linear Man Is Our Only Hope.

Action Comics #18 (2007)

Action Comics: Doomsdays, Part 1 (of 3): The Tide

Action Comics #13 (2007)

Action Comics: Convergence, Part 1 (of 2): The Thing That Should Not Be...

Something's coming to Smallville, leaving a trail of corpses in its wake! Clark Kent enjoys some down time from his responsibilities with a game of catch, while Lois Lane has to babysit a new

reporter at the Daily Planet... But what has the DEO got to do with all this?

Action Comics #14 (2007)

Action Comics: Convergence, Part 2 (of 2): With Teeth!

Action Comics #19 (2007)

Action Comics: Doomsdays, Part 2 (of 3): Shadow On the Sun

Action Comics Annual #2 (2007)

Action Comics: Doomsdays, Part 3 (of 3): Burein Sukuracchi.

DC2 Special #2: World's Finest (2007)

DC2 Special: World's Finest.

Batman #14 (2007)

Batman: Instinct.

The topside of Gotham City has been rebuilt over the past year thanks to Wayne Enterprises and their charitable efforts, but the sewers are another problem entirely... So when sewage workers are vanishing into the darkness, who does Batman think is the number one suspect?

Batman #15 (2007)

Batman: Masks, Part 1 (of 4).

Bruce Wayne is having a good day. Too bad he hasn't been in the Cave since he got in last night with Vicki Vale. Because when he gets down there and logs on, he's going to discover the terrible fate that has befallen James Gordon. And he isn't going to be happy. Not by a long shot.

The Flash #21 (2007)

The Flash: Ride the Lightning.

Lightning strikes once more in the Twin Cities, and you won't believe the consequences!

Batman #17 (2007)

Batman: Hizzoner, The Joker!

Green Lantern #8 (2007)

Green Lantern: Brave New World, Part 1.

A threat from the stars descends from the Heavens, searching for a battery to power the most devastating weapon known to all existence! Hal Jordan, Green Lantern, is all that stands between this villain and his target, and you won't believe the conclusion!

The Question #4 (2007)

The Question: Sneaking Mission.

The conspiracy deepens as a new player enters the game, and the puppet-master reveals himself to one of the cast! With more from the Agents of the DEO, and two buddies from another book making an appearance, you won't want to miss this as this arc continues!

The Question #5 (2007)

The Question: The Double-Edged Sword.

The con is on as The Question and his superfriends infiltrate "Hell" and search for what they're looking for. But as they delve deeper and deeper into Area 15... They realize that something is terribly terribly wrong in this government run complex!

The Question #6 (2007)

The Question: Knocking on Heaven's Door.

Blind, defenseless, lost in the bowels of hell and at the mercy of a master of torture. The Question meets Dr Moon... And witness the return of four characters you'd never thought you'd see again, spinning out of The Question Quarterly...

The Flash #20 (2007)

The Flash: Random Flashes.

In one day, a man's world can be turned upside down. Barry Allen is about to have one of those days. And you won't believe the consequences...

The Question #7 (2007)

The Question: Here With Me.

An Extra Sized Finale Issue!

You've seen The Question taken to his lowest by Steel Hand, you've seen him in Arkham Asylum, you've seen him on the road and you've seen him tortured at the hands of Dr. Moon. Travis

Clevenger and Bill Nodell find their way to Area 15, only to be confronted by a very powerful someone who doesn't have The Question's best intentions in mind, and inside "Hell" itself... People are dying... But by whose order? And what familiar face makes his "welcome" return to the world of the DC2? All these questions answered and more... Including the most important one asked! What is it? Who asked it? And why?

Wonder Woman #23 (2008)

Wonder Woman: Day of Champions.

Wonder Woman battles a close friend, and then is given another task by Athena! With the balance of the world at stake, the Greek Gods aren't the only ones who have noticed, and another champion joins the battle against the greatest threat to humanity since... Forever!

Nightwing #26 (2008)

Nightwing: Boy Hostage.

Nightwing is in deep when a confrontation with an old foe goes awry, and he ends up more than six feet under inside a metal casket in New York harbor!

Action Comics #28 (2008)

Action Comics: Family is Like...

Superman returns home to find his cousin Kara confused and bewildered, and she's not the only one! Lois and Clark a couple? Who is the NEW Clark Kent? Plus another family member finds Superman, and it's not a happy reunion!

