A Change of Heart

by xserenity

Summary

Dick was only doing what he thought was right. But he never expected how one good deed would change his whole life.
Exhausted and completely drained of an ounce of energy, Dick Grayson dragged his feet against the concrete ground, heading home. He had just gotten off the bus, having finished a day’s work. Now, he just wanted to crash in bed, sleep the night away until he had to get up again for work.

Dick sucked in a breath, released it, and felt the tension dissipate from his shoulders, if just a smidge.

The walk home wasn’t far. It was only about a five to eight minute walk from the closest bus station, depending on his pace. Today might take longer due to his fatigue.

As he neared his housing compartment, the building coming into view, he spotted an out of place figure from afar, laying on the sidewalk near the bushes and trees.

Squinting, he tried to make out if it was a person or not. As he neared the lump, he had confirmed that it was indeed a person. A man actually. He was on his side, probably passed out. At least Dick hoped he was and not possibly dead or even bleeding to death.

Dick felt like he should help but he wasn’t sure. Figured maybe someone else would do it but he noticed that those who had passed by didn’t even bat an eye. Of course that would be the case considering the place he was in. A soft sigh escaped his lips and he ran his hand through his dark hair, pulling out a few tangles he found in the process.

He couldn’t just leave the man there. He knew he should help because there was a possibility he could be injured. It might even be life threatening but his mind was screaming stranger danger. And yet, he decided against reasoning and decided to help.

Walking over to the lifeless body, Dick crouched to the ground, a few feet away from the body and examined the man. An arm was stretched out, head resting on it as he lay flat on his side. Dick couldn’t get a good look at his face as his hair was covering it. It didn’t help that the sky was dark and there were only a few dim streetlights. Dick did notice the bit of white in his bangs. Most likely dyed.

Scooting closer towards the body, Dick leaned down, hovering just above him to listen for any signs of life. Which he confirmed that yes, the man was very much alive and breathing and smelled atrociously like alcohol. As he had guessed, the man had too much to drink and simply just passed out. At least he wasn’t dead.

Dick did take notice of a colorful puddle of what he assumed was vomit hidden below the bushes off to their side. A shiver crawled up his spine and he wrinkled his nose in disgust. He wasn’t fond of the feeling of retching. Just the thought made him want to gag. He tried his best to suppress the imagery.

With a hand pressed to the stranger’s arm, Dick cautiously shook the man, trying to wake him up but he didn’t budge. Dick tried again and still, nothing. He sighed, licked his chapped lips. “Okay.” Guess he had no other choice.

Standing up, Dick moved so that he could slip an arm around the man, holding onto his middle. He
reached for his limp arm and slung it around his shoulder. Carefully, Dick made sure that his footing was flat against the ground before he lifted the stranger up. *God damn*, he was heavy. It took him a few tries but with effort, he successfully got him to his feet. It was basically like carrying an extra, albeit extremely heavy luggage.

Dick was tired and weak but thankfully, the distance to his home wasn’t far. However, he did struggle to keep his balance, almost dropping the stranger a few times. He settled for just letting his feet drag as he wasn’t conscious enough to even walk with him.

The man was definitely taller than Dick, about half a head more and had great body mass. Was more built and broad than Dick was. It’s not as if he was weak but well, he wasn’t strong either. Add to the fact that he was running on approximately five hours of sleep and had just finished a 12 hour shift.

But hey, it’s not like he was trying to make an excuse for himself. Though he kind of was.

Dick successfully made it back home but struggled a bit to unlock the door as he was trying to balance the figure while at the same time, digging for his keys and getting the door open. It was hard with extra baggage, as he deemed the stranger would be called, but he did it. He was proud of himself for not having dropped the man to the ground. It would probably add more to his injuries if he had any.

Closing the door shut behind him with his foot, Dick turned around, locked and bolted the entrance. The area he lived in wasn’t exactly the safest place but it also wasn’t the worse. But it was better to be safe rather than not so he had installed safety measures for himself. Not that there was anything valuable he had for burglars to steal. It was more of a home security type thing for him as this place was important to his wellbeing.

Dick carefully and slowly, set the man down on the floor. He lay him on his side and checked to make sure there weren’t any injuries. He was dressed in fitted blue jeans, a nice navy sweater and a fancy black trench coat. Dick didn’t want to invade his personal space too much so he did the bare minimum. For the most part, he was fine and luckily, there was no puke on him anywhere.

Dick breathed a sigh of relief that nothing was wrong. Now, he could wash up and get changed.

The apartment he was currently residing in was a one room studio that barely had any space. It consisted of the essentials needed for living. His bedroom and kitchen shared one space, which was basically his ‘common’ area. He had a bathroom and a laundry room with a closet. Thankfully he could do his own laundry at home. Though he only had a washer and had to air dry his clothes. It didn’t bother him much but it did take longer to do laundry.

There was a single mattress that rested in the corner of the room, his bed. His belongings lay on the ground beside it, such as a backpack or books he had borrowed from the library.

There wasn’t much as he spent most of his time working. But he did like to pass time reading when he could.

Once changed, Dick emerged from the bathroom sporting a pair of raggedy sweat pants that bore a few holes at the ankles and a baggy yet faded navy sweater. Essentially, they were just pajamas so his outer appearance wasn’t important. Dick went to discard his clothes in the hamper and when he came back out, he was surprised to see the stranger awake and staring at him.

He jumped back in surprise, heart rate spiking up. Eyes were wide, sapphire eyes staring back at the man as if he’d seen a ghost. He didn’t expect him to be awake.
The stranger didn’t seem to notice Dick’s reaction however.

"Where m' I?" He slurred, clearly, as Dick had confirmed earlier, still drunk.

The man’s eyes were blazed, red-rimmed and he did not look okay at all. He continued to stare at Dick, eyes squinting in curiosity and Dick wasn't sure if he should do something or not. Interestingly enough, Dick did notice how blue yet green his eyes were despite the dim lights in his room and how unfocused his vision was. They just stood out to him.

"Who're you?" He was at least, slightly aware that he did not know Dick or where he was at. Which was a good thing.

Dick wasn't sure how much would make sense to him if he explained but figured he should give it a try anyways.

"My name is Dick. I found you passed out near my home and helped you here," Dick spoke loudly, slowly and as clearly as he could.

The stranger licked his lips, probably chapped as he kept running his tongue back and forth. He pressed them together until they formed a line. Still squinting, he titled his head to the side, looking muddled. It appeared that he didn’t understand a single word Dick said.

Dick drew in a breath and tried again. "I'm – "

"M'kay," The man blurted, cutting him off. "T'anks," He said and pressed his hands to the floor, attempting to get up.

Dick bit his lip in worry, wanting to help him because he was obviously still very drunk. The man’s body was trembling, unsteady and Dick could see his legs shaking like jelly every time he tried to get up. His body coordination was awful as well, hands slipping every time he even attempted to push up.

