



Nightwing #39
Batkid

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Nightwing
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"You are a diffeecult man to find, my friend." The Frenchman paused, waiting for an answer from the shadowy man in the corner. He shrugged. "Not talkative? Oh, well..." He seized hold of the man tightly and ran back the way he had come, captive in tow.

You found him?" Plasmus asked eagerly.

"Oui, but of course," Warp responded.

Beside him, Phobia smirked at the newcomer. "Welcome, Scarecrow, to the Brotherhood of Evil. We have a proposal." She waited for a reply. When she didn't receive one, she looked at him closely. Her eyes widened, then narrowed.

"Thees ees not Scarecrow," Warp muttered. "Eet can't be. What 'appened to 'eem?"

Houngan snapped his fingers in front of Scarecrow's face, disgusted. "He is a vegetable," he muttered. "No way we can get the fear gas formula from him."

Trinity's face darkened. "No matter, we'll find something else," she said briskly. "Warp, dispose of him."

"Gladly," Warp muttered, opening a portal and dragging Scarecrow through it. In his vegetable state, the Scarecrow didn't respond. Warp shoved the limp villain through. The portal disappeared behind Scarecrow. Alone, he didn't appear to realize what had happened. He only continued staring ahead with vacant eyes, muttering.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no..."

Sometime after midnight, the busy hustle and bustle of Gotham quieted somewhat. Streetlights illuminated the figures of women hastily heading home, casting nervous glances about. Drug dealers stood on street corners waiting for their customers. Scarecrow twitched suddenly, a change from his constant shuddering. That was the only difference for some time. Then, gradually, his muttering began to stop. He hadn't moved from the sidewalk corner, and as the rain began to fall, a large puddle formed around him. Where he had been shuddering before, he now began shivering from the cold. It was probably the cold that alerted him to the fact that he needed to move, and move he did, sitting up slowly. He blinked and glanced around. Taking in the lowest of Gotham's society spread before him on the street corners, and the graffiti marking the rotten buildings, his eyes changed. They were no longer vacant, and he smiled. Standing, he stretched his arms, his smile growing wider until it became a broad grin.

"I'm home," he muttered. Then he cackled louder. "I'm home!"

Dick ran in past the door that Alfred held open and stood, dripping, on the rug. Alfred peered out into the dark torrent before shutting the door. Lightning illuminated the sky as thunder rumbled ominously.

"The radio in my car's dead," Dick grumbled. "I'll have to take it in to get fixed in the morning. Did you catch the news by any chance?" He added hopefully.

Alfred shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Master Dick. I have verified that the generators are in working order, in the event that we lose power."

"Great," Dick said. "I meant to do that this morning before I left, but I forgot. They said that this storm would be pretty intense." He had only taken three steps when the lights flickered, then shut off completely. They resumed a moment later when the generators kicked in. He grinned. "Thanks, Alfred."

"Where're we headed?" Robin asked from the passenger seat of the Batmobile.

"There's a robbery downtown," Batman told his junior partner. Minutes later they arrived at their destination. An officer who was leaning against his car and scribbling notes called to him.

"False alarm," he said shortly. Clearly not a Bat fan. "Owner tripped the alarm going in." He yelled to someone in the building. "C'mon, Frankie, get a move on. Haven't heard an update from Baker Street yet. Gonna swing by and make sure they don't need backup."

Seeing that Batman was standing several feet away, busily talking into his mike, Robin looked at the cop inquisitively. "What's at Baker Street?"

The cop gave Robin a tolerant look. "Nice try, kid." He finished writing his notes before swinging into his car. His partner came out of the store then and jumped in the other door.

Batman climbed into the Batmobile without a word. Robin slid into the passenger seat.

"What's at Baker Street?" Robin repeated.

"Not sure," Batman responded brusquely. "That's why we're gonna check it out. There were reports of a loony screaming at people and running down the road."

"Loonies aren't exactly uncommon in that area," Robin replied dryly.

