

Batman

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While Batman is one of its central figures, Gotham City holds many other stories. Looking for titles about **Robin**, **Batgirl**, **Nightwing** and the others? Check out their reviews elsewhere on the [Superhero Soup](#) page!

Batman: War Drums

ISBN 1401203418

By Bill Willingham and Andersen Gabrych

Art by Pete Woods, Damion Scott, Brad Walker, Cam Smith and Troy Nixey

DC Comics 2004

One of the enduring truths of the Batverse is that Batman needs a Robin. Now that Tim is out of the game, who is going to fill the pixie pants? Batman, as ever, insists that he doesn't need a Robin and everyone is somewhat surprised when he takes Stephanie Brown on as the new Robin. This is particularly true given that previously he emphatically told Stephanie to quit being Spoiler and stay off his streets. However, when she defies him and continues being Spoiler he's impressed and decides that if she's going to be a vigilante will-he-or-nil-he then at least as Robin she'll be under his supervision. He gives her a strict probation period and a new Robin suit. Alfred thinks he's using Stephanie to lure Tim back, and Oracle thinks he's being unnecessarily cruel to Tim, but Stephanie is having the time of her life until her enthusiasm gets the better of her and she disobeys a direct order from Batman and he fires her.

It's an interesting volume. Mostly it's a set up for the War Games trilogy, but it's a valid and complete story in its own right, nor do you have to have read it to follow War Games. I do have serious issues with what Willingham did with some of the characters, particularly Stephanie Brown. On the other hand, I think he does a good job with Tim and showing that just because he isn't Robin anymore doesn't mean that it's easy for him, or that he's stopped thinking like Robin. I like his Batman, who is

creepy and all about the mission and doesn't care that his vision might hurt people because the mission comes first. I had mixed feelings about the artwork, and again a lot of that has to do with how Stephanie got portrayed. She ended up bustier and bouncier here than I really think is necessary, and people frequently looked cuter than I associate with the Bat family but none of it bothered me unduly.

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Batman: War Games: Act 1

ISBN 1401204295

By Ed Brubaker, Andersen Gabrych, Devin Grayson, Dylan Horrocks, A.J. Lieberman, and Bill Willingham

Art by Ramon Bachs, Raul Fernandez, Al Barrionuevo, Francis Portela, Giuseppe Camuncoli, Lorenzo Ruggiero, Paul Gulacy, Jimmy Palmiotti, Kinsun, Mike Lilly, Andy Owens, Sean Phillips, Brad Walker, Troy Nixey, Pete Woods and Nathan Massengill
DC Comics 2005

Why does anyone want to live in Gotham? On a daily basis its inhabitants are at the mercy of a pantheon of costumed criminals each with their own uniquely twisted sense of humor, and on special occasions Gotham gets to be ground zero for the plague, or the center of a major earthquake, or designated a no man's land by the government. This time around it's gang warfare. Someone invited the heads of all the major Gotham gangs to a meet and killed them all. Now the gangs are leaderless and everyone is making a grab for power and it's all out war on the streets of Gotham. Batman is pulling in help from everyone he can think of to try and keep his city safe while he figures out what happened. What he doesn't know is that the whole situation was set in motion by a misguided, but well intentioned, Spoiler trying to regain her place at his side. She took a war game scenario off his computer and decided to implement it. Unfortunately what she didn't know was that the lynch pin in this particular war game – to consolidate all the gangs in Gotham under one controllable figure – is actually one of Batman's many disguises. Without Batman as Matches Malone in place to orchestrate the deal the meet up between Gotham's crime syndicates descends into chaos and violence.

The art in this volume was varied. Some of it was very good. Some of it was neither here nor there. And some of it raised my hackles. I was unimpressed by the cartoony aspect of some of the art. It made the characters less real and less vivid, and apparently increased Stephanie's bust size from a B-cup to a DD which left me wholly unamused.

