Dribbs and Drabbles

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Dribbs and Drabbles

by renecdote

Summary

Assorted Batfam fics from my Tumblr.

Notes

Fics cross-posted from Tumblr, mostly based on prompts. Tags will be added as they become relevant.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Robin is swinging from the next roof over when the warehouse blows up. The force of the blast hits his back and the added momentum rushes his landing. He hits the concrete hard, foot catching on the edge of the roof before he tumbles into a messy roll.

"Robin!"

Dick's panicked voice is immediately in his ear. "I'm fine," Damian automatically replies, but when he tries to push himself up he can't help groaning. His ankle throbs painfully, collapsing under his weight and he ends up sprawled on the rooftop once more.

There's a muffled thump as someone makes a much smoother landing, then Red Robin's voice echoes behind him as well as in his ear. "I've got him, Batman, stay on the targets."

Of all the Bats who had to come to his "rescue"... Damian's teeth bare in a silent snarl and he rolls over to push himself up once more. He makes it to a standing position this time and after a second of teetering, he's able to shift his weight to his left leg and maintain a stable stance.

"Are you alright?" Drake asks, taking a few cautious steps closer.

Damian steps back, unable to help wincing when it requires putting weight on his injured ankle. "I already said I was fine," he snaps.

Red Robin tilts his head, still moving closer. "Then how come you look like you're in pain?"

"A symptom of being in your presence," Damian sneers, glancing over his shoulder to calculate the angle and distance necessary to get to the next building. Another quick step backwards elicits an involuntary hiss.

"Robin, stop it - you're limping."

"No I'm not!"

Drake makes a frustrated sound and grabs his arm. "For God's sake Damian stay still. You're just going to make it worse."

They both freeze at the slip. Damian recovers first, pivoting on one foot to try and brake the hold on his arm. But Red Robin moves with him, twisting Damian's arm behind his back and pinning him against his chest.

"I will knock you out," Drake warns. "If you don't sit down and accept medical assistance right now, I will knock you out and drag you back to the Cave and tell Alfred you passed out from the pain of trying to continue to patrol on a busted ankle."

Damian snarls, struggling against the older boy's hold. He tries to kick back, forgetting for a second why he's standing on one foot, and pain explodes along his leg. He cries out and Drake's arm tightens around his chest, holding him upright when he doubles over.

"Are you done now?" The older boy asks mildly. Damian tries to growl and it comes out as a groan instead. But he doesn't protest as Drake lowers him to the ground and begins tugging off his boot, only hissing when he begins to gently prod the rapidly swelling ankle.
"Well, the good news is that it's not broken," Red Robin reports, sitting back on his heels and glancing up at Damian. "Bad news is that it's definitely twisted and Alfred is definitely going to bench you."

Damian scowls. "I don't need to be benched. I'm fine."

He can't see through the white lenses of Red Robin's cowl, but his tone makes it clear he's rolling his eyes. "Right. Of course you are. Now are you gonna let me help you limp back to the cave or should I call Batman or Red Hood to come and carry you?"

Damian grits his teeth and accepts Drake's help. It is, after all, better than the alternative.
You're turning blue! (Jason & Steph)

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Jason has just decided Mr Freeze is officially his least favourite villain when the window beside him crashes open. There's an annoying voice reporting to the Bats in his ear, a calm interruption in what had otherwise been frantic chatter. It echoes behind him and Jason concludes that the person is calm because they've just burst through the window like some heroic rock or stray football and are ready to rescue him.

Well fuck that. Jason strains against the block of ice keeping him frozen in place (ha). He doesn't need rescuing dammit! He's perfectly capable of-

Someone works their fingers into the catch on his helmet then pulls it off. It's enough to get Jason to lift his head slightly, looking up to glare at-

What the fuck.

Is he being rescued by an eggplant?

The eggplant squeaks. "Holy shit, you're turning blue."

Jason tries to make a sarcastic retort - because that's his thing and even near (or actual) death can't get rid of his thing - but he's pretty sure he just mumbles something about Nightwing and finger stripes. It made sense in his head: blue fingers, blue Nightwing, finger stripes... Okay, maybe he should have just gone with the "it's better than purple".

Eggplant-wannabe reaches into her belt and pulls out an icepick. It only takes a few minutes to get his chest and arms free. Something else appears from her belt and is shoved under his jacket then she kneels down to start working on his legs (head at a level Jason really wants to make a crack about - as soon as his mouth starts cooperating). The thing under his jacket is growing warm and Jason groans as the return of warmth makes his frozen limbs tingle.

As soon as his legs are free they stop working. Well they weren't really working before that, but the ice had been keeping him upright and without it he collapses to the ground. Eggplant Girl catches his upper body and they end up tangled around each other on the floor.

"I'm going to slap you," she announces, peering into his face. "Not for any medical reason. Just because I want to and I have no problem taking advantage of your current weakness."

Then she slaps him. "Ow," Jason mumbles, clumsily rubbing the stinging flesh as blood rushes to that part of his face. Eggplant grins, "Okay, now we gotta cuddle. This ones actually for medical reasons though; don't start thinking I wanna cuddle you. I'm just saving my arse by saving yours. Daddy Bats is, like, scary protective and I don't wanna be maimed if you die."

She takes Jason's jacket off and tucks a cape around his shoulders instead. Another magic heat pad is procured and stuffed between his legs then purple limbs wrap around him like an octopus.

"Who the fuck are you?" Jason asks a minute later, facial muscles finally cooperating enough to articulate his words properly.

"Your greatest nightmare," she intones in his ear, her cheek pressed against the side of his head. A
second for Jason to process that, then she adds, "Unless you love waffles. Then we can maybe be friends."

"Okay," Jason agrees. He does like waffles.

Then yet another window smashes and Batman and Robin are rolling into the room with their usual dramatic flair. "Spoiler," Batman growls and Jason doesn't realise he's been given the name of his unusual rescuer until she straightens up to point at the Bat pseudo-threateningly.

"The next words out of your mouth better be thank you," she says.

Robin snorts. Batman glowers.

Jason decided he likes this Spoiler person - even if she does dress up like an eggplant. Maybe he'll buy her celebratory waffles for saving his life.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr here
"Oh my god. What did you do to yourself?" Tam exclaims as soon as Tim hobbles into his office and sinks into the wondefully comfortable leather chair behind his desk. She glances around at the otherwise empty room then leans closer and whispers. "Is this because of that explosion last night?"

Tim lifts his hand to run it through his hair but aborts the movement when his shoulder twinges painfully. His left arm is in a sling to support his broken collarbone and the entire left side of his body is a mess of bruises. Figuring out how to use the crutches necessary to keep up his appesrance as "poor recovering Timothy Drake-Wayne" had been an ordeal. Eventually he'd had to accept Bruce's help - and a ride into work this morning.

"What explosion?" he replies blandly and takes a sip of the coffee she hands him. It's worth the slight pain the movement causes.

Tam rolls her eyes. "Okay, okay, I get it. You just slipped in the shower, right?"

"No." Tim takes another sip of coffee to build her anticipation. "My brother pushed me down the stairs."

Bruce had vetoed making that the official report if anyone questions Tim Drake's latest injuries. Tim isn't sure why; it's more realistic than saying he slipped on a wet floor. For those who know Damian at least.

"Uh huh." Tam starts organising the stack of papers she was carrying into three piles: to review, to sign, and to ignore until she gets over her grudge with whatever department has gotten on her nerves now. Her eyes are laughing when she glances up at him. "Damian? That little cutie? No way."

Tim throws a pen at her. "Stop mocking me, I'm injured."

She laughs, but her her smile is tinged with concern when she turns it on him again. "Seriously though, are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

One eyebrow goes up. Tim throws another pen at her; it bounces off her shoulder and rolls back across the desk.

"Oh my god, don't give me that look, you're just like Alfred." He makes a note to minimise the time those two spend together; it can only lead to bad things for him. "I'm actually fine. A minor fracture and bruising, nothing painkillers can't fix."

Tam gives him an assessing look - it's not quite Bruce or Alfred level but she's good enough to see through most of his bullshit - then nods. Her face remains serious but she can't quite hide the amusement in her voice as she replies. "Are you sure you don't want to me to get you a wheelchair to get to and from your meetings? If nothing else, it might get you sympathy votes."

A hail of pens follows her laughter out the door. For a moment Tim wonders why making her his assistant was ever a good idea. And then he remembers: she brings him coffee.
He takes a sip of the life-giving liquid and wonders how much easier it would be to get his latest project approved by R&D if he had sympathy votes.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
I need help over here! (Dick & Dami)

Please don't be dead. Please don't be dead. Please don't be dead.

The words run on loop through Damian's head as he crawls under a fallen shelf and through a relatively stable gap in the rubble of what was once a family-owned food store. Chip packets pop and crackle beneath his hands and knees as he moves as quickly as he can.

"Robin, report." Batman's voice is clear in his ear. A contrast to the creaking and groaning debris around him. Damian coughs as dust swirls in the air, stirred up by the drag of his arms and legs. He opens his mouth to say he hasn't found anything yet, but then he sees a bright patch of blue.

"Nightwing!" he calls, clawing desperately at cardboard and plastic and twisted metal. "Grayson!!"

On the other side of an overturned fridge, the lump of blue and black groans. "R-" Cough. "Robin?"

Damian almost cries with relief. "I'm gonna get you out of here, Nightwing. Just-" His breath hitches and he firmly tells himself it's the dust irritating his lungs. "Just hold on, okay?"

Another groan and a carton of milk that had been on Dick's arm is dislodged. "Ca-can't move my l- leg, Robin," Dick stutters. Then he's sucked into a coughing fit that sounds weak and painful. Damian shoves his head and shoulders through the hole he'd managed to make in the wall of debris separating him from his brother and wiggles until the rest of his body squeezes through. Screw finesse; whatever gets the job the done fastest.

Except that now that he's finally kneeling by Nightwing's side, he has another problem. He pushes milk and yoghurt and cheese off his brother's chest. Broken glass has torn material and skin alike and he's pretty sure Dick's arm is broken. But that's not the worst of it. Damian feels suddenly dizzy with the realisation that there's a chunk of metal lodged in his brother's leg, the fridge that had knocked him down impaling him and trapping him beneath it.

Oh god oh god oh god-

"I need some help over here!" he yells, forgetting in his panic that he should use his comm. Forgetting that the others don't know where he is in the building."

"Robin!"

The call is faint through the ringing in his ears and Damian doesn't even realise it's being shouted through his comm until Dick grasps his wrist and shakes it. "Dami. Look at me." His brother orders, sharp despite the rattling in his lunges and the pain that had made his voice weak less than a minute before. "It's gonna be okay."

Damian chokes on a laugh. "I'm supposed to tell you that."

Dick grins, but it's tinged with a sickening red and it fades a second later. "You gotta go," he says.

"No! I'm not not leaving you! You can't-!"

"Dami." Dick shakes his arm again, weak but insistent. "You gotta go get help. Gotta..." His eyes slip closed but he forces them open again. "Gotta help 'em find me."

Damian shakes his head, tears blurring his vision, but he knows Dick is right. His brother pushes at
him and, reluctantly, he shuffles backwards, turning in the cramped pocket of space to find his way out.

He doesn't let himself look over his shoulder. He won't be that weak. He doesn't need *one last look*, he'll see his eldest brother again soon.

(Alive or dead.)
They can't hurt you anymore (Bruce & Jason)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The alleyway is dark, thick with shadows that reach out and pull at Jason's clothing, tug on his hair, trail icy fingers down his arms. Jeering laughter underscores vile slurs and innuendos. No matter which way he turns, no matter how far forward or backward he goes, he can't escape them. Their voices or their hands or their hot breath prickling against his skin.

Someone flicks his ear and Jason jerks away, falling against hands that push him backwards and forwards between them like a rag doll. He's sure there were only three men when this happened last time, but they've obviously come back with their friends because now there are hundreds.

His hands are pulled behind his back and no matter how much Jason struggles and bites and kicks and screams, he can't get away from the strong arms holding him in place. "Shut up, runt," someone growls. "Nobody's comin' t' rescue ya." Then a fist slams into his jaw and pain explodes across the side of his face.

"Fuck you," Jason spits.


(How do they know his name?)

Eventually, Jason goes limp. This is when it's supposed to end, he's sure of it. But it doesn't. His body jerks with each hit or kick, flopping across the filthy ground. The laughter gets louder with every gurgling plea that drops from his bloody lips, the voices more insistent. He just wants it to end. He just wants to-

Jason wakes up choking on air. Tears are streaming down his cheeks and every gasping breath gets caught on a sob and holy shit he can't breathe. He can't breathe, he can't move, he's going to die. They're going to kill him.

He struggles against the arms encircling him, pushing frantically at a wall of solid muscle. He has to get free, he has to run, he has to-

"Hey, hey, calm down." The low, soothing voice filters in through his panic. "They can't hurt you anymore."

Bruce, Jason realises. It's Bruce's voice and Bruce's arms and Bruce's chest.

It's not them. It's just Bruce.

The fight drains out of him and he sags back against his new guardian's chest, sobbing into his expensive cotton pajamas. A hand runs through his hair, petting the back of his head and rubbing up and down his back. "Shh, you're okay. I've got you, Jason, you're okay. You're safe."

And Jason believes him. Because if anyone can protect him, it's Batman.

Chapter End Notes
Tumblr
Damian isn't hiding, but he could see how it may look that way to someone else. Alfred the cat had fled under the dining room table when the yelling started earlier and when he hadn't been able to coax him out, Damian had crawled under the table as well. Titus had followed him, sniffing at the carpet and knocking into chair legs with his tail before settling down with a huff. It had seemed much easier to just stay there than try to move both his pets.

Dick and Alfred have both walked past - looking for him, maybe, or more likely just going about their day - but nobody has actually come in yet. Father might have thought to look here, but he doubts Father will search for him. Not while he's still mad, at least.

"Hey Alfred!" a voice calls from the direction of the front door. The butler's reply is muffled by distance and then the voices die off as the conversation moves into one of the Manor's many rooms - probably the kitchen. Damian wonders who it could be; most visitors come via the cave.

He gets his answer a minute later when light footsteps precede the appearance of two socked feet and a pair of jeans in his vision. Todd is muttering to himself as he walks around the dining table then kneels down to start looking under it. The muttering stops when their eyes meet and Damian lifts his chin defiantly, daring the older boy to make fun of him. But all Todd says is, "Have you seen a pair of sunglasses under here?"

Damian glances at the floor around him and shakes his head. "No."

"Dammit," Todd mutters, standing up and almost banging his head on the table. "Must be in the kitchen..."

He leaves and Damian lets out a sigh of relief, relaxing back against Titus's flank. But it's short-lived because a moment later Todd comes back in and sets something down on the table before crouching back down.

"You wanna come out?" he asks.

"No."

"Okay." His upper body vanishes upward again and when he comes back down he's holding two mugs. He holds one out. "You want tea?"

Damian hesitates before nodding, reaching out to take the warm mug and cradling it to his chest. Even with the body heat from his pets, it's remarkably cool under the table. He blows on the hot liquid then takes a cautious sip as Todd sits cross-legged opposite him with his back against the nearest table leg.

"So why are you hiding under a table?" he asks eventually, conversational in a way that grates on Damian's nerves.

"I'm not hiding," he snaps.

“Uh-huh. It sounds like you’re trying to convince yourself of that.“
"I'm not," Damian insists. "Alfred wouldn't come out. I had to come under here to get him."

Todd looks pointedly at where the cat is now curled up in Damian's lap, purring softly as he's petted. "Right. And was it loud noises that drove Alfred under the table?"

Damian narrows his eyes. Todd takes a casual sip of his tea. And he knows. He knows exactly why Alfred ran under the table and why Damian is under the table and he just wants him to say it. Well he's not going to. Damian grits his teeth and glares.

Todd just shrugs. "Suit yourself. I'll just tell you what the official version is then, shall I?"

It's blatant manipulation and Damian will not be swayed by it.

"So I was leaving my apartment this morning when I realised I couldn't find my sunglasses anywhere. I had tea with Alfred yesterday so this is the only other place I could think they might be. And when I arrive, I find out that you and Bruce got into a screaming match this morning which ended with a broken chair and two smashed vases." He takes a sip of tea - probably for some kind of dramatic effect. "Apparently you threw a 4,000 dollar vase at Dick's head when he tried to intervene." Damian glowers at his shoes and says nothing. Todd pokes him in the leg. "Come on, short fry, spill."

It suddenly occurs to Damian that not-hiding under the table was a strategically bad move. He's trapped between Titus and Todd, without anything throwable within reach. And Todd is as annoyingly stubborn as everyone else in the family; he will not let this go.

"Father says I cannot patrol," Damian eventually mutters.

"That's it? You started breaking shit because he benched you? Wow. That's almost me-level crazy."

"He says I am banned from the Cave until i can find a way to deal with my anger that does not involve violence."

The older boy snorts. "I hate to agree with B, but he may have a point. The vases I can understand - Lord knows how many of those have been broken since Bruce started collecting strays - but the chair was a bit of an overreaction."

Damian can feel the anger from earlier simmering beneath his skin but short of throwing his cat at Todd's head there's not much he can do besides growl. "You're such a hypocrite Todd - you tried to kill him first!"

Todd blinks, face scrunching up in surprise before smoothing out with understanding. "We're not talking about B anymore, are we? This is about the Replacement."

Damian looks away. His fingers are clenched so tightly around his mug his knuckles are white and his chest is tight with- anger. That's what it is. Not guilt or regret or- None of the things Father thinks are affecting him. (Although, to be fair, Father does think anger is affecting him as well. And he may not be wrong but. He's not completely right.)

"Bruce find out you tried to kill him?"

Todd shifts closer, leaning forward so he can reach behind Damian to scratch Titus around the ears. Their arms brush and Damian holds completely still, watching the older boy warily. He and Todd are not enemies, per se, but this... this friendliness is unchartered territory.

"He wants me to apologise," he says stiffly.
"And you don't want to."

"It would not be sincere."

Todd's lips quirk upwards but it doesn't quite become a smile. "That's not the point."

Damian frowns, brows furrowing. "Then what is?"

"To teach you a lesson." Todd shrugs one shoulder, the simple gesture conveying a lot about what he thinks of Bruce's parenting techniques. "You don't want to apologise because it would be humiliating, admitting a fault or a weakness. He makes you do it anyway, makes you suffer the indignity of asking for forgiveness. It's an unpleasant feeling. One you try to avoid in future by not doing whatever you did wrong again."

"Oh." When put like that, it makes much more sense. (Some detective he is if he can't even figure out his Father's motives.) "So all I have to do to get Robin back is apologise to Drake?"

"It's a start." Todd gives Titus one last pat on the head - and an "accidental" one for Damian as well - then scoots backwards until he's no longer under the table. "Well, hide and seek has been fun, but unlike some members of this family I'm not freakishly short and my spine is not cut out for this kind of contortion."

"Tt. You're getting old, Todd."

He gets a casual middle finger in response, "Respect your elders, Demon Brat."

"I'm not a Demon!" Damian snarls.

Todd holds his hands up in mocking surrender. "Of course not, my sincerest apologies." A quick flash of teeth as he grins. "You wanna repeat that back to me? Y'know, for practice."

His laughter follows him out of the room as Damian scrambles out from under the table and takes off after him. His Father will surely make him apologies for trying to kill Todd as well, but it will surely be worth it to wipe that smirk off his older brother's face.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
'You're supposed to talk me out of this (Jason & Dick)'

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Whatcha doin'?"

Jason startles at the sudden voice behind him, wobbling precariously and almost failing off the gargoyle he's lounging on. Quick reflexes have a spandex-covered hand grabbing his shoulder before he can fall.

"Fucking hell!" he snaps, twisting to glare at Nightwing. "Don't fucking do that!"

Nightwing just raises an unimpressed eyebrow and leans out over the edge of the building. "Your spatial awareness is crap."

"My spatial awareness is fine," Jason grumbles. "I was just... distracted."

"By a case?" Nightwing's voice is still casual but Jason's sure his eyes are sharp behind the white lenses of his domino. This is definitely not a coincidental meeting. This is big brother checking on little brother.

Jason scowls beneath his helmet. Like he fucking needs checking up on. He's fully capable of dealing with shit on his own thank you very much.

But.

Hmm.

"You wanna get drunk? I have a really stupid idea that I could use some help with..."

Dick hesitates for a second - probably listening to the Bats chattering in his ear, making sure they have everything under control - then shrugs. "As long as you're buying."

--

Two hours, five beers and half a stakeout later.

Jason makes a frustrated noise. "You're supposed to talk me out of this."

"Why?"

Jason spares him an incredulous look. "Because it's a fucking terrible idea."

Dick shrugs. "Sorry, Little Wing, but the only other plan I can think of is even worse."

"Oh yeah?"

Dick points at the front door. Jason throws a bottle top at him. "You're right, that is a worse idea."

Dick shrugs, loosened by alcohol and completely unashamed of his atrocious attempts at staging a takedown. "Could get the kids out that way, though. It's so stupid they wouldn't expect it. Then it's almost smart."
"Reverse psychology," Jason agrees thoughtfully. Like this whole plan isn't still the worst plan in the history of planning.

They stare at the abandoned building a while longer, watching men moving around inside. Eventually Jason sets down his mostly-empty beer and sighs. "Okay, come on. Let's get this over with."

--

**Twenty-seven minutes, three dead child smugglers, fourteen more unconscious child smugglers and a possible (definite) concussion later.**

"Ow," Jason grumbles, poking at a gash on his arm. Upon inspection, it's bleeding more than he thought it was and he takes a second to wonder whether the dizziness he's feeling is because of blood loss or the blow he took to the head. He decides he doesn't care.

"I told you this was a bad idea," Dick - oh so helpfully - says from where he's tying up the leader of the smuggling gang.

"And then you helped me do it anyway."

Dick shrugs. "I just want that on record for when B inevitably yells at us."

Jason groans. "No. I am not sticking around for that. You can get yelled at on your own." He takes a step away, intending to find his bike and vanish into the night. Maybe find an open diner to get some food before he goes home and sleeps for a week.

Another wave of dizziness derails that plan. For the second time that night, Dick's reflexes stop him from falling on his arse.

"You're an idiot," his older brother tells him. "And you're not going anywhere until I've looked at your injuries." He prods at the gash on Jason's arm. "This is going to need stitches."

"You're injured too," Jason grumbles. Dick is clearly favouring his left leg and the shallow way he's breathing indicates at least two cracked ribs. "'M not the only idiot."

"You're both idiots."

They both jump and Jason ignores his throbbing head to whirl around and exclaim, "Jesus fucking Christ, don't fucking do that!"

Batman's lips quirk. Jason's sure he's raising an eyebrow behind his stupid cowl. "Language," he rebukes mildly. He pointedly looks around at the destruction surrounding them - including his two sons. "Was all this really necessary?"

"Explosives are always necessary."

Dick shrugs. "I told him it was a bad idea."

Batman grunts. "Then why didn't you talk him out of it?"

Dick throws his hands up in exasperation. "Oh my god, why does everyone expect me to be the sensible one?!"

"Because you're the eldest," Jason and Bruce reply simultaneously, then glare at each other.
"I give up," Dick mutters into his hands. "I resign. I'm done. Make someone else the eldest. Give it to Tim, he's sensible."

Bruce and Jason both ignore him; Dick always been overly dramatic. And Tim lives on too much coffee and not enough of anything else to be considered sensible.

"It's okay." Bruce squeezes Dick's shoulder. "Alfred can be the responsible one." He grabs Jason by the uninjured arm and starts leading them toward the Batmobile. "And he can start by patching both of you up."

Jason groans. "Can we at least stop for ice cream first?"

--

("Why do my children insist on carrying out such terrible ideas?" Bruce complains to Alfred later, after Jason and Dick have been properly doctored, medicated and put to bed.

The butler just gives him a flat look. "I believe they learnt that from you, Master Bruce.")

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
Your wound reopened didn't it? (Jason & Dami)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The funny thing is, it doesn't even happen on patrol. Well, not an *official* patrol. Batman is out of town on League business and Damian isn't allowed to patrol without appropriate supervision - which apparently just means Nightwing, who is busy in Bludhaven - but that's never stopped him before. Alfred had taken the Robin suit as a precaution against him sneaking out on his own, so when Damian had inevitably snuck out he'd had to do it in dark civvies instead.

Everything is going relatively well until he drops in to give the Red Hood a hand taking down a gang. Without the Kevlar protection of his suit, a glancing slash from a knife slices through the fabric of his hoodie and the flesh beneath instead of bouncing harmlessly off armour. He doesn't notice it at first, too absorbed in taking down the thug (un)lucky enough to get him. It's only once the fight is over and the adrenaline fades that the injury hits him, pain radiating from his side like fire. He groans and Hood is immediately looming over him.

"Where are you hit?" he demands. Then, "Wait, no, first - what the fuck are you even doing here? Isn't it passed your bedtime?"

"Robin doesn't have a bedtime," Damian snaps, pressing his hand against his side. It comes away glistening red.

Red Hood snorts. "You don't look much like Robin right now." He kneels down to inspect Damian's side himself, tearing the black hoodie even more so he can peel it away from the edges of the wound. He winces. "B is going to fucking kill me."

Damian tries to peer at the cut himself, but it's too dark in the alley to properly asses the damage from his angle. "You can't tell Father," he says, trying for authoritative but coming out borderline pleading. "He's busy, he doesn't need to worry about a minor injury." *And I don't want him to take Robin away.*

"Minor?" Todd's voice rises with incredulity, hovering over the side of his helmet where Damian knows the button to activate his comm link is. "That's gonna need at least a dozen stitches. And I'm not calling Daddy Bats, anyway, I'm calling Alfred."

Damian grabs his arm desperately, gasping when it causes a new wave of pain to lance through his side. "No! Please, you can't!"

"Woah, calm down." Hood grabs his shoulders to hold him still. "Jesus Christ, kid, you're going to make that worse."

"You can't tell them," Damian says again, prepared to sound as much like a broken record as it takes to wear Todd down.

The older vigilante hesitates, then sighs. "Fine. Whatever. They'd probably blame me anyway." They wouldn't, but Damian doesn't bother arguing the point. "Come on, I have a safe house a couple of blocks away. I'll stitch you up then you can go home and attempt to lie to Alfred yourself. Just don't involve me."

--
When Damian's alarm wakes him at six-thirty the next morning he wants nothing more than to put his pillow over his head and go back to sleep. But that would be suspicious. So he carefully rolls out of bed, takes another dose of ibuprofen and stumbles into the bathroom to shower.

By the time he gets down to breakfast, the painkillers have kicked in and the shower has sufficiently woken him up so that he's acting close enough to normal not to draw Pennyworth's attention. He eats mechanically, then retreats back upstairs until Pennyworth calls for him.

"Don't drag your feet, Master Damian, it will only make you late for school, it won't make it go away," the butler says, mistaking Damian's slow movements as he comes back downstairs with his backpack for reluctance. He scowls and walks even slower, grabbing onto the excuse of a bad attitude with fervour. In the car, he sits stiffly in the backseat and stares out the window, eager for their arrival so he can escape Pennyworth's scrutiny, but dreading the school day ahead.

--

It's all going relatively well until the end of lunchtime. Damian is headed back to his locker to retrieve the books he needs for the final classes of the day when he makes a mistake. A few boys from two grade above him are bullying a younger kid, pushing him around and laughing as they go through his backpack. And Damian gets involved.

He can't not get involved.

It's a short fight. One which ends when one of the older boys whacks Damian in the side with a textbook and he doubles over, gasping through the sudden onslaught of pain. The bullies laugh and call him names, getting in a few more hits for good measure before taking off down the now-empty hallway.

Slowly, Damian forces himself to straighten up and collect his books. If he's late to class Ms Carlisle will give him a detention without care for any excuses he could come up with. And he doesn't need Father to be even more disappointed in his school performance.

It's just a bit of pain. Nothing he hasn't dealt with before. He can make it to the end of the day.

--

Damian realises he's in trouble about half-way through fifth period. The pulsing pain in his side is distracting enough on its own, but when he chances a glance beneath his blazer, he finds that the right side of his white shirt is starting to stain red over his wound. It's not bleeding quickly, but it is bleeding. And that is a Major Problem.

"Damian?" Maps leans over toward him while the teacher's writing on the board. Usually Damian is thankful to have a friend in his class, but today he just wishes to be left alone. "Are you okay? You look kinda pale."

"I'm fine," Damian replies stiffly, pressing his arm tightly against his side. It hurts more, but the pressure might help stem the slowly oozing blood.

Maps clearly doesn't believe him, but Ms Carlisle turns back around to address the class before she can push the issue. Damian has never been more grateful for strict teachers with droning voices because it means he can zone out in peace until the bell ringing startles him back into awareness. Kids are already trickling out of the classroom and Damian joins the back of the mob, keeping close to the wall and trying to avoid the passing bags and limbs which bump his side until he can duck into the closest bathroom.
He fumbles his phone out of his pocket as soon as he's in the relative privacy of one of the toilet stalls. Even if he had the necessary materials, the wound is at an angle that would be too hard to stitch back up himself. As loathe as he is to admit it, he's going to need help.

Todd answers with a curt, "Aren't you supposed to be in school, short fry?"

Damian takes a deep, calming breath to overcome the irritation the nickname stirs up before admitting, "I need your help."

There's a beat of silence then Todd sighs. "Your wound reopened, didn't it?"

"Can you pick me up?" Damian asks instead of answering what is clearly a rhetorical question.

The older boy grumbles but he promises to pick him up about a block from the school in twenty minutes.