"I think you should – " Dick said but again, was stopped.

"Fine. M' fiiiine. T'anks for help," He hiccupped as he finally managed to get to his feet.

Dick held in his breath, was sure he was going to fall the moment he took a step. And that he did. Dick cringed when the man lost his footing, legs crumbling like a tower of blocks falling over and crashed to the ground in a loud thud. It looked painful.

"Are you okay?" Dick asked, crouching down beside him.

"M' head hurts," he grumbled.

"Maybe you should stay the night. You can take my bed," Dick offered.

The stranger nodded his head like a child and Dick held his arms. With guidance, Dick was able to help him over to the mattress. He pulled back the blankets and lowered the stranger down gently. With his head resting against the pillow, the man gave a goofy smile, murmuring something Dick couldn't quite hear. He paid it no attention as he pulled the blankets back over his body, tucking him in and making sure he was comfortable.
"You?"

"Hm?"

"Were you gonna sur-reep?"

"Oh. Don't worry about me." Dick waved him off and the man nodded, as if he understood and immediately closed his eyes shut. In an instant, he passed out again, his soft breathing playing like music into the silent room.

Standing up, Dick swiped back his bangs and sighed. What an unfortunate event to happen on a night where he just wanted to sleep. Looked like it was going to be a tough night for him but he'll have to put up with it. It was his decision to house this drunk.

Dick turned off the lights, walked over to the opposite side of the mattress and leaned against the wall. He slid down, butt hitting the hard carpet. At least it wasn't flooring. He could tolerate sleeping on carpet but it's not like he hadn't slept on the floor numerous times.

The night air was chilly and Dick shivered, running his hands up and down his arms, trying to create friction, some sort of warmth. He didn't exactly have a heater and well, the blankets he used to keep himself warm were currently occupied.

Lying down on his side, Dick pressed his back to the wall and brought his knees to his chest. He wrapped his arms around his body, trying to keep the warmth in. Sapphire eyes wandered over to the now, snoring stranger who was peacefully sleeping in his bed. He was jealous that it wasn't him in his own bed.

Oh how much he just wanted to sleep.

Honestly, Dick could probably have left the man there and maybe someone else would have helped him. But considering the poor neighborhood that they were in, it was unlikely. Dick knew he would have felt bad if something had happened to him. It was just one night so it would be fine. He seemed, for the most part, harmless.

Closing his eyes, he prayed sleep would quickly take him away.

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Jason Todd woke up feeling sore all over. There was a throbbing pain near the front of his head, circling all the way around to the back. It hurt like hell and he felt like he'd been hit by a car or something. Eyes hurt to open and watered every time he blinked. His mouth tasted horrid, a mixture of acid and alcohol.

_Fuck, what the hell happened yesterday?_

Jason rubbed at his eyes, the haze decreasing bit by bit as his vision slowly came to focus. He found himself staring at a light colored ceiling decorated with a few cracks and odd paint spots. There was also a small light hanging in the middle but it was off.

His mind was still disorganized and he wasn’t quite awake yet. Eyes traveled around, examining
the area and nothing seemed familiar to him. He couldn’t recall any of the details of the room. It was the first time he was seeing this place and then realization hit him hard.

“Fuck,” he breathed, coming to the conclusion that he was not anywhere that he knew. He must have passed out drunk someplace or had he gone home with someone? He had no recollections of how he even got here.

Jason tried sitting up but his head was spinning. Dizzy, he decided he would lay down for a moment and just survey the place.

And well, what did he get out of it? For one, it was complete trash. Who would even live in such a place?

It was a dump. It was tiny and everything looked old and tattered. The painting was chipped on the wall and ceiling. The carpet had a few bleached spots as well as darkened patches, probably from spills. The room was built in the shape of a rectangle with a kitchen at the opposite corner of where he lay. A tiny hall to the left of the kitchen that probably lead to the front door. Two doors to the left where he assumed was possibly a bathroom and maybe another bedroom.

Though it didn’t matter much to him because he was going to be out of here soon. Just laying here made him feel oddly uncomfortable.

Wandering eyes searched around for a clock but Jason didn’t find one so he settled for his cell phone instead. He pulled it out of his pocket and thankfully there was still 20% battery life left. It was only 5 am, still early in the morning.

Maybe he could just sneak out. On second thought, where was the owner of this place? His question was answered when he heard rustling from not too far away.

What the fucking hell?

Someone was sleeping on the floor a few feet away from the bed. Jason blankly stared at the figure, confused and dumbfounded because how did he not see that person there the first time?

He was probably more hung over than he thought.

Green-blue eyes stared intensely at the limp figure huddled against the wall. From what Jason could make out, it looked like a man. He was just going to assume the person was male because of the built. The stranger was curled into himself, almost forming a loose ball. He had dark hair, long and messy, covering his face so Jason couldn’t really see how he looked.

But who cared anyways? He wasn't planning on staying long.

After having rested for a bit, hoping that his headache had subsided, Jason tried to get up. He moved at a slow pace, trying not to put too much strain. He succeeded but his head still hurt. He groaned loudly and clutched his forehead. He seriously needed some hang-over medication.

Jason must have been making loud noises because from the corner of his eyes, he saw the figure near the wall move. His whole body froze, ready to strike if the stranger who helped him was actually a serial killer or some crazy person.

Green-blue eyes watched as the body slowly rose from the ground and sat with their legs crossed. Jason scanned up and down his body, taking notice of the old and ripped clothes he was wearing, a bit too big on him. Baggy.
His hair was indeed, longer than the average male, slightly wavy and looked like he had knots all over. His hair was abundant, coming down to his neck, curled around his jaws. The sides covered his cheeks and bangs were swept to the right, covering mostly all but one eye. Needless to say, Jason couldn’t really tell how he looked as his hair pretty much covered up his face. There was just that one eye with the other being slightly visible, the tip of his nose and his lips.

Jason could see though how tired he looked, watched as he yawned, mouth opening wide, hands rubbing at his eyes. He was still in a daze, sleepy. That was until their eyes met and he completely stopped all his actions.

Hands fell to his lap and he fiddled with his thumbs, nervous. He teared his gaze away, looking down as if his fingers were more interesting than Jason himself. Then he lifted his head back up, mouth opening and closing like a fish, wanting to say something but couldn’t find the words.

Then finally, he spoke. “How – Uh, how are you feeling?” He cleared his throat, voice slightly groggy.

At least his voice didn’t sound as bad as he looked.

“Fine.”

“Oh. That’s good.” He said, lips curling into a small shy smile.

Hm. Jason was astonished but he found his smile kind of nice. Though he still looked gross as hell.

Jason made to move, not wanting to stay here a second longer. He slowly got up and the stranger followed suit. He looked like he wanted to help Jason in case he fell but Jason managed fine on his own so the stranger stayed put.

There was a peculiar silence settling over them and Jason felt uncomfortable. He wasn’t going to let it linger around.

