

Can you believe it's only been five issues into this new run? Feels longer, doesn't it? The specific vibe and characters of Burnside feel so fully realized, so warm and familiar, that at times you get the impression Babs has lived here her whole life. But more than that, a lot has happened since Babs arrived: a wealth of new friends at home and at school, academic struggles, Dinah moving in and moving out, several romantic entanglements, and most of all, newfound celebrity and infamy. In fact, Babs' rep went from north to south so quickly that it's hard to decide whether it's ludicrous or perfectly in tune with the social media virulence of the new Batgirl. After a bit of thought, I lean towards the latter. When you consider how Balloon Boy went from an object of national tragedy to one of scorn within a day, Batgirl going from hero to enemy number one between issues doesn't sound so absurd. Still, the reaction of the angry mob seems a little disproportionate to what Babs actually did. It's like the loss of a single coffee shop made everyone forget the good she's done for the area. Unreliable memory makes up most of the issue's conflict, not just in the fickle loyalties of Burnside's denizens, but for Babs as well. Actually, her nailbiting over the possibility that she might be going crazy is not only needless, but seems poorly constructed as well. All along, I've mentioned how bizarre it is for Babs to just ignore someone who clearly knows her so well and using that against her. Here, she takes that obliviousness to a new extreme by suspecting herself as the culprit, which you can only justify as a side-effect of her recent low in self-confidence. Fortunately, Dinah is quick to point out how insane that particular theory is. That's right, "[t]he Birds are back!" It takes a bit of heartfelt groveling on Babs' part, but at least it saves Dinah from turning into a total jerk. The weird thing is despite a fairly intense sparring session, they don't really wrestle with the problems that led to their split in the first place. Dinah starts with a rant about Babs' recent behavior ("That's not the Batgirl I know. She doesn't care about celebrity. She's not glued to her phone."), but then Babs immediately changes the subject ("Hooq sent the city after me.") and Dinah just obliges ("Hooq sent the bikers and the fake Batgirl? What a crappy appy."). These are noticeably inept stitches in the story's fabric, but Stewart-Fletcher make it up with a rather clever twist they've been hinting at all along. [Spoiler alert!] The realization that Babs' brain scan is responsible for all the attacks is not only a great, unexpected move for the plot, it ties almost every part of Batgirl together. Now you understand why Babs' thesis and Frankie's startup woes have been such a fixture of the series; they're both directly connected to the problem Babs faces as Batgirl. That leaves one mystery left to solve: where Babs' brain scan went wrong. Scratch that; who cares what happened to make it go out of control? It could've been A.I. evolution or a bit of magical static electricity or the work of some third-party genius/idiot. What really matters is the message we're supposed to get from Brain Scan Babs' hatred of real Babs. All along, B.S. Babs has focused on the darkest parts of Babs' life: the paraplegia, her troubled family life, etc. Between that and how she seems to only care about who gets to own the Batgirl identity, we're getting to the point where we have to decide who's the real Batgirl: the one with the disturbed history or the one living out her hipster life in the present. This is the most emotional issue of Stewart-Fletcher's Batgirl yet, which is an interesting test of Tarr's range of expression. In this, she proves to be a little lacking. Seriousness isn't really part of her artistic nature, and it shows in the soap opera-ish, almost cutesy reactions of the characters to bad news. Wicks' lighting helps give the art the necessary tension, pathos, and menace, but Tarr only occasionally manages it on her own. Her strengths—the distinctive character designs, the realistic fashion choices, the ridiculously wonderful level of detail—are all still there, but now we see Tarr isn't completely invincible where the art is concerned. Some Musings:- "Florence" is a member of Dinah's A/V team—a reference to Florence + The Machine, perhaps?- Looks like

Jeremy is still casting out lines for Babs, this time trying the jealousy bait: “[Ashes for Sunday’s] new singer is quite attractive, wouldn’t you say, Barbara?” Trust me, Jeremy, that tactic almost always backfires. The post Batgirl #39 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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