--

Damian feels obtrusive loitering on the sidewalk in his Gotham Academy blazer, but he can hardly take it off with his shirt in the state it is. When Todd finally shows up he's driving an old red Nissan instead of the usual motorcycle. Damian slides carefully into the passenger seat with a quiet sigh, tipping his head back and staring out the window as they merge back onto the road.

"Well?"

Damian glances away from the traffic. "Well what?"

"How bad is it?" Todd asks.

"Oh." He pulls the blazer away from his side to reveal the growing patch of red. "Uh. It's not that bad."

Todd glances down at the wound then swears, eyes snapping up to glare at Damian before refocusing on driving when a horn blares loudly behind them. "How the fuck did you manage that sitting in a classroom?"

"It didn't happen in a classroom," Damian snaps. "And it wasn't my fault."

"Of course it wasn't," Todd mutters. He flicks on his indicator to move into the right lane and it's only then that Damian realises they're heading out of the city.

"Where are we going?" he asks suspiciously.

"Take a wild guess."

"You promised you wouldn't!" Damian accuses, because between the direction they're travelling and Todd's tight grip on the steering wheel it's not hard to figure it out.

Todd rolls his eyes. "Welcome to the real world, kid, where promises mean jack shit," he snaps. But a second later his lips twist in a grimace and when he glances over his eyes are almost apologetic. "Look, I'm sorry, okay? But if you've done more damage to that wound, I'm so not qualified to fix it. Alfred would'a caught on eventually anyway - if he hasn't already. Just think of it as... delaying the inevitable."

Damian crosses his arms and sulks the whole drive back to the Manor. He'd gone to Todd for help in confidence and this is how he's repaid for his trust? He clenches his teeth, mouth stretching in a
silent snarl. See if he ever helped the Red Hood again!

--

(Five weeks later, Red Hood drops in on a fight that Robin is *not losing thank you very much*. He gets a bullet graze on his thigh for his troubles. Damian makes sure to ignore his bitching with extreme obnoxiousness as he drags him back to the Cave to be stitched up. Todd glares at him as Alfred stitches the injury. Damian just smirks.)

Chapter End Notes

[Tumblr](https://example.com)
Help, please! He can barely breathe! (Jason & Dick)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On Monday night, the Red Hood takes an unplanned dip in Gotham Harbour when he's tossed overboard a boat smuggling drugs into the city.

On Saturday morning, Jason wakes up with a fever and a pressure in his chest that won't let up no matter how much he coughs.

(It doesn't occur to him until much later that these two things may be related. Hindsight is wonderful like that.)

He groans into his pillow, pulling his blankets over his head because it's too fucking early to deal with life. He's sure he turned the heater on before crawling into bed last night but now he's freezing so maybe he didn't.

("You're such an idiot," Dick tells him later, worry manifesting as anger. "Your room was a bloody sauna and you didn't think it was odd that you were cold?!"

"How was I supposed to know it was a sauna - I was fucking freezing!" Jason hisses back. Hisses instead of shouts because when he'd tried that he'd ended up coughing until he almost passed out and that had not been fun. At all.)

He drifts in and out of sleep for a while before the need to pee forces him to get up and confront the world. He shuffles dizzily from bedroom to bathroom then bathroom to kitchen. Food is usually his first order of business in the mornings, but today he's not really hungry. He just makes himself a cup of tea then retreats back to his bed. There are dishes in the drying rack which need to be put away, and he needs to put on a load of washing at some point, but he's got no energy for anything as mediocre as household chores. Maybe he'll read for a bit, then find the motivation to do what needs to be done.

Sometime later, he falls asleep with the open book against his chest.

--

A coughing fit and a pounding headache send him crawling out of bed for Aspirin and a glass of water. He puts the clean plates away while he's up and the simple chore exhausts him. He sits on the couch to catch his breath and the short break becomes a four hours movie marathon - most of which he misses because if he's not coughing, he's dozing or lost in thought.

He heats up some of Alfred's frozen chicken noodle soup for dinner, standing by the microwave watching the numbers tick down through half-lidded eyes and wondering why nobody else is freaked out by how much microwave counters look like bomb timers. He jumps when it beeps, dropping the spoon he's holding. He jumps again as the metal clatters against the linoleum.

And when the first mouthful of soup burns his tongue, Jason wants to smack his head against the table in frustration because it's just the icing on top of an already crappy day.

In what later proves to be really bad decision making, he decides that beating up petty thugs is exactly the cure he needs. So, despite the weary ache in his limbs and the way his muddled thoughts run together, he pulls on his uniform and heads out into the night.
Sunday is a blur. He remembers eating a piece of toast, crawling back in through his window, being a little surprised at not being dead, drinking water, watching a movie - something that wasn't supposed to be a comedy but made him laugh anyway - and trying to read a book. But he has no idea what order any of that happened in. Sometimes it's dark, sometimes it's light, sometimes it's a weird artificial mix of both.

When thinking about it just makes his head hurt more - and takes away precious concentration from breathing without coughing - he gives up. Sleeping is easier.

It's night again. Probably. It's dark at least. He doesn't know whether it's the same day or a different day. His thoughts are like treacle one second, slow and murky, then mist the next, floating along just out of reach, brushing against his mind but never tangible enough to grab. Jason takes a shallow breath and tries to go over what he does know.

He's in one of his apartment's. In his bed.

He's been here at least two days - possibly (probably) longer.

His chest hurts.

A lot.

His head also hurts.

Actually, everything hurts.

Dick is here. (When did that happen?) He can here him talking to someone - on the phone? - voice tight and anxious as he says "help, please! He can barely breathe!" His voice sounds as thick as Jason's breath feels. Maybe he's crying. (Why would he be crying? Did Jason do something wrong?)

And... The next fact is pushed out of reach by a sudden cough. Except it's never just a cough anymore, it's an endless bout of them, tearing his chest apart and squeezing it impossibly tight all at once. It fucking hurts. And he can't fucking breathe.

Oh god it's like being underground all over again, trapped beneath a ton of dirt - on his chest, in his lungs, clogging up his throat every time he tried to take a desperate gasping breath.

Hands are suddenly on him, patting and rubbing and lifting him until he's cradled against a warm, easily breathing chest. "Hey, hey, Little Wing, you're okay. Calm down. You're gonna be fine. Just hold on a minute, oaky? You just gotta keep breathing. Help is coming."

Just gotta keep breathing?! How fucking easy does he think it is?! The fucking nerve, coming into his apartment and bossing him around and-

Jason passes out.

He wakes up to steady beeping, a mechanical hissing, the cloying scent of antiseptic and a vaguely metallic taste in his mouth. He blinks and sees white; ceiling, blanket, bed. Everything.

Hospital, he realises. Why am I in the hospital?
"Jay?"

He rolls his head to the side and finds Dick's face inches from his own. His hair is unusually mussed, his eyes are underscored by dark bags, what looks suspiciously like dried tear-tracks on his cheeks and- well the lack of fashion sense isn't out of the ordinary, but Jason's pretty sure the badly matched shirt and pants he's wearing are from *his* wardrobe. (Vague memories of Nightwing rolling through his window swim through his mind; he'd thought he dreamt that.)

"You with me?" Dick asks, eyes wide with hope and concern.

Jason opens his mouth to ask, "Where else would I be?" but the words stick in his throat. Only a raspy "wh..." makes it out and he winces. Ow. His throat hurts. The sound is distorted as well and he reaches up to find that the weird tightness around his mouth is actually an oxygen mask. Dick grabs his hand before he can pull the mask away though, pushing it back against the blankets and giving it a quick squeeze.

"You want water?" his brother guesses. Jason frowns because that's not at all what he was trying to say, but his throat is raw and his mouth is dry so he lets his brother carefully lift the oxygen mask and accepts the straw with relief. He sucks greedily until he has to turn his head away to cough. It still hurts, but it's thankfully not as bad as it was before. (Last night? Yesterday? How long has he been here?) Dick must press a call button because a few seconds later a nurse is hurrying into the room.

"Why 'm I here?" he mumbles when he's sure he can talk without setting off another coughing fit.

"You're a very sick young man," the nurse replies, checking his temperature and blood pressure while Dick pretends he's not reading the results over her shoulder. "You've got severe pneumonia and bruised ribs." (He remembers a guy with a crowbar- no, a piece of metal piping. A crying woman. A filthy alley.) She nods toward Dick. "You're lucky your friend brought you in when he did; much longer on your own and you would have died."

Jason grimaces. That explains the hovering and the crying.

"Sorry," he says quietly once the nurse has gone.

Dick squeezes his hand. "I'm just glad you're okay, Little Wing. You scared the crap out of me." He doesn't say anything, but by the way he bites his lip and his gaze slides to the window, Jason knows he wants to add "Bruce too". He's really glad he doesn't; he doesn't have the energy to be angry right now.

"S'pose I should thank you," he mumbles, eyes drooping, exhaustion weighing him down even though he's spent more time asleep than awake in the last several days. "Dying 's'not fun..."

Dick snorts. "Go to sleep, Jay. I'll be here so you can make your obligatory death joke when you wake up next time."

"You better."

There's the feather-light touch of lips against his forehead as he drifts back to sleep. And Jason breathes easily, knowing his brother is keeping guard.
Tumblr
Forgiveness (Jason & Bruce)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His mouth tastes like ash and metal. His head feels like it's full of water. Everything dips and swirls when he shifts to look to the side. A black and grey blob beside the bed (gurney?) is probably a person.

*Person.*

*Someone in trouble.*

*Need to help-*

*Bruce!*

*Bruce is in trouble!*

Jason tries to sit up but the movement becomes a groan as injuries - new and not-so-new - announce themselves with prejudice. His chest hurts. His left side is on fire. His head is fucking pounding. His hand is heavy, weighed down by a blur of white that is probably a cast, refusing to support him in his attempt to push himself upright.

"Woah, easy Jay." The grey and black blob - *Person. Concerned. Dick?* - is suddenly leaning over him, hands pushing his shoulders back down into the mattress. "Stay still, you're hurt."

"No," Jason mumbles, desperately struggling against the hands. "No, m'fine. Gotta go, hafta help. B-
"

"B's not here, Little Wing. You gotta stay calm-"

*Stay fucking calm?! Bruce is gonna die. He has to save him.*

Dick swears, call's for someone, and a second later ice is spreading through Jason's veins. He tries to blink away the encroaching fog but his eyelids are like lead. They close and refuse to open.

"Fuckin' traitor..." he slurs. Then he's unconscious again.

--

*Jason was always an angry kid - an unfortunate trait he inherited from his father. Or maybe just learned behaviour. A hard outer shell; the best protection against the cruel injustice of the world.*

("*Nothin' wrong with bein' a little soft, ya just can't let 'em see it.*)

*Robin is an outlet for all the pent up aggression bubbling beneath his skin, but it's also a source of anger. Little spats with B; burning rage every time a thug picks on a kid; irritation with the excess glamour of upper-class life.*

*But for all his anger, Jason had never been able to hold a grudge. When the Joker had killed him, he'd tried. He'd tried so fucking hard. Because god-fucking-dammit he'd died and did Bruce even care enough to avenge him?*
But the anger wears down, just like it always does. And Jason is left sitting on a gargoyle in the dead (hah) of night, hiding behind a helmet, wondering why it even matters. The more he thinks about it - and he hates thinking about it but he's as masochistic as they come and if anyone's going to make him suffer it's going to be him - the more he realises B is beating himself up as much as the Joker beat up Robin. So what's the point in making it worse? What's the point in rubbing salt in a gaping wound?

(And it alarms him how easy the answer comes; no need for all that existential brooding crap Batman has so much fun with.)

Reputation.

And pride.

Fucking pride. The downfall of all of them. (The Bats. The villains. The ordinary folk. The whole fucking lot.) It gets them into trouble and it stops them from saying they're in trouble and it stops them from saying thanks when someone inevitably bails them out of trouble. It breeds regret.

Pride is an absolute bitch.

And Gotham is full of it.

Jason sighs and it seems like the wind sighs with him.

Coming to is like swimming through treacle. He's aware of movement around him, muffled voices just out of reach, but he can't make out any of it. His mind is slow and his body is even slower to respond. There's a sense of urgency humming beneath his thoughts but it floats away every time he tries to bring it forward.

"Jason? You awake?"

He tries to say yes - he can hear the voice, he must be awake - but his tongue refuses to cooperate so he just groans instead. The voice is instantly worried. "Are you in pain? Do you want me to get Alfred?"

Jason shakes his head. He peels his eyes open and manages to unstick his tongue enough to ask, "B?"

"No, it's Tim." He leans far enough over that Jason can see his face and a sudden rush of disappointment is followed almost immediately by a flood of panic.

"B?" he asks again, more urgently.

A crease appears between Tim's eyebrows. But, for all his faults (and Jason has a list, because he's an arsehole like that), the kid is a damn fine detective. "You want me to go get Bruce?" he asks - cautiously, because everyone knows thinks Jason hates Bruce.

Jason nods quickly. If Tim can go get him, Bruce must be okay. He must have got there in time. (But what if I hadn't?) With one last wary glance over his shoulder, Tim leaves. Jason is left lying in peace - well, as peaceful as it can be when everything hurts and the oxygen cannula is irritating his nose and the beeping of the heart monitor never stops. (Thank god. But. Annoying.) He's starting to
doze off again by the time a nearly-silent shift of fabric announces a presence by the bed.

"B?" He feels like a broken record. Or maybe one of those singing exercises; every warbling question the same, just shifting between pitches. This time it's high with hope.

A hand brushes his hair back, then Bruce's rumbling tones assure him, "I'm here, Jay."

"An' you're okay?"

There's a soft sound that could have been a huff of laughter or choked off surprise. "Yes, Jason, I'm fine."

"Mmm. Good." Just hearing it, knowing for sure that Bruce isn't dead, calms him, relaxes him enough to rest easily. But he couldn't have been. "Meant t' tell you," he mumbles, forcing drooping eyes open to look at Bruce so he knows he's serious.

Bruce's thumb rubs a half-circle across the back of Jason's hand. "Tell me what?"

"'S'not your fault."

B frowns. "It's nobody's fault, Jay. Nobody except the people who set up the ambush."

"No," Exhaustion and pain medication are dragging him toward the darkness, but Jason fights against it with every last scrap of strength he has. His body refuses to cooperate as he fumbles for Bruce's arm and he has to bite his lip to stop a frustrated whine from escaping. "B. Listen. 'S'not your fault. Don' blame you. Can't... can' blame y'rself."

"Okay," Bruce agrees, leaning down to kiss Jason's head. "It's not my fault."

But he still doesn't get it. Doesn't know what isn't his fault. Because if he did it would never be this fricken easy. Jason is too mentally and physically tired to push it though. He closes his eyes, content with the knowledge that they can argue over it some more once he's healed.

(Just like always.)

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
Damian vows to get revenge against Drake. For what is irrelevant. He has surely done something deserving of Damian’s contempt, and if not he surely will.

That’s why he’s here. Hiding under Drake’s bed in his apartment. Waiting for the older boy to stumble in from patrol and collapse onto the soft mattress and fall asleep. Well, Drake had done that first bit; he’s back from patrol, had fallen through the living room window almost an hour ago. But since then all Damian has heard is the gurgle of the coffee percolator and the tapping of computer keys.

He almost falls asleep waiting, but finally Drake shuffles into the room and crawls into bed. Damian makes sure to wait until he’s asleep. Drake is both a light and a restless sleeper; always shifting and turning as he acts out whatever ridiculous dream is playing behind his eyelids. He will fall asleep in the middle of the bed but roll over to the side. And that is what Damian is counting on.

He almost dozes off two more times before there’s a soft sigh and the mattress squeaks under Drake’s movement. Then a limp hand flops over the edge of the bed. Carefully, Damian slides further out from his position hidden under the middle of the bed, until just his arm sticks out into the faintly-moonlit room. Small fingers inch up the side of the bed until they find warm flesh and he grasps Drake’s hand with a soft tug - just enough to startle him into full wakefulness.

There’s no reaction for several seconds, then Drake’s grip tightens suddenly and it surprises Damian so much he jerks, bumping his head against the wooden slats beneath the bed.

There’s a soft laugh from above him. Then he’s being pulled out by his hand.

“Come ‘ere, gremlin,” Drake says, still sounding half-asleep.

Damian scowls and crawls the rest of the way out from under the bed. He tries to tug his hand free but Drake’s grip just becomes firmer and when he tugs back, Damian goes tumbling into the bed. Drake’s other hand grabs him around the waist and then he’s being wrestled under the blankets until he’s chest-to-chest with an amused Tim Drake.

“I’m going to kill you,” Damian promises.

Drake just hums sleepily and pulls him closer. “‘S’at what you were tryin’ to do? Thought you were ‘n assassin or somethin’.” And then, utilising his superpower of napping wherever and whenever he wants, he’s asleep again before Damian can growl threateningly, arms locked tightly around Damian so he can’t escape no matter how much he wiggles. So Damian just sighs and resigns himself to his fate.

He knew Drake would inevitably do something deserving of his revenge, but he didn’t think it would be this.
When the call comes over the comms - a terse "Nightwing down, head injury, we'll be at the cave in ten minutes" - Alfred can't even bring himself to be surprised. He's too accustomed to them all getting injured on a semi-regular basis to feel anything except resignation. Along with the worry, that is. But by the time the Batmobile roars in and skids to a stop, even that is carefully hidden behind his professional mask.

"How bad?" he asks, watching Bruce pull his eldest son out of the car and sling an arm around his shoulder to guide him across the cave.

Bruce grunts - his standard mode of acknowledgement (and most other communication) these days. "Not sure. He was out for seven seconds but aside from the standard dizziness and confusion he's fairly lucid. Mild to moderate concussion, most likely."

"I'm right here y'know," Dick mutters, grumpy but complacent as they manoeuvre him onto one of the cots in the med bay.

"That's the point, Master Richard," Alfred responds drily. "This is where you end up when you take foolish risks and end up hurt."

Dick's brow pinches as his muddled brain tries to think that over. Then he just mumbles something about "too many words" and closes his eyes against the fluorescent lighting above. He flaps a hand in some uncoordinated gesture and groans, "Too bright, make it stop."

The words run together a little too much to be completely coherent, but Alfred gets the general message easily enough. "I'm afraid I need the lights to make sure you're not in imminent danger of dying," he says, leaning over to peel off Nightwing's domino mask so he can check pupil dilation. Dick flinches away from the penlight with an angry whine.

"CT scan?" Bruce asks from the other side of the cot. He's gently parting Dick's hair to inspect the place where he was hit on the side of the head.

Alfred nods and while Bruce sets up the machine, he checks Dick's pulse and blood pressure. "Any nausea?" he asks.

"Don't think so."

He doesn't sound so sure. Alfred makes a note to keep an eye on that. "Pain level?"

"Uhh..." Dick's nose scrunches as he considers the question. "Maybe a five?"

If it were any other member of the family, Alfred would add a few numbers to that estimation, but Dick is (usually) fairly honest about his pain level. "Once the scan is done you can have some ibuprofen."

Bruce broods while the CT scan is being done - though whether it's because of the situation at hand, whatever he's hearing through his comm or something else entirely, Alfred has no idea. "Don't fall asleep, Master Dick," the butler says sternly, knowing all too well the drowsiness that accompanies a concussion. "Tell me about your day."
"Wasn't very exciting," Dick replies doubtfully.

"Tell me anyway."

So Dick rambles about his day and Alfred listens with half an ear, prompting him whenever a sentence trails off, until the scan is done. Bruce, still hovering worriedly, rests a hand on Dick's knee and looks at Alfred expectantly - well, as expectantly as Bruce does emotions. So basically just a slight tautness around his lips.

"Good news, Master Dick," Alfred says - only a touch wryly. "Your hard head has prevailed yet again. No major damage, just a minor concussion."

"Yay," Dick says, but it sounds more sarcastic than sincere. He cracks an eye open to ask hopefully, "Drugs now?"

The lines of Bruce's face smooth out and he squeezes Dick's knee. "Painkillers, then bed," he says firmly.

Dick's nose wrinkles. "But I gotta wait for Little D. He was worried, B."

"And I'm sure he'll still be worried in the morning," Bruce responds, helping Dick sit up to take the ibuprofen pills Alfred hands him. "You can reassure him that you're fine then. For tonight, he'll just have to take my word for it."

Dick opens his mouth to argue so Alfred smoothly cuts in with a non-refutable suggestion of, "If you are going to insist on waiting up for Master Damian, you can do so in your bedroom."

*Where he will surely fall asleep within seconds.*

With a reluctant sigh, Dick lets Bruce help him to his feet, leaning into his father when the world tilts unsteadily. Alfred stays behind to tidy up the med bay and - as predicted - by the time he ventures up to the bedroom wing with a glass of water, Dick is already asleep. He pauses in the doorway, smiling to see Bruce perched on the edge of his son's bed, the way he smooths back Dick's hair and kisses his forehead.

Having to mend injuries on a semi-regular basis is certainly not enjoyable, but these quiet, tender moments in the aftermath? These he could get used to.

Chapter End Notes

[Tumblr](https://example.com)
They're at a stalemate, have been for days now. All because Bruce had dared to suggest Tim stop drinking coffee and get some sleep. A reasonable suggestion, Alfred had assured him, since Tim is, after all, only fourteen years old and much too dependant on caffeine to keep him going than anyone should be. Unfortunately, Tim hadn't seen it that way.

No. Tim had slowly lowered his newly-filled coffee cup from his lips and stared at him until Bruce had shifted uncomfortably. Then he had smiled sweetly and asked mildly, "Are you going to take your own advice?"

And that's where Bruce went wrong, Alfred was quick to point out six hours later when he came down to invite them up for breakfast. Because he should have just said yes, poured his own coffee down the sink and gone to catch a few hours sleep between his thousand-thread-count sheets. But he didn't. Because Bruce is a grown adult dammit. And more than that; Bruce is the goddamn Batman. He couldn't just give in to the sass of a teenager, even if that teenager is a sleep-deprived, more-caffeine-than-blood Robin.

His second mistake had been saying something of that effect to Tim, who had rolled his eyes and taken another gulp of coffee before stating that he wouldn't stop drinking coffee, nor would he sleep, until Bruce did so as well.

So here they are.

Two nights later.

And Bruce is beginning to regret his entire life.

("Nothing new there," the painfully Jason-like voice in his head snorts.

Bruce reminds himself hallucinations are normal after forty-eight to seventy-two hours with no sleep.)

"One of us is going to have to sleep eventually," Bruce sighs. He runs a hand through his hair, looking sidelong at Tim's equally mussed locks.

Tim takes a pointed sip of his lukewarm coffee. "I vote you."

From somewhere in the depths of the Cave, Alfred sighs and mutters something about stubborn fools. Followed a moment later by a louder rumination about good role models. Bruce chooses to chalk that one up to auditory hallucinations; Alfred generally prefers to give useful yet sarcastic advice to his face.

"Don't you have school?" he wonders in Tim's direction, sure the boy had vanished form the cave for several hours each day but not entirely sure that's where he'd gone. "Don't your teachers ever question why you look so exhausted?"

The teen glances up from the case files he's poring over to give Bruce a flat stare - he wears the expression so often Bruce is beginning to think it's just his resting face. (You know, if he ever rested.) "Yes. And I tell them it's because the hours I should be spent sleeping are spent running
across Gotham's rooftops in tights," he deadpans.

Bruce blinks.

Tim blinks.

Alfred sighs. Bruce knows it's definitely real this time because he's suddenly standing behind them with a tray "More coffee, sirs?" he offers drily. "Or have you seen sense yet?"

Tim takes a mug and sniffs it warily, nose crinkling in disgust before he hastily sets it back on the tray. "That isn't coffee, Alfred, it's decaf." He sounds so outraged that Bruce laughs. It may or may not be a touch hysterical.

"I'll have you know, Master Timothy, that you've been drinking decaf for the last two days."

"Hah!" Bruce points a mocking finger at his young partner. "Alfred wins."

"I wasn't aware I was even playing," Alfred comments over Tim's indignant, "You've been drinking it too!"

That makes Bruce pause, his sleep-deprived mind working over the facts of the Case of the Decaf Coffee. He frowns into his near-empty mug as realisation washes over him. "We both lost," he tells the unfaithful liquid. It ripples ambiguously.

"I'll just get a blanket then," Alfred is saying, "Perhaps a pillow as well..."

And when Bruce looks up, blinking sluggishly, several minutes have passed and Tim is fast asleep, as though the very suggestion that his bloodstream had no caffeine in it was enough to knock him out, head cushioned on his folded arms, an errant sticky note stuck to his ear. Bruce reaches out to poke him just to be sure he isn't foxing, but his hand doesn't quite make it, flopping onto the table and brushing Tim's fingers with his own. Then his eyes slide shut and he too is asleep.

(They find out several hours later - at a more reasonable hour of the morning - that not only did Alfred win, he cheated. The last mugs of coffee were laced with a mild sedative. Bruce can't even bring himself to be more than a little irritated because at least Tim finally slept.)

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
Anon asked: Your tim angst is killing me, could you write maybe some comfort for him?? and like red robin!tim not robin tim if you are up for it

Bruce shifts his grip on the plastic bags in his hand and knocks on the door. He tries not to fidget while he waits, smoothing down the material of his suit jacket and telling himself it's because it's creased from hours sitting behind a desk, but by the time the door finally cracks open it's taking conscious willpower not to straighten his tie or readjust his cuffs.

"Hi," he says.

Tim blinks at him. His hair is mussed, eyes half-lidded, jacket and tie gone, top buttons undone, but still in his suit from WE. Probably woken from a nap by the knocking. Bruce feels a thin shiver of guilt about that (to add to the many, many other things he feels guilty about). "Hi," the teen replies, almost wary in the way his eyes flicker over Bruce's face and down to the bag in his hand. "Did I forget something?"

As though Bruce can't show up at his son's apartment just to visit without an ulterior motive. "No. I just thought I'd drop by, see how you're dong." He hefts the plastic bags a little higher. "I brought dinner."

"Oh." Tim's nose scrunches slightly, lips moving to form some silent question that Bruce would put money on being "why?" But he just takes a step back and pulls the door further open, a belated invitation accompanying the gesture. "Sorry it's kind of messy, I've been a bit busy lately..."

Empty words to fill an awkward gap, because the apartment isn't messy at all. Bruce moves through the living area to set the bags of takeout on the breakfast bar of the open-plan kitchen and notes nothing more than an empty coffee mug, Tim's laptop and a precarious stack of paperwork on the coffee table to indicate that a young adult teenager even lives there. "It's fine," he says anyway. "Taking in Jason desensitised me to mess."

Tim smiles at the joke, but it's forced, and the way his head dips and shoulders tense looks like he's trying to sink into himself. Bruce winces; Tim's always been a little funny about Jason, quick to defend him but even quicker to shy away from anything resembling banter.

"Where do you keep your plates?" he hurries to ask. His turn to cover the ensuing awkward pause with inane chatter Tim slips past him, the whisper of his clothing barely brushing Bruce's back, and pulls out two plates and two sets of cutlery. They work in silence to serve out the Indian dishes and it's only once they're sitting on the couch with the TV chattering away with a news report that Bruce finally clears his throat to break it.

"How's work?"

Tim snorts. He swallows his mouthful then spears another forkful of butter chicken and rice before asking, "You really want to do this?"
"Do what?"

"Bruce." Tim sighs. He sets his fork down with a clatter then turns to give Bruce his full, incredulous attention. "We work in the same place. We saw each other four hours ago. In fact, we see each other almost every day. Do I need to continue? Because I can make a list, starting with the fact that you never make small talk. And you never invite yourself around with takeout. And you never--"

"Tim." All it takes is that one, firmly spoken word for his second youngest's jaw to snap shut, for him to turn away to glare out the window as though it will alleviate his frustration and confusion. Bruce sets his own fork down so he can run a hand through his hair. "I know I'm not the best at... all of this-" He can't quite see his face, but he's pretty sure Tim rolls his eyes at that. "-but I've been back for several months now and I feel like I haven't seen you at all outside of WE, and that's hardly the place to properly ask how you've been."

What with walls with eyes and employees with ears, eager for any tidbit of gossip about anyone with the last name Wayne. Any casual allusion to their nighttime activities is treated with the utmost caution; even if Tim had cracked ribs or a bullet wound, he wouldn't dare to say it. And it's not like Bruce can just check for himself since Brucie is just a bumbling, oblivious billionaire.

"I've been fine," Tim says eventually. His eyes dart toward Bruce before dropping down to stare at his plate. "Sorry," he adds a second later. "I didn't mean-"

"It's fine," Bruce interrupts. "It's just... I miss you. "Even though you're not technically under my care anymore, I still worry."

Tim is biting his lip, still staring at his plate. Silence stretches between them for the third time and Bruce is beginning to think he's made some kind of mistake when he hears a soft, "Thank you." And when Tim lifts his chin to meet his gaze, his smile is real. "For dinner and..."

Bruce squeezes his shoulder. "Anytime." On the TV, the intro for some new reality TV show is playing, an upbeat melody to offset the more serious mood in the apartment. Bruce clears his throat, "Now, how about a movie?"

Tim's posture relaxes, eyes lighting up as he suggests, "The Princess Bride?"

"Sounds good."

And when Nightwing taps on the window a few hours later to see if either of them are going to be patrolling that night, Bruce waves him away. He smiles down at the teen sleeping against his shoulder, brushing back his unruly hair and dropping a kiss on the top of his head. The slight movement dislodges Tim enough that he slips forward, head coming to rest against his adoptive father's neck. Bruce tightens his hold around his shoulders and Tim sighs softly, curling against his chest. He's surely going to have a crick in his neck in the morning if he sleeps sitting upright but Bruce finds he doesn't care, more than willing to suffer a little pain if it means providing comfort to his son.
"Dammit, Dick, will you just hold still?!"