“Hey. Look,” Jason started and rubbed his hand on his neck, as if he was massaging it. “Thanks for helping me.”

The owner shook his head. “It’s nothing.”

Now there was another awkward pause. Great. Jason hated them but it was hard when he didn’t really know what to say to a stranger who apparently helped him out from maybe being mugged or freezing to death.

Still, he said nothing. Jason tapped his foot and avoided the man’s attention by looking anywhere but him. Eyes scanned around the room and he got a better glimpse of the poor state the apartment was in. It was a lot worse than when he had been lying down. Probably because his mind was a tad clearer.

An idea popped to mind. Jason reached inside of his jacket and pulled out his wallet. Thankfully it was still there. He figured someone would have stolen it.

He opened his wallet and flicked through his cash, grabbing onto a few to give to the man.

“For your help,” he said as he pulled out the bills but the stranger held up his hand.

“It’s fine,” he said, tone suddenly strained and tight.
“Nah. Come on. Take it. You helped me out.” Jason shook the money at him, urging him to take it.

“I helped you out of goodwill. I don't need to be paid for it.”

“But you could use it.”

He sighed, loud and frustrated. “That’s a kind gesture but I can manage on my own. You should keep your hard earned money. Okay?” He bit his lower lip, looking at Jason with a pleading face.

Jason was surprised by his reaction. Managing fine on his own? Yeah right. He lived in a dump of a place with barely anything in his apartment. Most of his appliances was probably broken anyways. On top of him looking dirty and haggard.

What really surprised Jason though was the fact that he outright refused his money, told him to use it on himself and that he helped him out of goodwill? What kind of idiot would not accept free money? Apparently this one standing right in front of him.

But well, whatever. If he didn’t want it then fine, more for himself. Jason didn’t push for it and stuffed his bills back in and tucked his wallet away.

“Alright.” Jason shrugged. “Thanks for the help then.”

He breathed softly, shoulders slumping. “You're welcome.”

The stranger showed Jason out and when he tried to ask if Jason would be okay or not, Jason cut him short and said he’ll be fine. He had a ride. He wanted to get out as soon as possible and the longer he answered the follow-up questions, the longer Jason had to stay around.

Quickly, he said farewell and walked away. Jason was glad when he heard the door close. Thank god. The elevators were found a little ways down the hall but they seemed a little sketchy so he opted for the stairs instead. It was only the 3rd floor anyways. The complex wasn’t that high or very big.

Once he was out on the street, he noticed that he was in the unfortunate side of Gotham. Not quite crime alley, but well, more of the slums. It was a place for those who lived pay check to pay check, struggling with life. Of course, a part of him felt bad, but at the same time, it wasn’t his problem.

Jason gave one last look at the place, the building looking as if it could keel over any minute. A shiver crawled up his spine and he felt spooked. At least he won’t be back here again and he won’t be seeing that weirdo.

He doesn’t even know how he ended up here in the first place and that frustrated him to no end.

But whatever. He just needed a ride home and to mend his headache. He started walking to the nearest public area while he phoned home for a ride.

Chapter End Notes

I just wanted to write about a poor Dick Grayson who was never adopted by Bruce :(
(but ofc, with JayDick)

Anyways, hope you guys enjoyed and let me know what you think!
A few days had passed since that strange encounter. Jason had more or less forgotten about it.

Okay, he really didn’t forget about it because how could one forget such an unusual night? Jason did try to not think about it but well, it didn’t quite work.

For the most part, he was grateful for the help he had received even though Jason thought the stranger was peculiar. He looked poor as fuck, well probably is because of the shit hole he lived in and the clothes he wore. He was basically wearing rags. Jason was curious though, did he get them at a thrift store? Or was it because he couldn’t afford new clothes and he just wore the hell out of them. God damn, if so, that was a little sad.

Not to mention the apartment was in tatters and just imagining what his living conditions were like made him shiver. He didn’t really care about the man per say but for some odd reason, he kept resurfacing whenever Jason’s mind wandered. Thinking back to that night.

It was all really weird when he thought about it.

For one, what kind of person helps a random stranger they don’t even know and lets them into their home? For all he could know, Jason could have been a criminal or a psychopath. He knew nothing about Jason and he was taking a dangerous risk. It was foolish.

But at least he was a bit cautious? It seemed like the stranger was monitoring him. Or at least, possibly guarding him as well? It was odd to wake up and find him sleeping not too far away from Jason without a blanket or a pillow in sight. Almost as if he had been watching Jason until he passed out.

Jason wasn’t clear on his intentions but it probably wasn’t anything bad. Tried to stay positive on that spectrum. It could have been as simple as ensuring that Jason didn’t hurt himself or vomited everywhere. Or it could have been something as crazy as him keeping guard that Jason wasn't going to wake up and create havoc.

Lucky for him, Jason was none of that. Just a highly above average human being.

Jason tried to wrap his mind over the – the weirdo’s (that’s right, that’s what he’s calling him) actions. Was he just friendly? A guy with a kind heart? Or just outright stupid? Or maybe a creep?

Jason had no answer to his questions and couldn’t even begin to speculate what went through his mind when he decided to help him. Because if Jason was in his position, he wouldn’t have done that. It would have been too dangerous on his account and he wouldn't have risked it. Though he won't lie, Jason was a little curious about the stranger. Wanted to know why he helped Jason.

It definitely wasn’t for any monetary reasons seeing he had refused him when Jason tried to offer cash as a sort of compensation for helping him. The man was living in a shitty apartment that had absolutely nothing in the room besides the bare essentials. It was small and dirty as fuck. Everything looked like it was ready to break, and well, it probably was with how many stains, chips, peelings and cracks were on the walls, floors and appliances.
Also, the stranger looked worse for wear. He looked unkempt, like he didn’t have time to keep up with appearances. Or maybe no money to groom himself.

Whatever it was, Jason figured he could help him out as a one-time thing. He had put up with him after all. But no, he didn’t want it. Actually looked offended.

Who even rejects free money anyways?

Apparently him.

Well, it didn’t matter anymore because it was over and done with. Jason probably won’t see him ever again and he sure hopes he doesn’t. A chill ran down his spine, got goosebumps just thinking about it. An image popped to mind of how he looked. His old and tattered attire, how he seemed to roll into himself, wanting to hide. His mess of a head was in desperate need of a cut. Least he shaved, probably would look like a cave man if he let his facial hair grow. If it even grew that fast.

What struck him speechless was Jason didn’t know how he ended up in the area. From what he could recall, he was at a party with his best friend, Roy. The idiot hadn’t called him back yet either and it’s been a few days since he last texted him about it. Which was actually when he arrived home that morning.

Speaking of the devil, Jason’s cell phone was ringing and Roy’s ugly mug was flashing on the screen. He picked up and held his phone to his ear.

“What’s up?” Roy cheered, sounding awfully full of spirits. Annoying prick.