Batman chuckled. "This guy's different. Some witnesses say lightning struck him as he was walking around the road, and voila, he's nuts. Others say he came from a huge glowing globe, others that he came up a manhole in the street. One guy said a guy in yellow spandex left him in the road."

Robin laughed. "Like Wolverine?"

Batman smirked. "We're almost there. Hasn't been anything over the police scanner about him for awhile, so I'm assuming they're still looking."

"A guy as disruptive as that can't be found?"

"Guess not," Batman said. "Maybe heard the cops were coming and beat it. There're lots of little alleys and abandoned buildings down there. If he knows the area, the cops won't find him."

"But we will," Robin stated confidently.

Batman didn't get a chance to reply before he spotted a couple of police cars ahead of them, their lights flashing. He slowed and saw that the cops were nowhere in sight.

"Must be searching for the guy," Robin said.

Batman drove a block past the police cars before he stopped. "We'll get out here," he decided. "Not going to see a thing from the car."

Robin's hair was lying flat in the heavy rain. He brushed it back, but it slid down again. "What say we look inside somewhere?" he asked hopefully.

Batman nodded towards a building across the road. "We'll start there."

Searching through abandoned houses down the street—there were more than had anticipated—Robin was curious. As he sloshed across to the next house, he wondered why Batman was so intent on finding this person. It seemed a minor enough problem to leave to the police. Certainly nothing that warranted interrupting patrol.

He opened the door of the building and peered inside. His nose crinkled at the smell.

"Well, at least it's dry," he announced philosophically. A few drops of water landed on his head. He stepped to the side and glanced up at the ceiling. "Well, mostly dry." He beamed his flashlight around the room, illuminating a staircase. He walked over to it and started up.

Just outside the doorway, Batman listened intently to his radio. After a moment, he switched the station. "Hey, A."

"Hello, B. Have you found anything of note?"

"Not yet, A." He glanced down the street. "I'm a couple of blocks lower than the cops, so hopefully, we'll know something soon."

"I'm afraid I *do* know something."

"Who was it?" Batman asked.

Alfred sighed. "You heard the report earlier this evening that someone had broken out of New Arkham. I've just discovered that the escaped prisoner was Jonathan Crane."

"Crane?" Batman thought about that for a moment. "How did he break out? New Arkham is—"

"Utterly secure?" Alfred finished dryly. "Apparently, not. I've reviewed the security tapes from the institution. The only clip of real interest is exactly six seconds long."

"How did he do it? Wasn't he still a vegetable?" Batman asked, switching on his flashlight. He walked through the door. He realized he hadn't seen Robin in some time.

"Yes, unless he was faking it, which I highly doubt. He would have to have fooled some of the best criminal psychologists in the country. Dr. Meridian submitted a report just yesterday confirming his mental breakdown, and it hardly seems that he could have recovered so quickly since then. Now, as for your first question: Scarecrow was taken through a portal that opened in his cell."

What? Batman blinked. A... *portal*? "Whose portal?"

"I'm striving to confirm the details at the moment, but I have a good idea of that answer. It appears to be Warp."

"What would he want with Crane?" Batman asked, moving swiftly through the downstairs rooms of the house. A rat, startled by the beam from his flashlight, ran over his boot.

"I'm working on that," the butler replied. "But this does matches up with the reports about a glowing globe and a man in a yellow costume."

"If those reports are right, and Crane is still in a vegetative state, he shouldn't be too hard to find."

"The problem will arise if Crane is *not* still in a vegetative state, sir. If Warp has somehow figured out how to cure him..." Alfred's voice trailed off for a moment. Then, he continued in a more businesslike tone, "I would suggest you use all proper precautions."

"Will do, A. Batman out." He looked through the last downstairs room, then shone his light on a spot in front of the stairs. Crouching down, he could see a large puddle of water and muddy prints. He recognized a few as Robin's.