Dick tries to hold himself as still as one of the gargoyles on the old Wayne Tower but he can't help the way his nose scrunches when she dusts over it with the foundation brush. "But it tickles," he whines, eyelids fluttering involuntarily as the brush skims over the skin beneath his eyes.

Babs adjusts her hold on his chin, fingers digging in a little harder than necessary as she tips his head this way and that to inspect her handwork. "Well then you shouldn't have gotten punched in the face the day before an interview with Vicki Vale."

"It's not like I asked him to hit me there!" Dick protests, turning toward the mirror to inspect her coverup job himself. Thankfully, the petty crook who'd hit him had more guts than strength and the blow hadn't been too hard. The bruise across his cheekbone is faint and the makeup does a good enough job of hiding it.

Babs mutters something about the strategic value of cowls as she begins packing makeup back into her bag. "Just don't touch it," she warns, right as Dick was about to do just that.

"Thank you, Babs," he says, turning away from his reflection to smile at her. "Don't know what I'd do without you."

Baba rolls her eyes, but her lips are tilting upward. "You're telling me they didn't show you how to do makeup in the circus?" she teases.

"Nothing this... subtle," Dick replies, turning his head from side to side to admire her handiwork again. "But if you ever need to do something with glitter, I might know a thing or two."
His ears are buzzing, static interspersed with choppy snippets of worried voices. He wants them to go away, they're only making his headache worse. Slurring something to that effect gets more frantic shouting instead of blissful silence though. He shifts where he's lying on the ground and his body shrieks with pain from head to-

Oh shit. He can't feel his toes. Can't feel anything below his knees actually.

Fuck, what the hell happened?

Someone touches the his neck and he flinches, whimpering when the jerky movement sends new waves of pain across his body.

"Easy, Hood." The voice is low, soothing. Too soft to be Batman, too calm to be Nightwing, not condescending enough to be Robin. Must be Little Red. "I need to remove your helmet so I can assess the damage."

The kid's fingers skim over the mangled helmet to hit the release button, then carefully pull it away from Jason's face. He blinks when his vision clears with the removal of the cracked lenses, giving him a perfect view of Red Robin's worried face hovering over him.

"Ow," he mutters, which is a bit of a massive understatement because as soon as he tries to turn his head, stabbing pain causes stars to explode across his vision. He tries to lift a hand to prod at his face and neck to figure out how bad it is for himself, but Red Robin catches his wrist - mindful of the two fingers that are most likely broken - and gently pushes it back down.

The younger vigilante's mouth is a grim line as he rests his other hand against the side of Jason's head to keep it still. "Help is coming. Just... don't move, it'll be okay."

Jason's starting to doubt that. "Wha'..." He has to pause to drag in a shallow breath (definitely some broken ribs). "What happened?"

Red Robin's brow pinches with his frown. "You don't remember?"

Would I be asking if I did? Jason wants to snap, but that's too many words so he just says, "No."

"You jumped out a window," he reports without meeting Jason's gaze, concentrating on untangling a coil of wire from around his legs. "Two storeys, limited cushioning for your landing."

Jason grimaces. That explains why everything hurts so damn much. "Damage?" he rasps.

"Bad," Little Red reports tightly. He pauses to listen to something said on his comm, then continues, probably more for the benefit of whoever's listening than for Jason. "Multiple fractures, contusions and lacerations. Moderate concussion. Most likely some internal bleeding." A pause while he cuts the last of the wire and throws it off to the side, then he adds a little quieter, "Potential spinal damage."

He winces at whatever is said in his ear. Opens his mouth to reply, then shuts it and sits back, just out of Jason's visual field - a lovely view of the inky black Gotham sky, glowing faintly orange with pollution and streetlights. Only a few moments later, the Batmobile skids to a stop and Batman is making his dramatic entrance onto the scene.
"Jay?!" he calls and Jason automatically tries to turn his head in that direction. Batman leans over him, gloved hand pushing his bangs back from a cut above his right eyebrow. His mouth is a tight, angry line as he turns to bark at Red Robin, "We need to move him."

"What part of spinal damage wasn't clear?" the kid snaps back. "We should keep him still and comfortable until Leslie gets here."

Jason doesn't point out that the lumpy mattress and squashed cardboard boxes beneath his back aren't exactly comfortable, mostly because Bruce is already arguing, "We're in an open area where a crime just occurred. Gordon's men are going to be swarming the scene any second now - not to mention nosy citizens! We'll meet Leslie at the clinic."

"B, you're not listening-"

"My spine's fine," Jason finally interjects. Two masked heads swing toward him in surprise.

"Hood," Little Red starts, voice dripping with placation. "I've been poking and prodding your legs for several minutes trying to get that wire off and you didn't feel any of it"

"'Xactly," Jason interrupts, triumphant despite the way the words steal his breath away. "Wire was... cutting circulation. Just... numb. 'S'all... tingly now."

The kid exchanges another long look with Bruce then shrugs. Bruce nods in return and then he's slipping a hand behind Jason's neck to support his aching head as they lift him upward. It's a slow, painful, dizzy process, but with Red Robin on one side and Batman on the other, they get him into the Batmobile before he passes out again.

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Jason comes to slowly, drifting into wakefulness on what is clearly the good drugs. Peeling open crusty eyes reveals that he's in Leslie's clinic, body swaddled in bandages and tape. His head is still throbbing but it's dulled by pain meds, and when he shifts it causes only a sharp twinge in certain areas rather than setting all his pain receptors on fire.

"Ow," he mumbles when he tries to sit up and his chest protests fiercely, slumping back against the pillows and blinking at ceiling. He lies there listlessly for a few minutes, listening to the hum of machines and hiss of his breath, until the sound of footsteps had him rolling his head toward the door.

"Ah, good to see you awake, Master Jason."

Jason smiles as Alfred walks toward the bed. "Hey, Alfie," he says, almost a whisper. "Wha' time 's'it?"

"Quarter to three in the afternoon," the butler replies, straightening the blankets. Once they're to his satisfaction, he turns his sternest frown on Jason. "You had us all quite worried."

"Sorry."

Alfred sighs. "I suppose it would be too much to ask that you refrain from jumping out anymore windows?"


"I should think not." Alfred sits down beside the bed and picks up a book, thumbing through it until
he finds his page. "And you'll have plenty of time to think about that while you're on bedrest." He
pats Jason's hand before leaning back and settling more comfortably in the hard plastic chair. "Now
get some rest, I'm sure this room will be full of people demanding your attention when you wake
again."
"Shh," Jon hisses. "They'll hear us."

Damian scoffs. "They'll hear you maybe. I was raised by ninjas to only be heard when I want-"

The window beside him is pulled open and Damian's boasting becomes a cut-off yelp of surprise as he and Jon are pulled inside and dropped on the floor in a heap. Damian, naturally, breaks his fall by landing on the half-Kryptonian, who grunts at the added weight hitting his back.

"Raised by ninjas my arse," Jon mutters into the floor.

"Language," a voice rebukes and when Jon lifts his head Stephanie Brown is standing over him, hands on her hips, grinning dangerously. To her right, Cassandra Cain has her arms folded, glaring down at her brother. Damian glares back.

"Um. We can explain?" Jon tries. An amused snort draws his attention to Barbara Gordon, watching the scene from her desk, a YouTube hairstyling tutorial paused on the desktop screen behind her.

"No explanations are necessary," Stephanie assures him, poking Damian with her bright-blue painted toes. "We know exactly why you're here."

"Tt." Damian slaps away her foot and sits up, regally brushing imaginary dirt off his shirt. "You know nothing, Fatgirl."

"Watch it squirt," Stephanie says mildly. "I can still embarrass you in front of your friend."

Jon watches with amusement as Damian's face flushes red and he clenches his jaw in the effort to keep his mouth shut and not antagonise her. "Better," Cassandra contributes, nodding approvingly. "No bad attitude at girls night."

"Now, where was I?" Stephanie claps her hands together. "Oh yes, that's right. You could have just asked to join us, breaking in was entirely unnecessary."

"We do not want to-" Damian begins indignantly, only to be cut off by Jon blurting out, "We just wanted to know what you do." Four pairs of eyes swing toward him; one betrayed, one curious and two amused. Jon feels his face heat up as he stammers, "I mean, what girls do on girls nights. We were curious."

The girls exchange delightful grins, then Barbara says, "We can show you."

Stephanie nods eagerly, reaching down and pulling Jon to his feet. Cassandra does the same to Damian, ignoring his grumbling protests with the practiced ease of a big sister. "Shall we start with hair or nails?" she asks the room at large.


"Quite right," Stephanie agrees, dragging Jon over to the desk and pushing him into the wheelie chair next to Barbara. "Make him beautiful Babs!"

Jon shares an alarmed look with Damian, caught in Cassandra's hold as he tries to make a break for the window. What have I gotten myself into? he wonders as Barbara selects a dark blue and begins
moving the brush over the nails of his left hand.

Although, he supposes it could be worse.

Stephanie is painting Damian's nails neon pink.
Why are you laughing? (Dick & Damian)

Damian has been having a pleasant afternoon. He'd finished his studies early and taken the extra time to have a nap before heading down to the Cave to train. It's on his way there that his day takes an... interesting, turn when he's drawn to the den by the sound of loud laughter.

He finds Dick sprawled across the couch, a bowl of chips balanced on his lap and a television show intro playing on the large TV screen.

"Dami!" his brother exclaims as soon as he sees him, hitting pause and beckoning him further into the room.

Damian steps forward hesitantly. "Why you laughing?" he asks suspiciously.

"Because it's funny."

Damian glances at the TV again, frozen on the image of a police captain glaring out of the screen. "It's a cop show," he says. "How can it be so funny?"

His older brother gapes at him. "Dami." His voice is serious, shocked, and Damian resists the urge to shift under his piercing gaze. "Have you never seen Brooklyn 99?"

Damian's lips twist into a sneer. "I have better ways to spend my time." He turns on his heel, ready to stride out of the room, but Dick snags his wrist and pulls him back so that he almost topples into his brother's lap.

"No, we need to fix this," Dick declares. He sets the chips on the cushion beside him and pulls Damian down to tuck him against his other side. "You okay to watch from here or do you want to start at the beginning?"

Damian grumbles, but recognises his defeat and mumbles, "Beginning."

They watch in silence, save for Dick's laughter, and Damian finds himself hiding smiles as the show progresses. He can see why his brother finds this show so entertaining, even if some of the humour is juvenile.

"So?" Dick grins as the episode ends, nudging him with his elbow. "What did you think?"

"It was... mildly amusing."

Dick snorts, ruffles his hair. "Yeah, okay Rosa," he teases. "I saw you smiling."

Damian growls, shoving him back. "Shut up, Gina."

Dick just laughs.
I think I twisted my ankle (Steph + Cass)

Chapter Notes

Prompt was: Stephcass for "I think I twisted my ankle"? Can be platonic or romantic, if you please!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steph is sitting on the edge of the roof munching on a muesli bar when Black Bat appears silently beside her. She melts out of the shadows and drops down to sit on the ledge, bumping their shoulders together in greeting. Steph nudges her back, grinning at her best friend.

Oh who's she kidding, Cass is so much more than just her best friend.

"Hey."

Cass's smile is soft. "Hey."

Steph offers her another muesli bar from her belt and then they sit quietly, feet swinging slightly, watching over the twinkling lights of Gotham. In one of the top-floor windows of the opposite building, a blue-grey cat leaps onto the back of a couch then onto the windowsill. It sits there cleaning itself, unaware of it's audience.

"Missed this," Cass says after several minutes of silent companionship. She loops her arm through Steph's and squeezes. "Missed you."

Steph smiles giddily, high on life with her more-than-best-friend back in town after what felt like forever in Hong Kong. "Not as much as I missed you," she replies, hand sliding down spandex and cloth until she reaches Cass's gloved hand and tangles their fingers together. "Everyone else is so boring."

Cass rolls her eyes, but her cheeks are glowing faintly pink in the bright moonlight. "Especially Tim," she agrees with a cheeky grin.

It's Steph's turn to roll her eyes at the mention of her other dorky best friend. "Cass, sweetheart, you're going to ruin the moment," she chides jokingly. "I was trying to sweeten you up before I-"

Cass doesn't give her time to finish, closing be gap between them so quickly Steph doesn't even notice until chapped lips are pressing against her own, a clear reprimand that there had been too much talking and not enough action. She inhales in sudden surprise, too shocked to properly enjoy the moment before a sudden crackling in her ear has them both jerking apart.

"I really hate to interrupt," Oracle's amused voice says. "But maybe you should turn your comms off before you start marking out."

Steph feels her face flaming even she grumbles something about nosy genius overlords not listening into private moments. Cass just laughs softly, squeezing their joined fingers. Steph pulls out her comm and shoves it into one of smaller compartments in her belt.

"Well," she says. "This rooftop rendezvous is officially ruined. Wanna go back to my place?"
"Race you there?" Cass suggests, hopping up in one smooth movement, body thrumming with excited energy.

Steph grimaces, looking back out over the city skyline. "Um. Not sure I can," she admits after several seconds. She lifts her left leg onto the ledge and straightens it out. "I think I twisted my ankle."

"You did not think this important?" Cass rebukes, frowning as she carefully pulls Steph's boot off to inspect the damaged ankle. It's swollen and red, sore but not as painful as she remembers broken bones to be.

"You would have worried and insisted I get it looked at immediately!" Steph replies. "Then we wouldn't have been able to have an almost-moment!"

Cass shakes her head but she huffs a breath that sounds suspiciously like laughter. "Moment later," she says sternly. "Doctor now."

Steph pouts as Cass hauls her to her feet and slips an arm around her back, balancing them both on the ledge. Steph leans against her easily, always amazed at the strength hidden in such a lithe, graceful body.

"I take it back," she grumbles, arms tightening around Cass as she shoots a grapple to swing them down to where she left her bike. "Being away has made you boring."

Cass pecks her cheek, grinning brightly before launching them off the top of the building. "But you love me!" she calls over the wind whistling past.

Yeah, Steph thinks, *more than you know.*

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
What the hell am I doing?

He used to think that a lot in the early days. Still does, sometimes. When there's nobody else around except this tiny child who trusts him so much. And he wonders.

What did I do to deserve this?

He told Stephanie first. Certain members of the family - he doesn't want to point fingers but, what starts with D, ends in k and rhymes with stick (in the mud)? - never quite forgive him for that. But, in Jason's defence, he had no fucking idea what to do and according to rumours (aka Oracle) Stephanie is good with kids.

She also happens to be half-way through his window when he realises just how out of his depth he is. Like free-swimming to the Mariana Trench kind of out of his depth.

"Thank god," Jason breathes when the blonde Bat tumbles off his kitchen bench to land in a crouch on the floor. In the living room, the screaming child throws a book at the TV. Jason winces. "I need your help."

Stephanie straightens slowly. "If it involves holding a kid for ransom, I'm not interested."

"I didn't kidnap him," Jason snaps. "He's mine."

Stephanie blinks, tips her head to the side so she can glance past Jason into the living room. Whatever she sees must satisfy her because after a few seconds she nods her head and peels off her mask. "How can I help?"

Between the two of them, they get the boy calmed down. Then Jason sends Stephanie on a grocery run for child-appropriate food and toys while he child-proofs the apartment. And figures out how to explain the new living arrangement to a distraught, confused and frustrated toddler.

"Hey sweetie, what's your name?"

"...Noah."

"And how old are you?"

"Three and two quarters!"

"You have to tell B."

It's been four weeks and a handful of days since Stephanie rolled through his window, and so far she's kept her promise not to Bruce or Alfred or his brothers in exchange for letting Cass in on the
secret. His sister is currently sitting on the floor with Noah, playing some kind of clapping game that has both their faces taut with concentration.

"I don't have'ta do anything," Jason snaps, turning away from the scene on the floor to glare at Stephanie.

"He's noticed you haven't been patrolling," the blonde counters. "And he knows you haven't left town. So how long d'you think it'll be before he drops by to check on you?" She nods toward Noah, now showing Cass how to stack wooden blocks to build a bridge. "You really want him to find out you're affiliated with the Big Bad Bat?"

Jason sighs, runs a hand through his hair. "Not today." Stephanie opens her mouth to argue and he hurriedly adds, "Soon, okay? Just not now. Let me have today."

--

Noah clings tightly to Jason's hand, both of them staring up at the Manor. One with awe and anticipation. The other with trepidation.

Tim answers the door when Jason finally works up the courage to ring the doorbell, an apple in one hand, his ever-present tablet in the other. He treats Jason to a wary look, eyes widening when they drift down to his small companion. Then he takes a step back. "Um. Come in."

Noah tugs on Jason's sleeve so he lifts the kid to sit on his hip as they follow Tim through the Manor to the kitchen. "B here?" he asks.

"He's in the- uh, he's downstairs."

They end up in the kitchen, Jason pausing in the doorway as Alfred turns toward them from the stove and freezes. "Master Jason," he says, delight overshadowed by surprise. "We weren't expecting you."

"Yeah. I..." Jason adjusts his hold on Noah so he can put the kid down on his feet, a reassuring hand on his shoulder when he presses back against Jason's legs. "Just thought I'd stop by. Wanted you to meet someone."

Alfred wipes his hands on his apron and comes over to smile down at the child. "And who might this someone be?"

"I'm Noah," the kid pipes up.

"Hello, Noah," Alfred says. "I'm Alfred." He looks up at Jason, question in his eyes, and Jason can only nod. Not like he can deny it; the kid looks enough like him for the relationship to be obvious. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

Jason just hopes the next meeting goes half as well.

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"How?"

"Well, Bruce, when a man and a woman-"

"Jason. Do you know who his mother is?"

"What makes you think I'd tell you if I did?"
"How'd he come to you?"

"She died. Child Services called, said I'm the only one she listed as family. No idea how they even got my number, but I wasn't gonna say no. He's just a kid."

--

Having the rest of the family know about Noah certainly makes Jason's life easier, if only because it gives him an army of babysitters to choose from whenever the need arises. He'd been unsure about leaving Noah with them at first since the kid had seemed reluctant to form attachments to anyone. But he'd adjusted to having a slew of new aunts and uncles a lot better than he'd adjusted to living with a father he'd never met before.

The first time Jason left him with Alfred, he'd come back to find him colouring with Damian, both of them sitting on floor in the den with Finding Nemo playing in the background and Dick snoring quietly on the couch behind them.

"Uncle Dami's fun," Noah had confided to him in the car on the way home. "He showed me how to draw horses."

The scribble of orange crayon that, if you squinted, did indeed look like a horse, found its home on the fridge in Jason's apartment. The first of many childish drawings to be collected there.

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The first time Noah calls him Daddy, they're both so shocked they just stare at each other across the table for several long seconds. Then Noah huffs and holds out his hand, demanding more emphatically, "Salt, daddy. Please."

Jason obligingly sprinkles salt on his pasta.

And later that night, after Noah is safely tucked into bed, he calls Alfred and freaks out because *holy shit I'm a father what am I doing?!* Alfred just chuckles and says, "Something right, it would seem."

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They settle into a kind of routine. Jason cuts his nighttime activities to almost none, only going out when it's absolutely necessary and there's someone free to take care Noah for him. These days his nights are spent cooking and eating dinner with Noah then watching a movie or reading before the child's bedtime.

"What did I do to deserve you?" Jason's whispers to the child cradled in his arms, nuzzling baby-soft blond hair that tickles his nose.

Noah turns away from Snow White's singing to look up at him with serious green eyes and says, "Mama said you made her safe and that made her so happy she had me to always remember."

Jason chuckles at the innocent explanation, bumping their noses together. "I love you, kiddo."

"I love you too, daddy."
Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
Like father like son (Damian)

Chapter Notes

Prompt was: Could you write about Damian being slightly older and falling for someone who is similar to Selina/Catwoman and have this whole "like father like son" thing with the batfamily?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She first catches his eye at a gallery showing. Pieces range from drawings to paintings to sculptures, all works from the young, upcoming talent of Gotham. That's what the advertisement's tagline had been, at least. Damian doesn't really care; he's only here because one of the charcoal sketches is his and Father had insisted that he make an appearance to "forge connections".

He has a feeling she isn't the type his father meant him to forge connections with.

She looks stunning in a tight black dress and silver heels, but her stiff movements and constant smoothing of the material make it obvious - at least to him - that she's not completely comfortable in it. So she's not here to make a donation or buy any of the art. Nor is she here just to appreciate it, since her gaze wanders over artworks and into corners where security guards and cameras lurk. Nothing on display is particularly valuable yet, but if the young artists' careers go anywhere - as the event organiser had assured - they will be one day.

As Damian watches, she pauses in front of his own contribution to the evening, taking a sip of champagne as she admires it - and the ease it would take to get it off the wall and into her clutch. Hands in his pockets, Damian sidles up behind her and says, "That one will never be worth much."

The girl startles but recovers quickly, turning to smile at him with glossy pink lips. "What makes you say that?" she asks, a touch of genuine curiosity in her tone.

"Intuition." Damian looks past her at the drawing, harsh lines and shades of black bringing the face of a Great Dane alive on the paper. One of many drawings he'd done of Titus, something he's proud of but not one of his favourites. "And the artist isn't going to sell anything else, so there'll be no market demand for his works."

She's frowning at him now. "How do you know?"

Damian's teeth flash with a quick smile; a learned expression from his Father's public exploits. "I'm the artist."

Her eyes widen with realisation, darting from his face to the artwork's placard and back again. Beneath her subtle makeup, an embarrassed flush tinges her cheeks a soft pink. "Young Mister Wayne. Of course."

Damian can't stop a grimace from twisting his lips at the nickname, a favourite of the media since his last growth spurt, used endlessly by his siblings for mockery. "Damian is fine," he tells the girl, eyebrows raising slightly in silent question of what he should call her.

She hesitates a moment before smiling, holding her out in the space between them. "Ellie. It's a
pleasure to meet you."

Damian shakes her hand, ignoring the Dick-like voice in the back of his head that encourages him to kiss her knuckles. "Likewise, Ellie."

The next evening, the charcoal sketch is stolen from the gallery. Robin, then Batman, spends the rest of his life playing cat and mouse with the thief dubbed Cinderella for the one glittering heel she left hanging from the wall. He never does that get drawing back though.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
I know a lullaby, think that'll help you sleep? (Steph + Dami)

Chapter Notes

Prompt was: “I know a lullaby. Think that’ll help you sleep?” with Stephanie & Damian if it's okay? I love them and they deserve more fluff ♥ (Also hello! :D I love your writing!)

Stephanie doesn't spend a lot of time at the Manor these days. Not that she ever did, really, but with Tim gone there's really no reason to be there at all. And yet, here she is. Ghosting through the dark halls well after she told Bruce and Kate that she was heading home.

Without conscious decision, she finds herself in the library, towering windows bathing the room in silver light. She runs her fingers lightly over book spines as she wanders around the room, driven by a vague memory of a book Tim recommended a few months ago, but not really looking for it. She can't even remember what it was called.

A muffled sneeze - quiet, cute, followed immediately by two more in quick succession - from the corner by the window pulls her in that direction. There's a dark lump wedged between the wall and an armchair, unmistakably a person sitting with their knees pulled up to their chest, head bent low, silent save for the sneezes she'd heard.

"Damian?" she questions softly, reaching out for the small bundle of child and cloth but hesitating just before touching him in case he's asleep. Waking assassins, baby or not, is always a bad idea.

He's not asleep though, uncurls a little at the sound of his name, brown face peeking up at her from beneath a too-big hood that flops over his eyes. "Brown?" He sniffs a little, rubs under his nose. "What are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same thing," Steph replies, even though she's pretty sure he means at the Manor in general not in this particular room. But whatever, semantics.

Damian shrugs, tugging his sleeves over his fingers and curling them in the soft material. It's dark blue and when he shifts his legs to shove his hands in the pocket, she gets a glimpse of the geometric design on the front. A very familiar design.

"That's my hoodie."

He frowns at her, glances down at the hoodie himself then back up at her face. "No it's not, it's-"

"Tim's, yeah, he stole it from me." Her lips curl fondly at the memory. She'd loved that hoodie, mourned its loss even as she'd stolen a pair of his sweatpants to get even. They're still in her wardrobe, and she'd assumed her hoodie was still in his, but- "How'd you get it?"

The kid shrugs again, refuses to meet her eyes, which means he probably stole it. And more than likely he's embarrassed about it. Whatever. Fine. Steph got over that hoodie a long time ago.

She shifts her weight, crouching not being the most comfortable position to maintain, and reaches out to poke his knee. "Hey, what are you doing up anyway? It's way past your bedtime."
"I could ask you the same thing," he retorts, parroting her words from earlier. Steph just raises an eyebrow, completely unimpressed, and waits until he finally mumbles, " Couldn't sleep."

Which could mean nightmares, but from the frustration lacing his tone she's guessing it's just good ol' insomnia.

"I know a lullaby," she says, words slipping out of her mouth unbidden. "Think that'll help you sleep?"

And it's not a serious suggestion - like, at all, because Steph cannot sing to save her life - but he's silent for so long she thinks he's actually considering it. Then he confides, voice barely above a whisper even though there's nobody else around to hear, "Mother used to sing to me, when I was little. She didn't believe in bedtime stories, said they were for children who were weak. But music was okay, it was a higher form of art, a worthy subject for my education." He's staring at his hands, twisting the hoodie between his fingers. His body language screams that this is not a happy memory, but his tone is almost bittersweet when he adds, "She had a lovely voice. Sometimes I'd wake her up, pretend to have a nightmare, just to hear her sing."

Steph bites her lip, doesn't know what to say because her instincts scream that Talia is a manipulative bitch who needs to be hurt for what she did to this poor child, but her brain says she was still his mother and, as fucked up as it may be, he still loves her, misses her, even. She wonders whether she's the reason he's still awake, curled up in the library instead of sleeping peacefully in his bed, mind too preoccupied with memories to rest.

Damian saves her from any awkward response she could come up with by sneezing again, head jerking up to stare at her with wide eyes as though it startled him as much as it did her. Steph giggles a little, bumping their knees together as she says, "Bless you."

A thought occurs to her and she leans forward to knock his hood back, asking, "That's, like, your fourth sneeze. You're not getting sick are you?"

He squirms away from her hands. "No. It is merely the dust in the air."

Yeah, because there's gonna be a lot of that in one of the most frequented rooms of a mansion Alfred maintains. Steph rolls her eyes, sure the expression will be hidden by the shadows. She makes a point to brush imaginary dust off her pants when she stands, then holds out a hand and waits patiently until Damian takes it before hauling him to his feet.

"Come on, you should at least try to get some sleep."

He grumbles something about mother hens under his breath but doesn't resist as she wraps an arm around his shoulders and guides him out of the room and back up the stairs to the bedroom wing. He does protest when she starts to tuck him in but Steph shushes him, smoothing the covers over his chest and bending to kiss his forehead just to be annoying. Well, under the guise of being annoying. She knows he secretly likes the affection.

"Goodnight, Dami," she whispers. "Sleep well."

He huffs a breath that's not quite a sigh, wrigging under the covers until he's comfortable. Steph isn't really expecting a response beyond that, but just as she's closing the door behind her she hears a quiet, "Good night, Brown."

And she's still grinning to herself forty seconds later when she bumps into Bruce coming back up from the Cave and he demands to know what she's still doing in his house.
Angst post Tim's death (Steph + Dami)

Chapter Notes

Prompt was: Hi! Can you write angsty Steph and Damian meeting after Tim's death Please??

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The thing is - and Steph knows this, okay, she's not dumb, it's just that it still takes her breath away - life doesn't stop moving forward just because one more person is dead. It doesn't matter that that person is Tim Drake, Red Robin, her best friend, her boyfriend, the first person to tell her she didn't need Batman's permission to be a hero. Life doesn't give a rat's arse about any of that. It just flows along and expects her to keep on swimming.

So Tim dies and Steph sobs into her pillow and Batman hugs her (and she's still like wtf?? when she thinks about that) and university still needs to be attended and crimes still need stopping. It's the latter which she'd been doing tonight when life had decided to slap her in the face with the reminder that while she's drowning in grief, other people - other young, happy, alive couples - are going about their lives as normal. Her vision is blurry with tears by the time she has the would-be-mugger on the ground and the couple are gushing thanks as they stumble away down the street.

"Spoiler!" The shout catches up to her two rooftops away, where she'd dropped to her knees and buried her face in her hands. The quiet thump of feet hitting the cement drags her head up to squint at four and a half feet of red, yellow and black.

"Not now, Robin," she says tiredly. Don't get her wrong, she loves the little cretin, but she's this close to a breakdown and doesn't have a single drop of mental energy left to deal with him tonight.

"Yes, now."

"Go home, Robin," she tries.

He steps forward. "No. I want to talk."

Steph shakes her head, hands out to keep him out of her personal space. "Please, Damian. It's been a long night and..." Her breath stutters. ".I just can't, okay?"

"Drake wouldn't want-"

"Oh so now you care about what Tim-"

"He was my brother!" Damian screeches, the words exploding out of him before he can filter them. "He was my brother and I don't hate him and nobody even cares!"

There's a beat of shocked silence where Steph stares at him and Damian's chest heaves as he struggles to control his breathing and not cry. Then, as if someone hits the skip button on a remote, the moment jumps forward and Steph's arms as locked tightly around his shoulders as he hides tears against her neck.

"Oh Dami," she murmurs, stroking his hair. "I'm so sorry, kiddo."
Damian's fingers curl into her cape, clutching the material like a lifeline. His voice is choked when he tries to snap, "I don't need your pity."