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Batman: War Games: Act 2

ISBN 1401204309

By Bill Willingham and Ed Brubaker

Art by Al Barrionuevo and Paul Gulac
DC Comics 2005

The all out gang warfare that Spoiler unwittingly instigated continues unabated.. A kidnapping attempt

by one of Gotham's many rival gangs ends up with Darla Aquista, daughter of a mob boss and Tim's girlfriend, dead and Batman on the local news. Spoiler has escaped the custody of Catwoman in an attempt to try and fix the disaster she set in motion. Unfortunately she runs afoul of an old enemy of Batman's and spends most of the volume strung up by her wrists at the mercy of a sophisticated psychopath. Tim's reaction to Darla's death and the chaos of Gotham is clearly the emotional center of the book. His gradual understanding that he cannot sit by and simply watch when he knows he could be of use, and his final decision to break his promise to his father and return to being Robin is interesting and well done, as is Batman's guarded relief and pleasure and Alfred and Leslie's less secret disappointment. Less well executed is Batman's reaction to the situation. He's running roughshod over everyone from Oracle to former Commissioner Gordon for no particularly apparent reason. By the end of the volume it's hard to feel that Batman is doing the right thing for himself, his companions or Gotham. It's even harder to like him.

As in the first volume the artwork is hit or miss. Everyone was less busty which is a relief, but the trade-off is even tighter than usual costumes for the women. I didn't love the art, a lot of it felt sloppy and had the oddest use of perspective. It definitely didn't add much to the story line, but I was too irritated by the plot to be really annoyed by the art.

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Batman: Broken City

ISBN: 1401201334

By Brian Azzarello

Art by Eduardo Rizzo

DC Comics 2004

Batman has always had an edge of melodrama, but Brian Azzarello has really taken that to heart. Batman spends the better part of this book wandering around Gotham solving the kidnapping and death of the young sister of a gangster while comparing himself to God. It's not that I don't think that Batman thinks of himself as godlike, particularly when it comes to Gotham's night. However, I find it heavy handed to have an actual written inner monologue confirming that fact. It's a case where I think "show don't tell" would have been better employed. The artwork also didn't do much for me in this volume. The colors are gorgeous, but the people all look like they've been hit with the ugly stick and then distorted. I'm a fan of Batman, but this isn't a volume I'm recommending.

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Batman: Child of Dreams

ISBN: 156389906X

by Kia Asamiya

Translated by Max Allan Collins

DC Comics 2003

This title, in many ways, is a clever mix of ideas. Famed Japanese manga and anime creator Kia

Asamiya tackles one of our most distinctly American heroes, Batman. DC Comics handed the keys to Gotham over and brought in Max Allan Collins, of [Road to Perdition](#) fame, to adapt Asamiya's words, and released the title in a handsome hardcover edition. So what's the first thing I noticed about this historic new Batman tale?

Well, for one thing, the character profiles. I don't mean the in-depth psychiatric portraits either, though everyone's quirks, from Batman's to his fans across the globe, are elegantly displayed. Each shot from any character reveals an enormous, aquiline nose that would make Caesar proud. Not that I mind, and Mr. Wayne always did have a sharp profile, but everyone's nose seems like it could easily slice up the scenery.

Don't let those noses distract you, however, at least not after the first few startling appearances. In this title, Mr. Asamiya deftly lays out cultural differences and similarities with a keen eye for what brings all of us closer together: the media. If that means delving into the darker side of fandom that unites cultures in media obsessions, so be it -- Asamiya goes right for the life blood of mass culture. Batman here has to face a most disturbing trend. Archenemies he knows to be locked safely away at Arkham keep dramatically appearing to challenge him only to suddenly die a wretched and miserable death within hours of being caught. Each phantom of his past, even the pitch perfect Joker, turns out to be someone entirely different -- a fan so taken with Batman himself, and his enemies, to pay the ultimate price for a moment of nefarious glory. In his investigations, however, Batman finds all roads lead to Japan.