“Fuck you.” Jason was not having it. He was annoyed and he was planning to unleash his full fury on the red-head.

“Hey, what did I even do to earn such hate right off the bat?” Roy pretended to sound like he was hurt. But Jason knew he was only acting.

“You left me hanging you asshole,” Jason said harshly, wasn’t going to sugar coat his words. Not that he ever did with most people, especially with Roy. He only ever did that for those he didn’t want to hurt. Which was not many.

“You left on your own!” Roy tried to argue.

Even if that was true, he was still going to blame Roy. “What kind of friend just leaves their friend, who was drunk, to fend for themselves?” He said and bit down on his teeth, grinding back and forth, irritated. Roy was avoiding his questions.

“I tried but you wouldn’t stop.”

“Fuck. Why am I even friends with you?” Jason threw his hands up in the air, releasing his frustrations even though Roy couldn't see him.

“Because I’m a good lay?” He was grinning over the phone, projecting his confidence and that pissed Jason off even more.

He rolled his eyes at the stupid comment. “Go to hell Harper,” he growled into the phone and hung up. Jason ran a hand through his hair, peeved.

Jason thought Roy could have filled some of the gaps missing in his memory. But he only proved to be unhelpful and actually made his mood worse than it already was.
Fuck. He needed some air.

Grabbing his keys and wallet, he headed for his car and left the house.

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When it came to food, Jason was not picky. Whatever was good, he ate and he ate mostly anything. So he ended up at a local diner that was recommended to him by a friend. He ordered a classic meal of chicken and waffles and ate in relative silence as he browsed the internet with his phone.

He received an abundance of texts from Roy. There were a lot of ‘sorry’ or ‘let me make it up to you’ or ‘let’s eat, my treat.’ Or anything else that he could do to apologize. It didn’t make things any better but at least Roy was trying. Even though he was failing hard because he couldn’t get Jason to care enough to let it go.

Once he was finished with his meal, he searched around for a waiter or waitress to bring him his check. The service was a little slow and he only wanted to satiate his hunger then planned to go elsewhere to kill time. As he searched the diner for a helper, he spotted an oddly familiar mop of hair. Or at least he thought it looked familiar. It was one of the busboys, clearing a table down the row from him. He had dark hair that was pulled into a short ponytail.

Jason felt like he’s seen him before but he wasn’t quite sure. He watched the man, in hopes of him turning around. Unfortunately he didn’t. He had packed all the dirty dishware and garbage into his bin and disappeared into the back.

Then his check arrived right as the young man disappeared behind the doors leading into the kitchen. Jason paid and lingered around a little longer to see if the man would come back out but he didn’t. Jason was curious but not that curious enough to stay around waiting so he left.

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“Order whatever you want, my treat,” Roy said as he looked at Jason with a wide grin on his face.

Jason looked from the menu to Roy and a mischievous smile fell upon his lips. “Anything? Then, everything on the menu.”

Roy’s eyes widen comically and he looked dumbfounded. Mouth ajar as if he would have a moment of freak out. “Holy fuck, I didn’t mean it like that!”

Jason rolled his eyes and chuckled. “I’m joking. Even if I did, I wouldn’t be able to eat it all anyways.” Roy sighed a breath of relief and Jason was amused he even fell for such a joke. Should have known he was teasing him.

The two were out at one of Roy’s favorite burger joints. For this occasion, the redhead invited Jason, offering to treat him to food and apologize for being a bad friend. Even though it should have been Jason’s choice of place. But well, whatever. Jason liked the food here anyways. Besides, they wanted to trade information with one another. Jason had only given Roy the bare minimum of what had gone on and Roy was begging for more.

Jason didn’t want to indulge in his friend’s pleas, was still quite irritated at him so he had rejected his invite the first few times. But Roy wouldn’t leave him alone. Even went as far as to annoy their butler, Alfred, to get Jason to reply. So Jason gave in when he was asked.

The restaurant was busy due to it being lunch rush. But thankfully, they had arrived a little before the crowd so they didn’t have to wait long and were immediately seated at a booth.
The hostess came by again after having seated them down. “Your waiter will be right here shortly,” she said with a bright smile on her face.

Roy playfully winked at her, put on his best smile and thanked her. She blushed a little, smile growing wider before she left to resume her job.

Jason arched a brow at him but Roy just shrugged it off. “You hit on everything that moves?”

“Only if they’re good looking,” he said, grinning.

Jason pretended to gag. “I sometimes wonder why I even dated you.”

“We were good together.”

“Our relationship lasted like, two months.”

“You saying I wasn’t good company?” Roy pretended to be appalled, hurt by those words.

“Fuck yes. The worst as a boyfriend. Better as a friend cause I can keep you at arm’s length.”

“Wow Jay, I am deeply offended,” he joked. “Least I was good in bed.”

Jason thought on that for a moment before he answered. “I’ll give you a pass on that.” Roy laughed and kicked Jason under the table which he returned the gesture.

Roy and Jason met at a gala, hosted by their adopted fathers and hit it off really well. So well that they dated for a brief time. It was sexual attraction at first but it didn’t last long as they found out that they didn’t really have romantic feelings for each other. But on occasion, they would sometimes hook up if they were feeling it. Mostly when Roy was dumped as a means of comfort. So at least the sex was good.

They remained as good friends and enjoyed poking fun at each other. It’s part of their playful banter. The two were having a good time bringing up old memories but were interrupted by their waiter.

A young man came up beside their table and introduced himself. “Hello. My name is Dick, and I will be your server.”

Jason stopped laughing and turned his attention to the figure next to them. When his eyes fell upon the person of interest, he gasped a little, surprised. It was **him**. The guy that helped him – well, practically could be considered his savior.

Dick blinked at Jason, sapphire eyes squinting, a little confused. But then the look in his eyes changed, seeming to realize who it was. “Oh.”

**Seriously?** What a coincidence.

Jason took in his features, now getting a better look at him in broad daylight. Dick was dressed in decent jeans that had a few rips at the knees. Was paired off with a black long-sleeve shirt and black sneakers. His raven hair was brushed and bangs were swept to the side, somewhat out of his eyes but still very much, covered his face.

He actually looked a little more presentable than when he first saw him. Which made sense because he was at work but at the same time, he still gave off an air of well, poverty.

Jason was a little tongue tied. “Uh. Hi,” he said awkwardly and wanted to internally slap himself.
How else was he supposed to react in this type of situation? He wasn’t expecting to see him again so what kind of shit luck had brought this upon him?

The corner of Dick’s lips curved into a small smile, a little shy but also nervous. He greeted him back with a timid hello. Roy noticed the uncomfortable exchange and was watching them, suspicious. Jason could feel his intense stare and ignored it for the time being. He teared his attention away and looked at the menu, trying to smooth over the awkward atmosphere and quickly threw out his order.

“Okay. Fries are fine?” Dick asked, voice surprisingly stable and smooth. He started jotting down the order on his notepad.