She rolls her eyes at his tough-guy act, squeezing him tighter just to get an indignant squeak - adorable, like a little mouse. (Tim had looked at her like she was crazy the first time she'd said his little brother was adorable, retorting in his flattest tone, "You know he's a baby assassin, right?" To which she'd emphatically responded, "Baby assassin. He's too little and cute to be scary." )

"I care, okay?" she says, sniffing a little. He pulls away and she lets him, pretends not to notice as he scrubs a gloved hand over his face to banish any sign of tears. "Come on, we can talk at my place."

Because as much as she wants to step back from everything for a minute, remember how to tread water as it threatens to drag her down into murky depths, she's not heartless. Damian's just a kid and Lord knows she can't rely on his family to provide a healthy model of how to process grief.

Ten minutes later, he sits at her kitchen table, mask off and hood back, awkward and out of place in such a homey setting, fiddling with his tea bag as he watches steam curl over the edge of the mug. Steph wordlessly grabs her own mug of tea and takes the seat opposite him, doesn't say anything, just waits for him to find the words he wants and the courage to spit them out.

"I wanted to apologise," he says eventually. The words are as stiff as his posture, and the way his eyes flicker up to her before dropping back to the table seems almost like he's asking permission. "But... I do not know how." He bites his lip, turns his mug so the handle makes a perfect one-eighty with a scratch in the wood, looks up at her again. "I was hoping you would come with me."

Steph blinks, takes a sip of her own tea to cover her surprise. Where he's talking about is obvious, that he would want to visit Tim's grave not as much a shock as others may think, but... "Why me?"

Damian shrugs, like it doesn't really matter, but she has no doubt his choice was very deliberate. Someone he trusts. Someone who'd provide moral support without judgement. Not Bruce because... well, Bruce. Not any of his siblings because they're too biased when it comes to his relationship with Tim. Not Alfred because he wouldn't want to bother him when he's already so busy with everyone else. So her.

"Okay," she says. Doesn't miss the way his eyes widen a little, like the answer he was expecting would be negative. "Tomorrow."

He nods, curls his finger around his mug but doesn't drink from it, just stares into the milky depths. Steph bites her lip to stop herself from asking what he thinks he's going to find there.

"Did you want to stay?" She finds herself offering, more to fill the silence than because she thinks he actually needs a place to crash. He shakes his head, just like she thought he would, and silence lapses again.

Damian is the one who breaks it next, head bobbing back up just when she's thinking of excusing herself to get changed into more comfortable civvies. "It's stupid, right?" He asks, a touch derisive, unsureness making his voice small. "I mean, he's dead. It's not going to change anything. And there wasn't even a body left so it's not like he's going to be resurrected, not like he's ever going to know. So it's just... pointless. Stupid."

Too little too late.

"Hey, no, it's not stupid." Steph leans forward, takes his hand and curls her fingers around his fist, makes sure he's properly focused on what she's saying. "Plenty of people talk to their loved ones..."
after they've died. And it's not... it's not about whether the things they say are heard or not. It's about remembering and making up for lost time and..." She struggles to find the words, not good at explaining something that most people just get, or if not, at least just accept as something that's done. "It's not stupid if it makes you feel better, if it's what you feel you need to do," she settles on, squeezing his hand. "Got it?"

His eyes rove over her face, searching for assurance that she's not lying, maybe. Then he nods. Steph nods too, once, firm. "Good. Now drink your tea."

He bites his lip, glances back down at the mug, then around her kitchen before finally saying, "Um. I don't drink it with sugar."

And Steph feels kind of like an idiot when she realises all his playing with the tea and staring into the mug hadn't been brooding or anything like that, he just hadn't been sure how to tell her she'd made it wrong. Hadn't even asked him, just automatically made it the way Tim liked it. Her hands are shaking slightly as she jumps up from the table and grabs the mug to pour it down the sink, apologies falling from her lips as she reboils the kettle.

"It's okay." Damian appears silently at her elbow, takes the mug and sets it aside before wrapping his arms around her waist. Unsure but wanting to help. "I miss him too."

Chapter End Notes

Come leave me prompts at my tumblr
Dad they're being mean! (Bruce + his boys)

Chapter Notes

Prompt was: Fluffiness with Dick yelling to Bruce or Alfred "Mom/Dad they're being mean!" Bonus points if someone (or many someones) from the Justice League hears ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's one of those video conference where nothing is actually getting done. Green Lantern and Flash won't stop squabbling, Diana's is making bets with Martian Manhunter on who'll snap first and Superman has been needling him about being a role model for the younger generation for the last fifteen minutes. So when there's a yelp followed shortly by a loud crash from the back of the cave, Bruce is almost relieved for the distraction.

Almost.

"Dad they're being mean!" Dick whines, appearing behind him without so much as a mask to conceal his identity and draping himself over Bruce's shoulders. Completely uncaring that Bruce is in a meeting with the Justice League. And that he's acting like a three year old.

"He started it!" Damian argues, popping up at his side and almost crawling into his lap as he tries to shove Dick off.

Bruce sighs, leans forward to avoid being smacked in the head by an elbow, and growls, very quietly and very dangerously. "Boys."

Which is, of course, Tim's cue to enter the mayhem as he protests - from a safe distance away from flailing siblings and Bruce's anger, "That term is so all-inclusive, and I didn't even do anything!"

On the large screens of the Bat Computer, the other members of the Justice League have fallen silent, looking various shades of shocked, horrified and amused. Superman in particular is doing a poor job of hiding his smile.

"Boys," Bruce growls again, and this time he's successful in getting the attention of his two squabbling sons. Which is maybe not a good thing, maybe he should have just thrown them both to the floor and pretended they weren't there instead, because now they're both shouting over each other to explain to him why it's the other one's fault.

In the Watchtower, Diana coughs to cover a laugh. Out of the corner of his eye, Bruce sees Tim wave to her.

"Tim," he barks, making the boy sidle back a step even as he smiles innocently.

"Yes, Bruce?"

"You have thirty seconds to explain what the hell is going on."

Bye Bruce - bye Diana!

And then he's gone.

"Um, Batman?" The Flash cringes as soon as Bruce's head swivels toward him, instantly regretting speaking up, but he perseveres because you don't get into the Justice League by backing down from silly threats like an angry Batman. "Maybe we should continue this meeting later?"

Bruce winces as Damian clambers up his chest, bony knees and elbows stopped from doing damage only by the bulletproof material of his suit, obviously not satisfied that he doesn't have his Father's full attention. "Yes," he agrees, voice only slightly strained. "I'll call you back when I've-" Dick flicks his brother's ear and when the younger boy jerks away he topples across Bruce's lap, one small hand smacking his chin on the way. "-dealt with this situation."

Except that he can't quite reach the button to disconnect the call with Damian using his arm to steady himself as he bares his teeth at Dick. The seconds drag out while Bruce continues to fail to control his children and Clark takes his time reaching for his own button to disconnect the video link, obviously finding his friend's predicament hilarious.

Of course, as soon as the screens go black, Damian launches himself over Bruce's shoulder and knocks Dick to the floor, both of them rolling and scrabbling until finally Dick gets the upper hand and sits on his brother with a triumphant, "Aha!" Damian squirms and bucks furiously but it's no use..

Bruce very calmly stands up form his chair, straightens his cape, then folds his arms and looms over them both. Damian notices first, going limp against the Cave floor and it's only then that Dick looks up, satisfied smirk falling at the sight of Batman's most unimpressed look.

"Um." His eldest gulps. "He started it?"

Damian hisses. "I did not start anything, you were the one who-"

"Only after you tried to-"

And then, before the argument can escalate into another full-blown fight, they both go silent, staring at each other in dawning realisation.

"Drake," Damian realises, spitting the name out like it's poison.

"He played us." Dick looks so betrayed it would almost be funny if Bruce wasn't already in a bad mood from being interrupted in the middle of a meeting.

"Why would Tim do that?" he asks warily, pushing the cowl back to rub at his throbbing forehead.

"The ice-cream!" Damian and Dick shout in unison, bounding up and bolting toward the elevator before Bruce can so much as ask them to save him some if there's any left. He should have knock Ben & Jerry's was responsible for responsible for this. Them and their stupid new Batman-themed flavour and the stupid people of Gotham who bought them so that there was only one tub left by the time Alfred got to the supermarket.

"Alfred?" Bruce asks the air, a little surprised when he looks around a second later and the butler isn't there. Alfred always appears when he needs to dramatically declare something. He huffs, resigned to doing things the old fashioned way. "Fine, I'll just get myself a drink. Something strong, do we still have that-?" He stops, curses when he realises he's still talking aloud, buries his head in his hands and mutters, "I really need a drink."
Chapter End Notes

Tumblr
Claustrophobia (Jason)

Prompt was: Hi! Can you write something about claustrophobic Jason Todd? I think there is a chance that he is claustrophobic since in the latest rhato issue he was afraid he was in a grave again. Love your blog btw ❤

It's stupid. Totally and completely stupid. And Jason knows it's stupid. But it doesn't matter how many times he tries to tell himself that - that's it's stupid, irrational, insane - because it seems so fucking real.

The walls are closing in. Creeping closer every time he looks away. So he can't look away, sits against the bars, pressed back as far as he can get with his knees against his chest and watches. He's exhausted, eyes gritty with fatigue, chin dropping down to his chest every few minutes. But he forces it back up, can't give in because as soon as he falls asleep the walls will close in and he'll wake up in a box.

(Again. Jesus Christ not again, please, I can't. Anything but-)

His chest hurts. Started aching not long after they left him alone. He'd thought maybe he'd been injured and just hadn't realised, had clawed open his uniform and stared at pale, scarred skin. That's when he'd realised the walls were closing in, seen it out of the corner of his eye, flung out a hand to slap the smooth concrete, as if he could push it away.

(Bizarro could. Where is he? I need to find him... get out... find them both...)

Every breath he takes is shallow, his lungs too small, the room too small, not enough air. At first he tries to breathe slowly - he should conserve oxygen, right? Isn't that what you're supposed to do? - but he can't. There's not enough. So he sucks in a desperate breath, two, three, four.

And now the roof is inching down. Or maybe the floor is moving up. Does the window look lower or higher? Has it moved left or right? Or is it all moving inwards at once, a perfectly symmetrical vice that's going to crush him into a cube like scrap metal?

He's dizzy. Feels sick. Still can't fucking breathe. And he knows that if he could just do that, could just think, he'd be okay.

He just needs the walls to back off for one goddamn second.

He tries to press back further, but the metal bars of the door are already digging into his back. He can't break through them. Already tried. Jammed his shoulder against them, pulled and pushed and cursed until he'd realised that was just using oxygen he didn't have.

So he sits. Watches the walls. Waits. Hopes the General gets to him before the walls do.
Sibling bonding (Cass + Dami)

Damian's been grumpy for two days now, snapping at anyone who spends too much time with him, refusing food out of spite, hiding in secluded corners of the Manor until someone (usually Father) drags him out. And Father can reprimand his behaviour all he wants but it's not going to change anything because it's all his fault anyway. Two nights ago Damian had sprained his wrist on patrol - a minor injury - and Father had benched him without hesitation. Forbidden him from not only patrolling but training as well until it was healed.

When Damian had sought out Cain in the cave, he had expected her, of all his Father's collected strays, to understand his need to continue training. Pain is merely a product of the mind, a weakness he cannot afford to give into. He has to be better, stronger, faster. Like Batman. Like her.

She had only shaken her head, though, turned away and gone to change out of her workout clothes. Left him furious and alone on the mats.

The squeak of a window being forced open breaks him out of his reverie. He tenses, melting further back into the corner he's sitting in, eyes darting around for something he could use as a weapon. The chances of it being an intruder are less than slim, but better safe than sorry.

A few seconds later a ball of black rolls across the attic floor, then Cain is lifting her head to smile at him from her crouched position less than a metre away. "Littlest brother," she says in lieu of proper greeting.

Damian glowers. "The door not good enough for you?"

Cain tilts her head, still staring at him without moving. "Faster from outside."

"Tt." He turns away to look out the window, watching out of the corner of his eye as Cain straightens up and begins walking around the attic. She picks up a brass candlestick and inspects it carefully before setting it down and moving onto a box full of old notebooks with Dick scrawled across the side. "What are you doing?" he eventually snaps, after numerous sheets have been lifted, objects scrutinised and boxes rifled through.

"Exploring," Cain replies simply.

"Why?"

She shrugs. "Why not?"

Damian frowns as she pulls out an old, dusty photo album and sits cross-legged on the floor to flick through it. He watches for several minutes but Cain doesn't make any attempts to engage him, just continues perusing the album until she gets to the end, then reaches for another one. Damian eventually turns away, looking back out the window at the sinking sun setting the sprawling Manor grounds aglow. The silence that settles over the attic is surprisingly comfortable and Damian allows himself to retreat back into his thoughts.

"I offended you."

The quiet admission has him turning abruptly back toward her, frown deepening at the openly curious look on her face. Her eyes sweep over him, seeing things he does not mean to reveal. The waning afternoon light casts abstract shadows across them both. Damian watches them drift across her face and doesn't know what to say. For once, it is Cain who fills the room with words.
"I did not mean to..." She hesitates, lip pulled between her teeth as she searched for the word she wants. "Make you little?"

"Belittle," Damian corrects automatically and she smiles gratefully.

"Yes, belittle," she repeats. "I wanted to help you get better."

It takes a few seconds for her meaning to make sense in Damian's mind but when it does his lips thin and his brow punches with a scowl. "I don't need to get better," he snaps. "I need to be better."

Cain lets the heated tone wash over her, pulling her knees up to her chest and wrapping her arms loosely around her shins.

"Like you," Damian continues. "You're fast and strong and you don't let stupid injuries stop you. If you would just teach me-"

"Not stupid," she retorts. Then, quieter, "Can't."

"But you're-"

"No." She's suddenly right in front of him, hands tight on his shoulders. "No. Not like me. I am... made wrong." Her fingers fist in the material of his shirt, trembling slightly. Her eyes are hard, steely in the weak orange light. "Be you. You is better."

Damian's breath is caught in his throat, eyes wide as she steps back, movements fluid and carefully controlled. The new position drenches her in shadow, invisible if Damian didn't know she was there. If he wasn't trained to he a Bat.

His voice is small when he finally says, "What if being me isn't good enough?"

What if next time it isn't my wrist, but somebody's neck?

They stare at each other in the nearly dark attic, quiet breathing falling into sync as Damian waits for an answer. The minutes stretch out until, just when he thinks he isn't going to get one, she speaks, voice whisper soft.

"Good enough for me."

And, somehow, it is that, not Pennyworth's wisdom or Father's reassurances, which makes Damian feel better.

"Should go," she says a moment later. "Almost dinner."

Cain holds out a hand and he hesitates only a second before taking it. Her fingers tangle with his, squeezing gently. Her smile is warm. Damian smiles back.
Prompt was: If you still wanted a Tim fic prompt, would you write a fic based on that sleepwalking headcanon list? Specifically on Damian following him because he's worried?

Headcanon found here

Damian is woken suddenly by the jangle-jangle-thump of Titus jumping off his bed. He lies there for a moment, still half-asleep and confused, until Alfred stretching and stepping over his face to follow his canine companion forces him to sit up and investigate the late-night disturbance. Titus has already nudged open the door and is disappearing into the hallway, Alfred slinking along in his shadow.

"Titus?" Damian calls softly. His animals don't even pause. Grumbling under his breath, Damian throws off the warm covers and hops across his room to pull on fluffy socks and his dressing gown before going to investigate.

The jangle of Titus's collar leads him along the hallway to the stairs leading down to the main entrance hall. Stifling a yawn, he pauses at the top of the staircase and peers down to where a shadowy figure is drifting toward the front door. His shoulders drop immediately. There is no threat.

"Drake," he hisses, scurrying down the stairs as fast as he can without slipping. Tim doesn't acknowledge him, just reaches out to unlock and open the front door. His fingers twist the knob and Damian skids the last few feet to punch in the code to disable the alarm before it gets the chance to wake the rest of the family. When he turns around, Titus and Alfred have already darted out into the freezing night air on the heels of his wandering brother.

Pulling his dressing gown a little tighter around himself, Damian follows. Trying to wake Tim would be foolish, he knows, and he doubts he'll be able to gently guide him back to bed from all the way down here. And he's not going to get his pets back until he's satisfied that his brother isn't going to sleepwalk himself into trouble. All he can do is follow and hope that Tim finds a cozy corner to wedge himself into sooner rather than later.

They moulder down the front steps and around the Manor. Titus keeps close to Tim, a little in front so he can use his body to make him change direction if his walking is going to take him into an obstacle. Alfred winds between Tim's ankles every time he stops. Damian stumbles along behind them and wishes he'd thought to put on shoes. Across the grass and through the garden and down to where the manicured grounds taper off into untamed woodland. Drake doesn't go past the tree-line though, just skirts along it until he reaches a familiar spot.

Damian freezes. Tim continues walking, oblivious, but Titus trots back to butt at his legs and snuffle at his hand until Damian curls his fingers around his collar. He watches from the edge of the small cemetery as Tim trails his fingers along headstones until he reaches one and sits down against the back with a soft sigh. He pulls his knees up to his chest and drops his head down. Alfred jumps up onto the headstone then steps daintily down to drape himself across the back of Tim's neck. Titus steps forward, straining against the grip keeping him by his young master's side. And Damian still can't move.
They can't stay here, he needs to wake Tim up, reclaim his pets, get back into his warm bed and go back to sleep.

But.

Moonlight peaks through a break in the cloud cover and Damian finds his eyes involuntarily drawn to the inscription on the polished slab of granite his brother is huddled against. Not that he needs to read it to know who it belongs to. He's spent enough time here himself to know exactly who's buried where. Who isn't buried where.

Titus pulls against his hold again, turns to bump his head against Damian's knee with a low whine. Damian lets him go, runs a soothing hand over the soft fur of his head. "It's okay," he whispers. Titus huffs, hot breath tickling his fingers. He gets the feeling his dog doesn't believe him.

Taking slow steps, Damian approaches Tim and crouches down in the grass in front of him. He bites his lip, reaches out and lets his hand hover over his brother's shoulder. Before he can bite the bullet and touch him, though, Titus bumps into him and he goes tumbling forward. Right onto Tim.

His brother jerks wake and the sudden movement has their heads smacking together. Alfred yowls when he's squashed back against the headstone, claws scratching Tim's back as he takes off in fright. Titus barks and circles around them excitedly. Both boys grimace, rubbing their heads.

"Ow," Tim mutters, sounding more confused than pained. He glances around, face falling when he realises where he is and puts together how he must have gotten there. "Um. Did you follow me?"

"Tt." Damian stands quickly, crossing his arms and turns away, pretending to look for where Alfred might have gone. The cat is probably back at the Manor by now. "Your stupid sleepwalking disturbed my pets. I came only to retrieve them."

When he glances back, Tim is staring at him with a thoughtful frown as Titus tries to lick at his face. He snakes an arm around the Great Dane in a half-hug and Damian realises he must be freezing. In a t-shirt and sleep pants, he's not even remotely dressed to be outside in the cold autumn night. Damian has a sudden urge to get him inside as quickly as possible, thoughts jumping to Alfred's famous hot cocoa before he quashes them.

"Well?" he snaps, gesturing irritably. "Do you wish to stay here all night?"

Tim uses the headstone to pull himself to his feet and Damian pretends not to notice when he glances down and his eyes widen. Titus gives another short bark, clearly telling them to hurry up and get back inside. They're silent as they trudge back up the hill to the Manor, save for a quiet "thanks" when Damian shucks his dressing gown and shoves it at his brother instead. The sound of his chattering teeth is irritating, is all. And Father would no doubt find some way to blame him if Tim were to get hypothermia.

"I'm going to make tea," the older boy says when they slip back in through the front door and Damian reenables the alarm. He's still shivering slightly even in the dressing gown, hands tucked under his armpits to warm up. He pauses, hesitating, then offers, "Do you want some?"

Damian shakes his head. "I'm going back to bed. Some of us prefer to actually sleep at night."

Tim is nice enough not to point out that the reason their late-night trek even happened was because he was sleeping. "Okay. Goodnight."

Alfred the cat is back on his bed when he gets there, curled up on a corner of his pillow, and Titus is quick to reclaim his spot at the foot of the bed. Damian crawls back beneath the blankets and very
determinedly does not think about what Tim seeking out his gravestone in his sleep means. His limbs are heavy with tiredness and his thoughts are slow and hazy, but he finds himself continuing to lie awake for a while longer. Until he hears the quiet pad of feet in the hallway as Tim returns to bed. Only then does he finally drift off.
Chapter Summary

For a prompt by anon: Hi, this is an original prompt idea, not in your list. How about one of the batboys are at school or work and they make up an excuse for their injury from patrol? "Excuse me, ____, but how did you say you broke your finger exactly?"

Jason has been Robin for three months when he shows up to PE with three fingers taped together and a note excusing him from participating. He spends the lesson sitting in the bleachers finishing the history essay that's due at the end of the week. It's fine, nice even, because he likes history and if he gets the essay done early Bruce will let him spend more time training. It's only when the bell signals the end of the period and he starts shoving books back into his bag as the other kids drift out of the gym that his broken fingers become problematic.

"Excuse me, Mr Todd? Stay behind, I'd like to have a word with you." Ms Schmidt's voice is firm but sincere, the kind of do-gooder tone that makes Jason's skin crawl, and he knows what's going to come out of her mouth even before she opens it and asks, "How did you say you broke your fingers again?"

His instinct reaction is to snap, "I didn't." It's none of her damn business; if it was it would have been on the doctor's note. But he knows that's the kind of defensive answer that'll get him in trouble, either for talking back or the conclusions she'll jump to (then likely take to the principal with a good dollop of misguided concern).

Instead, he forces his shoulders to remain relaxed and flashes an embarrassed smile. "Skateboarding," he says. "Apparently it's not as easy as the movies make it look."

Ms Schmidt hums consideringly. "You fell off?" Her tone is politely curious, a little concerned, but Jason recognises it for what it really is; this is an interrogation he's not supposed to win. Well too bad. Not only has Bruce been training him in resistance to interrogation techniques, but Alfred is a pro thespian and a damn good teacher.

"Um. Not exactly." Jason ducks his head, rubs the back of his neck with his uninjured hand, gives a short, awkward laugh. Tries to project chagrined and embarrassed with every fibre of his being. "I was practicing inside because it was raining and I ran into a table. Broke a five thousand dollar vase and two of my fingers."

It was actually Penguin and a glancing crack from his stupid umbrella that Jason hadn't blocked properly. But it was raining so. Not a complete lie.

The teacher makes a sound in the back of her throat. She could be disappointed that it wasn't a more interesting story (even teachers love gossip), or she could think he's lying. She probably thinks he was street fighting or something. Jason scuffs the toe of his sneaker on the polished floor and waits impatiently to be allowed to leave; at his rate he's going to be late for his next class.

"You know, Jason, you can tell me the truth. You don't have to protect him. If there are other injuries…"
Jason just stares at her. Then he laughs Out of the corner of his eye he sees the last few of his classmates give him curious looks as they shuffle out of the gym to their next classes. He wishes he was one of them right now.

“Look, Ms Schmitt, whatever you think happened, did not happen,” Jason says. Firmly, convincingly. He meets her eyes dead on because that's what Alfred told him to do when he's trying to sell the truth - or sell something as the truth. “I fell off my skateboard because I shouldn't have been riding it inside. But if you really don't believe me, I'd be happy to get the shards of broken vase out of the trash and bring 'em in as proof. Or maybe I could get a video? Wayne Manor has so much security there was probably a CCTV camera in the room somewhere.”

Ms Schmitt now looks a little uncomfortable, her smile wooden around the edges. “I don't think that will be necessary,” she says haltingly. “As long as you're alright.”

“I'm fine.” He doesn't say thank you for your concern because her concern is honestly more of a nuisance than anything else.

“Good. Well, you best run along to your next lesson. We don't want you to get a detention for being late.” As if it wouldn't be her fault if he did.

Jason adjusts the strap of his backpack so it doesn't slide off his shoulder and hurry's out of the gym. He just hopes none of his other teachers are as nosy. Next time he gets a noticeable injury from his night job, he'll just make Alfred call him in sick or something. Much easier than dealing his teachers’ scrutiny disguised as concern. And there's no need to give them any more wrong ideas about Bruce’s parenting or what Jason gets up to in his spare time.

Who knows, maybe one day one of them might stumble in the right direction. Then he'd probably have to choose between school or Robin. That's the last thing Jason wants; he loves school and he loves being Robin. He'll just have to get better so there are no more injuries to lie about.
Damian pushes up onto his toes and stretches his arm, feels the muscles stretch taut from his fingers to his shoulder. It gives him approximately two and a half feet of reach, but still it is not enough. The tips of his fingers brush the tin he wants, but it’s not sufficient purchase to pull it down. A jerky grabbing movement only pushes the tin further out of reach.

Damian growls and curses whoever put the damn tea up on the top shelf in the first place. And while he’s at it, he curses the broken arm that stops him from climbing up onto the bench and getting it that way. The kettle is whistling shrilly on the stove, demanding to be poured over the tea leaves, so Damian moves it off the heat then turns to survey the kitchen with a frown.

There are an assortment of teas lower down, but he doesn’t want any of those. The blend he’s craving is a bold Ceylon with cardamom and hints of orange. None of the greens or early greys or breakfast teas will do. If only he could- Ah. His eyes light on one of the bar stools at the breakfast bar. They’re the annoying swivel type, because Grayson and Drake apparently had significant input in their choosing, but they will do for his purpose. Dragging the stool across the floor and positioning it one handed is difficult, but Damian manages, and he is just about to climb up when-

“What do you think you’re doing?” A voice demands from the doorway, and then Todd is crowding behind him, larger frame towering over Damian and reaching with enviable ease to grab the tin of tea he was after. “Let me help. Alfred will kill me if you fall and break more of your bones trying to climb up there.”

Damian sighs, frustrated by the coddling, but he has the tea he was after now so he can’t complain too much. A little bit, though, is not only warranted but expected, so he snatches the tin from Todd and says, “I am perfectly capable of reaching the top shelves without injuring myself, Todd. Although I would not have to if monstrous oafs such as yourself did not put things up there.”

Todd just laughs and ruffles Damian’s hair, knowing full well Damian can’t hold onto his tea and swat him away at the same time. “Not our fault you’re so tiny, squirt,” he retorts.

Damian could “accidentally” spill boiling water over him in retaliation, but he refrains. After all, Todd may have insulted his stature, but Damian has the tea he was after now, so who’s the real winner here? (Hint: not Todd.)
I've got you + you can stay - Bruce & Tim

Chapter Notes

For the prompt: "So for that prompt list, what about 40 with Tim and 18 with Bruce? Either combined into one or as two separate, whatever you want to do~"

40: “You know, you can stay if you want to.”

18: “I’ve got you.”

There’s something rough beneath his cheek, strangely hard and… damp? It crinkles when he shifts, the almost silky texture brushing his jaw and. Oh. A cape. Why is there a cape under his head?

“Red Robin?” a voice says and the words push at the cotton wool surrounding his mind. Deep and rumbling and warm. Like gooey chocolate brownie; a hard, crusty layer on the outside but perfectly soft and sugary on the inside. Not milk chocolate, though, dark chocolate, because it’s edged with something bitter like concern, tangy and sharp on the tongue but leaving a strangely pleasant aftertaste.

The imagery makes Tim giggle. And then groan because ow, fuck, my head.

“Tim?” the voice speaks again. Closer this time, gentler, more bitter. More concerned.

Tim cracks his eyes open (wonders, vaguely, why he didn’t think to do that earlier) and squints at the blurry darkness. He tips his head slightly, biting his lip against the flare of pain, searching for the face attached to the voice (square jaw, stubble, hard outer layer cracking to let the gooey centre bleed out into the space between them), but his eyes only see black.

“B?” It’s shrill and panicked because oh shit I can’t see I’m blind. Tim shoots upright. Too fast, too sudden, too much. His brain ricochets like jelly inside his skull. The world flashes white. His stomach turns.

Hands skate around his arms, across his chest, on his neck, gathering material and hair while Tim coughs up bile. He keeps his eyes squeezed shut because he’s a little afraid his brain will leak out through his tear ducts if he doesn’t.

“It’s okay, you’re okay,” Bruce is murmuring. His hand is cradling Tim’s head like it’s something breakable, like an egg, or precious, like his mother’s pearls, or explosive, like a bomb. With the utmost care. “I’ve got you.”

Tim slumps back against his adoptive father’s chest, Batman’s breastplate hard and unforgiving, yet blessedly comfortable, beneath his pounding heart. The cape, that swirling mass of black he’d woken up to, is wrapped around his shoulders. The rest of the world swims into blurry focus. The orange of a street light, the red of his uniform, the white of a soggy newspaper. Not blind, he realises with no small amount of relief, just disorientated.

“B?” he croaks. The words he wants to say - what happened hurts why where are we fight - tangle together in his brain. Like silly string, the more he tries to fit them together, the more messy they become. But somehow Bruce understands anyway.
“You were knocked out,” Bruce tells him. His fingers are gently combing through Tim’s hair, soothing and prodding at the bump on the back of his head. “You have a concussion.”

The threat - gang members? mercenaries? Tim cannot for the life of him remember - must have been dealt with because Bruce isn’t rushing him to get back into the fight or get out of harm’s way. They just sit there a while, for long enough that the world grows muffled and Tim’s head nods toward sleep. Only then does Bruce move, jostling him awake as he gets them both to their feet. The world lurches and pulses with the dizzying pain in his head; a thousand angry rogues beating on his skull like they’re trying to break out of Arkham.