The artwork is in some ways typical of manga, particularly in Wayne's love interest and investigative reporter (Bruce can really pick 'em, can't he?), Yuko. At the same time, the gray tones and crisp lines also pay homage to their origins in American comic art. The two styles blend impressively well. The story is an interesting interrogation of the fan mentality, and what responsibility heroes, media and otherwise, have to their public, and gets deep into the mind of what divides admiration from obsession. The dialog, despite a few clunky bits where I felt like I was trapped in a bad noir film, tells the story well. The romance felt especially phoned in and kept making me wish for a woman worthy of Batman. The action and atmosphere, in the end, make up for such shortcomings and deliver a classical Batman tale well worth the effort.

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Dark Knight Dynasty

ISBN: 1563893908

by Mike W. Barr

Art by Gary Frank and Cam Smith

DC Comics 2000

You're probably looking at this cover and wondering - who is that woman? Does Batgirl have a new costume? All right, so maybe you're better informed than I am and you know exactly what's going on. *I* thought that when I first saw this cover.

Despite appearance, no, Batgirl has not added gold to her wardrobe - this title is one of the many Elseworlds titles that DC Comics releases periodically, inviting their writers and artists to take their favorite characters and tweak their stories. Allowing the creators to think outside the classics stories'

lines has led to some excellent topsy-turvy ideas. In this case, we are introduced to three Bat-men fighting the same immortal villain in three different times – one a knight of the Crusades, one a variation on the modern Bruce Wayne, and one a daughter of the Wayne line in the far future. Each segment manages to remain faithful to the Wayne spirit, so to speak, but also plays with the well-known tropes we all love. The artwork shifts beautifully to suit each age. I can't resist a tale that helps me consider about a familiar tale in a new suit – just what *would* it be like if Batman were Batwoman?

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Bruce Wayne, Fugitive

Volume 1

ISBN: 1563899337

By Devin Grayson, Ed Brubaker, Chuck Dixon, Kelley Puckett

Art by Roger Robinson, Scott McDaniel, Rick Leonardi, Phil Noto, Trevor McCarthy, Sean Phillips, William Rosado, Dave Ross

DC Comics 2002

One of the most fascinating things about this series is that it isn't particularly about Batman or Bruce Wayne. He is the catalyst, but the focus of the story is on how everyone around him reacts to the events that he precipitates. At the end of the last volume Bruce Wayne escapes from prison and essentially drops of the map, while Batman continues his nightly patrols of Gotham. The people who are closest to Bruce – Oracle, Nightwing, Robin and Alfred – are frustrated by his apparent disinterest in clearing his name and resuming his civilian life. Contributing to tensions within the group is the uneasy possibility that Bruce might be guilty. Nightwing vehemently refuses to believe that the man who raised him, who taught him how to be first Robin and then Nightwing, could kill another person. However, Oracle and Robin have seen a very different Batman recently and can't quite convince themselves that it's outside the range of possibility. As the team, absent Batman, continues to investigate it becomes clear that someone is trying to frame Bruce for murder, someone who knows that Bruce Wayne is also Batman. Batman himself remains frustratingly mute on the whole subject, including the question of his guilt or innocence.

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Bruce Wayne: Murderer

ISBN: 1563899132

By Chuck Dixon, Greg Rucka, Ed Brubaker, Devin Grayson, Kelley Puckett

Art by Scott McDaniel, Roger Robinson, Rick Burchett, Rick Leonardi, Steve Lieber, Damion Scott, Pete Woods, Trevor McCarthy

DC Comics 2002

Bruce Wayne-- handsome, rich, and Gotham City's favorite playboy.
Batman-- dark, brooding, and Gotham City's guardian angel.

It's hard to say which is the ego and which is the alter ego, and when Bruce Wayne is accused of murdering Vesper Fairchild, up and coming investigative journalist and a former girlfriend of Bruce Wayne, Batman takes advantage of the situation to slip off the burden of being Bruce Wayne. Those who are closest to Bruce are left frustrated and angry at his apparent lack of desire to clear his name. Added to which is the nagging question of whether Bruce/Batman might have killed Vesper Fairchild. He had the opportunity and the ability, and maybe even a motive.

