

Vigilance

Written by Corey W. Smith

Nightwing crouched atop one of the support towers on the bridge over Jump City Bay, unseen by the steady stream of traffic passing back and forth far below him. As the sun set behind him, he watched the brilliant reflections it cast across the bay's waters, the small island situated roughly at its center, and the huge, T-shaped structure that marked the island as more than just a part of the topography.

For Nightwing, the view was one of bittersweet nostalgia. Though many years had passed since he'd lived in that Tower, or even in this city for that matter, he still made it a point to come back from time to time...if only just to reassure himself that it was still there, still occupied, still active. Still standing as a monument to this city, and a warning to its enemies.

Still playing a role in preserving the peace that so many took for granted.

He wondered if any of the drivers passing below him ever looked out at Titans Tower on their way across the bridge, if they ever reflected on *why* it was there, what it stood for, and what it meant. What the young people who lived in it risked every day, whether the public was aware of it or not, and why they did it.

Or if it had faded into just another part of the scenery, for most.

Most people would never, *could* never know the danger they willingly faced every day, the price they paid, and the blood they spilled precisely *so* the city's inhabitants could go about their daily lives in peace. Most people never had to think about what had to be done in order to secure such peace and tranquility in what was inherently a violent and chaotic world.

It had been years since Nightwing had seen Slade's name mentioned in a newspaper. But that meant nothing, as far as he was concerned. The fact was, the man was still free. And as such, neither he nor the Titans could ever afford to forget about him. He'd spilled too much blood, claimed too many lives.

It wasn't about taking revenge. It was about defending the innocent. As long as Slade was free, he was dangerous. Evil never sleeps, it only waits for the vigilant to tire. It was as simple as that.

It was only natural, only human, to want to forget about the terrible things that had happened, to leave the past behind. Nightwing didn't blame the people who wanted to move on with their lives. But he also knew, from personal experience, how dangerous such complacency could be. And if he had to be the unpleasant reminder, the killjoy, the dark cloud to dampen everyone else's sunny day...then so be it.

In Gotham, the Joker alone had killed hundreds. He'd been in and out of Arkham Asylum dozens of times, but somehow always managed to escape, or be released, to kill again. His appetite for destruction knew no bounds, and he was hardly alone in that respect. Were it not for the tireless, constant, unwavering efforts of Bruce, Barbara, Tim and others, not to mention Commissioner Gordon and Gotham's brave police force, Nightwing could scarcely imagine how many more might be dead.

And yet, the politicians and the judges wanted the Batman and all his associates locked up. They were constantly harassing Gordon, dragging him and his men through

one pointless hearing after another. Did they think that if they simply stopped fighting crime, then crime would just go away?

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Nightwing wondered if the people of Jump City would ever turn on the Titans that way. He certainly hoped not, but in any case, it was out of his hands. He knew they would deal with it when the time came, if it ever did.

As was his habit, he silently bid his old friends a good night...and good hunting.

Dedicated to the true heroes.

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