Bruce doesn’t bother asking if Tim can walk under his own power; the way he’s swaying on his feet makes it pretty clear any steps will be clumsy and likely end with him face-first on the hard ground again. Instead, Tim finds himself lifted carefully into Bruce’s arms and carried toward wherever he parked the Batmobile.

“No,” Tim protests, even as he leans into the hold. “I c’n get back myself. You c’n stay out. Gotta protect th’ city. More important…”

Bruce just hugs him closer. “No,” he says, firm, decisive, the word rumbling through his chest and into Tim’s bones. “Nothing is more important than making sure you’re okay.”

And Tim knows Bruce doesn’t mean him specifically. He means all of them; the Robins, the other assorted bat or bird themed sidekicks. His kids. His family.

But right now it’s directed at Tim. In a few minutes or hours, someone else will be more important. So Tim smiles, wide and open and definitely dopey from the head injury. He curls his fingers around a chunk of Batman’s cape and soaks up the comfort while he can.
It’s rare for Damian to come to Dick during the night when he wakes from a terrifying nightmare or just can’t sleep. More often, Dick will wake from his own nightmares or to use the bathroom and peek in on his little brother, only to find the bed neatly made and Damian cocooned in blankets but wide awake in one of the many other rooms of the Manor. The only reason Dick knows Damian thought about coming to him tonight is because he’s only just on his way to bed, hours later than he said he’d be going up, when he sees the dark figure lurking in front of his door. Too small to be Bruce or Alfred, too sneaky to be Tim.

“Dami?” he calls softly through the darkness.

The figures startles at the sound of his voice, spinning around quickly, and there’s a glint of something like metal in the moonlight, but maybe Dick just imagines that because a second later it’s gone. “Grayson,” the boy says, and he doesn’t quite manage to hide the relief beneath indifference. “I was just…”

“Looking for me?” Dick suggests, coming close enough to rest a hand on Damian’s shoulder and smile down at him. Knowing his little brother’s aversion to seeking comfort, it was more likely checking on me. Probably with a large dollop of panic when he realised Dick wasn’t in bed.

“Nightmares again?”

Damian turns away, either purposely or inadvertently shrugging Dick’s hand off with the movement. “Tt. I’m fine.”

“You know, we all have traumas and nightmares,” Dick tells him. “So we understand what it’s like. You don’t have to act like you’re okay all the time.”

“Father does.”

And Dick snorts. He can’t help it because, “Bruce really isn’t the best role model, kiddo. It’s very much “do as I say, not as I do” with him.”

Damian is quiet as he considers that. Maybe thinking back on all the times Bruce came across as a massive hypocrite; Dick certainly is, and there are many to choose from. Bruce telling him to go to bed because his body needs rest, then staying up for three nights straight before Alfred managed to drug him. Bruce telling him not to go on patrol because he bruised a few ribs, then roaring out of the Batcave with a knife wound in his leg. Bruce preaching about coping mechanisms, then bottling up his emotions and going out to punch criminals dressed as a giant bat.

“Alfred is a much better role model,” Dick continues when the silence stretches between them. “And you know what he always does to chase away nightmares?”

Damian rolls his eyes but there’s a lightness to his features that wasn’t there before, a relaxation of his posture, maybe from the conversation, maybe just because Dick is there now. “I have had
Pennyworth’s cure-all hot cocoa before, Grayson,” he says, but it’s not dismissive.

Dick takes his hand, pulling his little brother down the hallway, away from shadows and dreams, toward the kitchen. “Then you know it’s magic,” he says with a grin. When he glances over there’s a faint smile on Damian’s face.

“Yeah, magic,” he murmurs, and Dick gets the feeling he isn’t talking about the hot cocoa.
You smell good - Dick & Tim

Tim adjusts the arm slung over his shoulders and tries not to trip when Dick takes that as an invitation to slump his entire weight against him. He doesn’t complain, though, because he’s just glad Dick is still conscious and (mostly) walking. Tim may have put on a fair amount of muscle since becoming Robin, but he’s still small and definitely not able to carry Dick without help.

“Just a few more steps,” he says encouragingly. He can see his bike ahead, a bright red beacon of hope in the gloom of Bludhaven. If he can just get them there, everything will be okay. They’ll go back to the Cave or Dick’s place and Tim will call a responsible adult who will tell him that Dick is going to be just fine.

Dick stumbles over a plastic bottle and it would be funny, the lack of coordination from one of the most graceful people Tim knows, if Tim wasn’t so concerned about what was causing it. Nightwing had been tied up when Robin had jimmed the flimsy lock on a window and sneaked into the warehouse office. He’d been awake but out of it, eyes glazed over and mostly unaware of what was going on around him. (He’d called Tim Jason. Tim is pretending he just misheard whatever he really said because he’s not sure he can deal with that on top of the stress that’s currently crushing him.)

Tim’s first thought had been a head injury, but there’d been no sign of a knock on the head and Dick hadn’t been dizzy or in pain, he’d just been sluggish and disorientated. Drugged. Tim just doesn’t know with what. He’s really hoping it’s nothing more serious than a sedative that wasn’t quite enough to knock him out.

Finally, they reach the bike. And then it’s just a matter of manoeuvring Dick onto the back and sliding on in front of him, wrapping his arms about Tim’s waist and praying that he can hold on.

“Timmy,” his older brother mumbles into his hair. “What kinda shampoo d’you use? Smells so good.”

Tim is caught somewhere between startled and amused. And a healthy dash of worry because Dick definitely sounds more out of it than he did five minutes ago.

“I stayed at your place last night,” Tim reminds him, desperately hoping that Dick hasn’t actually forgotten that much. “I used your shampoo this morning, remember?”

Dick hums and it sounds enough like agreement that Tim lets relief flutter in his chest. And Tim still doesn’t relax, though, doesn’t let that flutter of relief grow too bold. ETA to Dick’s apartment is eleven minutes, ETA to the Cave is forty-eight. That’s more than enough time for something to go drastically wrong.

Dick’s hand moves and Tim pauses, waiting to see if he’s going to move and fall off the bike, but he’s just… patting Tim? “S’okay,” Dick mumbles, “Did good.”
Tim laughs, a short, breathy and hysterical sound, because Dick isn’t the one who’s supposed to be offering comfort in this situation. But being drugged to kingdom come apparently doesn’t stop him being the best big brother Tim always wanted as a kid. He squeezes Dick’s arm before settling both hands on the handle bars and kicking the stand up. They’re going to get home in one piece and Dick is going to be perfectly fine. Tim is going to do what any decent brother would do: he’s going to make sure of it.
Chapter Notes

For the prompt: Could you please write #100 with Dick and/or #105 with Jason? Thank you!
100: “I’m not leaving.”
105: “You’re not going anywhere.”

“I’m not leaving.” Dick calls and the word bounces through the Cave, guiding him toward the med bay. It’s the only part of the Cave with lights on so he knows that’s where he’ll find his new little brother, even if Alfred hadn’t told him when he sent him down.

True to the butler’s word, Jason is in the chair beside the occupied bed where Bruce lies almost-motionless. It’s been three hours since Alfred tied off the last stitch closing the bullet wound in his shoulder and Jason’s muscles must be stiff and aching from sitting in one position, but he doesn’t appear to have moved even an inch from Bruce’s side. It’s not the first time Batman has been hurt since the new Robin started patrolling with him, but it is the first time he’s been hurt this badly. It makes Dick smile a little bit, seeing how worried Jason is, knowing that means Bruce is in good hands (he may still be mad at him a lot of the time, but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t care).

Dick really hates to break up the bedside vigil, but, “Alfred sent me down to get you. He says it’s almost time for school and you have a test today so you can’t get out of it.”

Jason tips his chin up, and he’s probably aiming for determined and defiant but mostly he just looks young and stubborn. “I’m not leaving,” he says. “You can’t make me.”

Dick probably could, actually, through force and manipulation if not actual authority over the teen. He doesn’t, though, because he remembers being exactly where Jason is now: thirteen years old and terrified that if he looked away from his injured guardian for one second, Bruce would die and he’d be left alone again. He’s gotten used to the injuries over the years, learnt to lock that worry away in a box and act like everything is fine because Bruce is always fine.

But Jason is still new to this; he hasn’t learnt that being human doesn’t keep Bruce down yet. He’d settled down here with a blanket and a book that he doesn’t look like he’s managed to read more than two pages of, determined to keep watch. Dick has no doubt that his world has narrowed to nothing but the steady rise and fall of Bruce’s chest, the beep of the heart monitor and the stark white of the bandages in the dim lighting of the Cave’s med bay.

“You’re really not going anywhere, are you?” And it’s less of a question, more of a resigned statement, tinged with a fondness he doesn’t always feel toward his younger brother. Mostly his feelings toward Jason are clouded by his resentment toward Bruce for giving his name and his colours (and his love) to a kid he replaced Dick with. It’s not fair on Jason, but he’s always so angry at Bruce these days that he can’t help it.

Maybe he can make up for it though. Do something right by the kid.

“You won’t let Alfred make me go to school?” Jason asks, hopeful and suspicious. Probably wondering how anyone can stop Alfred from doing what he thinks is best for his charges. Probably
wondering why Dick is helping him play hooky.

Dick smiles slightly. It falls flat when he leans against the side of the bed and follows Jason’s gaze to the too-pale face in front of them. “You know, Alfred worries about him too,” he says with a nod toward Bruce. “He’ll understand if you tell him why you don’t want to leave.”

Jason looks doubtful. Dick nudges him, winks when he glances over, and adds, “But I was just planning to tell him you feel asleep and you looked so beat I didn’t want to disturb you. If there’s one thing Alfred won’t argue with, it’s someone around here actually getting some rest.”

He’s planning to leave it at that. Brotherly duty done, Bruce’s health checked on, Alfred’s errand run (sorta). But when Dick steps away, Jason’s hand darts out and catches his wrist.

“Thanks,” the teen says. Then, almost grudgingly, “You’re not so bad sometimes.”

And Dick figures he can probably stick around. Just for a little bit longer. He didn’t like being alone in the Cave as a kid, and an unconscious person isn’t really good for conversation, maybe Jason will appreciate the company.
The fleece blanket is pulled taut around his shoulders, excess material bunching in his lap because it’s for a queen bed and Damian is thirteen and small. It warms him, though, on the outside at least, quelling shivers that threaten to shake him apart.

“Warm enough?” Richard asks, hands rubbing up and down Damian’s arms over the blanket. A brisk, comforting movement that is gone much too soon.

Damian hums, head nodding over the hot mug of tea cradled between his hands. In a while he’ll probably be too hot again, melting under the warmth of the blanket and the fire dancing in the hearth, but right now it is a relief from the chills that are plaguing him. He lets Richard prop another pillow behind his back and tuck the blanket more firmly around his knees.

“You’ll be back soon?” he asks, not even caring that it’s childish. Richard has a job to go do, important work to finish, but Damian just wants him to stay. He wants to curl into his brother’s comfort and let the noise of a movie wash over him. Something lighthearted, uncomplicated and easy to follow because concentrating takes energy he doesn’t have right now.

Richard leans over to smooth back the hair curling against Damian’s temple and kiss his head. “Yeah, kiddo, as soon as I can.”

Damian curls his fingers more tightly around his mug as Richard straightens and steps away from the couch. He’s going to sit there and not call his brother back as he watches him leave the room. He’s going to flash a quick, reassuring smile when Richard turns around in the doorway. He’s going to-

“Wait,” Damian blurts and then his mind freezes, leaving him scrambling for a reason to delay stop Richard stepping out that door. “Um. When can I have more medicine?”

Richard frowns at him. “Not for another few hours,” he replies, suspicious and confused because Damian had made such a fuss about actually taking the fever reducers earlier.

“Oh.” Damian bites his lip and stares down at the edges of the blanket twisted between his fingers. “Can you… Can you get me a glass of water?”

Richard gets the glass of water and when he sits it on the coffee table, he perches beside it, studying Damian with furrowed brows. Damian hunches further in on himself under his gaze, resisting the urge to throw himself against his brother’s chest and never let go.

“What’s this about, Dames?” Richard asks gently. The back of his hand finds Damian’s forehead. “Are you feeling worse? Do you want me to get Alfred?”

Damian takes a sip of tea, swallowing past the slight itch at the back of his throat. “No, I’m fine. I just... I don’t want you to leave,” he mutters.

They both know he doesn’t mean just for tonight. So many people who leave don’t come to back.
And he knows this isn’t like that, he knows Richard is going to be back as soon as Nightwing is no longer needed, but he’s sick and tired and he can’t shake the prickling feeling that he’s being abandoned. Richard wouldn’t, he’s sure of that much, but not everything that happens out there is within their control. What if he gets hurt because Robin isn’t watching his back? What if he gets captured? What if he gets killed?

Damian sniffs. He hates being sick. Hates the cloudy haze around his thoughts, the well of tears that is constantly behind his scratchy eyes, the mingling of murky, nightmarish memories with heightened emotions.

“Oh Dames…” The mug is plucked from between his fingers and a world-tilting moment later he has been lifted into his brother’s lap. Long arms cuddle him close and Damian sinks into their warmth.

“I’m not leaving, I could never leave you, okay? Not for long,” Richard assures him. “Just because I’m needed elsewhere right now, doesn’t mean I don’t want to be here taking care of you. You just close your eyes and sleep for a while, and when you wake up I’ll be back.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Damian closes his eyes. When he opens them again, the fire is dying and the room is dark. He shifts, wriggling away from the blanket suffocating him, and there’s a grunt from… beneath him?

“Go back to sleep Little D,” a voice murmurs. The blanket is peeled off him, letting blessedly cool air brush against his overheated skin, and then Damian’s head is being guided back to the chest he is lying against. Solid and warm, with a familiar heartbeat beneath his ear.

“D’you save the world?” Damian asks. You really came back.

“Yeah, kiddo, course I did.” I promised I would, didn’t I?
Calm down - Tim, Babs + Dick

Chapter Notes

For the prompt: Your writing is Absolutely Fab-u-lous by the way. I love it all. Could you maybe do 'Calm down' and angst with Dick, Tim and maybe Barbara? Thanks. :D

A few things for this one: warnings for a pretty graphic description of blood and Tim having a panic attack and just generally freaking the f*ck out. Also there are liberal references to the Identity Crisis panels where Jack Drake dies (I’m gonna say this one could happen maybe 1-4 months after that). Most of these aren’t necessary knowledge but the line “It's okay, Tim… it's okay” is taken from there (Bruce says it to Tim when they find his dad).

There’s so much blood. On the floor, coating the Nightwing uniform, soaking into Tim’s jeans. Blood everywhere except where it’s supposed to be: inside Dick. Tim stares at it and all he can see is a boomerang sticking out of his father’s chest. All he can think is not again please no not Dick too I can’t do this again I can’t lose someone else please -

“Robin,” Oracle says in his ear, the modulated voice almost drowned out by the rush of blood and the pounding of his heart. “Robin, I need you to calm down.”

It sounds so easy when she says it - take a deep breath, shove the intrusive thoughts from his mind, recall his training, focus on what needs to be done, save the day.

It’s not easy. He feels like he’s choking and no matter how much air he sucks in, it’s not enough. There’s a vice squeezing his chest and his heart, the burning pain so bad he thinks he’s going to burst. His hands are shaking. His legs are tingling. His stomach churns. He feels lightheaded.

He needs to calm down.

He can’t calm down.

He wishes he hadn’t responded to this distress call, wishes he hadn’t been closest, wishes he’d been in uniform. Maybe if he had his cape to hide behind he wouldn’t be such a mess right now. He could be Robin instead of Tim Drake, strong and capable, unaffected and invincible.

But that’s not how it works, is it? He’d been Robin when his dad died and it hadn’t made a damn bit of difference. He hadn’t been strong enough, hadn’t been fast enough, hadn’t been able to save him.

And it’s happening all over again.

Tim had taken off at a run when Oracle contacted him. Hadn’t bothered with his uniform because emergency… Dick… extensive injuries had been playing on a loop in his mind and there hadn’t been time. Dick needed help. Nothing else mattered except getting there before it was too late.

Except he’d crashed into his brother’s apartment and time had stopped. He’d been sure (still is, can’t shake the image of blood and boomerang and “DAD!”) that it had been too late. Had dropped to his knees like a puppet with its strings cut. Had frozen. Panicked. Can’t stop. Can’t breathe. Can’t
He hates himself for it, for being pathetic and falling apart while his brother bleeds out on his bedroom floor, for wanting someone else to sweep in and take charge. But it’s too much like that scene. Too much blood and not enough life. Too much Tim can’t do and not enough that he can. Dick is going to die, just like his dad died, and Tim is going to kneel here in a pool of his blood and watch it happen because he can’t- he can’t-

“Tim!” Oracle. She doesn’t sound calm anymore, she sounds angry. Tim wants to cry. His lips taste like salt; maybe he already is. “I need you to do one thing, okay? Just one. Can you do that?”

Tim inhales, let’s out a shaky breath. One thing sounds easy but… Can he? “Yes,” he forces himself to say. He has to be able to. For Dick.

“Okay,” the word is gentler again. “I called 911, the paramedics are on their way, but I need you to take off his uniform.”

Take off-?

Oh. Right. Secret identities. Someone else is coming to save the day because Tim can’t think clearly and he can’t make himself move. He’s a shit hero. He can’t even save his brother, couldn’t save his dad, and strangers are relying on him to protect them? Maybe this is why people seem to keep dying around him. Maybe it’s not that the world is cruel and unfair. Maybe it’s Tim. Maybe… Maybe he should...

“ETA six minutes, Robin, how are you doing?”

How is he-?

Right. He’s supposed to be doing something. Just one thing. He can do that. Just peel off the suit and toss it under the bed. Ignore the shaking of his hands. Stay calm. Get Dick into civilian clothes. Stay calm. Don’t bother putting a shirt on - not enough time. Ball it up, against the wound. Pressure. Stay. Calm.

The blood is warm and sticky, sliding over his palms, squelching between his fingers. It makes Tim gag. He closes his eyes, can’t look at Dick’s face (too pale, too still). “Good job, Tim, you did well. Everything is going to be okay,” Oracle is saying in his ear. A low, soothing buzz. But he’s not, he can’t, he isn’t- He chokes on a sob. How can everything be okay? None of this is okay. Dick isn’t okay. He isn’t okay.

Footsteps. Voices.

Paramedics.

Help.

Tim lets them pull him away from the body Dick. (Like Bruce did, that night.) Lets someone drape a blanket around his shoulders. (Like Bruce did, with his cape.) Lets them offer well-meaning but useless platitudes. (Like Bruce did, when he hugged him.)

It’s going to be okay. This time it will be. It has to be.

He feels sick. He swallows and it tastes like copper. Like failure.

I can’t lose you too, Dick, please.
He takes a deep breath. It hurts. He does it again. Someone touches him and he flinches away. *Don’t console me, don’t comfort me, don’t, please, everything has to be okay, people don’t do that if it’s not okay.* He wipes at the tears on his face, realises too late that his hands are covered in blood. All of him is covered in blood. Dick’s blood. His dad’s blood. Innocent blood. Life-taking blood. Too much blood.

(“*Everything is going to be okay.*”)

(“*Tim, it’s okay.. It’s okay...*”)

Is it?

Can it be? When he’s surrounded by blood? Choking on it, drowning in it, *dying from it.*

Except - and it’s so not funny he has to laugh, short and bitter - that’s the problem: he’s not the one dying. It’s everyone around him. And all he is left with is their memory and their blood. It’s all he can smell, all he can see, all he can taste. It’s under his fingers, behind his ears, between his teeth. It slips and slides beneath his feet. It’s never going to come out of his sneakers; white, new, tarnished. It’s going to stay there and remind him. Every time he blinks, every time he swallows, every time he breathes.

And no matter how much he scrubs, it’s never going to come off his hands.
A cold nose nudges Damian’s ear and he tightens his arm around Titus’s neck (not too tight, but enough to get across *stay, I need you, I’ll be fine*). The dog’s coat is soft and silky against his face, his scent that comforting mix of familiar dog and oatmeal and honey dog shampoo. Damian inhales deeply and Titus’s broad flank rises in time with him. His dog whines softly, sensing his master’s distress, but he does not disturb the nest they’ve curled themselves into on Damian’s bed to fetch someone (usually Richard) who can fix it, like he sometimes does. He seems to know that Damian needs to be alone.

Mostly alone.

Alfred had walked lazy circles up and down, around and around, Damian’s back before settling just below the base of his neck. A warm, purring ball of comfort. A clear move to say *stay, cuddle, we’ll make you better*. Sometimes Damian thinks his animals are too smart for their own good, the way they always seem to know his mood, to know when he needs comfort or when he needs to get out and run until his legs shake and his chest burns and his head is clear of problems.

Problems like Mother and Father. Yelling at each other over video calls, pulling Damian between them like a tug-of-war.

(“He will return to me for the summer.”)

“No, I’m not letting him anywhere near that hell you call training. He’s doing well here, he stays.”

“You think you can keep my son from me? I’ll-“

“*You* were the one who kept him from *me*! For ten goddamn years, Talia!”)

Problems like Richard. Moping in Bludhaven because his latest relationship fell through, even though he and Damian had plans last weekend.

Problems like Drake and Todd. Constantly at each other’s throats lately for whatever dumb reason they find to squabble, too busy arguing to think that maybe Damian would like to spend time with someone other than Pennyworth or his animals.

At least the animals are decent company. At least they understand him. At least they *care* about him.

There’s a soft knock on the door and then it pushes open to let someone inside. Damian does not lift his head from Titus’s fur, not even when the door clicks shut again and the person walks over to perch beside him on the bed. Whoever it is scratches lightly at Alfred’s head (Damian can tell because he purrs even louder when you get a certain place) while they find their words.

“I wanted to apologise,” Drake says, and Damian is a little surprised that it’s him. “Dick, Jason and I were talking and we realised we’ve been neglecting you a bit lately. I know it’s hard with you
“Do you?” Damian snaps, but it comes out garbled so he has to lift his head to say it again. His movement dislodges Alfred and the cat stretches, winding around Drake’s arm before flopping down between Damian and Titus, a paw just brushing each.

“Yes,” Drake says simply. “My parents weren’t happily married, they fought almost constantly and were barely on speaking terms by the time—“

He looks away. Damian knows enough to fill in the gaps, to know how Drake lost his mother. He is surprised, though, to learn that his parents argued all the time.

“And I know what it’s like to be ignored or forgotten about,” his older brother continues. His fingers move to play with a few strands of Damian’s hair and Damian doesn’t swat him away, he leans into the feeling of comfort given from someone other than his pets. “It’s awful, messes you up a bit. So I’m sorry we haven’t been very good brothers lately. If you can forgive us, we’re going to make it up to you. How does pizza and a movie at my place sound?”

Damian considers the offer. He considers Drake. He considers Titus and Alfred. He considers all the ways the night could go wonderfully, and all the ways it could end up no better than the last few weeks. Then he says, “Is your apartment pet friendly?”

Drake smiles, shaking his head a little, but it’s not a no, it’s amusement. “Sure, Damian, you can bring your animals - but no Batcow, okay?”

And that night Damian sits on the couch with Richard on one side and Todd on the other, Titus at his feet and Drake on the floor beside him, and Alfred in his lap. The cat purrs. Damian bends forward to bury his face in his fur and smiles.
Jason paces the kitchen in his apartment, muttering “pick up, pick up, pick up” under his breath.

Dick, for the sixth time, does not pick up.

Jason peeks around the wall into the living room, where Damian is ensconced in a blanket on his couch. He’d come across the littlest bird on patrol, had even been prepared to turn a blind eye to the fact that the kid was out without a partner (or permission). But then he’d gotten up close, and Damian had promptly coughed on him.

Jason, contrary to popular belief, is not a complete arsehole, and the kid was clearly unwell, so he’d done the responsible thing. Tied Damian up, tossed him over his shoulder and carted him back to his apartment. Once there, Damian had kind of... deflated. He’d rolled into a blanket on the couch and has been lying there since, shivering and sulking, while Jason tries to get ahold of someone to pick him up.

He has a drug dealer to shoot; taking care of sick little brothers does not factor into those plans.

But. Neither Dick nor Alfred are answering, calling Tim would probably just end in bloodshed, and he’s nowhere near desperate enough to call Bruce.

And the kid really does look miserable.

Jason sighs. He marches into his bedroom, grumbling under his breath, and grabs the electric throw blanket off his bed. He knows what it’s like to be sick and feel like you’re never going to be warm ever again. The least he can do is give Damian something to ward off the chills.

He’s also, maybe, feeling a little bit guilty because he’s pretty sure (78% - he’s not willing to rule Tim “germ magnet” Drake out completely) he’s the one who gave Damian the flu. Tonight is the first night he’s managed to drag himself out of bed to patrol in a week and the kid just so happens to be sick? When he was the one Alfred sent around with soup on Tuesday? Yeah. Probably not a coincidence.

“Here,” Jason says, tossing the blanket at the kid. “I brought you another blanket. It’s heated so. Probably better than that old thing you’ve got.”

Damian frowns at him suspiciously, red nosed and watery eyed. The blanket had landed half over his head and he hasn’t moved it, making the whole image more amusing than anything else. Jason wonders whether he can get away with taking a picture.

“Why’re you being nice?” Damian asks. Demands to know, really, but he sneezes at the end and it kind of ruins the effect. “I thought you were just going to send me home.”

“I was,” Jason says. “I am . But nobody has picked up yet and I’m not driving you on my bike like
that, so you may as well stay here and be warm until Dick or Alfred call back.”

Damian sniffs. After another few seconds his gaze drifts away from Jason. “Tt. Fine,” he says, like he’s indulging Jason, because not even a fever can stop him from acting like a little prince.

Jason reaches out and ruffles his hair. Not even to be annoying; just because he can. “Want to watch a movie?”

“No.”

“Well I’m going to.”

Jason flops down on the couch beside his brother and flicks through channels until he finds something that looks interesting. They sit there in silence, both pretending that Damian isn’t slowly inching his way across the gap between them, like a baby heat seeking missile or something.

By the time Dick finally calls back, he’s curled up half across Jason’s lap, fast asleep. And Jason figured there’s no point moving him and waking him up now. Rest being the best cure for the flu and all that. He tells Dick to collect Damian in the morning.
**You’re not looking too hot - Jason & Bruce**

Chapter Summary

For the prompt: Hi! Big fan of your fics! They’re always so good and make me feel warm and fuzzy inside. If you’re still taking sick fic prompts, could you do “You’re not looking too hot” with Jason and Bruce please?

Why am I here?

He doesn’t even mean it in an existential way. For once, it’s not a question of *why did I get a second chance? Why did the universe bring me back?* It’s just a confused, curious question.

What am I doing in the Manor?

He hadn’t been here when he’d… gone to sleep? Gone on patrol? What had he been doing before he woke up here? Jason doesn’t like the way his memory muddles together and stretches thin over the last twenty-four hours. He’d been fine yesterday, he’s sure, and all he knows is that now he’s not.

His head is pounding, each throb making the world blur and spin a little. It makes walking down the staircase difficult, but he manages. Just. Even if he has to collapse sit down on the bottom step for a few minutes and just. Breathe. Be still.

He almost doses off like that, legs stretched out, leaning against the banister. Startles back to awareness, groaning when it cause pain to slice through his head, at the featherlight touch of a hand on his shoulder.

“Jay?” a voice murmurs. Bruce. Jason doesn’t want it to be Bruce. He wants it to be anyone but Bruce. He doesn’t want to see him. He doesn’t want to fight right now. Doesn’t want… want...

He wants. Wants his dad to make it go away. The headache, the dizziness, the way the world just doesn’t make sense. It’s almost like he’s been drinking but he hasn’t and it’s so much worse.

“Bruce?” It’s not a sob. It’s not..

Bruce has this surprising way of reacting to distress. Not like he responds to other emotions. It’s like that special combination of almost-tears and near-panicked, choked pleas hits his ears and a switch is flipped. He knows exactly what to do.

Or maybe it’s just that Jason is his kid and his kid needs him.

He tugs Jason into a hug, curls a hand around the back of his neck, stroking a little with his thumb. He says, “Shh, it’s okay, Jason, you’re okay.”

Jason shakes his head. Regrets it immediately. There’s so much pressure in his head that he thinks it’s going to explode. The pain is seeping into his nerves, spreading through his body until everything aches. “Hurts,” he says, not even caring that tears are streaming down his face and soaking into Bruce’s shirt. Something silky and expensive and utterly ruined.

He feels thirteen instead of twenty, all of a sudden, sick with the worst sinus infection he’s ever had
and missing his mum more than ever. He feels fourteen and almost delirious from fever, writhing in sweat-soaked sheets and calling out for Bruce. He feels fifteen and dying. Burning from the outside in and the inside out. In so much pain and none at all. And all he wants is a parent to hold him and make it all go away.

Bruce pulls back slightly, cups Jason’s face with one hand and brushes his bangs back with the other. He hisses through his teeth. “You’re burning up,” he says. “You should be in bed.”

“No,” Jason groans because he doesn’t want to be thirteen or fourteen or fifteen, he wants to be twenty and fine. And twenty-year-old Jason doesn’t want to be here. Twenty-year-old Jason doesn’t want his dad. Twenty-year-old Jason is fine by himself. “‘M okay. ‘M leaving. You can’t… can’t stop me.”

“You really don’t look so hot, Jaylad,” Bruce says, hands rough and gentle as they card through his hair. Jason is still leaning against his chest. He wants to leave but doesn’t want to move.

It occurs to him, through the weird shimmering quality brushed over the world, that Bruce was surprised to find him here. Alarmed that Jason was half-conscious on his staircase. Which means Bruce didn’t find him like this on patrol and drag him home. Dick didn’t, because he wouldn’t have left Jason’s side. Tim would have reported to Bruce. Damian would have had to call someone big enough to carry Jason.