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Batman: No Man's Land

By Bob Gale, Greg Rucka
DC Comics 1999-2001

Gotham's shadows color every Batman story. Her buildings loom better than the Bat himself. She has always been the unnamed lead actor in the Batman universe. As Bruce asks himself in this series, did Gotham make him, or did he make Gotham? **No Man's Land** is about Gotham and her residents. In the absence of any of the rules of civilized society, without electricity or running water, in a city run by gangs, Gotham's citizens find a way to survive. This is their story. [read more...](#)

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The Series

[Batman: No Man's Land Volume 1](#)

[Batman: No Man's Land Volume 2](#)

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[Batman: No Man's Land Volume 4](#)

[Batman: No Man's Land Volume 5](#)

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Bruce Wayne, Fugitive

Volume 1

ISBN: 1563899337

By Devin Grayson, Ed Brubaker, Chuck Dixon, Kelley Puckett

Art by Roger Robinson, Scott McDaniel, Rick Leonardi, Phil Noto, Trevor McCarthy, Sean Phillips,

William Rosado, Dave Ross

DC Comics 2002

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name and resuming his life. Contributing to tensions within the group is the uneasy possibility that Bruce might be guilty. Nightwing vehemently refuses to believe that the man who raised him, who taught him how to be first Robin and then Nightwing, could kill another person. However, Oracle and Robin have seen a very different Batman recently and can't quite convince themselves that it's outside the range of possibility. As the team, absent Batman, continues to investigate it becomes clear that someone is trying to frame Bruce for murder, someone who knows that Bruce Wayne is also Batman. Batman himself remains frustratingly mute on the whole subject, including the question of his guilt or innocence.

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Bruce Wayne, Fugitive (volume 2)

ISBN: 1563899477

By Greg Rucka, Devin Grayson, Ed Brubaker

Art By Steve Leiber, Scott McDaniel, Sergio Cariello, Roger Robinson

DC Comics 2002

It has been three months since Bruce Wayne escaped from prison. It has been three months during which Batman has had no obligations to anything other than his mission. His friends/family have figured out that he was framed, but Batman seemingly isn't interested in proving Bruce Wayne's innocence because so long as Bruce Wayne is a guilty fugitive he is free. As usual, it is Alfred, always the voice of concern and reason in the Batverse, who reminds Batman that he is needed as Bruce Wayne too. What follows is the slow unraveling of the mystery of who framed Bruce Wayne for Vesper Fairchild's murder and why. The artwork in this series remains consistently elegant, using cool tones and sharp color contrasts to build dramatic scenes. This wasn't my favorite volume in the series. It was well written, but it lacked the emotional impact of the other volumes, although it was definitely necessary for plot continuity.

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Bruce Wayne, Fugitive (volume 3)

ISBN: 1401200796

By Greg Rucka, Ed Brubaker, Kelley Puckett, Devin Grayson, Geoff Johns

Art By Steve Leiber, Scott McDaniel, Rich Burchett, Roger Robinson, Damion Scott

DC Comics 2003

The mystery is solved, Bruce Wayne is cleared of the murder charge and both Batman and Bruce are back in Gotham. Bruce/Batman has even admitted to his Bat-family that he knows he's not the easiest person to live with (and their expressions of shock and amusement are priceless). Before reading this volume I did wonder what exactly there was left to talk about. Which just goes to show I should have more faith, because this is the most introspective volume of the series. Having been Batman and Bruce and reconciled his need to be both, Bruce now has to face what the sublimation of himself into Batman has cost him over the years. Sasha Bordeaux was Bruce Wayne's bodyguard and before the Vesper Fairchild murder fought at Batman's side. She chose to protect both Bruce and Batman because she

was in love with him, and Batman allowed her to discover his secret because he was afraid he was falling in love with her and he needed a way to control and distance his relationship with her. While Bruce escaped prison to be Batman, Sasha was tried and convicted of murder. Bruce/Batman's seeming indifference to her has broken her love for him just at the moment when he is realizing that perhaps it is important for him to allow people to be close to him and possible for him to be close to them.