Action Comics #29 (2008)

Action Comics: Sons & Daughters of Krypton.

After the shocking final moments of last issue, Superman faces the challenge of a lifetime, and a foe he never thought he'd meet in combat?

It's Father Vs Son across the world, as Jor-El battles his son for his subjugation of the Planet Earth...! You can probably guess Lex Luthor has had a hand in this!

Green Lantern Corps: Liberation #1 (2008)

Green Lantern Corps: Liberation: Invasion.

Our intrepid squad of heroes are on their way to Oa for the last stand against the Manhunters and their mysterious Grandmaster! Who is underneath the hood of the robotic killing machines master? What could possibly go wrong if the Green Lanterns go past Rann? What indeed...

Detective Comics #33 (2008)

Detective Comics: Trial by Fire, Prologue.

A new creative team and a new direction!

Dick Grayson has adopted the mantle of the Bat and has to face all the evil that comes with it! Seeds are sown for months to come as Batman is stalked by an unseen foe, battles against the citizens of Gotham itself, and is targeted by a familiar team! Meanwhile, Harvey Bullock and the GCPD are drawn into a horrendous murder mystery, one that shakes Bullock to his very core!

Also featuring a back-up feature written by Charlie Wilkins & Samantha Chapman!

Detective Comics #34 (2008)

Detective Comics: Trial by Fire, Part 1.

Lucius Fox returns to Wayne Manor and Dick Grayson makes a big decision about Gotham City! The Batman continues his nightly patrols, only to run into a little trouble, the kind offered by... The Suicide Squad!

Batman Vs the Suicide Squad! It begins here!

Detective Comics #35 (2008)

Detective Comics: Trial by Fire, Part 2 of 3.

The calm before the storm. The Suicide Squad nearly had him, he wasn't prepared, and if Bruce was something, he was always prepared. So with Dick fighting for his life beneath the cowl of the Bat, he needs to rethink his approach. He needs to draw up battle plans. But when push comes to shove, will he really be able to defeat the Suicide Squad, even with a little help from his friends?

Detective Comics #36 (2008)

Detective Comics: Trial by Fire, Part 3.

Batman, Batwoman, Blue Beetle and Robin vs. the Suicide Squad! As the Squad launch their attack during a Wayne Enterprises ball,

nobody will come out on top! Be here for the extra-sized finale to this arc!

Wonder Woman #26 (2008)

Wonder Woman: The Dead-Beat.

In the aftermath of her battle in the Underworld, Wonder Woman returns home to recuperate, but meanwhile, across the world, danger rises and chaos looms...

Wonder Woman #22 (2008)

Wonder Woman: Day of the Dead.

Wonder Woman faces the challenge of a lifetime on the first of three days that will shape her world for the months to come! Featuring the return of two DC2 villains, Wonder Woman is tasked by her patron Gods to take down a threat powerful enough to destroy even them!

Wonder Woman #24 (2008)

Wonder Woman: All Hope...

Wonder Woman descends into the Underworld, and as the world above waits with baited breath... Down below... Something rises!

Wonder Woman #25 (2008)

Wonder Woman: Era.

One tiny event can change everything, and for Wonder Woman, former princess of the Amazons and current defender of the dead isle of Themyscira, currently situated where New York used to thrive, that is a fact she knows too well. With the world in ruins due to something that happened in the world a century ago, during the modern age of superheroics, Wonder Woman is the last Amazon.

With a chance to change the world for the better... Will she take it?

Wonder Woman #27 (2008)

Wonder Woman: The Herald, Part One (of Two). Dreams haunt Wonder Woman that aren't hers, leading the Queen of the Amazons on a mission to save a lost soul, and battle a threat that she could never dream possible!

Wonder Woman #28 (2008)

Wonder Woman: The Herald, Part Two (of Two): Hands Bound.
"She is coming!" he screams, and rightly so too, as Wonder Woman is hot on the heels of the someone, or something, that haunts the dreamscape of all of humanity.

Wonder Woman #29 (2008)

Wonder Woman: Twilight.

Twilight over Paradise Island. Beautiful dark blue skies streaked with orange and yellow, running together like an oil painting. The majority of the island slept. Doom's Doorway stood loomed on the outskirts of the city, the imposing mountain silent in the receding darkness of the coming morning, and the guards stood as vigilant as ever. None were expecting what would emerge from the twilight.