He has no idea how he got here. Just that he’d woken in his old bedroom and panicked. Thought dad instead of Bruce and home instead of Manor. Words he hasn’t associated with this person or this place in a long time. Too long.

He starts crying all over again. Harder, this time, hands coming up to clutch the back of Bruce’s shirt. He doesn’t know why, doesn’t know where all these tears are coming from, and it just makes him cry even more.

Bruce rubs his back. Up and down along the bumps of his spine, just like he did all those other times Jason was sick. It’s soothing. Comforting. Coaxing him to relax, melt bonelessly against his dad. “You don’t have to leave,” Bruce says, quietly, like he doesn’t want to break whatever this moment they’re having is. “You can stay. We’ll take care of you.”

It’s tempting. To let Bruce pick him up and carry him to bed. To let him tuck him in and stroke his hair until he falls asleep. To let him bring him tea and soup and that disgusting cherry flavoured medicine Alfred always has on hand. To let him read to him when he can’t sleep. To let him care. Temptation is dangerous. A setup for disappointment.

“I’m fine,” Jason reiterates.

Bruce squeezes him. “If you’re sure,” he says.

But when Alfred finds them twenty minutes later, Bruce is still hugging him and Jason is still letting him. Eyes closed and breaths even, somewhere between sleep and awake, caught between memories and reality. He’s starting to think that maybe he found his own way here. That he’s feverish and his head hurts and he wants his dad to make him better.

But Jason isn’t thirteen or fourteen or fifteen anymore. He knows Bruce can’t fix everything, can’t heal every injury or cure every illness just by being there. Jason’s head still hurts and the world is still fuzzy. He’s still confused and miserable and sick.

But. He isn’t alone anymore. And maybe that makes the rest of it bearable.
He’s still not going to let Bruce carry him back up the stairs though. He can walk.
Sweat is trickling down the back of his neck. Damian swipes at it irritability, shifting his weight on trembling legs. He places the vase of flowers he’s carrying carefully in the middle of the table. Then he screws the lid off a water bottle he’s been carrying around and takes a drink. A quick break, he thinks, sounds heavenly.

Damian leans against the picnic table and tugs at his collar. He’s only wearing cargo shorts and a polo but he feels unbearably hot. Gotham’s blistering sun beats down on him and Damian doesn’t understand why it’s affecting him so much. He grew up in the desert. Trained in conditions harsher than this. And yet, he’s feeling weakened and ill from nothing more than setting up a Fourth of July luncheon in the Manor’s garden.

Alfred had recruited him, his father, Drake and Thomas - the Manor’s inhabitants the night before - to help prepare the lawn for the Justice League and other assorted superhero friends who have been invited for a mid-year feast. Dragging picnic tables out of storage, bedecking them with cloths and flowers, setting out food and dinnerware. Hardly taxing work. And yet...

“I think this is the last one,” Drake says, coming up beside Damian with a handful of cloth napkins. “Alfred just started giving orders for the food tables to be set up.”

Damian grunts. He takes the opportunity napkin folding provides to sit down, using the table like a backrest and sighing a little at the minute relief staying still and off his feet brings. Even as short-lived as that relief is. His stomach is turning unpleasantly, unhappy with the water he’s sure his body needs more of. His fingers fumble over the folds of one napkin while Drake works quickly to fold the rest; a turnabout from their rivalry at the start of the day.

Drake frowns at him. “What’s wrong with you?”

Damian swallows another mouthful of water. It sloshes uncomfortably in his stomach. “Feel... ill,” he mumbles.

“Oh. Um, okay.” Tim looks around, searching for Father or Pennyworth or even Thomas. Someone who isn’t him because he never wants to deal with Damian’s problems. (Although, to be fair, Damian never really wants to deal with his either.) (To be even more fair, it’s probably less to do with Damian and more to do with not getting sick because he’s an idiot who lost his spleen and could die.)

Damian bends forward and presses his face to his knees. He takes a few even breaths and prays that the water works and his stomach settles. Maybe if just doesn’t move for a while he’ll start to feel okay.

A hand, light, hesitant, touches his back. “Uh, there’s a bucket to your left if you need it.” One of the ice buckets that hasn’t been filled up yet, awaiting their guests arrival so it doesn’t melt too soon.
Damian grimaces. “Not gonna throw up.”

“Right,” Drake says, sounding wary instead of reassured. Damian would be offended if he wasn’t too busy trying to make good on his word.

“Oh, there’s Alfred,” Drake says after a moment, relief evident in his voice. “I’m going to—”

Damian gags and tastes bile. He claps a hand over his mouth.

“Oh, shit. Here.” Drake shoves the ice bucket into Damian’s hand just in time.

He feels a little better after vomiting. Less like he’s going to pass out and not quite so nauseous anymore. Still hot and shaky though. He takes a swig of water then presses the cool bottle to the side of his face.

“Master Damian?” Pennyworth. He sounds concerned.

“I’m fine,” Damian says, swatting irritably at the hand that reaches for his forehead. He stands up, too fast, making his head spin, and immediately plops back down. He throws up again.

“Oh dear,” Pennyworth is saying. “A bit of heat exhaustion, I think. Master Timothy, if you could help me get him inside—”

“I’ll do it.” And now Father is here as well, Thomas trailing behind him. All of them hovering and worrying over Damian.

“I’m fine,” he protests again, shifting the water bottle to the back of his neck. “I just need a minute…”

Damian’s plea of good health is ignored. His father picks him up. Pennyworth vanishes the bucket of sick. Drake runs ahead to the house, following instructions to prepare a fan and cool cloths. Thomas is… somewhere. Out of sight. Maybe staying behind to finish the setting up Damian has interrupted.

Shame curls in his stomach. His illness has delayed Pennyworth’s schedule, everyone witnessed his weakness, he’d thrown up in front of Drake. Twice.

Damian presses his forehead against his father’s neck. It is only a small comfort that Drake was not the one who had to carry him. There are few things, he thinks, that could make him feel more awful right now, but that certainly would.

And not all because he’d feel guilty if he got Drake sick. Nope. That doesn’t factor into it all. Would be completely irrational. Heat exhaustion isn’t even contagious. And that’s all this is. (Right?)
Do you hate me? - Tim & Damian

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: “Do you hate me?” Damian to Tim (maybe under the influence of some drug or something bc what are the odds dami ever point blank asks that idk)

There’s a misty quality to the world that wasn’t there two and a half hours ago. When Tim tilts his head the metal shelving in front of him seems to warp and shimmer before settling into a new position. It kind of makes him want to giggle, even though he knows it’s not funny and is in fact very, very bad.

“Damian,” he says and the name is like a realisation. It’s not that he’d forgotten his younger brother was there, not when he’s pressed so tightly against his side, seeking warmth that neither of them have much of anymore. His mind had drifted for a moment though, away from the walk-in freezer Penguin’s goons locked them in and toward a warm summer day in the Manor gardens. Laughing with Dick, playing games with Cass, stretching out in the soft grass and taking a nap- “Damian, we gotta stay awake.”

The fourteen year old grumbles something no-doubt unflattering under his breath and sits up a little straighter. He doesn’t lean away from Tim, though, and Tim wouldn’t let him if he tried. They need to stay warm as much as they need to stay awake.


Tim’s own thoughts are slow and disjointed, like they’re swimming through molasses to get to the front of his mind. Flashes of words and images and approximately 700 people a year die from hypothermia in the United States alone swirl around, beating on the wall of remain calm, do not panic that Tim is frantically trying to keep up. He doesn’t have oxygen to waste on a panic attack, can’t afford to let his control fracture. He has to stay strong for Damian. He has to keep his little brother alive.

“Talk,” he says, blinking rapidly to keep his eyes from falling shut and staying that way.

There’s such a long beat of silence he thinks Damian isn’t going to respond and then-

“D’you hate me?” Damian asks and the way his brow crinkles is so much like Bruce that Tim has to take an extra second to blink and remind himself he hasn’t been thrown back in time. And then the question catches up to him and he has to blink again because - does he?

“No,” he decides after a long moment. “I don’t hate you.”

“You used to.”

“Yeah.”

The word drifts into the frigid air, fogging and swirling up toward the single insulated light bulb. Tim watches it until it fades into the glaring white all around them. Fades like his hate for Damian faded. Fades like his attention from the topic has faded. Fades like his life is-
No. He shakes himself back to alertness. He is not going to die. Damian is not going to die. They’re going to get out of here. Batman and Nightwing are going to throw open the door any second now.

Seconds pass.

The door stays shut.

Damian slumps over a little further. Tim pokes him in the neck. “We’re going to play a game,” he says. “Sit up.”

Their movements are stiff and clumsy, and the angle is a bit awkward but they don’t want to get too far away from each other’s heat. Still, they make it work. Left hand - *clap*. Right hand - *clap*. Both. Again. There’s a small frown of concentration on Damían’s face as Tim hums the tune of the nursery rhyme that goes with the actions. He can’t remember the words, but he remembers sitting on the playground in junior school learning the clapping movements. Going home and having no one to practice with.

Tim feels his attention drifting again as the repetitive motion becomes too mindless. They switch to another game, alternating between tapping the backs of their hands and their palms together. Faster and faster. Cooperative games, a teacher had called these. Ones that require two or more people to work together. A few years ago, Tim would have laughed at someone suggesting he play a cooperative game with Damian. They wouldn’t have been very good at it, even one as simple as clapping. It’s easier now, though.

The decision to work together tonight had even been a voluntary one, a conscious want to work a case together. And it had been going well before Penguin’s men had gotten the jump on them. Tim’s still not sure how exactly that happened. Was it because he was distracted making sure Robin hadn’t cut himself shimmying through a broken window? Was it because he turned at the wrong time to make a bantering comment? Is it his fault his little brother is going to freeze to death?

“Drake?” Damian asks, hands falling to grasp Tim’s wrists. He leans forward, a renewed energy glinting in his eyes. “Was that voices?”

Tim stills, listening. His breath fogs in front of him, mingling with Damian’s, both too shallow. Oxygen is getting low. They can’t have too much longer now. He doesn’t want to burst Damian’s bubble of hope but…

“No,” Tim replies duly. “I don’t hear-”

And then he stops because. Yes. Muffled, distant, but clearly voices. He turns his hands to grip Damian’s wrists back, squeezes. He grins. Hopefully it’s not the bad guys comes to finish them off.
“Dami, was that you? Or did a goose with bronchitis just fly in?”

The Cave is… Well, it’s a cave. A damp, cavernous, underground space. Suitable for bats and other rodents - and vigilantes, apparently. So Richard’s joking question makes no sense. Neither is it funny.

Damian crosses his arms over his chest and glares. “Don’t be ridiculous, Richard,” he snaps. It comes out croaky. “Of course it wasn’t a goose.”

Richard holds up his hands, a soft smile teasing the edges of his lips. “Just checking,” he says, and the next words out of his mouth are less fond and more serious, “Because I see you’re in your uniform, but you know you’re not allowed out on patrol if you’re not well.”

“I am fine,” Damian argues. But his body betrays him and he coughs. A wet, rattling sound that burns his chest and tears at his throat. Still, when he can finally gasp a breath around it, he insists, “It’s just a cold.”

His brother is not convinced. Just like he hadn’t been convinced when Damian said he wasn’t ill this morning.

“Exertion is just going to make you worse, Dames,” Richard says, in an infuriating appeal to logic. “And if you get worse, Alfred’s going to put you on bed rest. You don’t want that, do you?”

No, Damian does not want that. He scowls at the ground. He hates being sick. Hates the heaviness of his limbs and all the other physical symptoms. But mostly he hates the expectations associated with being sick these days. Things like rest and cuddles, which Richard insists are a home remedy even though that’s ridiculous. Things Damian is still not used to, which make him feel just as off-kilter as the dizziness from a fever.

Illness was nothing but a weakness in the League, even though it couldn’t be helped. Damian’s memories of being sick then are filled with exhaustion from pushing himself through his usual day of studies, reprimands for subpar performances, quiet sniffling so nobody could hear him crying himself to sleep. A few have the jangle of his mother’s bracelets and a cool hand brushing his hair back from his face, but those are surely just hazy fragments of dreams. There was no comfort for illness, only lessons on how to push through it. After all, an enemy would not wait to strike just because he was sick.

And Gotham will not take a night off from crime just because one of its protectors is not out there.

“I told you I’m fine,” Damian says, controlling his breathing to keep another coughing fit at bay. “I
Richard “hmm”s. A short, considering sound. “What if,” he says slowly, like he’s tasting the words, or measuring the reaction he gets from them. “I decided not to patrol tonight?”

“But you have to!” Damian protests. If Nightwing is not out there, there’s no way he will be allowed to patrol, nor given opportunity to sneak off, and with Batman and Red Robin both overseas there will be no one guarding the city.

“Alfred’s been bugging me about taking a night off,” Richard says, pulling off his gauntlets and tossing them onto the desk beside the Batcomputer. “And I think he knows I’m starting to get your cold as well, so both of us taking a break will keep us in his good graces.”

Damian feels a flash of guilt at his brother’s admittance that he’s getting sick as well. If he had protested more about all the cuddling…

“C’mon,” Richard says, tugging Damian into a quick hug then guiding him back towards the locker room to change back into civvies. “How does a movie and some tea sound?”

It sounds tempting. Tea to soothe the tickle in his throat would be wonderful, and he’s found watching movies with his brother to be a pleasurable pastime. Especially when he’s feeling lethargic and unwell, not entirely up to running around Gotham even though he will insist otherwise until he’s blue in the face.

“What about the city?” Damian asks, looking over his shoulder toward their bikes. Any other night, they would be on them by now, zipping through Gotham’s streets in search of crimes to stop.

“Oracle and the Birds can take care of Gotham tonight,” Richard says. He squeezes Damian’s shoulder. “You just focus on taking care of yourself for once.”

There is still that urge to protest on the tip of Damian’s tongue, but he remembers that Richard isn’t at a hundred percent either and swallows it back. He is sure that he does not need as much taking care of as his brother thinks, but if it will also help Richard’s health to rest for the night… Well, surely one night off won’t hurt too much.

“Fine,” Damian agrees. “But I get to choose the movie.”

Richard grins and ruffles his hair. “Deal.”
Press conference - Bruce & Tim

Chapter Notes

kuppatan asked: prompt: tim drake in a press conference with brucie wayne (optional: any of the other batfam members crash the meeting in a very disruptive manner)

Tim is finally getting out. He did his time, Bruce is no longer not-dead, and Wayne Enterprises is no longer Tim’s problem. He just has to last through one more press conference and then he’s done. Free. Sans responsibility. Goodbye documents that need a Wayne signature. Goodbye board meetings that need a Wayne representative. Goodbye business junkets. Goodbye awkward small-talk with investors. And, with added feeling, goodbye WE press conferences. You will not be missed.

“Are you sure you don’t want to stay on in any capacity?” Bruce asks as he shrugs on his suit jacket. It’s a nice charcoal grey to match his pants and the tie is a dark, classy purple, probably a father’s day gift from Cass or Damian. “R&D, maybe? I think they have openings for interns and I’m sure you’d like it down there.”

Tim can’t tell if he’s joking or not, so he holds up his hands to quickly dispel those ideas before Bruce can get attached to them. “Nope, no thanks, I’m good.”

He has had more than enough of representing the Wayne name in any capacity lately. Don’t get him wrong, it’s a fine name, but it’s not one he ever thinks he’ll feel completely comfortable with. And the way the media always drops the Drake when they print anything about him irks Tim. He’s happy enough having the Wayne attached, legally being part of Bruce’s family, but embracing it fully feels too much like a betrayal to his dad. Jack always wanted him to go into business, but Tim is pretty sure figurehead for Wayne Enterprises wasn’t what he meant.

“Hn.” It’s only a short sound, but it’s one Bruce uses so often that Tim can pick apart the tones and the different emotions it conveys by now. He’s relieved not to hear any disappointment. Just thoughtfulness. And then Bruce says, “You’re right. We should at least wait until you’ve finished university.”

Tim bites his lip to hold back his instinctive denial. They can have the argument over him finishing school later. When he doesn’t have to go out and play the happy little Wayne heir for the press. Thankfully, the door opens before he has to stumble his way through a tongue-tied response or an unsubtle topic change.

“Sorry I’m late,” Dick says, fingers working quickly to finish the knot of his tie. Tim looks closely at the pattern and sees the blue dots are actually little birds.

“Dick,” Bruce says. “What are you doing here?”

Dick grins and ruffles Tim’s hair. “I’m here for moral support.”

Tim frowns, patting his hair back down into something presentable. Bruce shakes his head a little and procures a comb from his desk to fix Tim’s hair himself. It’s weirdly parental. More so than Bruce usually is. Tim wonders whether being lost in time gave Bruce some kind of need to be more expressive with his love. He has an urge to tell him that he doesn’t need to do anything more to
prove he loves them, that they already know how much he does, but he swallows it back. Now is not the time.

Bruce smooths the shoulders of Tim’s suit as he leans back and Tim smiles at him. “Thanks,” he says, resisting the urge to play with his cuffs. He’s not nervous about the press conference, exactly, he’s had enough experience with them to get over any public speaking anxiety years ago. But he feels strangely jittery. It must be giddiness from having Bruce back, he thinks, which still creeps up on him every now and then. This press conference is the first real bit of publicity Bruce has done since his return, and it’s like the public factor of it is really hitting home that Bruce is alive and not going to vanish again. Tim will hand his Wayne Enterprises responsibilities back to him and everything will go back to normal. Hopefully.

“Ready?” Bruce says, pulling Tim out of his thoughts.

Tim nods, hand slipping into his pocket to make sure his palm cards are still there. “Ready.”

Dick squeezes his shoulder as they follow Bruce out of his office toward the elevator. If Tim closes his eyes, he can almost imagine that he’s back on the day Bruce adopted him, heading out of the courthouse with a grinning Dick beside him. Bruce turning to look over his shoulder as they approach the doors, a silent, final question that this is okay before he announces it to the press waiting outside. The slightest nod Tim gave in return, a pale yes compared to the bright smile on his face. And then cameras flashing and journalists clamouring with questions about the latest orphan-turned-Wayne. Bruce taking the lead and Tim standing by his side, bursting with bittersweet happiness.

Today is almost the opposite of that. Tim takes the lead as they step outside, shaking Lucius’s hand and taking his place at the podium. He recites his short speech to absolve himself of responsibility (hallelujah) then melts into the background as Brucie Wayne fields questions from the reporters.

“Do you have any comment to make on your son’s tenure as head of your company?” someone in the back calls.

Bruce glances back over his shoulder, eyes meeting Tim’s as he replies, “I couldn’t be more proud.”

Tim ducks his head to hide his blush, but somehow photos of it still make it into at least three articles. Embarrassing things like this, he thinks as he fields Dick’s teasing, are why he will not miss press conferences. Or press attention in general. Now that he’s free, maybe he’ll become a recluse so he never has to deal with journalists again. Bruce can handle the vultures on his own.

Although, he admits as he looks at the photo of them together, it is kind of nice to stand up their by his side and have the world know Bruce is his father. It always fills him with that same feeling as the first time, that bittersweet happiness. He takes a red pen and carefully puts a small arrow between Tim and Wayne, inserting the Drake he scrawls above. He repeats it again and again until all the clippings say Drake-Wayne, then he posts them all back to their editors. Maybe the next time someone prints a photo of him and Bruce, it will say Tim Drake-Way instead of Tim Wayne, and he’ll feel a little less bitter and a little more happy.

But Tim isn’t holding his breath. Now that it’s not part of his duties as a WE representative, he thinks he’ll just stick to avoiding the press.
Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: Because I need to get up but my cat is lying on my stomach- what about a fic where cat Alfred is lying on Dami so he can obviously not move from his position for any reason under any circumstances

“No.”

Dick’s eyebrows shoot up, honestly surprised by the answer. “No?” he repeats. “But you always want to spar.”

That’s why he’d come to Damian, in fact. Restless and needing to burn off more energy than a run could manage, he’d sort out his youngest brother because he’d been sure that Damian would eagerly accept an invitation to spar. Training dummies are no match against a real person, after all, and Damian always puts up a good fight. He makes Dick work for his victories and Dick could really use that workout today.

But Damian is lounging on the couch, reading a thick hardcover, Alfred the cat dozing on his stomach, and he apparently has no intention of moving. Dick wonders whether he is sick and reaches or to feel for a temperature, but Damian swats his hand away with a frown.

“I am perfectly well, Richard,” he says. “But Alfred is asleep.”

Dick stares at the cat. Stares at Damian. Repeats the motion a few times. “...so?” he finally ventures when no greater explanation is forthcoming.

“So,” and that’s an edge of exasperation creeping into Damian’s tone, but it’s the fond kind not the go away kind, “I cannot disturb him.”

Oh. Dick’s chest bubbles with what could be amusement. It might also be a bit of disappointment. He’s being stood up for a cat, he realises. Not even another person. A cat.

“Come on, Dames,” he cajoles. “Alfred’ll just find a nice patch of sun to nap in. He won’t mind if you come spar with me for a bit.”

Damian purses his lips and for a second Dick thinks he’s actually won, but then his little brother’s expression smooths over and he shakes his head. “I am sorry, Richard,” he says, and he really does sound sorry so that makes Dick feel a little better. “But Alfred has been out of sorts lately and I do not want to disrupt his rest by moving.”

“It’s okay,” Dick says, smiles a little and ruffles Damian’s hair. Smiles a little more when that gets him an indignant squeak. “Maybe later, though?”

“Later,” Damian agrees. He doesn’t go back to his book though and Dick hesitates before leaving him be, sensing there’s something more he wants to say. His wait pays off and a moment later Damian says, “If you would like... you may join us.”

It’s far from the vigorous workout Dick was hoping for, but a quiet afternoon with his little brother?
“Sure, Dami,” he says. “You know I’ll never pass up a chance to spend time with you.” And because he can’t resist, he reaches out to tweak Damian’s nose, teasing, “Even if I do have to share with a cat.”
Protecting - Jason & Damian

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: Hi! If you have any free time and feel like writing a fic would you mind writing one with Jason and Damian where Jason protects Damian from either Joker or Talia? Like, their on a mission together and get kidnapped and then shit kind of hits the fan. Thank you so much, hope you have a great day!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Don’t touch him,” Jason snarls. He tightens his grip on Damian, clutching the unconscious kid to his chest with one arm, keeping a gun trained on the Joker with the other.


“One more step and I swear to god I’ll kill you,” Jason says. His voice is shaking but it’s not fear, it’s rage. He feels blinded by it, consumed, and the only thing holding him back from planting his foot in the Joker’s face, over and over and over and over, is the heartbeat under his fingers. If that heartbeat wasn’t there…

“Now, now,” the Joker says, voice honeyed. It makes Jason’s stomach turn. “What would daddy dearest say about that? You know how he feels about murder.”

Bruce would forgive him if it was for Damian, right?

Not that he cares whether Bruce forgives him. He doesn’t. Bruce can hate him for the rest of his life and Jason wouldn’t give a damn because there’d be one less psycho murderer in the world and that’s all that matters.

Jason’s finger tightens over the trigger. He should just do it. Right between the eyes. See how he laughs that off.

Joker’s lips twist in a grotesque sneer. He splays his arms, like a mockery of a ringmaster. “Come on then, give it your best shot.”

He doesn’t think Jason will do it, Jason can see it in his eyes. He thinks this is going to go exactly how the last two times went. That Jason is going to let his chance to kill the Joker get away again.

He adjusts his grip on the gun, feels his gloves creak from how tightly he’s holding it.

Damian shifts ever so slightly in Jason’s arms and he freezes. His heart is thumping wildly, adrenaline coursing through his bloodstream. The part of him that is still fifteen and dying in a warehouse just like this one screams run. Get the hell out of here.

But running isn’t an option. Not when Damian is unconscious and severely injured and Jason’s leg is fractured in at least two places. His only option is fight. Sit here against the wall with his brother in his lap and make himself pull the goddamn trigger.
The moment stretches.

“That’s what I thought,” Joker sneers. He takes another step forward, metal rod tapping against the ground. Each dull thump leaves behind another bit of blood. Damian’s blood.

The Joker thinks Jason won’t do it. Or can’t. But he’s he’s failed to account for one crucial thing: this time, Jason isn’t going to be doing it for himself. It’s not revenge. It’s not even the Red Hood’s retributive justice. This time it’s personal in a different way. This time, he’s protecting his little brother.

Joker lifts the rod to swing and-

Bang.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr is here.
Dick leans back in his chair and says, “No.”

He can tell immediately that his response has thrown Bruce off because Batman freeze for a split second before turning back toward him. “Excuse me?”

“No,” Dick repeats. “I’m not leaving.”

There’s a tense moment where he thinks Bruce is going to order him and Dick is going to say no again and it’s going to snowball into a fight neither of them really have the energy for right now. The argument is already playing out in Dick’s mind; possibilities of what Bruce will say and what he’ll say and what they’ll both want to say but won’t. But then Bruce’s shoulders drop. If he wasn’t Batman, it would be a sigh.

“Alfred said he’s going to be fine, Dick.”

Dick curls his hands into fists, nails biting into his palm. “And you can just accept that and move onto beating up the next bad guy?” he demands. It doesn’t matter that he can see the steady rise and fall of his little brother’s chest, that he can hear the steady beeps of the heart monitor. He can’t just accept that Damian is going to be fine and go back out. Not yet. Not while he’s still unconscious and hooked up to all those machines.

What if he wakes up and nobody is here? Who’s going to keep him calm and in bed so that he doesn’t inadvertently hurt himself more? Alfred can only do so much, and right now he’s busy scrubbing bloodstains out of the Robin uniform.

“Yes,” Bruce says. His jaw moves like he’s grinding his teeth, but none of that frustration comes across in his tone. “Because he will be. We’re still needed out there—”

“You’re needed out there.” And here comes the fight, Dick thinks a little ruefully. “Damian needs me here.”

“Damian is unconscious, the anaesthesia will keep him under for several more hours—”

Dick laughs. It’s a harsh, brittle sound. Nothing about this is actually funny. “Is that how you justify your absences every time one of us wakes up alone after injuries? The expected time anaesthesia will last?”

Bruce looks at him for a long moment. Dick wishes he’d take the cowl off so he could see his eyes. It’s so much easier to know what Bruce is thinking when those white lenses aren’t in the way.

“I can’t stay,” Bruce says eventually. Slowly. Strangely hesitant with his words. Which usually means emotions are involved, so maybe he’s actually conflicted about going back out to patrol before Damian is awake and he can confirm that he’s okay himself. Or maybe Dick’s barbed comment got to him and he’s feeling guilty for all those times he hasn’t been here. Not that that will stop him from
“I’m not asking you to,” Dick says. He sighs, scrubs a hand through his hair. Stiff from dried sweat and blood. He should shower, wash all the grime and blood off, but he can’t bring himself to go far enough from Damian’s side to do it. “I’m just saying someone has to.” *I. I have to.*

“I can’t do nothing,” Bruce continues, like Dick hasn’t even spoken. “Sitting here idle, waiting for Damian to wake up… I can’t do anything here, so I have to do something out there.”

Dick doesn’t know why he’s bothering with the justification; after almost twenty years he’s more than used to Bruce’s coping mechanisms. His need to assuage whatever guilt he feels by pushing himself to be better, do better. The fact that he’s already caught the bad guy this time doesn’t stop him from falling into that old pattern. Doesn’t stop the guilt.

“It’s not your fault,” Dick says. Needs to say. His hand twitches, an aborted movement to reach out and offer comfort. It wouldn’t be accepted; it never is with Bruce. “What happened to Robin was Two-Face’s fault. He did this. You couldn’t have known-”

“I should have,” Bruce snaps. He’s not looking at Dick now, head tipped down to stare at his youngest son, pale and still on the hospital bed. His voice is like steel. “I should have known. I should have stopped it.”

Just once, he doesn’t add but Dick hears anyway. *Just once I should have been there in time to stop a Robin from getting hurt.*

Dick wants to laugh, dry and strangled as it would be, because he feels the exact same way. Has been thinking the exact same thing since he found Damian bleeding out on that street. *I should have known you’d go after Dent. I should have gotten here in time. I should have stopped him before he even took that first swing.*

“You’re not omniscient, Bruce.”

Bruce’s lips do this funny little twist, not quite a grimace, before they settle back into their usual hard line. He opens his mouth, probably to continue his self-deprecating argument about how he *should have been* , but pauses. Lifts a hand to his ear instead, even though it’s not really necessary with the cowl. More of a reflex, or a courtesy gesture to let Dick know about the interruption. (A welcome one.)

“Copy, Red Robin, I hear you,” he says into his comm. His muscles shift as he straightens, settling into a posture that is entirely Batman. Entirely business. And Dick realises their argument conversation is over even before Bruce says, “I’m on my way.”

He turns with a swirl of his cape, back toward the Batmobile. Pauses and half turns back before Dick can make a comment about goodbyes. “Go clean up, Dick,” Bruce says. “Damian won’t like to see you covered in blood when he wakes up.”

Dick realises, with a belated kind of guilt, that Bruce probably hadn’t liked seeing him covered in blood either.

“If he wakes up,” he says. Quickly, needing to fill this suspended moment before Bruce disappears back out into the night, even though he’s not sure what he wants to say. Just that he has to say *something.* “If Damian wakes up before you get back…”

“Tell him I’ll be home soon.”
Dick’s eyes flicker down to Damian’s face and by the time his gaze lifts back up Batman is gone. The roar of the Batmobile echoes through the Cave, fading as it gets further down the tunnel toward the road. And then it’s gone. Leaving behind Dick, Damian and the steady beep of the heart monitor.