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Batman: Hush

Volume 1

Volume 2

By Jeph Loeb

Art by Jim Lee

Hush stars Killer Croc, Poison Ivy, Harley Quinn, the Joker, the Riddler, Scarecrow, Ra's al Ghul, Clayface, at least two Robins, Superman, Catwoman, Oracle, ex-Commissioner Gordon, Harvey Dent (aka Two Face), the Huntress & Krypto, the Hound of Krypton. The plot is very simple. Batman's foes attack him in new, unexpected ways - Killer Croc turns to kidnapping, Poison Ivy uses her wiles to gain herself a Man of Steel for a suitor, Harley Quinn develops a fondness for opera - which leads Batman to suspect the existence of a shadowy mastermind lurking in the shadows: Hush.

Batman is right, of course. Hush, a mysterious bandaged figure with a fondness for trenchcoats, wastes no time in making his presence felt. He cuts Batman's batrope, causing him to take a header into Crime Alley; he gives Poison Ivy the Kryptonite Lipstick that enables her to seduce Superman; he frames the Joker for the shooting of Batman's boyhood friend, which causes the Dark Knight to almost cross the edge.

I'm going to be honest: Hush has almost no plot. The driving force of this 13-issue storyline is a riddle - who is Hush? And you know what? It works. Hush's identity was one of the most hotly debated topics in comics last year and I must confess, in the interest of full disclosure, that my own guess was totally off the mark. Despite that, I will highly recommend Hush anyway.

Jim Lee's artwork is great, of course. Jeph Loeb, the writer, takes full advantage of Batman's Rogue Gallery, which is one of the three best in comics (the other two being Flash and Spider Man's). However, I think the best reason to read this series is Selina Kyle, aka Catwoman, who is portrayed as a strong, funny, attractive woman.

Yes, it's true: Batman gets a girlfriend, and he even tells her his secret identity. While it's true that these characters have a history - in pre-Crisis days, the Batman of Earth 2 married Selina Kyle - putting Batman in a semi-realistic relationship (all they do is kiss) is a huge step forward for his character. It's a shame that it ends.

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Batman: Officer Down (New Gotham 2)

ISBN: 1563897873

By Greg Rucka, Ed Brubaker, Chuck Dixon, Bronwyn Carlton, Devin Grayson, Nunzio DeFilippis

Art by Rick Burchett, Jacob & Arnold Pander, R. Steven Harris, Mike Lilly, Mike Collins

DC Comics 2001

Commissioner Gordon has been shot. The GPD suspect Catwoman, but the Batfamily have their doubts since guns aren't really her style. Nightwing, Robin, Batgirl and Oracle are all trying to track down Catwoman to ask her what she saw and trying to get to the bottom of who shot Commissioner Gordon. Commissioner Gordon's shooting has a profound impact on those around him. Oracle is terrified she is going to lose her father. The Gotham PD is out for blood, whether it means breaking a few rules or not. Of all of them, however, it is Batman who is the most lost. Even Alfred's acidic and unhappy commentary on Batman's choices don't seem to be able to push him to action. It's an interesting and well written story line that is unfortunately not backed up by the artwork which runs the gamut from making everyone look vaguely hung-over to making them all look like puppets.

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Batman: Evolution (New Gotham 1)

ISBN: 1563897261

By Greg Rucka

Art by Shawn Martinbrough, John Watkiss, William Rosado, Phil Hester

DC Comics 2001

[No Man's Land](#) has ended, but Gotham isn't back to her normal self yet. The gangs have moved back into town, and there is an increasingly acrimonious divide between those who stayed in Gotham during [NML](#) (old gothamites), and those who left Gotham and then returned (deezees). Told by Greg Rucka, which is a pretty solid recommendation for any book, and accompanied by gorgeous two-toned artwork this is an interesting look at what happens next. The end of [No Man's Land](#) is a triumphant reopening of Gotham to the world, but **Batman: Evolution** shows that by no means does that mean that all of Gotham's problems have been solved.