Wonder Woman #30 (2008)

Wonder Woman: Potential.

The Cheetah returns, and Wonder Woman must deal with the chaos rout! President Jeb Stewart visits Themyscira House, and so does the White King of Checkmate! That's right, Steve Trevor returns into Queen Diana's life, and the Gods take note!

Wonder Woman #31 (2008)

Wonder Woman: Dystopia, Part One (of Three).

Things start falling apart. Donna Troy is haunted by dreams of her past, Diana is confronted by a shocking new destiny, Mt. Olympus suffers a crisis of its own, and Steve Trevor is not left untouched by the growing evil that spreads across the world. This is only the beginning...

Batman #34 (2009)

Batman: Don't Say a Word.

In this issue, Commissioner Gordon, Sergeant Bullock, Black Mask, Wildcat, Hush, Robin, Alfred Pennyworth and even Batman! The mysterious bandaged man known as Hush strikes in Gotham, but what is he up to? And why does he have his sights set on James Gordon! Robin gets some training from one of the elite fighters of the DC2, and Batman can't catch a break... all that, plus who is the stranger that stalks the Narrows?

Batman #35 (2009)

Batman: The Big Heat.

Black Mask returns to the streets of Gotham City with a whole lot of darkness in his heart and a massive wanting to inflict pain on every single living person that walk the streets. Batman and Robin come face-to-face with the Grey Ghost, and discover the murderous vigilante's true identity... a man with ties to Bruce Wayne's dark past! All this, and The Dark Knight rises as the scarlet hooded girl and the big bad white wolf with his ruby red lips stalk the Narrows and circle the mysterious man into what could be his demise! Intrigued? All this, inside!

Batman #37 (2009)

Batman: When The Man-Bat Flies..."

A murderous villain stalks the Narrows, emulating Jack the Ripper! Is history repeating itself once more? The Dark Knight intends to find out, in his own imitable way! And meanwhile, an old foe resurfaces on a murderous rampage that the Batman will struggle to stop-- and you won't believe the final scene!

Detective Comics #39 (2009)

Detective Comics: What Are You Afraid Of?

Arkham Asylum has been replaced by a bigger, better institution, spearheaded by Wayne Enterprises. During the prisoner transfer, an old enemy escapes-- but in twenty minutes, what can one mad man do? A lot, it seems, as secrets and horrors from Jonathan Crane's past haunts Gotham City as a living embodiment of fear runs free!

Batman #39 (2009)

Batman: Surface Tension.

Jason Todd is Batman?! Dick Grayson is missing, presumed insane?! This issue, Black Mask makes a move against the city, prompting the new Batman and Robin team to launch an all out offense on the Gotham Underground, all the while Hush and Constantine Drakon make their presence known in Gotham City, and while two "old" players appear on the scene, promising many nights of mayhem for the city of Gotham!

Batman #40 (2009)

Batman: Confinement.

Dick Grayson fights for his life against the villainous Nicholas Lucian, the devilish madman who holds him captive, all the while edging closer and closer to the darkness that consumes the city he vowed to protect! Batman comes faces-to-face with his arch-foe, and it's not who you think! Batwoman joins the search for the missing Dick Grayson, racing against time, unsure if he's even alive!

Green Lantern #20 (2009)

Green Lantern: Secret of the Star Sapphire.

Hal Jordan, Green Lantern of Sector 2814 faces a threat from the past as the Star Sapphire of the Zamorans barrels down on Earth, to test the Oan representative of Earth! It all begins here, as a new era for Green Lantern begins!

Batman #41 (2009)

Batman: Until Death.

Meet The Flesh-Monger. Meet The Prince of Lies, and his loyal aide-de-campe Milo Vesuvius. Meet the Gun-Moll. Meet Boss Synth. Meet the new breed of villainy that Gotham City must accept as her own-- even if she doesn't want to. How will a Batman and Robin team survive if they can't trust one another? And will Dick Grayson survive the night?

Green Lantern #21 (2009)

Green Lantern: Infect, Part 1.

In the aftermath of last issue, Hal Jordan is pulled across the universe for a debriefing by the Guardians of the Universe-- and is briefed on the secret history of the Zamorans! All this, and Guy Gardner returns-- and he's not entirely himself...

Batman #42 (2009)

Batman: Fear of the Dark.