“Yeah.” The word bounces between the walls of the almost-empty cave. “Soon.”
“Richard?”

It’s a whisper through the darkness, slicing through the veil between dream and reality, pulling Dick into wakefulness. He rolls over, leaving behind the pocket of warmth his body had created in sleep. He lifts a hand, reaching out toward the small figure hovering beside his bed.

“Dami?” he murmurs, voice rough with sleep. His fingers brush cotton and he wiggles them, searching for a grip to tug the kid closer, out of the cold night and into the bed with him. “Wha’s wrong kiddo?”

Damian sniffs. It’s a quiet, innocuous sound but it tells Dick so much about the reason for this late night visit. His voice is thick when he replies, “I can’t sleep.”

Nightmares, mostly likely. Insomnia is as much of a regular visitor among their family, but it’s much less likely to drive any of them to find company during the night. Dick is familiar with both and hates that his youngest brother, not even in his teen years yet, suffers from them as well. The curse of childhood trauma and a life of vigilantism.

“C’mere,” Dick says, dropping his hand to flip back the bedcovers. Damian slides in beside him and Dick cuddles him close. The kid is cold; Dick wonders how long he lurked in the hallway before talking himself into coming in. “It’s alright,” he murmurs against his brother’s hair. “You’re safe, I’ve got you.”

A small arm slides around his waist, the other hand fisting in the front of Dick’s shirt, and Damian clings to him like the child he so rarely lets himself be. His breaths are warm and rapid against Dick’s collar, hitching with every swallowed sob that threatens to escape. The ticklish flutter of his lashes is damp where Dick’s shirt is pulling down to leave bare skin.

Dick rubs his brother’s back and it feels like a useless gesture. Did it help when Bruce did that to him as a kid? Dick finds that he can’t remember and it makes his chest ache. Moments like that feel like a lifetime ago. A lifetime and a gaping chasm. He and Bruce may be on more solid ground now, but there are some things they haven’t been able to get back to after all those years of fighting.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Dick offers quietly.

Damian’s head moves in a quick negative shake. Dick isn’t really surprised; if there’s one thing the kid gets from Bruce, it’s his reluctance to let others into his problems. Although Damian has gotten better since he first came to Gotham. Probably because now he has people around who are willing to listen and offer no-strings-attached help.

“Oh okay,” Dick says. He yawns. “If you change your mind, offer’s always open.”

“I know,” Damian replies. He shifts away from Dick to wipe at his eyes. “Thank you, Richard.”

More time passes in companionable silence. Sleep is beginning to creep back up on Dick, brought on by the late hour and the comfortable warmth of the small body against his chest. Now that Damian’s crying has petered out, he doesn’t feel so bad about letting his eyes slide shut, body craving a few more hours sleep. He’s just drifting off when Damian’s voice startled him back to consciousness.

“You died.”
Dick stays silent, unable to wrap his tongue or foggy mind around a response. Maybe it’s better that way. Damian’s voice is quiet, barely a whisper. He probably thinks Dick is asleep already. Dick thinks guiltily of the few other times Damian has found his way into his bed after a nightmare; did he sleep through hushed confessions all those times as well?

“You died,” Damian repeats, choking over the words. “Because I did something stupid.” His grip on the back of Dick’s shirt tightens. “You were Batman again and we were chasing someone. I don’t know who but… You told me to stay and I didn’t listen. I thought I could take them but I wasn’t good enough. They caught me. Tied me up and lined up like a firing squad. You-” A shuddering breath. “You swung in and saved me but. But they were already shooting and-“

He doesn’t need to finish. Dick can picture the scene all too well, almost feel the phantom pain of dozens of bullets ripping through suit and skin and muscle while he shields his little brother. Dead before his momentum lands them safely out of the way.

“When you grabbed me… You said it would be okay.” Damian’s tears are unmistakable now, soaking through Dick’s pyjama top and dampening his skin. “It wasn’t okay, Richard, you were dead.”

Dick gives up the pretence of sleep to tighten his arms around his brother. He doesn’t say anything, doesn’t trust his own voice not to tremble, just bends his neck to kiss the top of Damian’s head.

“I’m still here,” he murmurs, throat working around the ache of suppressed emotion. “It was just a dream.”

But he knows, and Damian knows too, that it could so easily be more than a dream. Dick would lay down his life to save his brother in a heartbeat. Any of his siblings. Bruce or Alfred too.

He bites his lip against more reassurances. Damian doesn’t want empty platitudes anyway; he would have started talking when he first crawled into Dick’s bed if that was the case. He came here because he needed the reminder that Dick was alive. So Dick shifts onto his back so he can wrap both arms around his little brother, cradling him close, Damian’s head tucked just under his shoulder so he can hear the steady beat of Dick’s heart.

Despite any tiredness before, neither of them go back to sleep that night. They just lie there, quiet breaths syncing in the darkness, until dawn creeps between the curtains. Weak grey light heralding another wet, miserable day in Gotham.
Jason adjusts the arms draped around his neck. The kid is heavier than he expected. Ninety-five pounds of muscle and Kevlar and completely useless at helping keep his body upright at the moment.

“You’re so gonna owe me for this one,” Jason tells Damian’s unconscious form. “Taking care of lost birds is not in my job description.”

Not that Jason has a job description per se. Legally dead and self-employed in illegal business and all that. But if he did have a job description, taking care of lost birds would not be on it. Not even in fine print.

So why the hell is he doing this? It’s a question Jason has been asking himself ever since he found the kid. Out cold sprawled across a rooftop on the edge of Burnley and New Town. He’s lucky it wasn’t an alley or Jason might not have been the first to come across him.

“What the hell were you even doing out there?” he continues the grumbling tirade to his unaware audience. “Going out alone was just stupid. Especially in that neighbourhood.” He hefts the kid higher on his hip. “Actually, going out at all with a fever was stupid. Didn’t Talia ever teach you about self preservation?”

Knowing their family business, she probably did. Or hired someone to do it. From what the kid has mentioned about his childhood, Talia wasn’t the most hands-on mother. It makes Jason feel a little guilty, illogical as that may be, because he’d been getting Talia’s full attention while his own son was neglected. Maybe one day he’ll find a way to apologise for that that doesn’t sound stupid.

Oh by the way I’m sorry your mum spent months caring for a braindead zombie instead of looking after you.

Jason snorts. Yeah, maybe not. It’d probably only pour more salt in the kid’s already gaping wounds where his mum is concerned. He keeps thinking if he’d known Damian was around while he was with the League, he’d probably have found a way to get him out. Maybe not get him to his dad because he’d had all those issues with Bruce after he found out about the clown and the new Robin, but get him away from his psychopathic grandfather at least. Hell, maybe he’d have even found a way to get Damian out of the life for good. Kid’s too damn young for what they do.

And yeah, maybe thinking that makes Jason a hypocrite but he doesn’t really care. He probably shouldn’t have been swinging around in a cape and short-shorts at twelve either. None of them should have. He scowls. Fucking Batman. Bruce. It always come back to him. His stupid crusade and his stupid need to do good and his stupid compulsion for taking on sidekicks and his stupid bat ears. Bats don’t even have ears like that. Fucking stupid.

One of Damian’s arms slips down and Jason has to shift his hold again so the kid doesn’t flop out of his arms and land in a puddle on the ground. He should probably just toss him over his shoulder in a fireman’s carry. But it’s not like they’re going far, and until Jason knows whether the fever he so obviously has is the only reason the kid was unconscious on a rooftop, he’s not eager to aggravate any potential head injuries by sending more blood to his head.

Plus - and he’s never telling Damian this ever - the kid had just looked so damn small and vulnerable that picking him up and setting him on his hip, hugging him a bit, had been instinctual. Maybe it’s a hero thing, maybe it’s a brother thing, Jason doesn’t care, but Damian had looked like he needed comfort and he’d immediately jumped to give it. Dick would be so proud.
Not that Jason 

wants Dick to be proud of him. Especially not for being a good big brother. He 
doesn’t care about all that family mumbo jumbo the eldest bird is always sprouting. Nope. Jason is 
perfectly fine being the black sheep, lone wolf, insert-other-outcast-metaphor-here. He’s just doing a 
single Good Samaritan thing. One-off event. Would have done it for anyone. It has no relevance to 
Damian being his little brother at all.

“You better not tell anyone about this,” he says, half-heartedly threatening. “Dick will get ideas 
about me caring about you brats, and I don’t need any of that shit in my life. So you keep your trap 
shut or I’ll sew your lips together, got it pipsqueak?”

Damian other arm slips from Jason’s neck to dangle lazily down his back in response. Jason rolls his 
eyes. Figures the kid would be lackadaisical about a threat even when unconscious. No self-

preservation at all, he’s sure of it. The kid probably skipped those lessons to get in some more sword 
practice.

“Finally,” Jason mutters when his apartment building comes into sight. Thankfully he’s on the top 
floor so he only has to go in the roof access door instead of shimmying down the fire escape with the 
kid. That would have been interesting. In the non-fun, possibility of ending in mortal injury kind of 
way.

He gently drops Damian on his bed, then just stands there looking at him for several minutes. It’s not 
that late, almost eleven, but someone is probably missing the kid by now. Jason should call Oracle or 
Alfred and let them know he’d found Robin, that he’s safe.

But first. Jason gets to work unknotting the laces on the kid’s boots. He tosses them in the corner of 
the room and starts a pile that he adds belt, tunic and mask to. Typically, the kid doesn’t stir through 
the whole tedious process to help Jason find his way around all the booby traps in his costume, but 
he does as soon as the hard part is over and Jason gets him under the covers.

“T’d’d?” the kid slurs, bleary eyes cracking open. “What’re you doin’?”

“Tucking you in,” Jason replies, pulling the comforter taught under Damian’s chin to emphasise his 
statement. Also because it’s a cool night. But mostly to be an annoying older brother person. Not 
because of caring reasons like the kid worsening his illness by catching more of a chill from the cold 
night air.

Damian bats weakly at the blanket. “Too hot,” he says. It’s probably as close to a whine as Jason’s 
ever going to hear from the kid.

“That’s because you have a fever,” he says, throwing up his hands and letting the kid push away the 
blanket in favour of crossing his arms. Still in Red Hood gear, minus the helmet but not without a 
domino, backed by the polluted-orange moonlight coming in through the window behind him, Jason 
is sure he cuts an imposing, authoritative figure. “Going out like that was really stupid, I hope you 
know. You’re lucky it was me who found you, not some Gotham scum who woulda done a lot 
more than find a bed for you to sleep in.”

Damian rolls over on the bed, unintimidated and unimpressed, to bury his face in the cool pillow. He 
mumbles something that Jason doesn’t catch. Could have been “piss off”. Could have been “thank 
you”. Could have been something else entirely.

Jason chooses to think it was gratitude. “Whatever,” he grunts, fairly sure the kid is asleep now. 
“You’re welcome, I guess. Just don’t do it again.”

In response, Damian makes a soft snuffling sound like a congested snore. Jason sighs and resigns
himself to repeating that spiel in the morning.

Not that the kid will be here that long. Jason’s going to make that call to someone who can pick him up. Right now.

In a sec.

After he straightens the covers.

And then a gauntlet closes around his ankle and Jason cries out as his knee is jerked out of its socket. Pain so sudden and so severe that he thinks he’s going to pass out. The hand holding him tightens. The bones in Jason’s ankle creak.

“Batman-“ he gasps, panicked and terrified. If he looks up, he can see Bruce’s muscles strain to hold his weight. If he looks down… if he looks down, he’s going to be sick. He screws his eyes shut instead.

“I’ve got you, Robin,” Bruce promises, but it’s too tense, too thready, and Jason is still dangling upside down over a hundred feet in the air when Bruce surely has the upper body strength to-

But Bruce is hurt. There’d been a gun, a shot, a grunt of pain. And Bruce had started favouring his right arm which - Jason peeks one eye open and lifts his head up - he is now using to hold Jason.

He swallows. His heart slams against his chest with every beat. Salty tears catch in his lashes and run toward his hairline. Trembling fingers tug at the fastening that keeps his grapple strapped to his belt.

“I can’t get it,” he says, tugging harder, panic ratcheting up a few notches. His leg is screaming at him. He feels nauseous. “It’s stuck, I can’t, I can’t-“


Jason sucks in a breath. Tells himself Batman knows what he’s talking about, that Bruce wouldn’t lie to him about this, that he’s not going to end up a pancake on the sidewalk ten stories below. It’s going - breathe out - to be - breathe in - alright - and out again.

Bruce grunts, his fingers shift around Jason’s ankle, slipping the tiniest bit. Jason’s heart is in his throat. He fumbles again with the fastening on his belt, wills his hands to steady. If they don’t stop shaking he’s probably just going to drop the grapple gun if he ever manages to get it out. His body swings gently, back and forth and back and forth, above the city. But Jason tries not to focus on that. Because everything is going to be alright. Bruce said so.

Bruce’s fingers slip another millimeter. His grip tightens, hard enough to leave a nasty bruise. Every nerve in Jason’s leg is on fire. The only thing keeping him from passing out is his skyrocketing blood pressure from the panic that refuses to let go. He can hear the harsh pants of Bruce’s breathing, can imagine the sweat beading under the cowl, the clenched jaw, the gritting of his teeth so hard it must hurt. The heart-stopping terror. (But he doesn’t want to think about that.)

His thoughts can’t escape from a derailing train of going to die going to die going to dieingodiegodiegodiegodiegodiegodiegodiegodie. Jason doesn’t want to die. Not even if it means seeing his mum again. Life is good now. Living at Wayne Manor, being Robin. He hasn’t had the role all that long yet, but he loves it. It would suck to have that all end in a splat because some wannabe villain in a twenty-dollar halloween costume got in a lucky hit. He hopes Batman got the guy at least.

“B-“ he starts. What’s he going to say? Something profound, maybe? Final words should be meaningful, but Jason can’t for the life of him think of anything to say that would be. His heart really isn’t in it. Too busy hoping this situation is going to itself right-way-up any second now.
Bruce doesn’t let him get too far with the maudlin, defeatist thinking. “Focus, Robin,” he says. It sounds a lot like “stop being melodramatic, Jay”, which Bruce had said to him that afternoon when Jason had whined about not having had a chilli dog in months.

The fastening under Jason’s fingers finally snaps open. He pulls out the grapple, grip tight despite his hands being slippery with sweat, and points upwards.

Bruce’s hold on him slips.

The line shoots out.

Jason chokes on a laugh, giddy with relief. Bruce hauls him into his arms and hugs him tight. It’s alright. Everything is alright now. Bruce has got him. He’s okay. He’s okay.
Best burgers in Gotham - Bruce & his kids

Bruce doesn’t know why he bothers anymore. He can only say “silence on the comms” and “no names in the field” so many times before his kids stop being creative and just start ignoring him. Which they did, forty minutes ago.

“-diner on Robinson is obviously the best,” Dick is saying.

“You’re only saying that because it has robin in the name,” Jason argues back. “And they gave you that free soft serve when we went there after busting-”

“Hey, what the hell Dick - why did you take Jay and not me?” Tim cuts in.

Bruce shoots him a Look (which has no effect whatsoever), since this child is beside him and he can do that. Also because Red Robin had been relatively uninvolved in the whole Best-Burgers-In-Gotham debate until now. Bruce had thought maybe his physical presence had something to do with. That Batman still had some kind of control and the rest of his brood were only so bold because they weren’t within reach.

He was wrong. So, very wrong.

But he’s not the only one who was wrong. All his kids are, so he tells them, “You’re all wrong.” And there’s a best of reflexive silence across the comms, just in case it’s an actual order about an emergency or breakout or something patrol related. Bruce allows the split second of silence to wash over him, breathes in the calm and peace it brings, before he adds, “Alfred’s burgers are the best burgers in Gotham.”

And there’s a cacophony of responses in his ear.


“Well, obviously Pennyworth’s are the best,” Damian is agreeing.

“You’re just saying that because he’s like your dad,” Dick is adding.

“Not fair, old man, how are we supposed to argue against Alfie?” Jason is grumbling.

Bruce clears his throat. Pointlessly. He’s starting to wonder whether his children ever listened to him. There was a time, wasn’t there? When he’d give an order and it would be followed without (too much) questioning?

“Is anyone available to respond to the police alert at Second National?” Oracle cuts in across the chatter. They all fall silent for her. Typical.

“Red Robin and I are nearby,” Bruce responds. A nice bank robbery will be a great excuse to silence his comm for a while. Give his head a break from the budding ache behind his brow.

He can’t believe there was even a debate in the first place; Alfred’s burgers are unquestionably the best in Gotham. Maybe by the time he’s trussed up the criminals response for the latest attempted bank robbery, his children will have come to their senses and realised he’s right. He’s Batman, for God’s sake. He’s always right.
Dick gets there as fast as he can.

It’s not fast enough.

Damian is on the ground and there’s blood - god, so much blood - and he’s not moving, he’s-

Alive. He’s alive. “Oh thank god,” Dick breathes, dropping to his knees beside his little brother. His hands hover over torn fabric and dented armour. He doesn’t know where the most damage is, doesn’t know where to start putting pressure. His training is flying out the window and he grasps at it desperately, the scattered threads slipping between his fingers.

Get it together, Dick chides himself, now is not the time to fall apart. Later… he can do that later. When Damian has been stitched back together. When they’re not still out in the field. When his little brother isn’t squinting up at him like he’s just seen the sun after a thousand gloomy winters.

“N…” Damian coughs. “Night…wing?”

Dick cups his cheek with one hand. His gloves would leave bloody fingerprint marks if Damian’s face wasn’t already coated in the warm, red substance. “Yeah kiddo,” Dick says. “It’s me, I’m here.”

Dicks fingers brush over Damian’s hairline and the kid groans. He reaches up with one shaking hand to push Dick’s arm away, manages to wrap two fingers around his wrist before he loses the strength.

“Hur’s,” Damian says. He takes a shallow breath. Licks his lips and tries again, “M’head… it hurts.”

“Okay,” Dick says. He turns his arm so he can wrap his hand around Damian’s and squeeze. It feels like a teaspoon of comfort in a lake of despair. “Okay, that’s… That’s good to know. Can you tell me where else it hurts? I need to-” A shaky breath. “I need to know whether I’m good to hurt you more moving you, or if, if I should give you something first.”

He really doesn’t want to drug his little brother. He knows how much Damian hates it, hates the grogginess and the lack of control. But he will. If it’s what needs to be done. If that’s what is best for him.

Damian’s eyes have fallen closed, but his head moves slightly toward Dick, like he’s searching him out. “You wouldn’t,” he slurs. “Never hurt me…”

Oh Dames… “Of course not,” Dick promises. His eyes burn and he wills back tears. Later. Fall apart later. “Of course I’d never hurt you, Little D.”

Thankfully - not so thankfully - Damian passes out before he has to. Unintentionally. Because someone else hurt his baby brother. But still. Dick doesn’t want to cause Damian more pain. Not even just trying to help, trying to get him home. Not if he can help it.
What happened to you man? - Jason & Dick

Jason is three steps away from the fridge when he realises he’s no longer alone. He turns quickly, pulling one of the guns from his thigh holsters and training it on the figure falling through his window.

Falling, not climbing.

“Nightwing.” It comes out on the tail of a sigh. The resigned kind, not the relieved kind. Blue bird falling through his window at four-thirty in the morning is the last thing Jason wants to deal with. Well, second last. Batman would be worse. At least the younger ones are small enough that he could just toss them back out. (Not that he would. Probably. Whatever, it’s the threat that counts.)

Dick doesn’t move from where he’s crumpled on Jason’s floor, one foot still caught up on the window ledge. Jason sighs again. Lowers the gun. “Ah fuck,” he mutters and goes to pull Dick fully in and close the window.

A quick check reveals that Dick is still breathing and his pulse isn’t too out of whack, which is something, Jason supposes. Unconscious on his floor is better than dead on his floor.

“Dick,” he says, tapping his brother’s pale cheek. Come on man, wake up. If Dick doesn’t open his eyes and tell Jason where he’s hurt or what he was drugged with, Jason is going to have to call someone more experienced in dealing with these things. He really doesn’t want to have to do that; Alfred doesn’t get enough sleep dealing with the family’s bullshit as it is.

Dick groans, head rolling away from Jason’s insistent touch. “Don’t wanna get up Alfie,” he mumbles, curling in on himself. “Don’t feel good.”

“Hey, hey, no, don’t go back to sleep,” Jason says, shaking Dick’s shoulder. He can’t stop worry from creeping into his voice. Dick never admits when he isn’t feeling well. Not unless it’s really, really bad. “Dick, come on, I need you to tell me what happened to you.”

Dick groans again, pressing his face into Jason’s floor, but he does slur out a muffled, “Jay?” so Jason figures he’s slightly more with it than he seemed a moment ago. “Yeah,” Jason says. “Yeah, it’s me. You’re in my apartment.”

Dick mumbles something unintelligible in response. Then he pushes himself up onto his elbows. “M going,” he says, struggling into a sitting position. His arms tremble and his face seems to lose even more colour. Still, he persists. “Sorry to bother you, Jay. I’m leaving, I promise.”

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“Hey, hey, wait a second,” Jason says. “You just feel through my window. You’re not going anywhere until you explain that.” And I know you’re not going to drop dead as soon as you leave.

Dick doesn’t answer. Maybe he can’t, all his energy focused on getting himself up onto his knees, one hand still splayed on the floor to keep him balanced. It’s eery, seeing Nightwing so off-kilter. Makes Jason’s skin crawl. Makes something in his chest twist painfully.

“Dammit,” he mutters. Drags a hand through his hair and mentally curses Dick for putting him in this situation. He probably planned this. Dragged himself across town to Jason’s apartment so he could make him feel things and guilt him into caring and. Ugh. If this turns into a “come back to the family we love you” spiel, Jason is out. It doesn’t matter how injured or sick or whatever Dick is since he still hasn’t told Jason what happened.
Dick grabs the windowsill, preparing to drag himself up onto shaky legs and leap back out into the night. Jason takes pity. “You don’t have to leave,” he says, hooking a hand around Dick’s arm and helping him up. “Not out the window, at least.”

“Woah,” Dick mutters, hand flying up to his head as he sways. Jason has an arm around him instantly, prepared to control his brother’s fall if his legs collapse - and hope he doesn’t take Jason down with him.

Thankfully, Dick manages to stay upright until they get to the couch. He sinks down onto the cushions with a grateful sigh, not even bothering to try taking off his boots before he lifts his legs and curls up. Jason rolls his eyes and tugs the boots off for him.

“You gonna tell me why you came here now?” he asks. “And whether I should be calling an ambulance?”

“No ambulance,” Dick says. He sniffs and rubs at his face, seeming to remember only then that he’s wearing a mask. He peels it off carefully and tosses it away. It smacks Jason in the shoulder and flops, wilted, to the floor.

Jason looks between the mask and his older brother with raised eyebrows. He gestures to the Nightwing suit. “You don’t wanna change out of the rest of that before you fall asleep there too?”

Dick frowns. “‘S warm.”

“Dick, it’s like a hundred degrees out-” Jason stops. Peers more critically at Dick. Pale, shaky, a sheen of sweat across his brow. He steps forward and presses the back of his hand to Dick’s forehead, knowing already what he’s going to find. “Jesus, Dick, you’re burning up. You went out like this?”

Dick sniffs. “I was fine.”

“Yeah, well, now you’re not.”

“Jus’ need sleep,” Dick argues. He pulls one of Jason’s throw cushions under of his head to emphasise his point.

“Which you can do in your own bed, where I won’t get infected by your germs. So who am I calling?” Jason asks, crossing his arms and staring down at his uncharacteristically out of it older brother. Jason dreads to think how high his fever is.

“Mm?” Dick rolls over, pulling the blanket from the back of the couch over himself and just generally making himself at home. “Don’ have to. You’re good ‘nough li’l wing.”

“No- Dick, no, that’s not what I-“ Dick smiles at him, a little loopy and so annoying earnest. Jason throws up his hands. “Oh for fuck’s sake. Fine. You can sleep on my couch, but this will not become a regular thing. One time offer, you got it? And only because you’re too fricken heavy to throw out the window.”

He gets a soft snore in response.
dove-among-bats asked: Ren... I beg of you... Robin! Jay and Cass interacting... [B]lease, for moi, your beloved dove

Jason shivers in the icy wind that whips his cape up around his ears. Earlier today he’d been excited when Bruce said he could do a partial patrol by himself, but now he’s just cold and tired and wishes Batman was here so he could huddle beneath his cape. He bounces on his toes a few times, trying to force warmth through his body with the movement. Another strong gust of wind catches in his cape and almost topples him off the edge of the roof.

“Woah,” he says, arms windmilling to keep his balance. He jumps quickly off the ledge, abandoning his view of the street in favour of not ending up flattened on it like a pancake after a sixty foot fall. Bruce would never let him patrol alone again if he got knocked over by a strong breeze.

Screams reach his ears from further east, probably only a few blocks away, and Jason takes off in that direction. He somersaults to the next roof, cheering internally when he doesn’t stumble or lose momentum on the landing (screw Dick Grayson and all his flippy shit, acrobatics are not as easy as he makes them look), then throws himself off the edge and lets the wind and his grapple carry him the rest of the way.

He gets there too slow.

Or rather, someone beats him there. Someone small and fast who takes down the three men in the time it takes Jason to blink. One guy is dumb enough to try pulling a gun but he’s knocked out before his fingers move more than a millimetre toward his belt with a move that looks straight out of one of those old Kung Fu movies Bruce will never admit to loving.

“Wow,” Jason whispers. “Where’d you learn how to do that?”

Brown eyes lock onto him. In the illumination of passing headlights, Jason sees now that this other mysterious vigilante is only a young girl. Maybe his age, maybe younger, it’s hard to tell with how thin and dirty she is. *Street kid*, Jason realises, like one might recognise a fellow sports team fan, but no street kid he ever came across in those few months he was one himself had the kind of skills this girl possesses. He wonders where she learnt them.

The girl sinks back into the shadows when Jason steps forward and he pauses, not wanting to scare her off. “It’s okay,” he says, hands held up to show he means no harm to her. “I’m Robin, I came to help.” She continues to look at him silently, curious but strangely blank, so Jason adds, “What you did was really cool and uh, good. What’s your name?”

She doesn’t answer, just bends down and picks something up off the ground, keeping one eye on Jason the whole time. She’s grabbing a purse, Jason realises, something pink and glittery. For a moment Jason thinks it’s hers and wonders whether she had it on her when she ended up on the streets or if she stole it, but then she steps forward and thrusts it into Jason’s hands.

“Uhh…” He glances down at it, then back up at her. The girl makes an impatient noise when he
doesn’t do anything else and reaches forward to open the purse. She plucks out one of the cards and slaps it against Jason’s chest; he reaches out to take it automatically. Sally Larson, it reads, and a perky blonde woman looks back at him with smiling eyes.

Jason frowns around at the three unconscious men they’re standing in the middle of and puts it together. “This is the woman they were tryin’ to hurt?” he asks. The girl doesn’t reply. Jason’s beginning to think she can’t talk at all. Maybe she can’t understand him either because she doesn’t even nod, just wanders away and starts picking through the litter in the alley like she’s searching for gold. Or loose change that people have lost.

There a several things Jason should do right now. Firstly, he should call the police and let them know they’ve got three criminals to pick up. Then he should probably clear out of here and go find more people who need Robin’s help. Somewhere between all that he should also figure out who this mysterious ninja girl is so he can let Batman know there’s another potential vigilante in town.

He doesn’t do any of that. Instead he steps forward and calls, “Hey.”

The girl turns back toward him with a frown and Jason gets the impression she’s confused by him still being here. He understands that; not a lot of people hang around longer than necessary in Gotham’s dark alleys to help out street kids. They all just hurry home to their families and friends, where they’re safe and warm and can ignore the less desirable aspects of life. Jason’s not like those people. He jerks a thumb over his shoulder and says, “There’s a great twenty-four hour pizza place just down the street, wanna grab some food?” And then he remembers the girl might not understand him and mimes eating as well.

There’s a moment of tense silence while she stares at him and Jason thinks she’s going to turn away and reject his offer, but then she nods.

Jason smiles so wide it makes his cheeks ache. “Great! Just follow me, it’s just-“

There’s a sound and a blur and before Jason even realises what’s happening he’s being pushed aside and a broken bottle is being kicked across the alley. The girl is inches away from him, with a knee in the back of one of the men that had been unconscious. He must have woken up without Jason noticing, gone straight for the nearest bottle to take a stab at Robin’s exposed back. Jason winces. Stupid, letting his guard down like that.

“Thanks,” he says, rubbing the back of his head. The girl turns toward him and he feels colour rush to his cheeks when it sinks in that she just saved Robin’s arse when he’s the one who’s supposed to be saving people. “I coulda, uh, I mean I woulda noticed him before he could hurt me.”

She just shrugs and smiles at him. It’s the most expressive she’s been since they met and Jason feels himself smiling back. He crouches down to tie up the three men to make sure they really do stay down this time then calls their location into the police. The girl waits for him by the mouth of the alley until he’s done then walks beside him as they head to the pizza place.

Jason isn’t really hungry but he orders a large pizza and two sodas then sits back and watches her practically inhale the food. He finds himself laughing at the way she folds the pizza and shoves it in her mouth; he’d done the same thing his first week at Wayne Manor and Alfred had had a fit. And then he finds himself thinking about how Alfred would react to this strange girl’s less than stellar table manners. The image that forms in his mind is something right out of one of those family sitcoms he remembers watching with his mum on her better days.

