

Bat In The Bat

Barbara sighed, sipping on her first dose of morning coffee as she sat at her desk. As her laptop booted up, she cast her eyes upwards to the wall where newspaper articles were pinned.

“Manbat attacks Wayne Tech Genetic Labs.”

“Manbat attacks Arkham Asylum.”

“Manbat and Freeze Alliance?”

“Batman Captures Freeze.”

“Manbat companion seen attacking Gotham Central Bank.”

“Batman Gone Rogue?”

“New Bat Creature spotted attacking Nightwing.”

Barbara rubbed her eyes as she logged into her account and brought up her chart of the ManBat attacks.

“If Batman has gone rogue it could be bad for everyone but I refuse to believe it,” she muttered, staring at the red markers on the map amongst a few blue ones.

“If these blue markers show Batman activity then things don’t make sense.”

She closed her laptop as she heard heavy footsteps ascending the stairs, she sipped on her coffee as she turned towards the door. The latch clicked as the knob turned, Barbara’s eyes widened in shock as the tired dishevelled appearance of her father, Commissioner Jim Gordon.

“Rough night father?”

“You could say that. Dent is calling for the hunting of Batman claiming him to be in league with this so-called ManBat,” Gordon mumbled, sitting on his daughter’s bed.

Barbara glanced back at her articles on the walls, focusing on the one with “Batman Gone Rogue?” a picture of Batman fighting the ManBat.

“But hasn’t he been seen fighting ManBat?” she asked.

“Yep, but they still believe he’s in league with Dr Langstorm as normally Batman would have beaten down the villain and brought them to Arkham Asylum.”

“Could this other bat be Miss Langstorm?” Barbara quizzed.

“You’ve been researching,” Her father said, his voice a mix of concern and amusement as he looked at her with his worn out eyes.

“Call it a small hobby that keeps my attention,” Barbara said, waving her hand dismissively. Not dismissing her dad but dismissing the thought that always came to her when talking to her dad, the thought that was the other Batman in Gotham appropriately naming herself Batgirl.

“I see it as a dangerous hobby. Remember when Quinn kidnapped you to get her Puddin released!” her dad reminded her, his voice slightly raising with a hint of disgust. The Joker or Harley’s Puddin had always been known for upping his game every time he was broken out.

Barbara pondered her words as she remembered being tied up to a carousel horse watching Harley fighting Nightwing, giggling playfully as she struck the member of the Bat-family with her mallet

“If it hadn’t been for Batman, Gotham would have fallen long ago,” Barbara said, trying to not sound like an argumentative teenager.

“True but I don’t know,” her father sighed.

Barbara watched as her father stood up and straight to make his way towards the door, trying to hide a small yawn as he stretched his arms up.

“Enjoy your rest father,” Barbara called, watching the door close.

She sat back at her desk and open her laptop, her eyes fixating on the markers as she rubbed her chin thoughtfully.

“If these red markers represent Manbat activity and these blue ones represent the other bat attacks, there’s got to be more to this.”

With a few clicks on her laptop’s mouse, she opened up a police file on Dr Langstrom given to her alter ego by someone inside the GCPD who believed Gotham needed more heroes. She gave a chuckle remembering the case of the Calendar Man and how she had proven herself to her contact.

She scanned Langstrom’s record, scrolling down with small taps of the down arrow key as she scanned over his former partners in crime and then onto former bases of operations, the world “Downtown Zoo” jumping out at her. She hummed thoughtfully as she tapped her chin.

“This is a job that Batgirl can take,” she said, smiling as she glanced out of the window, “But everyone knows bats only become active at night.”

The wait to the night was a long drag, Barbara had found herself tossing and turning in her bed, pulling up her phone clock from time to time as if waiting for the short vibration of her phone's alarm. By the time it did vibrate under her pillow she was already zipping up her yellow boots.

She picked up her phone and silenced her alarm, slipping her phone into one of her yellow pouches fastened to her belt. She pulled on her yellow gloves and slipped on her cowl that was shaped to resemble Batman's whilst concealing her identity. She gave a chuckle staring at her mirror as she fumbled with her hair allowing the auburn locks to fall against her black cape.

Barbara walked over to her window opening it, while any normal person would use the front door, she wasn't normal tonight she was Batgirl and she was on the case. She pulled her grappling hook off of her belt and fired a line up towards the neighbour high rise, smiling as it coiled around the gargoyle, the three head hook biting into the stone. The line whizzed as she recalled it, pulling herself up to the gargoyle.

She took a moment to stare over the bright lights of Gotham's nightlife, the biggest one, Wayne Enterprises, shining like a glaring beacon. She turned her head down looking at her decorated yellow grappling gun with the signature Batman emblem on it that she had procured from her contact.