“Yes,” Jason answered, curt.

“Would you like anything to drink?”

“Vanilla milkshake.”

“Okay.”

Dick then turned to Roy and asked him for his order. Roy took one last look at Jason, a brow raised at him before he gave his order. Jason knew he was going to be bombarded with questions once Dick was gone.

“Okay. I’ll get that started right away and the drinks will be out shortly,” Dick said.

“Thanks,” Roy and Jason both replied simultaneously.

Once Dick was gone, Roy attacked him, verbally. “What was that?

“What was what?” Jason tried to play it off but he knew it wouldn’t work.

“That,” Roy said and nudged his head towards Dick, who was punching in their order at the counter behind the register.

“That?” Jason answered, trying not to look in the direction Roy was basically pointing at.

“Nothing. I just gave him my order just like you.”

“Jason. Don’t play dumb. You know him.” Roy stared at him, eyes narrowed and waited for an answer as he folded his arms over his chest.

There was no way Jason was winning this so he groaned loudly, exasperated. “Fine.”

“Waiting.”

Jason clicked his tongue, but well, he was going to tell him anyways. Just, he didn’t think Roy would ever meet him. “He’s the guy that helped me.”

Emerald eyes widened in surprise and Roy leaned forward. “Wait. Are you serious?”

Jason nodded. “Yep.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes Roy.”
“Wow,” Roy breathed and brushed back his hair, speechless.

Jason sighed and collapsed back against his seat. He felt exhausted already, could feel the energy slowly seeping out. “Exactly. I didn’t think I’d meet him ever again.”

“Okay, well, what’s the story then? You only told me that someone helped you out.”

Jason was about to reiterate his story to Roy but Dick suddenly returned with their beverages. He had a tray balanced on one hand, filled with a variety of glasses. He grabbed the milkshakes that they both had ordered and set it on the table.

“If you need anything else, please let me know. Your food should be out shortly,” Dick said with a curt smile.

“Sure,” They both answered and once again, were left alone.

Jason found himself watching Dick as he walked away, examining his physique. He was lean yet tall with a slight tan to his skin. At least, the bit of skin he could see as the man was mostly covered. It didn’t seem to matter what angle Jason looked at him from but Dick just looked like a charity case of help needed. With how he dressed and the way he carried himself. Shoulders slumped without an ounce of self-confidence in his body.

He was staring so intensely that he hadn’t realized he was ignoring Roy until he spoke. “Let’s continue now that he’s gone.”

Jason brought his attention back to his friend and recapped the story to him. At least, what he could remember. Told him how he’d woken up in an unfamiliar setting. That the place was a dump and a bit about Dick’s attitude and his look. Anything before that was a blur.

“Wow. That’s kind of crazy. But you’re right about him looking, you know, dirty. You see the dark circles under his eye?” Roy asked, not being discreet at all with how loud he was speaking.

Jason shushed him. “Yes Roy, I did and can you talk a little quieter? He’s in the same room as us.”

Roy murmured an oops, nodded and lowered his voice. “He looks sickly.” Then he gasped. “Oh my god, what if he’s diseased?”

“Roy…” Jason started, ready to reprimand him. He was sure the man was just tired and not sick like Roy was trying to imply.

“I’m joking. At least he was kind enough to save you, a complete stranger.”

Jason shrugged. “I still find that weird.”

“Kind of creepy wouldn’t you say?” Roy asked and Jason didn’t think it was creepy, just weird. Weird that anyone would actually help another without being overly cautious. “How did you even end up in that area?”

Now Jason wanted to yell at Roy for this. “How the fuck would I know? That’s why you’re here.”

“Well, shit, I don’t know.”

“Roy, how do I start off at a high rise club and end up down in the, well, slums?”

Roy blinked at him, obviously didn’t know what the hell had gone on. “All I remember was, you left, took a cab someplace and you were drunk as fuck.”
“And you didn’t stop me?” Green-blue eyes glared intensely at his friend, as if to blame him for his inability to help him.

“Hey man. I tried. But I was pretty drunk too so I guess, I didn’t try that hard.”

Jason sighed and took a sip of his milk shake. “You asshole,” he said but wasn’t mad. At least, not anymore. He just wanted to give Roy a hard time.

“I’m your best friend. I have to be an asshole.”

“Pretty sure that’s not how best friends work.” Jason reached across the table, stole Roy’s shake and took a sip from the glass.

“Hey, that’s mine!” Roy made grabby hands for Jason to give it back to him.

“Your treat, remember? I can eat and drink anything.” He earned another kick to the shin for that comment.

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Their lunch together was a blast, as it typically always was.

When their food came out, Dick wasn’t the one to deliver it to them. However, he did pass by to ask how they were doing and then took care of their bill. It was very brief, minimal interactions with Dick, as he seemed to be busy waiting other tables.

Or maybe he was trying to avoid him? Whatever it was, it didn’t matter.

Jason was signing the receipt when a thought occurred to him. He decided to leave a generous tip. A big fat amount for Dick. Then he left behind a simple message, a thanks with a smiley face.

As he left the joint with Roy, he was smiling and felt a little proud of himself. Hopefully, Dick would appreciate the kind gesture.
Dick drew in a breath as he grabbed the stranger's bill. He was confused. Extremely confused and didn't know what to think.

Holding a thin flimsy piece of paper in hand, Dick stared at the numbers. He couldn't believe what that man had done. It was their second time meeting and it wasn't as if Dick had expected to run into him again.

Actually, he thought he'd never see him again. But apparently he was wrong.

Dick was surprised when he realized who it was and he wasn't quite sure how to react. It was a bit intimidating since he didn't have a good impression of the man. Dick was fairly perturbed by his reactions that morning. He was abrupt, cut Dick off a few times and quite honestly, was rude.

Not to mention his features added to Dick’s level of anxiousness now that he was able to see him in natural lighting.

His features were masculine and defined. A beautiful nose, thick jawline and bright blue eyes with a tint of green mixed in. He had dark hair much like his own except short and styled. It was one of those new haircuts that most people were sporting. What was it called? Well whatever it was, his hair was short in the back but a bit long in the front, with bangs slicked up. He also had a strange tuft of white in his bangs which Dick found interesting.

Despite how rough and intimidating he looked, Dick had to admit he was handsome though he had an air of arrogance. Judging from how well-groomed and dressed he was, he probably came from a fairly wealthy family. Besides the obvious fact of him trying to give Dick money.

It wasn't like Dick was jealous or anything because he wasn’t. Seriously, he wasn't. He’s already accepted who he is and where he stood in society.

The redhead, who Dick assumed was his friend, didn't seem any different than him. Also bore similar resemblance in terms of outward appearance in clothing and how they carried themselves and spoke.

If Dick had to describe them in one word, they looked like jerks. The type of jocks you'd often see on television shows and movies -- popular douchebags. Yeah, that's what they reminded Dick of.