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Batman: The Dark Knight Returns

ISBN: 1563893428

By Frank Miller

Art by Frank Miller, Klaus Janson, and Lynn Varley

DC Comics 1997

Sinister, fierce, and burning with power, reacting against the new laws prohibiting superheroes from walking the streets, the Dark Knight returns to his crime fighting ways after a ten year absence. Frank Miller made comic history in the 80s with this reinvention of Batman -- and deservedly so. This

collection remains one of the most powerful examples of just what a superhero tale can be.

review by [robin](#)

If you discover you're craving more tales of the big Bat, check out these titles:

Batman: The Killing Joke by Alan Moore

ISBN: 0930289455

Batman: Year One by Frank Miller

ISBN: 0930289331

The Dark Knight Strikes Again (the much anticipated sequel to Dark Knight Returns) by Frank Miller

ISBN: 1563898705

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Across the Universe: the DC Universe of Alan Moore

ISBN: 1401200877

By Alan Moore

DC Comics 2003

Are you an Alan Moore fan? Have you watched his career closely through [Watchmen](#), [V for Vendetta](#), [Tom Strong](#), and [From Hell](#)? Or are you simply curious to know what's so special about the writer who (according to The Onion) has "reached previously unscaled heights" of story telling innovation? For Moore devotees and dilettantes alike, **Across the Universe** is an enjoyable sampler of the work of a comic book genius. The 13 stories in this collection all feature the DC heroes, with a special focus on the Green Lantern Corps, Superman, and Batman. My personal favorites include an encounter between Superman and the Swamp Thing, the background on The Phantom's secret origin, and some hilarious Green Lantern lore imparted from the Great Hall of Service on the Planet Oa. Like so many of Moore's longer works, these stories all end with a dramatic twist that's either heart-wrenching or silly, keeping us guessing until the punchline in the last panels. This is an opportunity to see how a virtuoso writer incorporates his own peculiar perspective into pre-existing characters and worlds with their own history, rules, and mythology.

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Batman: Huntress

ISBN: 1563898012

By Greg Rucka

Art by Rick Burchett, Terry Beatty

DC Comics 2002

This is an origin story for Huntress, which is intriguing simply for providing background to the world of Gotham. When a member of the Panessa family, one of Gotham's premiere mob families, is killed

on the streets of Gotham with one of the Huntress' trademark crossbow bolts the press and Batman assume her guilt. What the press and the Panessa family don't know is that the Huntress is also Helena Bertinelli, only surviving member of the former reigning mob family of Gotham. Through a series of flashbacks Greg Rucka explores the events that led to Helena Bertinelli's orphaned state and how and why she becomes the Huntress. The Huntress, like Catwoman, is an interesting counterpoint to Batman. She's a costumed vigilante, but as the events of the book show, her ethics don't always fall in line with Batman's.

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Batman: Death in the Family

ISBN: 0930289447

By Jim Starlin, Jim Aparo, Mike Decarlo

DC Comics 1988

For years Dick Grayson was the eternally youthful, fearless and wisecracking boy wonder Robin. Then he grew up and became the first leader of the Teen Titans and later a superhero in his own right, Nightwing. This left Batman without a Robin, and everyone agreed that Batman needed a Robin, if only to provide some much needed levity. Thus, Jason Todd was introduced as the second Robin. He was originally written to be a very similar character to Dick Grayson, however, somewhere along the line his character started to write himself and Jason Todd turned out to be a little bit sullen and a lot rebellious. The problem was, nobody really liked him very much. In response DC Comics did something unprecedented. They opened up the fate of Jason Todd to the readers. By calling in readers could decide if he lived or died, and by a narrow margin readers opted to kill him off.

This is the story of how Jason Todd died. It is partly a story about Jason's search for a mother he never knew he had - a search which takes him to the Middle East and Africa and winds up involving international arms trafficking and the Joker. But the emotional impact in the story comes from tension in Batman. His choices, his dedication to justice and the protection of strangers at all costs, are instrumental in the death of Robin. He has to confront the consequences of who he is, and the kind of life that he lives and asks others to live.

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