Daily **Life**

THE PULL LIST:

THE ABSOLUTE ROBINS FINALLY ARRIVE

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Since the launch of the "Absolute Batman" series, comic fans around the world have been eagerly awaiting the reveal of Absolute Robin — would he be a gritty twist upon the well-beloved character, or would he remain an optimistic contrast to Batman's shadowed soul? Well, Scott Snyder and Nick Dragotta have finally delivered, and it seems like they packed a punch no one could have ever expected.

Hello and welcome back to The Pull List, a weekly column that dives into the complicated world of DC Comics and its current events. This week, I'll be sharing my thoughts on the recently revealed Absolute Robins — and yes, Robins with an S, because we've got a flock of them this time around. But for now, let's jump into some of this week's new releases.

This time around, both the Flash and Harley Quinn are having their moment. Absolute Flash returns in issue #14 and our regular mainline Wally West will also be around for "The Flash #32," but I think Harley is a better topic of conversation for today.

"Harley Quinn #61," releasing this week, will continue the "Batquinn" storyline established in #60. Batquinn, for those who haven't heard, is Harley's newest moniker as she takes on the cape and cowl. Complete with a dark attitude, she acts as Harley's own take on the Batman himself. And honestly? It's really bad.

For the past several years, DC has slowly been pushing Harley towards a more heroic persona — ever since they decided that she and the Joker were done for good. For a while, she existed alongside Poison Ivy as a pair of villains-with-a-moral-code, but she's been on a slow path to redemption for some time now.

Heroic Harley Quinn is an idea I hope DC drops sometime soon. Much of the appeal of Harley is her troubled backstory with the Joker, her fun attitude, her unexpected intelligence and wit paired with a seemingly insane exterior, and her relationship with Poison Ivy. Making Harley a hero takes away from a lot of that and removes the edge her character has always had and used with glee.

I don't think Batquinn is here to stay by any means, but it's certainly a sign of bad things to come for Harley. Personally, I hope they give her a reboot sometime soon, because it's time to start taking her character seriously again.

There isn't anything exciting going on with DC in terms of any new runs this week, but it's important to mention that we're creeping up on the last day to pre-order "Absolute Green Arrow." Pre-orders for issue #1 close next week on Monday, and I think we're in for a great run.

Speaking of great runs, it's time to talk about the birds of the hour: the Absolute Robins.

If you're unfamiliar with Batman's Robins, consider this to be a quick rundown. "Robin" is a title, not a character, and it's changed hands several times. The original Robin, Richard "Dick" Grayson, first appeared in 1940's Detective Comics #38, around a year after Batman's debut. Since then, we've had Jason Todd, Tim Drake, Stephanie Brown and the current Robin, Damian Wayne.

Who does or doesn't count as a Robin is a hotly debated subject, but the aforementioned list is the one that aligns best with mainline canon, and the list that I personally subscribe to.

In a dramatic twist of events, writer Scott Snyder and artist Nick Dragotta made the decision to include the first four mainline Robins and another major Batfamily character in the Absolute Universe's twist on Robin. That's right — one comic, five Robins!

Dick, Jason, Tim and Steph will all be acting as Robins simultaneously, with their fifth member being Duke Thomas. Duke is best known for his role as the Signal and acts as Gotham's daytime protector in the main canon, but he had an incredibly short stint as Robin during the "We Are Robin" event, which saw a variety of characters take on the Robin mantle.

The Robins look a little different this time around. Instead of acting as a protégé to Batman, they're on Joker's side. Joker, known as Jack Grimm in this universe, adopted the Robins and gave them to Slade Wilson (Deathstroke) to train in what is known as the Robin Program, which is supposedly a new initiative meant to beat back crime in Gotham. This team of five won't be acting as apprentices to Batman but rather his hunters.

The Robins also aren't just young sidekicks anymore; they're a powerhouse team aided by five mechs of varying sizes. In what we've seen so far from Dragotta's artwork and the recently revealed variant covers, each member of the team is pre-packaged with a robot mech suit designed to help turn the tide against Batman. I hope they release action figures because I need to get my hands on one.

For fans of mecha or the "Gundam" anime, or anyone who loves "Pacific Rim," this looks to be an incredibly exciting era of not only the Absolute Universe, but also for Robin in general.

Damian Wayne has been Robin for several years, and his popularity has ebbed and flowed over time. DC seems to be toying with the idea of letting Damian put down the cape for a while, but it doesn't seem set in stone. It's possible they've run out of ideas for Robin, and this sudden twist in the Absolute line might help generate some excitement for the boy and girl wonders.

However, I'd warn readers not to get too attached to the new squad. Jason Todd famously met his demise at the wrong end of a crowbar thanks to Joker, who happens to be his boss in this universe. On top of that, Steph died at the hands of Black Mask during her tenure as Robin. Given the heightened level of violence in the world of Absolute Batman, no one is safe.

Despite this, I doubt anyone is on the chopping block anytime soon. I think the Robins will be jumping in and out of the storyline throughout the run, and I imagine Snyder will want to use their characters to the fullest. It's definitely likely that we'll see at least one of them switch sides to instead help out Bruce, but I hope that's a little later down the line. For now, I'm just excited to see Batman face off against a mechanized Dick Grayson or Jason Todd. That'll be a comic to remember.



Two Robins from the "Absolute Robins" series making their appearance on the cover of "Absolute Batman #20." Robin has been a longstanding member of Batman's story throughout his comic history.

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Sneak peak at "Absolute Harley Quinn" in the "Absolute Batman" series. Harley Quinn #61 releases this week, continuing her Batquinn persona storyline.

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