

**(Warning:** This story contains female muscle, female muscle growth, muscle worship, and graphic sexual content)

Gotham City never slept, not under its dark red skies. In the night criminals prowled the streets. In Gotham, gunshots and sounds of struggle were part of the urban jungle environment, often accompanied by the sounds of police cars, fire trucks, and ambulances. Every alley held a dark secret, deals made under the shadows, muggings perpetrated between silent stone buildings.

Gothamites knew to fear the darkness, since young they were taught what places to avoid, which people to ignore, and which parts of the city were safe or not. It was engraved in their minds to like a survival instinct. Gangs and criminals of all stripes had their talons sank deep into the city, working from their way up from the street to the highest level of city officials. The understaffed and often compromised police had its hands full steaming the flow of crime, perpetrated by criminals of the normal and super variety.

Yet there was still hope in the darkness, criminals had learned to fear the shadows too whenever that light shone in the dark sky, displaying the image of a winged creature that thrived in the night.

The Bat stood for many things. Honor, righteousness, and a particularly brutal brand of justice that left many criminals nursing their broken bones and rethinking their life choices. It was the Bat they learned to fear, the dark shade that promised swift retribution and pain falling down from the high roofs.

He couldn't be everywhere at the same time, right? That was the slimmest hope many criminals had long since clung to enact their illegal activities. And perhaps when he had started out that was the case.

But in truth, few bats were solitary creatures.

Batman's family followed their leader's path of justice and enacted the same brand of vengeance upon crime to protect the good people of Gotham.

The Robins and Batgirls who had taken up the mantle had become almost as fearsome as Batman himself. Even if they lacked their leader's intensity, they didn't need to strike fear into the hearts of criminals to be just as effective.

Though one of the Bats in particular came damn near close.

The third of the Batgirls was known by the criminal element to be utterly fearsome and brutal in her fighting style, dealing devastating and debilitating strikes with such speed and ruthless precision many of them thought it was a miracle they hadn't died. The Bats didn't kill, but often that meant they lived on to regret it.

After all, only metas could heal from multiple broken bones and concussions and recover to full normalcy with enough time.

Cassandra Cain believed in her adoptive father's mission, possibly far more than any of his other proteges. The daughter of assassins raised to be the deadliest weapon grew to be a compassionate and driven soul under Bruce's guidance.

So she repaid that kindness, that trust, by taking care of Gotham City with all her heart.

This city could be so much more, not just the hellhole of crime the rest of the country saw them as.

Patrols often involved beating up criminals and stopping crimes already in progress. One thing usually led to another, a small crime could clue them to a bigger crime.

And right now, Cassandra was following the lad on the latest issue Gotham would be dealing with.

Drug trafficking wasn't uncommon in Gotham, but things became more complicated when more 'anomalous' substances circulated. In a world where magic and super-science would often run amok, it was no surprise some people would capitalize on the situation and make money off it.

According to Oracle's info, a dealer would be holding a business meeting with a local gang to sell the product. Details were scarce, but they had a good reason to believe the drug would have meta-like effects on people given what they managed to piece together.

Cassandra hated when people sold 'powers in a tube'. It always ended horribly.

Silent as a whisper and invisible like a shadow, the Batgirl slipped inside the warehouse where Oracle's coordinates directed her. She remained hidden in the shadows of the upper railings as dim and often flickering lights shined down on a group of people. She took notice of a man in a jacket and jeans, holding a briefcase, the dealer most likely. The more poorly dressed individuals with matching colors in their outfits most likely were the gang he contacted.

"How much the whole thing?" The leader of the gang gruffly asked.

"For you, my friend?" The dealer spoke up with a salesman's pitch. "I'm willing to give you a nice discount and leave it at fifty thousand"

Sounds of shock and outrage echoed among the gang members. "Fifty grand?! That's insane"

"Well you asked for the whole thing" He tapped the briefcase. "One vial is five thousand"

The gangster took a step forward, trying to look intimidating. "How about me and my gang just take it all, get our own 100% discount if you know what I mean"

"You could" The dealer looked unperturbed. "But when where are you going to get more? Not to mention my boss will know you stole it" He let out a short laugh. "And word of advice? You're better taking your chances with the police than with *them*"

As the gang seemed to reconsider his words, Cass was already formulating a plan of attack. They were well-grouped and the area below was very open. A few smoke bombs should make that a non-issue. One more reason she preferred her cowl to have no mouth.

