

They say that silence is golden. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that silence is expressive. Through its origin and end, its duration, and its felt quality, quiet can convey depths of emotion and thought amazingly well. Indeed, the messages of silence can be more powerful than those of speech, as any fan of pre-1930 cinema can attest. What then, does the silence of *Batgirl: Endgame #1* say? As with all comics, the images carry the meaning. Normally, they do this work in cooperation with words. Here, they do so in the absence of speech or internal dialogue. In the quiet of this story, certain repeated images fairly scream. The articulate nature of these pictures arise from the plot of Cameron Stewart and Brendan Fletcher, but especially from the art of Bengal. These images do not attempt to strike a contrast with the techniques of Babs Tarr in the main *Batgirl* comic, but to extend and complement them, like a modification of a baroque musical theme. The thin, precise lines; delicate detail, especially of facial features; and careful use of lighting to set mood convey the sense of a cheerful world fallen under a cloud. Indeed, the actual clouds of smoke are joined by looming architectural features to make it seem that the bright characters scurry about the feet of giant shadows. This reminded me of nothing as much as the scenes at the end of the *Lord of the Rings* novels, where the Shire struggles under the evil spell of Saruman. The malevolent magic here is woven by the Joker, and the most memorable images from this book are the smiles. The fixed grins of the Joker virus victims seem all the more terrifying for being divorced from the expected titters and giggles. The quiet imparts a deadly purpose and maniac fixation to the movements of the victims that embodies the evil will investing Gotham, the evil will that may, Scott Snyder has intimated in the main *Batman* comic, be an essential part of Gotham. Against these, though, are arrayed other smiles. We have the genuine joy of Barbara and Frankie as they maneuver to defeat the Joker's minions. We see the desperate expression of Tiffany Fox as, at Barbara's urging, she attempts to copy the virus-induced smile so as to evade attack by the infected. And there is the relief of Tiffany's parents to be reunited with her on the safe side of the Burnside bridge. The bridge itself is the other great image that dominates this book. The creators of *Batgirl*, like those of *Gotham Academy*, and in a different way the creators of *Catwoman*, have worked hard to show us that Gotham is not a homogeneous empire, but a puzzle-box republic in which worlds nestle within worlds. The realms of *Batgirl*'s Burnside, Olive Silverlock's *Gotham Academy*, and Selina Kyle's criminal kingdom rest within and alongside the dark universe of Bruce Wayne. Yet, although they are near the world of *Batman*, they remain apart from it. The bridge is a physical symbol of that separation. On one side is the danger and darkness of *Batman* and the Joker. On the other is the safety and relief of *Batgirl*'s Burnside. The span of steel between the city and the suburb expertly embodies one of the essential aspects of *Batgirl*'s new creative direction. The post *Batgirl: Endgame #1* appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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