Though, they probably weren't quite like that. At least not the handsome dark haired one. He assumed they were based on first impression and although the man was rude that morning, he was still kind enough to not pretend he didn't know who Dick was. If he was an asshole, he would have done that.

He also wouldn't have tried to show his gratitude through money. Though Dick didn't appreciate the gesture. He understood his good intentions but he didn't want it.

Dick knows he wasn’t fortunate in life and that he could use extra cash but at the same time, he wasn’t about to accept anyone’s pity. He knows far too well how that ends -- typically bad. He's had terrible experiences and wasn't about to be fooled again.

God, just thinking about it made him angry. How - How people would offer him money if he 'serviced' them, like he was some prostitute. Or desperate enough to sell his body for money.
That was the last thing that he would ever do to himself, even if he was desperate. The thought sickened him.

It was better if he depended on himself, at least he wouldn't be hurt by others.

Yet, why was he holding onto the one hundred dollar bill that was left behind with that man's payment? He even left a comment, a simple thanks. Sloppy writing and a tiny smiley face. Dick only did his job, provided service that surely did not deserve such a lavish tip.

He didn't understand his intentions and wanted to rush out and find him, give him back his money. But he was long gone. Dick could give it to the restaurant but tips left to the servers were part of their pay.

He didn't want it but he wasn't one to defy the rules. So Dick cashed in the receipts and kept the tip, made a note to self that the next time he came back, if he ever did, Dick will return the money to him.

Surprisingly, he did come back a couple days later. This time, without his hyperactive friend. When their eyes met as he entered through the door, Dick froze in spot, almost running into someone.

The stranger saw his almost accident and smiled, amused as he waved at him. Dick stared blankly, slightly star struck, not in the sense that he was a dreamy hot guy (because okay he sort of was), but shocked that he was here again. And the reason was most likely not for the food but to see him. Not that Dick was being boastful because he wasn’t but it just seemed as the likely reason.

Dick quickly recovered and went on his way, continuing his work. From the corner of his eye, he could see the man talking to the hostess, an energetic blonde girl who would occasionally talk his ear off since he was the only one who listened to her. Dick wasn't the most socially approachable, kept to himself so not many cared or tried to talk to him. She was the only exception. It probably had to do a lot with his looks as well as the fact that people were shallow and judge based on appearance. He couldn't exactly blame them since he did the same.

As he finished filling up a few glasses of water, he saw from the corner of his eye that Mr. Kind of handsome was taking a seat at one of the tables he was in charge of today. Good chance for him to return the money.

Dick headed towards the table once he finished his initial task.

"Hello. My name is Dick and I'll be serving you today." It was a customary greeting and as awkward as it felt to say it to someone he's met three times, he had to do it. He probably didn't remember his name anyways.

"I remember." Oh, apparently he did. "Nice seeing you again." He smiled, then introduced himself. "By the way, the name’s Jason."

Jason. Okay. Standard name. At least he didn't have to refer to him as the nameless stranger anymore or whatever weird nicknames he came up with. He could finally put a name to the face.

"What would you like to drink?" Dick asked, figured he should ease in before he dropped the bomb
and handed him back his money.

"Water is fine," Jason said after a few seconds of pondering.

"I'll be back with the water then."

Dick headed back to the kitchen and got the man his drink. Thankfully, it wasn't rush hour yet so he had some down time in between and there weren't too many tables he was serving at the moment.

"Here you go." Dick set the glass down on the table gently.

"Thanks."

He knows he should be asking Jason for his order but he noticed that his menu was closed. Maybe it was a good opportunity to ask.

"So –" Dick started, catching his attention. Jason paused mid action, was about to take a sip from his water and set the glass back down. Eyes were on him, watching, curious. It made Dick nervous and he sucked in a deep breath. "Um. Last time, you gave me a tip. A big tip."

Jason's face lit up, lips curving into a small smile. Dick cringed, almost reconsidered his decision because he was about to upset Jason. But he went with it. "I wanted to give it back," he said and watched as Jason's smile fell.

He arched a brow, confused by what Dick meant. "Why?"

"It's too much and I don't deserve it," Dick explained.

"But you did. Your service was good," he claimed with confidence. Dick knew that he was only being polite because his performance was average. He didn't exert enough effort serving Jason and his friend. Even if he did, it didn't constitute a tip that large.

"I didn't," Dick argued. "It was simple service."

"I beg to differ."

Dick sighed, a little frustrated that Jason was arguing against him instead of just agreeing. But maybe, Dick was being the unreasonable one. He wasn't backing down even if he was.

"Look, I get that you want to help me. But I didn't need it. I didn't take it the first time and I don't need it now."

"It's fine. It's a tip. People are free to tip as much as they want."

It was a true statement but Dick still didn't like it. He didn't want to come off as rude but he felt like it should be stated. No matter how harsh it sounded. "I don't need your pity."

"It's not pity," his tone changed, almost defensive. Jason looked a little annoyed, lips turned into a frown, brows tight and fingers curled into a taut ball.

"It is. I know it is. I don't just get this much tip out of the blue." He dropped his voice, trying his best to remain calm and not burst out in anger.

Jason stared at him, eyes burning with confusion. He was assessing him, trying to gauge his emotions; reading him. Dick remained stoic, tried to keep his feelings of annoyance and shame
hidden. He wasn't about to reveal how he truly felt, stayed as professional as possible. Especially because he was in the workplace but also the fact that he barely knew Jason.

Suddenly, Jason grumbled loudly and slumped back in his seat. "Okay. Fine. It was," he admitted.

"Then can I give it back to you?" Dick asked,

Jason's jaw dropped and he laughed, amused at what he thought was a joke but then he stopped and stared at Dick, noticed how he wasn't laughing as well. "Are you serious?" Dick just glared at him, sapphire eyes daring him to laugh again. "Oh shit. You are."

"I am."

"Well, okay." Jason ran his fingers through his hair like he wasn't sure how to respond. "You know what? Just keep it okay? It's for your help the other night as well as your service."

Dick was about to argue against that but he realized he was lingering around too long. "I'm dropping it for now because I need to take your order."

"Good choice," he grinned, back to his playful self. He quickly threw out his order, probably went with his usual since he didn't even look at the menu.

"Is that all?"

"Yes and even if you give it back, I'm not taking it," Jason said, eyes glimmering with vanity.

Dick drew in a breath, wanting to tell him off but he remained composed and went to put in his order. He momentarily hid behind the register, taking in small breaths to calm his mind. It wasn't even a big deal and he knows it, yet he felt extremely frustrated. Flustered even. He could feel heat building in his cheeks. He understood that Jason had good intentions but it didn't sit well with him. It took a moment for Dick to calm down and once his heart rate slowed, he made his rounds, checking in with a few and serving others who had just entered.

When the food was out, he delivered it to Jason. He could feel his fingers trembling slightly, nervous for some odd reason. He set the plate of food down, surprised he didn't spill it.