"Feels wrong but at least it's getting used and not stuck in some evidence locker," she said, eyeing most of her pouches on her belt.

She fired the line off again, using it to glide and swing between buildings, the wind rushing through her cape and hair as she built and carried her momentum.

Eventually, she stopped, perching herself upon the old church roof, looking down towards the empty zoo. Her memories flashing back to when this zoo was open and active, filled with life and exotic animals, remember how she used to come here with her dad before Gotham turned into the chaotic nightmare that it was now. She wiped a small tear from her right eye as the faint twinge of pain in her heart as the painful memory of The Joker killing her mom in a bomb attack on the zoo, his attempt to mix Bane's venom with to mutate animals to sow chaos in Gotham under the orders of the Great Immortal Ra's Al Ghul.

Hours ticked past until the clock tower chimed away, Batgirl sighed looking up at the starry sky, her eyes systematically scanning for anything that resembled the Manbat or Batman.

"Nothing. I seriously thought there would have been..."

She broke off as a loud screech filled the air, her hair swept about as a great gust of wind shot overhead caused her to instinctively ducked.

“Gotcha,” she said, trying to hide her excitement as she pulled out a small set of black binoculars.

The binoculars clicked as she followed the creature, marvelling in glee at the sight of a bat creature swooping down towards the old tiger enclosure. She put her binoculars in her pouch as she freed her grappling hook from her belt, firing a line down towards the zoo’s entrance, clipping a hook around the line, zipping from her perch to the ground.

“Well then here we go!”

She stealthily crept through the zoo, keeping crouched and low, sticking to the darkness of bushes and collapsing stands, her eyes scanned as she stayed as quiet as a mouse, keep her ears tuned and alert for any unwelcome attackers but only silence surrounded her, silence increased alertness at least that is what she learned through conversations with her dad.

Her heart pumped, her body and mind racing with adrenaline and excitement as she stared at the empty broken down tiger enclosure, her eyes focusing on a large cave in the far back of the den.

“Okay, get in, find Langstrom, beat him up, arrest him and then dump at the police station. I think that just about covers the plan at least I’m pretty sure that’s what Batman always does,” Batgirl said, grinning like a kid at Christmas.

She leapt from the shadows and hurried into the enclosure, darting like a predator into the den. Small faint lights on the floor seemingly guided her down the dark sloping tunnel, her hands fumbling against the wall trying to help her guide through the darkness.

“Next time I’m making a cowl with night vision,” she whispered as she came to halt.

Her eyes glistened at the sparkling tunnel of light coming from the end of the tunnel, the faint running of water echoing around drifted into her ears. Batgirl let out a small sigh as she reached the mouth of the tunnel, her eyes scanning over the walls and the single bridge.

“Smart move no cover for intruders,” she said, trying to work out a plan.

“I know you’re there so you might as well come say hello Batman,” a voice came, echoing around the cave.

Barbara deeply inhaled trying to focus her efforts on boosting her confidence, Batgirl needed to be strong and fearless in the face of the monster she was about to confront.

“Sorry to disappoint,” she announced, stepping from the shadows and up to the bridge.

Her eyes fixated on the large laboratory set up positioned and built around the cave. A familiar bat-shaped figure stood hunched over a table.

“I don’t...is it me or are the bats getting younger these days?”

“Dr Langstrom you’re under arrest!” Batgirl called, raising her fist and taking up a fighting stance, “Come peacefully and you won’t get hurt.”

Langstrom started chuckling that twisted into laughter, “You’re not like the other Bat. I’ll admit I’m not like the Joker, I prefer a chat before the pummeling starts. Aren’t you just a little bit curious as to why I’m doing this Miss Gordon?”

Batgirl tried to hide her small flinch as Langstrom spat out her surname, his monstrous glowing eyes staring at her, his mouth curving into a sinister smirk.

“Ah sorry, where are my manners of course your superheroes don’t use your real name. I beg forgiveness from you Batgirl.”

“How do you know?” Batgirl demanded.

“Information is easily brought or gained but when you’ve been around me for so long I’m bound to learn your identity,” Langstrom stated.

“For so long. This is the first time...”

“That we’ve met. Oh my dear this is the sixth time we’ve walked this path though your precious little mind wouldn’t have been able to handle the truth,” Langstrom explained, his large bar ears twitching as Batgirl shifted her weight.

Bones cracked and crunched as the monstrous battle turned back into a man before her eyes. She turned away, not caring to watch the old man getting himself dressed.

“I must remember to break him out again as my thanks for helping me gain control over my transformation. But he also helped with a few other little things such as Project Thirty Two,” Langstrom continued, clicking her tongue, “You can look now.”