Then as she was about to reach into her belt, the windows exploded.

Chaos reigned as the gangsters all scrambled and panicked. Long green vines stretched and crawled over the walls as though nature was reclaiming the warehouse.

Cassandra saw a pale green-skinned woman enter the building, carried by a giant flower serving as a pedestal, fierce red hair stood as one of her most eye-catching traits. And the anger in her green eyes was palpable.

Poison Ivy. What was she doing here?

“Found you”

Her vine lashed out like a whip, and the dealer’s briefcase was sent flying at great velocity.

It collided with the ceiling right above Batgirl with such force it cracked open the case. She heard the sound of shattering glass and dripping liquid before she even registered it was falling over her.

“Ugh!” Cassandra huffed as a bright green liquid splattered all over her uniform, the shards of glass harmlessly bounced off her reinforced leather, but she could still feel the wetness and cold of the substance seeping into her outfit. Ugh, the smell alone was so acidic it hurt her nose, making her gag.

Then there were screams, people throwing around the warehouse with devastating swiftness. Bodies collided with walls and the ground, a gunshot or two blasting amidst all the chaos before all fell silent once more.

From her spot, Cassandra saw the vines retreat. Recovering from the previous shock of the substance falling over her, the Batgirl jumped to her feet and quickly vaulted over the railing.

She barely caught side of Ivy retreating, completely unaware of her existence before she disappeared from view, her plants carrying her with too much speed for Cassandra to catch up.

She could still try and give chase, find out why she busted this deal. But...

Deciding fast, Cassandra knelt by each of the fallen men, feeling their pulse and making sure they were alive. They had been fortunate, Ivy was not interested in killing them, her vines’ blows had only rendered them unconscious.

Sighing to herself, and wincing at the feeling of the liquid starting to seep into her skin, Cassandra figured perhaps she should have this looked at to make sure she wasn’t under any risk.

Reaching into the zip ties, she tapped into her communicator before tying up every gangster and the dealer. “Oracle”

*'Cass! Got an update on the-?'*

"Contact the police on my location," The Batgirl said curtly. "Got six individuals in custody"

*'What about the drug?'*

"...Get a decontamination shower ready for me on the Belfry"

*'Oh dear'*

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While the Batcave was Batman's center of operations where he and his sidekicks had organized and trained for many years, time had proven its highly secure location under Wayne Manor was as much of a detriment as it was an advantage. Regardless of how fast the Batmobile was on their hidden direct route to Gotham, it did not change the fact they still needed to travel from the city outskirts. Even a few minutes late could cost someone their life.

The Belfry was the answer to that issue. A top-of-the-line secret headquarters that could rival the Batcave in every way, with its state-of-the-art technology, armory, multiple training rooms, and personal living quarters for any member of the Gotham Knights. The Belfry had not been the brainchild of Bruce, amusingly enough, it had actually been Tim's. He had chosen the Old Wayne Tower for its perfect strategic location in the heart of Gotham, from where they could be deployed swiftly to any direction of the city.

Cassandra was not surprised; Tim was always the smartest of them. Not like Oracle's tech-savvy smarts and information-gathering skills, but his instincts and ability to adapt allowed him to be the second-best detective of the family. Cass did not doubt Bruce when he said Tim would one day be the world's greatest detective.

After a decontamination shower, Cassandra stepped out of the facilities in a loose white shirt and dark shorts, drying her hair with a towel as she went over to Barbara's station. She watched the redhead work on the samples she had brought (including those taken from her uniform), the screens showed a bunch of data that went over Cassandra's head. Not to say she did not know her chemistry, her training involved identifying multiple kinds of poison and various other agents, their effects on the body, and the multiple various reactions chemicals

would have with each other. But this level of complexity was beyond was beyond her knowledge.