His eyes met Jason's, who was watching him the whole time, interested. Dick bit his lower lip, feeling anxious. "C-Can I get you anything else?" He cursed himself for sounding a little unsteady.

Jason shook his head. "Nope. I'm good."

"Okay. If you need anything, please let me know."

"Sure thing."

He breathed a sigh of relief once he was away from Jason, finally able to relax again. For some reason, Jason made him feel nervous and he didn't understand why. It wasn't like he was mean to him or anything. Just, well, his presence was unnerving. Probably due to his looks and attitude and how those turquoise eyes were constantly on him. It wasn't something Dick was used too. He was blunt and brash and yet, he paid so much attention to Dick -- attention he's never received before.

For the rest of his meal, Jason never called on Dick again until it was time to pay.

"Here is the check and please --" Dick said, making eye contact with Jason. "Leave me a normal tip." There was sincerity in his eyes, almost pleading him to abide by his request. Jason looked as if
he wanted to retort, argue against him but after a few seconds, he nodded his head.

"Okay. If you keep the one I gave you, then I'll do as you say. That should be fair enough."

Of course he had to be a smart ass about it. Dick groaned, bit down on his lower lip and tugged it back with his teeth. He almost wanted to reject that but he knew it would backfire. Sighing, he agreed.

"Okay."

"Good."

Jason pulled out his wallet, set his credit card in the leather booklet and Dick picked it up. "I'll be right back then."

He did his business, swiped the card and ran the transaction. Once completed, he returned back to Jason's table and gave him his receipts to sign.

"Thank you for your time," Dick said then paused, hesitating but finished off his farewell. "Have a good day." It was docile and softly delivered but he tried to smile, albeit curt.

It earned him an amused grin from Jason. "Thanks. Same to you."

Dick nodded his head as a kind gesture, turned on his heel and headed right back to work. He could feel heat creeping upon his cheeks and for some reason, he felt oddly embarrassed.

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The next time he saw Jason was about a week later, not that he was keeping track. He was with his redhead friend again. Dick was actually finishing up his shift as he was taking care of the last table for the night. Their eyes met briefly and Jason waved at him. Dick was unsure of what to do, seeing that his hands were full at the moment with booklets and pens. He didn’t want to be rude because Jason had been anything but well, kind in a way so he felt bad if he just ignored him.

Dick gave a small smile, watched as Jason’s turquoise eyes beamed, pleased. Feeling awkward at the sudden realization of what had just occurred, he turned on his feet and quickly escaped to the back.

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When Jason had appeared about two weeks later, he was with someone different. A boy who bore a scowl on his face, dark hair and golden skin. He looked to be about twelve or thirteen and was running his mouth. Dick couldn’t hear as he was far away but he didn’t know who the kid was to Jason as they didn’t bear any resemblance. Surely not his brother?

Well, Dick never got the chance to find out as the two were seated at a table he was not in charge of. Given the fact, he was also about to go on his lunch break, just about checking out.

As he was passing off his shift to another who would be taking over for him, he felt eyes on his back, as if someone was staring at him. Dick threw a quick glance at the direction it was coming from and found Jason gazing straight at him. With a hand held up, he seemed as if he wanted to wave but was distracted as the kid in front of him pulled at his hand, attention falling back upon the boy.

Jason looked a little annoyed, eyes glancing back towards Dick. It was sort of amusing. But he
supposed he’ll just have to catch him next time.
Not that Dick wanted to talk to him anyways.

The chance finally came one quiet afternoon, when things were slow. Dick didn't sleep well last night, kept tossing and turning, nightmares keeping him from his slumber. Add to the fact that it was freezing and the blankets he had did not help.

As he rinsed his hands at the sink, Dick examined himself in the mirror. He knew he looked awful, felt awful, but he looked worse for wear. Almost like a zombie. His hair was a complete mess, unkempt as he didn’t have time to get ready, having fallen asleep near dawn and waking up late. He had it pulled into a messy ponytail. His eyes were blazed, blood-shot with dark bags. His face pale, drained of any color and he had a slight headache from not sleeping.

He probably should have taken the day off but he couldn’t afford it.

Dick emerged from the bathroom, getting back to work. Sapphire eyes scanned the area as it was a common habit of his. His face lit up when he spotted a familiar head of hair and side profile.

It was Jason.

It was strange how whenever Jason visited, he was always searching around for Dick. The same could be said for him. He didn’t have the best first impression of Jason and he made him feel strange, a current of emotions running wild within him but it wasn't a bad feeling. Jason wasn’t a bad person overall. He had good intentions to say the least.

It’s not as if Dick didn’t find this whole thing weird with how Jason frequently came to eat at the restaurant. Maybe he had been a regular customer but Dick had never taken notice. Though he didn’t care much for people as they weren’t pleasant to be around. So it made sense he never noticed. Besides, Dick had been a dishwasher most of his duration here, stuck in the back, until he was finally offered to be a waiter.

Dick wasn’t one to openly talk to another nor did others really talk to him unless they had to. The past had scarred him heavily and he decided it was best he kept his distance. He didn’t hate people per say but well, it was difficult interacting with them. He had tried, failed and been burned by his efforts. It wasn’t worth it to him.

Drawing in a breath, Dick tried to relax himself as he walked towards Jason. He could feel his hands trembling, nervous, not quite sure why. But there was just something about Jason that made him feel jittery -- worked his nerves into a bundle of mess, heart pumping rapidly.

As he made a beeline for Jason, the man spotted him and smiled, almost eager. He waved. “Hey,” he said.

“H-Hey.” Dick tried to keep his voice stable, didn’t want to come off as odd. His hands were still shaking and Dick had hold his arm down to hide his trembling. He prayed it would subside soon.

“It’s been awhile,” Jason said.

“Yeah. Um – yeah it has.” His headache made it difficult to concentrate.

“I tried visiting a few times but I seemed to have missed you.”
“Oh. That’s…unfortunate.”

“It was. I wanted to talk to you.” Jason seemed tamer than their previous encounters. A little less stuck-up, like he had dialed it down.

Dick blinked at him, surprised to hear that. He’s never heard anyone tell him that before so he was caught off guard. He wasn’t sure what to say, or how to answer that so he quickly switched topics. “Uh. What would you like to drink?”

Jason looked as if he wanted to switch the topic back but he let it pass. “Oh. Right,” he said and flipped open the menu, skimming through it quickly. It didn’t really look like he was actually looking for a beverage as he was in the food section. He must have realized his error as he closed the book shut abruptly. “I’ll just have a coke.”

“Sure thing. I’ll get that right out.”

Dick walked away, still clutching onto his arm and got Jason’s drink. When he returned back to Jason’s table, he tried his best to set down his cup without spilling it. He succeeded and internally pat himself on the back.

“Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Are you ready to order?”

“Sure. Before I do that,” Jason paused, eyes lowering to Dick’s arm. “Are you injured?” He asked, noticed how Dick had one arm flat while he held it down with his other hand.