Then the moment is broken when Batman growls in his ear. “Robin, come in. You were supposed to be back twenty minutes ago, where the hell are you?”
Jason winces. Across the table, the girl pauses her slurping of the soda to tilt her head and watch him. He gestures to the earpiece he’s wearing as he replies, “Shi- sorry, Batman, I got distracted helping someone.”

“Hn. I want you home in thirty minutes.”

Jason glances at the clock above the shop’s counter. It’ll be cutting it close, but he can do it if he leaves right away. “Thirty minutes, got it, B.”

The girl seems to understand that he has to leave even before he says so because she gives him a sad smile. Jason feels bad that he doesn’t even have any money on him that he can give her, having used the little cash he had to buy the pizza. He supposes he could take it out of Sally Larson’s purse and replace it before he returns the purse… His hand twitches toward the bag and the girl shakes her head. Jason sighs. “If I didn’t think Batman would have a conniption I’d just take you home with me.” He grins. “And then maybe you could teach me some of those awesome moves you used back in that alley.”

The girl grins back but Jason suspects it’s more a response to his own grin than to his words. Reluctantly, he stands up. He has no way to know where she’ll be at the end of tonight let alone tomorrow or next week, but he hopes he’ll see the girl again. Knowing Gotham, though, he probably won’t.

“Goodbye, then. Um, take care of yourself.”

Jason looks back as he disappears into the night and sees her face pressed against the window watching him go. He lifts a hand to wave and she waves back.

—

Five Years Later

“Jason, have you met Cass yet? She’s Batgirl.”

Jason turns toward the girl standing beside Barbara and freezes. Her hair is shorter, neater, and her arms have been built up by muscle, but he recognises that smile immediately. “Cass?” he echoes. “You’re the girl from that alley.”

“You bought me pizza,” Cass says, eyes lighting up. She hugs him, squeezing tightly. “Best little brother, even before.”

Jason laughs, hugging her back. “Oh my gosh, I can’t believe- Hey, wait, little brother?”
I brought you dinner - Dick & Tim

Tim coughs, curling tight around his pillow like he can stop his chest from rattling apart if he just makes himself small enough. The cold he’d thought he had at the beginning of the week has rapidly worsened and now he’s too sore and his head too heavy to even try getting out of bed. Even sitting up makes his vision swim, so he doesn’t bother with even that pretence of wellness when he hears his squeaky living room window slide open. He’s thought about oiling it but the warning about intruders is nice.

“Tim?” A voice calls - Dick, too bright and cheerful for Tim’s throbbing head. “Timmy, are you home? I brought you… dinner…” He trails off to a murmur when he reaches the bedroom doorway, noticing the lump of blankets that is his brother on the bed.

Tim should just pretend to be asleep, save himself the energy of interacting with anyone and the fussing that will no doubt occur when Dick realises he’s sick. But another coughing fit claws its way up his throat and bursts out past chapped lips. When it’s over, Tim can do little more than press his face into a cool patch of pillow and groan.

A cool hand sweeps his bangs back and presses against his forehead. Dick clicks his tongue, “You’re burning up, kiddo. How long have you been sick?”

His brain is too fuzzy to even think through what day it is (Thursday, maybe? Friday?), so Tim can’t be more precise than, “Few days.” His voice is like splintered wood, dry and rough, and his throat feels like he’s been swallowing glass. He blinks up at his brother with watery eyes and hopes he looks pathetic and miserable enough that Dick will just leave him alone to sleep.

No such luck. Dick gets up and leaves the room then returns with a bottle of water in one hand and a thermometer in the other. “Here,” he says, and taps the thermometer against Tim’s lips until he opens his mouth to accept it. “Let’s see what we’re dealing with, and then we’ll get some fluids in you and start making you better.”

Tim groans because he knows that means taking him back to the Manor and he doesn’t want that. Doesn’t want what comes with that. Who comes with that. Damian is bad enough when Tim is healthy and all his brain cells are functioning, he doesn’t think he’s capable of dealing with him while he’s ill. Proximity to the brat is more likely to be detrimental to his recovery than anything else.

But his temperature is over one-oh-two and Dick is doing that concerned grimace thing that means Tim doesn’t have a choice. His eyes burn and he hides his face back in his blankets. Dick’s hand settles, cool and soothing, against the back of his neck.

“Please,” Tim says, voice muffled and hoarse. “’M fine here. I just want to sleep.”

Dick’s thumb strokes his neck, an absent, pensive gesture. Like Bruce, Dick is weak to the distress of others, even more so when it’s someone he cares about. But he still shakes his head after a moment and says, “You’re really sick, Tim. Come home and let us take care of you, you don’t have to do it yourself.”

“I do! Tim would say if he had the voice for it. I always have and I always will! Between absent parents and absent mentors and his own globetrotting to prove one of those things wasn’t permanent, Tim feels like he’s always had to take care of himself. And, sure, Alfred would say he’s done a “right poor job of it”, but he still did it.
“I don’t want to go there,” he says, doesn’t even care that he’s whining. He’s sick and he’s tired and he just wants to sleep in peace. He doesn’t want hovering older brothers or annoying younger brothers around. “Dick, please, I don’t-“

He breaks off to cough. And cough and cough and cough until tears are streaming down his cheeks and he can’t suck in a breath and his lungs are burning and oh god-

Dick hauls him upright, rubs his back, tells him to breathe, voice warm and steady. Tim latches onto it, collapses in his brother’s arms, gasps for air around the fire in his throat and the vice squeezing his chest and the dizzying throbs of his head. His tears wet Dick’s shirt and he doesn’t even have the energy to blink them back or wipe them away with a shaking hand.

“It’s okay, little brother,” Dick murmurs against his hair. His lips are feather-light against Tim’s overheated head. “Everything is going to be okay.”

Tim gives in. He lets Dick pack a bag for him, lets himself be bundled into a blanket, lets Dick pick him up when his legs are too weak to hold him up. He closes his eyes and rests his head on his brother’s shoulder, drifts to the gentle sway of being carried to the car. And he admits to himself that having someone take care of everything, take care of him, for a while is kind of nice.
the soft tread of sorrow

Alfred’s arms are plunged into soapy water as he scrubs at last night’s dinner dishes. It’s an act of normalcy that he’s clinging to. Focus on the oil marks instead of the blood marks in the Cave. Focus on the precarious stack of drying dishes instead of the funeral arrangements that someone will have to make eventually. Complete one task and move onto the next so he doesn’t crumble under the weight of grief.

Something brushes against Alfred’s leg and then there’s an insistent meow and the cat winds its way back through Alfred’s legs to sit impatiently in front of its bowl. It - because he feels a little silly calling the creature Alfred - chatters angrily when Alfred just stares dumbly at it, pot forgotten in his hand.

Of course you’re hungry, he thinks, Master Damian has usually fed you by now.

And that, it turns out, is his breaking point. Not the pale, limp body cradled against his father’s chest. Not the bloody uniform balled up in a bag, ready to be burnt. Not the gaping wound he’d cleaned and stitched with surgical precision. Through all that, Alfred’s mask did not crack, he remained strong and in control.

But at the hungry demands of his grandson’s pet…

Alfred bends forward and lets the soapy water catch his tears.
Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: “I do not snore” for Damian

Dick eases open the door and slips silently through the gap into his brother’s room. Damian is asleep, sprawled like a starfish across the bed, covers bunched around his sides. Gentle snores whistle through the room and Dick grins. Damian seems more and more like Bruce every day.

“Grayson?” Damian mumbles when Dick straightens the covers over him. He rolls onto his side, barely awake, seeking his brother in the darkness.

“Yeah,” Dick murmurs. He smooths back Damian’s hair. “Just checking in. Go back to sleep, Dami.”

“E’rything ’s’okay?”

“Everything’s fine,” Dick promises. It is now, at least, after setting his mind at ease by making sure his brother was okay. Some nights, it’s enough to know they both came back from patrol in one piece. Others, like tonight, the nightmares are only shaken away by seeing that Damian really is alive and well.

Dick leans back from the bed and Damian’s fingers reach out to catch the edge of his shirt. “Stay?” he asks, the word too much of a plea to be demanding.

Dick was planning to stay a few more minutes until Damian went back to sleep anyway; he knows he’s not the only one with nightmares. He smiles. “Sure, kiddo. As long as you don’t keep me awake with your snoring.”

Damian snuffles, rubbing his cheek against his pillow as he curls further into the covers, making room for Dick to lie down on the other side of the bed. “I do not snore,” he mumbles.

Dick chuckles. He kisses the top of his brothers head, only soft hair sticking out of a hole in the bedcovers now. “Of course you don’t,” he says soothingly.

A few minutes later, Damian has gone back to sleep and Dick is left smiling to himself as the soft snores once more fill the bedroom. Rather than keep him awake, they lull him toward sleep. The quiet, intermittent reassurance that his brother is alive and with him.

Dick sleeps and his dreams are pleasant.
“What the hell were you thinking?” Jason snaps. He’s got one hand fisted in the kid’s hood and the other wrapped around a hunting knife. The guns he’d started the night with are somewhere at the bottom of the harbour.

Damian glares up at him. His feet are an inch off the ground, steadily dripping water into a growing puddle. “You needed my help.”

Jason snorts. “That worked out well for you, didn’t it? Because last I checked I was the one who rescued you from a watery death.”

They’re lucky it’s the middle of summer and not the harsh months of winter. It’s the difference between Damian’s unplanned swim being an unpleasant one and a deadly one. Still, the kid is starting to shiver in the slight breeze. Jason drops him back to the ground with a squelch and splash from his boots.

“Maybe don’t throw yourself at a moving boat next time,” he grumbles as he shrugs off his jacket and puts it around Damian’s shoulders, taking off the kid’s cape and throwing it somewhere to be collected later. “If you’d stopped to ask, I could’ve told you I had it under control.”

“You could have died!” Damian snaps. His fingers are white-knuckled around the edges of the jacket he’s clutching closed and he sounds… Shit. He sounds worried. Should Jason check for a concussion?

“I had it under control,” Jason repeats. Calmly. Definitely calmly.

“He had a gun to your head!”

“And I had a gun to his- Y’know what, no. No, we’re not doing this,” Jason says. He realises he’s still waving the knife around so he tucks it back into the sheath on his thigh. “I did not need rescuing, and I did not need rescuing you to interrupt my night, and I especially don’t need arguing over it to continue interrupting my night. The scumbag I was after got away, so now I have to go find him again.”

Damian looks mutinous. He also looks like a drowned kitten though, one drowning in Jason’s jacket, so Jason is more amusing than anything.

He sighs. “Go home, kid. Before you catch a cold and Alfred comes after me.”

Jason turns and walks away. He thinks maybe he hears a snuffle, suspiciously like the precursor to tears, but when he turns back, Robin is already disappearing behind a warehouse. His cape is still in a puddle on the gourd. Right beside Jason’s jacket.
Dick glances at the neat handwritten recipe again as he pulls a bunch of angel hair pasta out of the packet. He snaps the noodles in half in one quick movement and dumps them in the pot of bubbling soup. The aroma of chicken and vegetables fills the kitchen and Dick breathes it in with a smile. It smells like being a kid again, hanging around the kitchen while Alfred cooked dinner.

“Is it done yet?”

“Not quite.” Dick leaves the soup simmering to lean against the island bench, peering across at the bundle of blankets and spiky hair that is his brother. “Maybe you should go lie down for a bit, I’ll bring the soup to your room when it’s done.”

Damian doesn’t lift his head from his folded arms. He sniffs. “I’m fine.”

Dick sighs. They’ve been locked in this battle all day. Damian insisting he’s fine while he stumbles around the penthouse and the Bunker with a fever, sneezing and coughing. Dick wishing Alfred hadn’t picked this weekend to go out of the country to meet up with Bruce because Damian wouldn’t argue with Alfred if he told him to rest. Or if he did, Alfred wouldn’t feel bad about just drugging his tea for the sake of his health.

“Why don’t you move to the couch, at least. That stool can hardly be comfortable,” Dick tries. “Pick a movie or something for us to watch.”

“Fine.” The word is punctuated by a harsh cough. Damian drags himself off the stool with a wince, rubbing at his chest. Dick makes a note to take him a cup of warm lemon and honey with the soup.

Dick cleans up the mess he made chopping vegetables while the soup finishes cooking. He can’t see Damian over the back of the couch from here, but he keeps glancing in that direction anyway. Even though he’s sure it’s just the flu, he can’t help being worried. Dick isn’t particularly good at taking care of himself when he’s sick, and now he’s in charge of caring for a sick kid? Dick loves Damian, he really does, but he’s glad Bruce is back became Dick is not cut out for parenthood just yet.

“Do you need anything else?” he calls.

“No.”

Dick fills two bowls with soup while water boils for the lemon and honey drink. He remembers his mum making it for him as a kid, one of her sworn-by home remedies that always seemed to work. He wonders whether Talia ever did things like that for Damian, cared for him while he was sick, and concludes with a pang in his chest that she probably didn’t.

Bowls and mug on a tray he joins his brother on the couch. “Careful, it’s hot,” he says, the words falling automatically off his tongue.
“Obviously,” Damian mutters, but there’s no real snark in it. They eat the soup in silence, save for Damian’s occasional sniffles and coughs. When the bowls have been set aside, Dick leans back, wrapping an arm around Damian’s shoulders. Maybe it’s just because he’s feeling bad, or maybe it’s a sign of how much he’s grown since coming to Gotham, but Damian doesn’t protest. He pulls away just long enough to pull the blanket out from around his shoulders and spread it over both of them instead. Then he curls up against Dick’s chest and falls asleep listening to David Attenborough tell them about Jumbo the elephant.
Want to tell me what you’re doing in my kitchen at 3 in the morning? (Jay & Dami)

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: “Want to tell me what you’re doing in my kitchen at 3 in the morning?” Jason & Damian

Jason drops his helmet on the couch and shucks his jacket to toss beside it. He stands, arms crossed, in the middle of his apartment and asks, “Want to tell me what you’re doing in my kitchen at three in the morning?”

The light above the stove is on, bathing half the kitchen in yellow light. The other half is shrouded in shadow, and it is from here that Robin turns on a stool to give Jason an unimpressed frown. “I assure you, Todd, I would not be here if I had a choice in the matter.”

“Cool,” Jason says. He shifts his weight so it’s off his right leg. “So leave.”

The kid has helped himself to Jason’s kitchen, filling a mug with something warm, steam curling into the air. It’s probably that really nice Earl Grey blend Jason practically had to smuggle into the country. Damian sips it like it’s his tea and his kitchen and Jason is the one who shouldn’t be here at this hour.

“Pennyworth put out an APB for you,” the kid says. “For leaving against medical orders.”

“So you’re here to tell me to lay low and watch out for overbearing family members until they forget they care?”

“Tt. I was sent to retrieve you.” Damian sets the mug down with a clink. When he stands, he loses height instead of gaining it. Hardly imposing, but the calculating look on his face makes trepidation curl at the base of Jason’s spine. If his muscles weren’t already tense from pain, they’d be coiling in anticipation of a fight.

“And how are you going to do that, pipsqueak?” he asks. “Unless you’ve developed super strength I don’t know about, you couldn’t drag me back to the manor even if you could knock me out.”

“I don’t need to.” Damian smiles. It’s victorious and unsettling. “I am only the distraction.”

The- Oh fuck. Jason spins around, trying not to curse when he puts weight on his busted leg, and comes face-to-face with Alfred, a stern frown on his face and a syringe in his hand.

“Am I going to have to use this?” Alfred asks. His tone is mild but it is not an idle threat.


Alfred nods. Right answer. “Excellent work, Master Damian,” he says. “If you could please escort Master Jason to the car, I will lock up and follow.”

Jason spies a duffle bag by the couch that Alfred has surely packed with his belongings, which means he’s probably going to be stuck at the manor for a while. He sighs again.
“Cheer up, Todd,” Damian says, preceding him out the door. “It could be worse.”

“Oh yeah? How?”

“You could be dead.”

A startled laugh escapes Jason. He rubs his knuckles through Damian’s hair, mussing it into wild spikes. “Watch it, kid, I’m the one who makes the death jokes around here.”

Damian ducks away from him with a scowl. “Tt. Like you’re the only one around here who’s died.”

Jason doesn’t like to think about that. So he just rolls his eyes and pushes Damian’s shoulder. “I was first though.”

They descend the stairs to the parking garage bickering. It would almost be… nice, maybe, if Jason’s knee wasn’t throbbing in protest. And if he wasn’t so acutely aware of using humour as a coping mechanism. He is just as aware of the emotions swimming beneath Damian’s barbed insults.

“Hey,” he says, catching Damian’s arm before he can climb into the back seat. “You know you can always-”

Alfred’s dress shoes click against the concrete as he approaches. Damian is looking up at Jason curiously, young face creased with a frown. It’s like a moment suspended in time, the first wobble of a spinning top when you’re not sure if it’s going to keep spinning or fall over. Alfred’s footsteps draw closer; he’s looking down at his phone, typing a response to a message.

“Always what?” Damian asks.

Alfred puts the phone in his pocket and pops the boot to put Jason’s bag in.

Jason shakes his head. “Nothing.”

He slides into the front seat and slams the door. The sound seems to echo in Jason’s chest. He clenches his fist on his knee. Drops his head back against the leather headrest. This is why he doesn’t like spending too much time around the family. He’s not good at it.

Damian’s door closes and his seatbelt clicks into place. They sit in silence while they wait for Alfred to get in and start the car.

Jason closes his eyes. He can feel Damian’s gaze like static electricity prickling his skin, feel when it drops away to focus on a game on the kid’s phone. He bites his lips. Pushes away that impulse from earlier, the one that made him reach out to the kid. Jason has enough issues of his own to deal with, he doesn’t need to take on anyone else’s.

Besides, Damian probably wouldn’t want to talk to him anyway.
"You never listen to me" - Tim & Damian

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: From the list, maybe “You never listen to me.” With Tim & Damian? I love love love how you write them together!

Inspired by this amazing art by @omgiamwish

“Stupid,” Damian hisses. “You stupid, stupid fool. You should have listened to me, I told you it was a trap. I told you.”

The closest to a response he gets from Drake is the beep of the heart monitor he’s connected to. It’s a little slow, not as reassuring as it should be.

Fury bubbles up beneath Damian’s skin, hot and sudden. He should be glad that Drake is still alive, or concerned about his injuries, or uncaring, but all he feels is anger.

Anger at Drake. Why couldn’t you just listen to me for once?

Anger at himself. The last thing I said was that I hated him.

(“No, we should wait, it’s a trap-“

“Let go of me, I’m going in, someone has to help-“

“This is why I hate you! You never listen to me!”)

And here he is, sitting vigil by his maybe-dying brother’s side while everyone else has been forced to rest upstairs, and he can still find only hurtful things to say. It is easier, to call Drake a stupid fool, to curse at him, to be swallowed whole by anger. Easier than feeling the sharp ache behind his rib cage. Easier than drowning in guilt.

I should have tried harder to stop him. I knew it was a trap. I knew Red Robin couldn’t handle it alone.

Damian hadn’t done enough then and there is nothing he can do now. Nothing except sit and watch and hope. Hope for Drake to recover. Despair for what might happen if he doesn’t.

Damian thinks of his father after Todd’s death.

He thinks of Grayson after his father’s death.

He thinks of himself when he found out Grayson was dead.

The anger fizzes and dies, leaving a lump in Damian’s throat. Tears burn at his eyes. He squeezes them shut. “Don’t die, Drake,” he whispers. “I don’t… I don’t hate you. Please don’t die.”
“Don't you dare disobey any more orders" - Damian & Bruce

Chapter Notes

kasyfairytaillover asked: "Don't you dare disobey any more orders!" I feel like that describes Damian! If you want please!

“I’m coming in.”

“No.” Batman’s voice is harsh across the comm. “You stay right where you are, Robin.”

Damian grinds his teeth. “You need my help.”

"I said stay where you are.”

Damian is already two steps to ignoring the order but he freezes. Something in his father’s voice, something Batman shouldn’t sound like, something brittle, makes him stop. More than stress, more than worry… Fear.

Ice slithers through Damian’s heart. Batman had gone in to find Nightwing, he must have found him by now, it’s been almost twenty minutes. For him to sound afraid… Damian swallows. He’s not sure he wants to know what his father found, what state Nightwing is in. If he’s even alive… But he has to know.

“I’m coming in,” he says again.

“I gave you an order-”

Damian mutes the comm. He’s going to be in trouble for that later. He can hear the lecture already: “Don’t you dare disobey my orders again!” There might even be threats to take away Robin. Damian doesn’t care right now. He finds an open window and silently enters the building. It’s an old factory, empty and silent, echoing with disrepair. Damian crouches on the gangway that would once have provided access to repair the machines reaching up to the caving roof and surveys the shadows below.

A sound, like a whisper of despair. Damian shivers despite the thermal undershirt of his uniform. Silent footsteps carry him down the stairs. They creak and groan with unwelcome disturbance. Damian holds his breath until he gets to the bottom.

“Robin.” A hand on Damian’s shoulder makes him jump.

“Nightwing,” he breathes. Relief threatens to sweep his feet out from under him. But if his brother is okay- “Where is father?”

Richard grimaces. “He’s fine. You should wait outside.”

Damian turns, flicking the hand off his shoulder. “If he were fine you would not tell me to wait outside.”

“Damian.” Richard grabs his elbow. His voice is like ice, hard but fragile, threatening to crack under
too much pressure. “Wait outside.”

Damian stares at his brother. He nods. He turns toward the stairs, waits until the hand on his elbow loosens, then he spins back and ducks under Richard’s arm to run further into the factory. He hears Richard curse and keeps running. His heart is thumping in his chest, adrenaline screaming that something is wrong. Footsteps follow him, an urgent voice. Damian weaves between machines and vaults over conveyor belts.

He almost trips over his father when he finds him. Batman’s ears are slumped forward, his weight leaning against a rusted packing machine, the red-brown of the metal matched by the growing pool of blood on the ground. Damian falls to his knees in it, hands going to his father’s injury. It’s impossible to miss: a rusted spike through his side.

“Thought I told you to wait outside,” his father says. There’s just enough moonlight shining through holes in the building to see how pale his face is beneath the cowl.

“I tried to stop him,” Richard says. Damian hadn’t heard him slow to a stop beside them.

“What happened?” Damian hears himself asks. It’s cold and clinical while his thoughts are tumultuous and his insides have twisted themselves into knots. Blood is staining his tights. There’s a lot of it, more than there should be. His mind jumps to league training and crime scene photos.

“It’s going to be alright, son,” his father says. Not “I’m going to be alright, son.”

Richard is saying something about Pennyworth, about Doctor Thompkins, about help coming. Damian isn’t listening. He’s not sure he could concentrate on the words even if he wanted to. His hands are still hovering around the spike, useless and unsure. His father grabs them, holding them between his own.

“Damian,” he says. It’s slightly breathless, not strong like it should be. “Listen to your brother. It’s going to be okay.”

Damian shakes his head. His eyes feel hot and he squeezes them shut. Why is he reacting like this? Batman has been hurt worse, survived worse. His father tugs on his arms. Gentle, inviting. Damian lets himself fall forward, tucks his head against the bat on his father’s chest. He feels like a child.

He is a child. A child who does not want to lose a parent.

“Promise?” he whispers.

His father kisses the top of his head. “Promise.”
"Do you hate me?" (Damian & Bruce)

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked: "do you hate me?" with damian and bruce?

Bruce drops his head back against the top of the couch with a sigh. It’s a Sunday afternoon and the Manor is empty. Not that that’s particularly unusual as of late. It seems like all his kids are avoiding home because they’re mad at him these days, for one reason or another. Maybe Alfred too, since the butler has been absent most of the day, leaving only a hastily scrawled note to let Bruce know he’s on his own for dinner tonight. It feels suspiciously like a reprimand, but Bruce has no idea what he did wrong.

There are any number of possibilities though, and Bruce takes this time to sort through them. Did he leave batarangs somewhere he shouldn’t have? Is it an important date he’s forgotten? Some other parental duty he failed to fulfil? He thinks, with a sigh, that it could be any of those or a hundred more things he’s done wrong. He’d just been so wrapped up in a case…

Another sigh.

There’s the quiet click of claws on the hardwood floor and then Titus walks into the room. He pauses when he sees Bruce sitting on the couch he likes to nap on in the afternoons (much to Alfred’s discontent), and Bruce doesn’t want to admit that he has a standoff with his son’s dog but… he has a standoff with his son’s dog. The dog stares at him and Bruce stares back, each refusing to blink, until Titus huffs what sounds suspiciously like an amused sigh and leaps up on the couch. He stretches out on his back, head in Bruce’s lap, and this is a cue Bruce understands. He scratches the dog’s belly.

“Well at least you still like me,” he tells the dog.

There’s another sound from the doorway and Bruce looks over just as Damian’s steps into the room.

“Damian,” he greets. “I thought you were out.”

“Only to walk Titus.” A beat, then, “We didn’t go far.”

“Hm.”

Damian comes closer and stops in front of the couch. He’s carrying a bottle of water and a tennis ball, Bruce sees. He was probably searching for where his dog went off to when he heard Bruce’s voice. There’s a little frown on his young face, one that Bruce is sure he’ll see looking back at him if he searches through old photo albums from when he was a child. He’d had that frown a lot, after his parents died.

“Do you hate me too?” Bruce asks, and he’s only half joking, mouth quirking up at the corners but unwilling to take his eyes away from the grinning dog in his lap in case the truth on his son’s face is one he can’t bear.

Damian only clicks his tongue, though, calling Titus off the couch so he can take the place at Bruce’s side. “Don’t be ridiculous, Father,” he says. “Why would I hate you?”
Because everyone else does. He forces the bitter response back though. Whining to his ten year old would not be the kind of father-son bonding activity Alfred would approve of. So Bruce shakes his head, keeps the almost-smile on his face, and says, “It’s nothing, I was just…”

“Brooding?” Damian suggests.

Bruce chuckles a bit. “Yes, I suppose I was brooding.”

Titus thumps his tail against the floor and shoves his head in the gap between Damian and Bruce’s knees, demanding pats. They lapse into silence, Bruce absently scratching the dog’s head, Damian playing with one of his ears. It’s nice. Bruce realises how little time he actually spends just sitting quietly or engaging in some activity other than vigilantism with his youngest son. He makes a mental note to change that.

“I am sorry,” Damian begins haltingly, unusually hesitant with his words, “If I ever made you feel like I hated you.” There’s a crease between his brows that Bruce wants to smooth away. “I admit that I did when… when I first came and I thought you didn’t want me. But I don’t. Not anymore. I… understand now.”

Bruce puts an arm around his son’s shoulders, pulls him into a half-hug. “Thank you,” he says, voice a little rough. “For not giving up on me.” He wonders when this kid, the one who’d been so prickly and defensive and angry, became so wonderful and caring. Was it Dick’s influence? Alfred’s?

Damian leans into the hug. “It is only fair,” he says. He tips his head to look up at Bruce with a rare smile. “Since you did not give up on me.”
"you need to get out of here" - Jay & Dick


“Shut up,” Jason snaps. Flurries of ash drift to the ground like snow. They catch in Jason’s hair, painting sweat-spiked curls a ghostly grey against the backdrop of burning orange sky where the warehouse roof is supposed to be.

Dick coughs, dust and smoke poisoning his lungs with every desperate gasp for breath. The cracked face of Jason’s helmet stares at him from the ground. Jason shouldn’t have taken it off. Even if it was broken, it had to be better than nothing. He’d still have time to get out of here if he’d just put the helmet on and go.

“Please,” Dick says hoarsely. “You can… It doesn’t have to be both of us, you’ve got a chance—”

Jason presses down harder on Dick’s leg and he screams. A sound like a hundred bats screeching as they take flight. It echoes in Dick’s ringing ears even after it dies down to ragged breathing. Tears are creating a Pollock painting through the blood and ash on his face but he doesn’t even have the energy to sob.

“I said—” Jason sounds a little ragged himself “—shut up. Stop being so friggen melodramatic, Dickface, I am not leaving you here just so you can die another sacrificial death.”

He stops to take a choking breath. Dick stares up at his brother as he presses a hand over his eyes. His younger brother who he’s supposed to protect, who he’s supposed to comfort, not make cry. “Jay…”

“Dammit, Dick, just- Shut up, okay?”

Dick bites his cheek. He’s not sure what words he would’ve been able to offer anyway. Everything’s getting hazy, body locked in a vat of pain while the world ebbs around him. There’s fire in his leg but everywhere else feels cold. That’s not good. Dick knows that’s not good. Jason should just leave him, he’s probably past saving now anyway. How much blood loss is too much? He should know, Bruce taught him that, taught him how to look at a pool of blood and know how critical the situation was.

Dick cranes his neck. That small movement is enough to make him dizzy. Black spots lurk on the edges of his vision and it’s so tempting to give into them, to let go of the pain, let go of everything for a while. Jason is taping something around his leg, kneeling in the pool of blood slinking across the concrete. He’s taking care of it, it would be so easy for Dick to just…

A hand taps his cheek. “Hey, look at me, no falling asleep yet. C’mon Dick, open your eyes.”

Dick tries. The world is blurry though, it makes his head hurt. His eyelids feel weighted, pegged down like the tents at the circus. Jason swears. Dick wants to reach out to him, to smile and tell him everything is alright, he’s just resting his eyes, Jason should get out of here without him though, he’ll catch up in a moment. There’s too many words though, tripping over themselves in Dick’s fuzzy mind.

Something slides under Dick’s shoulders and a moment later the world tilts. Black and white and kaleidoscopic pops of light burst in front of his eyes. Dick’s stomach is somewhere around his feet. Or maybe his feet are up where his stomach is supposed to be. He has just enough hold on what’s going on to think that he’s too heavy for Jason to carry. Then he passes out.
End Notes

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