Climbing up the stairs, he called out quietly, "Robin?" He frowned, switched channels, and turned the volume up on his radio. "Rob—" Static He tried radioing Alfred, only to receive more static as his response. The storm must had to be interfering with the signal.

"Robin?" He called, slightly more loudly. He saw a small staircase leading up to a closed door. Opening it, he stepped onto the roof. After searching quickly, he went back down, determined to thoroughly search the top floor. He opened door after door, until—

He jiggled the knob of the locked door. "Robin?!" He backed up a couple of steps and kicked. The top hinges gave way. He kicked again and stumbled as the door flew open.

Straightening, he automatically rolled into a defensive position. A man was standing to his left, holding a small pistol but with his hands up-raised. He must've been the one who'd opened the door. Another man was standing across the room, his gun pointed at Robin's head. Batman glanced at the boy to make sure he was unharmed. Robin's wrists and

ankles were tied, and his mouth covered, with tape. He was sitting on the floor at the gunman's feet, looking none too happy about it. When he saw Batman's stare, he looked a little sheepish.

"Let him go and you won't get hurt," Batman ordered, his voice gravelly. "Much."

The gunman to Batman's left advanced, training his gun on the vigilante. The one on his right kept his weapon aimed at Robin. Batman's mind raced as he worked to figure out how to free his partner. With guns pointing at both of them, this was going to be complicated.

"Yeah, come up the back way," the first man spoke into a radio he'd whipped out. He waited for a reply. "Hello? Hey!" Muttering under his breath, he pocketed the radio. "It's dead."

"The storm," Batman told him. "It's disrupting the signals." He paused for effect. "You won't be able to reach help until it calms."

The man chewed his lip. "You watch 'em," he told his partner. "I'll go down and bring them up the back steps—otherwise, they'll walk straight into our friend there." He exited through a door at the other end of the room.

The remaining gunman looked nervous. Sweat dripped down his face. He glanced at Robin briefly, but kept most of his attention trained on the dark figure across the room from him.

"Who's 'they'?" Batman asked. The man looked at him in disbelief.

"Like I'd tell you," he scoffed. "I know what you're trying to do. You're trying to trick me into saying something."

"What am I trying to trick you into saying?"

The man's face turned red. "Stop that, just shut up!" Batman obediently backed off, keeping close attention on the man's left trigger finger.

"Okay," he responded. He glanced at Robin, who seemed calm. "Just take it easy. Your friends wouldn't like it if you shot us without giving

them the chance to attempt their run-of-the-mill evil plot." He couldn't resist adding, "One accidental squeeze of that trigger and it's 'bye bye birdie'.

Robin's expression was hard to read beneath the mask and the tape over his mouth, but Batman gathered that he had heard him loud and clear. The gunman turned an even deeper shade of red. "Quiet." Everyone listened as a series of *thumps* sounded from across the room. The door opened, and the second gunman walked in, followed by a few others. They immediately trained their guns on Batman. One glanced first at Robin, then at Batman. He took a couple of steps forward, keeping a large distance between himself and the vigilante.

"This has been rather frustrating, on the whole," he said.

Batman immediately recognized his accent as British.

"Your appearance threw a spanner in the works, I must admit."

Batman smirked at the guns trained on him and at the man who was keeping his distance. "Scared to get too close?"

The man smiled thinly. "I wouldn't get within a bargepole of you, no offense meant. I'm not daft."

"Could've fooled me," Batman muttered. "You're not 'daft', and yet you kidnapped Robin? That wasn't *smart*."

The man was shaking his head. "As I told you before, this was hardly the plan."

"So the kidnapping was an accident?" Batman scoffed.

"Quite. At this stage, that is."

"So the kidnapping was what, stage three?"

The man looked at him patronizingly. "You are hardly in a position to demand that I explain my plans."

Batman shrugged. "It's just that most villains, especially those with bri—"

"If you're that eager to know your fate, then I suggest you shut up and allow fate to take its course. You are not presently in a position to run off, so I recommend that you be quiet and look for an escape route."