Batgirl turned to face him as he moved deeper into his lab setup, she cautiously stepped onto the bridge.

“You mentioned my name, you...you said I’d been here before,” she called, trying to hold her confidence.

“Oh yes your cowl was destroyed by Project Twenty Six but Freeze helped refine the process to keep your identity a secret. Call it my gift for you being such a good experiment.”

“Project Twenty Six but you said thirty-two. But six times you claim I’ve visit...ed,” Batgirl said, her voice trailing off as stared at Langstrom.

Her confidence slowly faded as she watched the doctor stepping out from his setup holding a small triangular device in his left hand as he stood close to the bridge, “Now you’re working it out.”

Batgirl clenched her fists, taking a few steps forwards, “Enough trying to mess with my head. I may be new at this superhero gig but I’m still taking you in!”

“I think not my dear,” Langstrom said, his lips curling into a sinister smirk as he moved his thumb closer to a red squared button on the device.

A bright green light shone as he hit the button, a faint yet growing beeping sound emitted from the device. The beeping became rapid, almost rhythmic as a faint orange glow appeared under her hair. A high pitched squealing sound filled her ears as she looked around, panic flooding her eyes as she looked around for the source.

“What did you do!”

Batgirl let out a scream as glowing orange lines traced across her neck, her hands flying back to her neck as she dropped to knees, feeling a burning, burrowing sensation spreading across her skin.

“Pain...pain drives the beast, pushes it towards the surface. The nanites within your neck chip help control you when you change but they’re also good for funnelling the change around your body,” Langstrom explained.

Batgirl slammed her fists into the ground hunched over as she hissed through gritted teeth. Two sharp ringing sounds pierced her ears as the tips started to press into her cowl. Fabric tore as her ears lengthened, steadily widened out of a pair of jagged holes in her cowl, the outer skin darkening into a black as a blood-red spread throughout the inner ear.

Her fists uncurled, fingers splaying out. Langstrom seemed to flinch as bones popped and cracked across Batgirl’s body.

“My muscles....their burning!” she wheezed.

“Trust me I know all the pain you feel. I still remember the first time I changed,” Langstrom stated.

The sleeves of her suit, tightened, seams becoming more pronounced. Grey fabric tore around her bulking arms, slowly revealing her darkening skin to Langstrom. Bumps appeared in the tips of her yellow gloves, pure white talons tore through them as her gloves tore apart, peeling away from her swelling hands and fingers.

“My....suit.....What are you...”

“No need to worry about the suit. I always made one for you to keep the cover though your new form might not need one,” Langstrom said, calmly sitting in a chair.

Batgirl shot him a glare, snarling like some beast as red started to seep into the whites of her eyes like blood. Tears leaked out of her eyes as she stared towards her right forearm watching five black bones sprouting out of the outer side of her forearm with one sprouting just above her elbow. The bones tugged at her skin, jerking it slightly as the bones grew longer, her talon claws scraped against the ground at the sensation of new skin forming between the bones.

She whimpered watching the red membrane forming her wings.

“Every bat needs its wings,” Langstrom observed.

The leather of her boots pulsed, bones snapped within her feet as her fourth and second toes retracted into her thickening feet. Leather fractured as thick white talon-like claws, tipping three swelling toes, tore through the fronts of her boots, the soles of her boots separated from the rest as her feet grew longer and bigger. Her toes and fingers twitched as her claws grew bigger.

Her legs muscles pulsed and twisted, pain flaring up caused her to cry out in pain, a cry that twisted into a screech. Fabric tore around her bulging, growing legs and butt cheeks, her white skin darkening like the night sky whilst creasing appeared in her tightening skin. Her ribs popped and crack, ribs forming in the top half of her suit, exposing her abdomen and chest, her abdomen and stomach skin tightened whilst she became muscular, a toned six-pack forming. Her spine popped and crack strengthening to carry and support her increasing size.

Batgirl’s cries of pain twisted into animalistic grunts of agony as her mouth and nose pushed outwards slightly, her teeth sharpening into jagged points whilst her nose flattened slightly. The creature hissed and snarled, it’s green pupils fading into black as the red that had consumed the whites of her eyes started to glow.

Langstrom chuckled, walking up to his creation as it bowed its head towards him. He stroked his hand down its black cheek.

“Now my pet. Do you serve me?”

“Yes, *master*.”

“Good....then bring me Dr Quinzel.”

The bat creature screeched as it's winged arms flapped about, lifting its body up and off the ground. It swopped out of the cave and up the tunnel as Langstrom stroked his chin thoughtfully.

“Time for phase two.”

“To Be Continued!”