Beneath Gotham City, Batwoman, The Dark Knight, Robin and Batman are at the mercy of Brimstone and his cohorts Charaxes and Killer Croc! The torture of Dick Grayson comes to a head, Jason Todd and Barbara Gordon are exposed to a mind-altering substance that shifts their perceptions from sanity to madness, and

all the while, a greater threat looms over Gotham City as the gangs move toward war!

Green Lantern #22 (2009)

Green Lantern: Infect, Part 2.

All-out-war over Coast City's skies as Hal Jordan battles Guy Gardner, with the safety of the entire universe at stake! Chloe Sullivan returns, as these two ring-wielders slug it out, and you won't believe the events that unfold!

Green Lantern #23 (2009)

Green Lantern: Infect, Part 3 (of 3).

One man heads to Oa, triumphant, whilst another finds himself trapped on Earth -- and the Green Lantern Corps shut down their home-base and issue a kill-on-sight order to ensure that they do not fall!

Wonder Woman #32 (2009)

Wonder Woman: Dystopia, Part Two (of Three).

The pieces fall into place as Themyscira is besieged by the entire world, Donna Troy steps up and Zenobia follows, Athena's plan begins to unfold and Ares takes the fight to Kronus on Paradise Island! Diana's fate is revealed and Steve Trevor and Apollo begin their own counterattack, and below, in the Underworld, Persephone raises an army of the dead, and begins their march to the world above!

Wonder Woman #34 (2009)

Wonder Woman: The Good Old Days.

In the future, the world is a different place, all thanks to one woman. In the past... Wonder Woman faces a blast from the past, a long forgotten secret from The Apokolips Imperative!

Batman #46 (2010)

Batman: The Way Things Will Be.

Bruce Wayne is back, so what does that mean for Gotham city? Jason Todd is about to find out.

Shazam! Special #1 (2010)

Shazam!: Sons of their Fathers.

Action Comics #47 (2010)

Action Comics: Heart Of Kryptonite, Soul On Fire.

Green Lantern #27 (2010)

Green Lantern, Love Lost, Part 2.

Hal Jordan takes his daughter and Chloe Sullivan to Rann, where the ringslinger teams up with Adam Strange to face some demons, and Chloe shares a heart-to-heart with Alanna. Meanwhile, people close to Hal Jordan are visited by a strange apparition, and not all of them make it out intact, and Guy Gardner pays a visit to Carol Ferris, who is still seeing visions of a dead man as plain as day!

Green Lantern #24 (2010)

Green Lantern: A Day Like Any Other.

Green Lantern 2814.2, Hank Henshaw, returns to Earth, and takes on all the duties of his partner, Hal Jordan, in the aftermath of Infect! But with Mongul prowling on the outer fringes of the solar system, and Coast City in his sights, how will one of the greatest, most talented Green Lanterns perform? The ultimate test for Hank Henshaw begins!

Green Lantern Annual #2 (2010)

Green Lantern Annual: The Rise and Fall of Sinestro.

Sinestro has been a presence since the earliest days of the DC2--infected with the LEGION virus, enraptured by Parallax, used and abused and made a pawn in a game he never wanted to play in. But what happens when Sinestro is freed from all the possessions and the mind control? What happens then? What happens when Sinestro roams the universe once more?

Green Lantern #25 (2010)

Green Lantern: Requiem.

Across the universe, chaos begins to unfurl. Mongul hurtles away from Earth, hoping to avoid the colossal rage that the Green Lantern Corps is aiming to unleash, Hal Jordan and Guy Gardner at the forefront of the tidal wave of emerald might that wants the yellow-skinned intergalactic terrorist's head! Meanwhile, just because the world is looking one way, doesn't mean that the rest of the galaxy stops ticking over-- something is looming on the

horizon, and it means nothing but trouble for the Corps and beyond!

Green Lantern #26 (2010)

Green Lantern: Love Lost.

Guy Gardner inducts John Stewart into the Green Lantern Corps, whilst Hal Jordan receives a phone call from an old flame-- Carol Ferris is back on the scene, and is she seeing things, or is an old face really back? Will this spell trouble for the burgeoning relationship between Hal and Chloe Sullivan?

Green Lantern #28 (2011)

Green Lantern: Love Lost, Part Three (of Four).

One year later... and we're back. The story continues.

Green Lantern #29 (2011)

Green Lantern: Love Hurts, Part Four (of Four).

Heroes live, heroes die.



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