

While Batgirl has been delightful and forward-thinking in a lot of ways, there's one aspect to the story thus far that hasn't received the attention it should be getting. From the start, Babs has known there's someone out there who not only seems to know everything about her, but who has the capability to ruin her life from the inside out. Yet she's been strangely complacent about the situation. Despite repeated digital and physical threats in the last three issues, this one opens with her having a ball, blithely unconcerned with the danger squarely before her. So maybe she deserves the lashing she gets from Dinah early on in the issue. Unfortunately, Dinah doesn't really hit on the problem and so fails to properly reorient Babs' focus. Instead, she takes issue with Babs' sudden social media frenzy, even going as far as taking selfies in costume with fans. But Dinah's timing couldn't be worse for such a lecture. Since she's spent her entire time on this series acting like a grade-A jerk, she can't expect to scold Babs with fighting words like, "You sound like a child," and think they'll have an effect. It's true, however, that seeking out publicity goes very much against form, and not just for the Bat-family. Even Superman, most media-friendly of superheroes, doesn't go out of his way to put himself in the public eye. What Babs is doing takes her within Booster Gold-levels of narcissism—or maybe it's more appropriate to compare her to Jordan Barberi, darling of reality show Gotham Heights (the title of which tells you everything about the show and its star). By her uncomfortable expression when Nadimah complains about Barberi's attention-seeking behavior, Babs knows she's in bad company. Going after Barberi, then, is less about shutting down a "menace," as she calls him, than avoiding uncomfortable comparisons. Qadir's hesitation when she asks for his help is already a red flag, but it becomes fairly obvious as she confronts Barberi that she's doing it for all the wrong reasons. It backfires, of course; by trying to preempt his drunken rampage, she spurs him on to do exactly what she's trying to prevent, reversing her popularity in the process. Maybe I'm overstating when I say she targets Barberi for all the wrong reasons. It's pretty clear that she's also doing it to prove to new boyfriend Liam\* (the cop who flirted with her at the end of last issue) that Batgirl does do something good for Burnside. It's a conflict we see pretty often in this genre: the superhero who pals up with the cops by day, but gets hunted by them by night. This also leads to that old debate on whether superheroes have a place in civilized society. Jeremy distinguishes himself by offering some real, specific grievances to the argument, including the disturbing fact that Batgirl's capture of Riot Black compromised his own investigation into the villain and led to Black being "back on the streets in hours."\*\* Needless to say, after Babs chase of Barberi ends in the destruction and permanent closing of Cuppa Joe's, a neighborhood institution, Jeremy only has more ammunition to lob at Batgirl. So yeah, Liabs\*\* is doomed. Even if he didn't have this much beef with her alter-ego, his awareness of some of her most personal, out-of-costume secrets is bad news. Your first instinct is to pin him as Babs' stalker, but eventually, we learn that it may be the stalker passing on Babs' secrets to Liam. If that's the case, the perp is even more dangerous than we thought, someone who can hack into her cell phone number and pass as her voice. The good thing is while Babs may have been able to put this archnemesis out of mind for the last few issues, she definitely can't now. As someone who's not terribly articulate about art, I often give colorists short shrift in these reviews, but I really want to take a moment to talk about how vibrant and alive Wicks makes this series. I've noticed in a lot of mainstream comics, the colors tend to blend together with a few shots of bright primaries thrown in. Wicks covers the full spectrum of color and pairs them in surprisingly complementary ways: Nadimah's canary yellow hijab against an orange top and white jacket; Babs' red hair, pink dress, and green. It's the same level of detail Tarr brings to her art, in which every individual character, even the extras filling out the subway, have their own

personal style of dress. You can go through the issue several times and find something new to delight over with each reading. Some Musings: \* Which leads to an endearing sad face from Jeremy. Aw. I'm still rooting for you, buddy! \*\* On what basis, I wonder. \*\*\* Had to do it. I'm an addict for couple blend names. The post Batgirl #38 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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