"You *want* me to escape?"

"By all means, I would love for you to try. It would be my pleasure to blow you away." He fingered his Browning. "However, you will be of far more use to me and others alive, at least at the present."

"If it's me you want, then let Robin go."

The man shook his head. "Come, now, you're perfectly aware that I cannot do that, of course. Without his presence, I'd be in a bit of a bind."

Batman was seething.

The man casually checked his watch. "Time to go," he announced. "Um, let's see here... you fellows first. Yes, that's right... then you... good, good."

Down the stairs they went. Outside, Batman watched as a few men climbed into a car with Robin, leaving the boy no chance to get away. Batman himself was closely guarded and didn't dare to escape on the chance that they'd hurt Robin in the other car.

"I'm just going to be in the car up ahead," the man said, as Batman sat between two gunmen. "If we have a problem back here, I'll know about it," he concluded in a genial tone. Batman took the hint.

Behave if you want the boy to live.

So, unwillingly he rode, keeping careful track of where they were. At last they pulled into an empty parking area, and both cars emptied. Batman and Robin were forced into the building, Robin several yards ahead so

that Batman could see that there were several guns trained on him at all times.

“Just tie him to that chair over there, won’t you?” He heard the Brit behind him dictating. “And I believe this chair here will do nicely for Batman. There we go...”

From separate ends of the room, Batman and Robin glanced at each other.

“There, now,” the man said, looking pleased. “I’ll just go find my associate. I think you’ll recognize him. I’m William, by the way. Now if you’ll excuse me a moment...” He walked out of the room.

Though William was gone, the room was hardly empty. Batman counted seven gunmen, two with guns trained on Robin, the remaining five had theirs pointed at towards himself. William returned through the same door that he had exited a moment before. He was followed by an all-too-familiar character. Batman’s eyes narrowed behind the cowl.

“Scarecrow.”

He examined the newcomer closely. Yes, it was Scarecrow alright, the same visage, the same cold, haunting eyes, even the same clothes. His New Arkham clothing must be somewhere else in the building. It was the same villain, Batman was sure, though there were several subtle differences. The Dark Knight could detect a nervous twitch at Scarecrow’s right eye. He seemed thinner; his eyes were set even more deeply in their sockets, and filled with hate.

Hate that was being directed towards Batman, rather pointedly.

“Batman.” He spat the name out. “Surprised to see me?”

“Not at all,” Batman replied. “I heard Warp broke you out.”

Scarecrow scowled. “Who told you that?”

Batman shrugged slightly. “Eyewitnesses saw it.”

Scarecrow seemed to consider this for a moment. It occurred to Batman that Crane really might not have a clue about how he'd gotten free, since he'd been virtually catatonic at the time that he'd been liberated.

"I don't see Warp around anywhere, now, though," Batman added coolly. Scarecrow's features twisted nastily.

"I don't need Warp."

William turned to one of the gunmen. "Before we proceed, Scarecrow, I suggest we have Batman searched," he told him over his shoulder. To the gunman he said, "You look like just the man for the job. Leave your weapons behind, thought, please."

The gunman obligingly laid down his weapons, then, less happily, approached Batman. He quickly found the Dark Knight's supply of batarangs, the first aid kit, and various other paraphernalia. Behind the cowl, Batman's eyes flitted to Robin's position. The guard was temporarily distracted as the men, curious, had come forward a few steps. Batman decided to take his chance. As the man reached to empty another section of his utility belt, Batman jerked down on his arm and smacked his head—hard—into the other man's. As the searcher stumbled back, Batman quickly stood and looped his hands over the back of the chair, plowing into the next man. He'd taken down three when a gunshot was fired. Stopping, he glanced wildly over to where Robin was.

William stood there, the cold barrel of his gun pressing firmly into the boy's temple. Batman could see that Robin was trying hard not to wince. "That was a warning shot," William informed Batman. "I think you've got an idea of what will happen next. Now, sit down."