Barbara kept typing, not even turning around as she addressed the third Batgirl, already aware of her presence. "I'm still waiting for news about the dealer from the police" It'd be up to the commissioner to see if they could get answers from the man. "Good news and bad news. While the samples you were able to get were contaminated, I've been able to identify the compound. It's Venom"

Darn. Bane's prized drug that would give him superhuman strength and endurance. Could he be behind this? Unlikely, the man did not like to share...

Cassandra did not like the idea of that serum being the new hot stuff in the black market. Much less that she had been covered in the stuff, thankfully it only got to her skin when it seeped into her outfit. Venom could only work by being directly injected into the bloodstream through a continuous dose.

The Batgirl draped the towel behind her neck. "What else?" She asked, feeling there was more to it.

"It's been modified" Barbara replied, frowning as she stared at the data in her skin. She leaned forward and rubbed her chin, the computer's glare reflected on her glasses. "I... can't really make out how, or for what purpose. The sample's contaminations are making it hard for me to pinpoint the other chemicals mixed in this variant"

She swiveled in her chair, looking up at Cassandra. "Then there is the matter of Ivy, and why was she there"

"She looked angry" Cassandra explained. "It was a type of personal anger" With how well she could read a person's body language, it was evident to her this matter wasn't just business for the echo-terrorist.

"Perhaps she's run afoul with these people" Barbara pondered. "We won't know until we can get more info from the dealer" She sighed, throwing her head back. "Bruce chose a bad time to be away on business"

Which was another way of saying he was currently engaged in a dangerous confrontation with the League of Shadows the moment he caught wind of another of Ra's al Ghul's plots. At least

he was not alone, Nightwing and Red Hood were with him. Gotham's protection rested on the rest of the family's shoulders.

"Hmm," Cassandra mused. "Nothing else then?"

"I'll keep working on this. See if I can figure out what's up with this Venom variant" She smiled at the younger. "You've done a lot tonight, take some rest"

"Gonna train then" She curtly said as she walked away towards the gym.

Barbara made a highly exasperated face. "You just got back from patrol"

"Yup"

"You just showered too!"

"Will shower again"

Cassandra most definitely did not smile when she heard Barbara's groan of frustration, muttering something about Bruce and his daughters.

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Much like the rest of the Belfry, the gym was stocked with all the equipment they could need. A large assortment of weights and multiple machines (far more advanced than anyone could find in the average gym), filled the ample room. There was only a single wall mirror, as none of the family would train to show off (openly), it was there to check if there was anything 'out of place' as one would say.

Cassandra had lived most of her life with the body being her only medium of communication. Fighting was her language, the movement of limbs and shift of muscles were her words. If not for Bruce's relentless help and Barbara's support, Cass would have never learned the written or spoken language.

She was never meant to...

As such, Cass held a very different way of looking at her body. It was still her medium, her way of expressing herself when words failed her. Her athletic physique and highly toned muscles were the result of her rigorous training and lifestyle, she trained her body to live up to the Bat's legacy and mission. Because sometimes she still felt wordless.

Learning to be a more functional person came with all the caveats. Relationships, interests, attraction. She had felt attraction to Connor, but it had been too soon for her to adapt, so when she felt *his* attraction, it was too much to bear. They ended things as friends, for which she was grateful.

As Cass kept growing and learning, she noticed those feelings of intimacy and wanting were... not unpleasant. In fact, she could enjoy them.

Sometimes, when her mind wandered, she thought about feeling that attraction from a certain someone. Someone whose friendship meant the world to her and... made Cass feel it wasn't right to want that from a friend.

As she checked her body, flexing a bicep and lifting her shirt to show the row of abs, Cassandra reminded herself she was beautiful. Everyone told her so... was she beautiful enough for *her*?

The Batgirl shook her head with a groan and decided she *really* needed to channel this energy and get her mind off this subject. So, she went to the punching bag.