

"Well begun is half done." That observation comes from Aristotle by way of Tommy Elliot AKA Hush in an earlier issue of Batman Eternal. I would humbly add a corollary, "Well ended is half mended." Any storyline started on the right foot can endure several missteps without falling, while any story that ends on a good note finds forgiveness for large numbers of sour chords. Unfortunately, in Batman Eternal #41 the main story, the plotline following the nanovirus plague assaulting the Gotham Narrows, does not end well. This has provided one of the chief threads of the narrative since the earliest days of the series, and it deserved a major revelation for a climax. Unfortunately, the answer ends up being obvious and disappointing. Let's just say his friend, the white rabbit with the watch, would have been more welcome and more entertaining. Perhaps the worst is that the story seems to have very little connection to the main trunk of the series, the question of the ultimate villain behind Gotham's agony. That isn't much of a mystery after the last couple of issues, but still this plotline, like that of the mystical goings on at Arkham, would have carried greater effect had it merged into the main artery of Batman Eternal. However, as one story ends, another begins. Whether it is well begun we will have to wait to judge. This issue finally sees Harper Row don the mask and costume of Bluebird, latest addition to the Bat Family, in an attempt to save her brother who has fallen victim to the machinations of a certain personage in a silly top hat. Writer Kyle Higgins spends a generous amount of time exploring the relationship developing between Harper and Red Robin, including a well-crafted, although somewhat hackneyed, conversation in which Tim Drake warns Harper of the sacrifices involved in taking up a mask. The resonance between these characters provides one of the successes of Batman Eternal. Both have chosen to become masked vigilantes not out of compensation for personal hardship and tragedy, like Bruce Wayne or Jason Todd, nor out of a sense of family duty like Damian Wayne, nor out of noble idealism like Barbara Gordon or, should Scott Snyder's interviews bear out, Duke Thomas, nor out of the joy that motivates Dick Grayson. Rather, they take up the mask from obsession, from a strong sense that this is what they are born for, and that this is a matter in which they have, quite simply, no choice. It is a grim theme, and one that might get much too dark very quickly. Higgins, however, plays it with a relatively light touch, and at least the beginning of the beginning of Bluebird's story reads well. Joe Quinones' relatively simple, clean art seems slightly cartoonish, which also helps to keep the tone from slipping too far in a grim direction. This melds nicely with Kelsey Shannon's clear, basic color palette. Shannon's colors are shifted toward the green end of the spectrum, once again providing a somewhat cartoonish feel to this installment. The post Batman Eternal #41 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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