Batman took a slow step backward, looking for some way, any way to tackle him without harming Robin.

"Sit down," William snapped, "or it's 'bye bye birdie'." Batman sat, and allowed his arms to be tied, though he covertly separated them a bit at the wrists.

"Now," William said, his gun still at Robin's head, "carry on, Scarecrow."

Scarecrow gloated at Batman's defeat. "You thought you could win this time!" He yelled. "But you can't, not this time. You have *no* idea *what* I have in store for you...." He cackled.

"I took you down last time, Crane," Batman said roughly. His throat was raw; he could use some more of Alfred's honeyed tea. "It was me. Let. Robin. Go."

Scarecrow shook his head wildly, grinning widely. "Nope! He'll be the test! I caught two birds with one stone!"

"A bird and a bat, actually," one man spoke up. "Since Batman's a—"

Bang!

"Shut up!" Scarecrow yelled at the dead man wildly. He handed the gun he was waving back to the man he had just borrowed it from.

Batman caught Robin's eye. *That serum left him completely unstable*, he realized. He was now dealing with a much crazier, much deadlier Scarecrow.

"Time to go," Scarecrow announced. He walked through a door. Three men lifted the struggling Robin out of his chair and dragged him after.

"Don't do this, Scarecrow," Batman called more urgently.

The man walked on.

"Crane!" Batman yelled desperately.

William paused in the doorway. Then he walked back to the chair to make sure that Batman was secure. "Don't be in a rush, now," he told the Dark Knight. "Your turn will come soon enough." Turning, he walked through the door.

Click.

Batman struggled desperately, ignoring the yells of his guards until one

of them stuck him across the face with the butt of his gun. He could feel a bruise already swelling up. He began working with the ropes he'd loosened such a tiny bit earlier, trying to force his hands through the stubborn rope. He worked furiously, as he imagined what they were doing to Robin inside the closed room when—

"No!" He heard a yell. *Tim*. The shout made him work faster than ever.

One of the guards noticed. "Hey, I need some more rope!" he told someone behind him.

Rope was quickly produced and wound tightly around Batman's wrists as he thrashed desperately in his chair. He felt another strike across his face and saw black for a few seconds. Then, another few blows knocked him out completely.

When he awoke, it was to screams. He jerked his head up quickly and glanced around, unsure of his surroundings. He saw men loitering around him, some shifting their weight, bored. Three were playing cards, while casting covert glances at a door.

A door. *The door*.

The memories came back in a rush. Another scream from beyond the door reminded him that Robin was in there. He quickly began working to free his hands, but soon realized that, numb as they were, there was no way he'd get loose without help.

"Noooooo!" he heard Robin scream from behind that door. It was only four yards from him, but it might as well have been four hundred miles. He struggled again, straining against the knots.

"Nooooooooo!" That scream was much clearer this time. He glanced up to see William standing in front of the Door. He'd opened it. Batman knew what was coming.

"It's your turn."

To be continued!

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Nightwing: Black Friday Blues.

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

Nightwing #21 (2007)

Nightwing: Kiss in the Night.

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

Nightwing #22 (2007)

Nightwing: To Catch A Night Thief

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

Nightwing #11 (2007)

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

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

Nightwing #13 (2007)

Nightwing: Ain't Never Had A Friend Like Me

Nightwing #15 (2007)

Nightwing: Hopelessly Devoted to You

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Nightwing: Beauty and the Mess.

Nightwing #17 (2007)

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

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Nightwing: Heart of a Champion.

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

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

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Nightwing: Be My Escape.

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

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

Nightwing #32 (2008)

Nightwing: More Than Useless

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

Nightwing #33 (2008)

Nightwing: Vengeance Served Cold.

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

Nightwing #14 (2009)

Nightwing: Something Wicked This Way Comes

Nightwing #37 (2009)

Nightwing: Dance of Death.

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

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