“Oh. No, I’m not,” Dick answered, surprised that Jason was perceptive. Most wouldn’t have bothered to care.

Jason sighed in relief. “That’s good. I was just curious since you kept holding your arm.”


“Yeah. No problem.” Jason smiled and for a moment, Dick thought he looked sincere. “I’ll just have the number 3.”

“Sure. I’ll put the order in and it should be out soon.”

It was difficult to talk to Jason while he was working. He could only make small talk on occasion whenever he needed service. Despite the fact that the place wasn’t that busy at the moment, he still needed to be attentive and not chatter.

The food was out and Dick brought it to their respective tables, bringing Jason’s last.

“It’s finally here. I was starving,” Jason said and took a bite of a fry.

Dick smiled softly at his excitement. “It’s good the kitchen was fast then.”

Jason hummed in agreement, munching on his fries. “Um, if you need anything else, please let me know.” Dick was about to turn away but Jason stopped him.

“Alright. Then, I have a question,” Jason said.

“Oh?”
“How have you been?”


“You know.” He tried gesturing with his hands. “How are you?”

Again, Dick was having trouble comprehending. He stared at the man, who was grinning like a child, wondering what he was getting at. Did he really just want to know how Dick was doing? Or was there a hidden agenda behind his question?

“I’m fine I guess?” He was unsure of how to exactly respond.

“You guess?”

Dick nodded slowly, still confused. “Yeah, I guess.”

Jason chuckled. “You sure?”

“Uh. Yes.” He was starting to feel a little embarrassed about this, could feel heat rising and settling in his cheeks.

Jason gazed at him, didn’t blink at all, as if he was trying to look into his soul. It made Dick shift uncomfortably. Then he shrugged his shoulders. “Alright then. Could I get another refill?”

Dick wanted to poke further but he debated against it. He reached for Jason’s empty glass, fingers still slightly shaking. He hoped Jason hadn’t noticed as he was reaching over him but it might have been a bit obvious because he found the man staring again.

“I’ll be right back,” Dick said and left again.

The rest of the time was pretty static for Dick. He waited other tables as more customers came in. He took care of their orders and bills and once he noticed Jason was finished, he handed him his bill and then quickly disappeared to attend to another table.

When he came back around again, Jason was gone and Dick was curious as to whether he left or not. Dick went to check on the table and found cash on the tray. It looked like he had paid and then left.

He checked the amount, sure to find the correct total for the meal, as well as a tip, bordering on a 20%. Which Dick was thankful for that he didn’t get another outrageous amount though definitely on the higher end for a one person meal. He brought the tray back to the register to cash in the amount. As he was about to file the receipt away, he saw a note on the one sitting below the first, the guest copy.

Written in messy handwriting, there was a number. A phone number.

XXX-XXX-XXXX
Hey… I’m interested in getting to know you more.
Please give me a call if you’d like.

That trembling in his fingers that felt like it was about to disappear? Yeah well, it just got worse. And there was a strange prickling feeling at his fingertips. He felt frazzled and just didn’t see what Jason saw in him. What made him so interesting that this man was making an effort to speak to him? To go as far as to give him his number?
Dick didn’t understand but even then, he was a little curious. He folded the piece of paper and tucked it into his pockets just for future reference.

Maybe, just maybe if he could work up enough courage, he’ll give him a call.
Chapter 4

Jason stared at his phone, waiting for a call to come in from a particular waiter he was smitten with – a waiter named Dick. But he got nothing. Not a single call or even a message. A message would have been fine. Or some form of communication that maybe he wasn't interested. Or maybe he was just busy.

It's not like he was desperate. No, not him.

Okay, maybe just a tiny bit. But he was more peeved than fraught, felt a little rejected. If Dick wanted to reject him then he could have just told him. Jason would have appreciated that.

It’s not like it's been that long, only about a week and he was sure he wasn't that impatient. A bit of time had gone by and surely, he should have had some downtime to give Jason a call. But maybe Dick was just a special case. Maybe he couldn't afford the time to call him. Yeah, maybe it was just that. Honestly, Jason was just making excuses, anything to make himself feel better.

Seven days was a struggle for him. Seven days was way too long. He initially waited three, told himself he'd just go check up on Dick but decided not to. He didn't want to appear desperate and also didn't want to come off as aggressive. So he continued to wait until the itch he'd been scratching couldn't be contained anymore.

"Dude, Jason," Roy called out.

"What?" Jason shouted, angry and annoyed.

Roy arched a brow at him, was sitting sideways off an arm chair with his legs dangling over the side. "Chill. If he didn't reply, means he's not interested. Besides, why are you trying so hard with that?"

"His name is Dick," Jason glared at Roy, not liking the insult he was throwing at him.

"Not like I give a shit," Roy said and shrugged his shoulder, not caring at all. "My question is, why are you trying to tap that?"

Jason narrowed his eyes, giving him a look of irritation. "Roy. That's not what I'm trying to do. I'm not after him romantically.

"You sure? Because you've been complaining to me all week. Fucking, all week. Every day! If you don't want to sleep with him, then what?"

"I just –" Jason breathed, raked a hand through his hair. "I just want to be friends."

"Why friends though? You have me," he said and pointed to himself with flare, earning an eye roll from Jason.

"You can't be my only friend. Besides, he just seems....interesting." Jason moved from where he was standing and sat down on the couch. He tipped his head back, closed his eyes and thought of Dick. The first thing he saw were those pretty blue eyes, so vivid and bright, like the ocean. They completely mesmerized him. But despite the beauty of those colors, there was a hint of darkness beneath those eyes. A sadness that he was carrying. That look had captured his attention. It didn't at first but the more he saw him, the more Dick piqued Jason's interest.
"Jason. You're blind. I see nothing," Roy said and flicked a piece of candy he was eating at Jason. Jason caught it and threw it back.

“I don’t need to explain myself to you.”

“You don’t need to but I don’t get why you’re interested. He's not even your type and you didn’t even really care about him in the first place.”

That was a true statement that he can't deny. While Dick initially did weird him out, there was always a bit of fascination. At first, it was pity. Okay, to put it in better terms, it started with pity (still slightly felt pity for him) because Dick lived in a fucking dump and who wouldn't think that upon seeing his place? And the condition Dick was in himself? The clothes he wore? Yeah -- most would have felt bad for him but wouldn't even try to help. At least Jason wanted to but Dick was conservative enough to not take his money.

Which was a surprise to Jason because most would take his money without a second thought. That was what sparked his interest in Dick but he still couldn't get pass all the strangeness that came with him. He was just a little odd to Jason. So he decided to just let it die, figured what the hell, the guy was weird and there was no point in thinking about it. Plus he probably would never see him again.

Well, Jason was wrong. When he met him the second time, that spark reignited itself. While he was joking around with Roy, teasing Dick behind his back which he did feel a little bad about after, he couldn't help but want to know more about him. Just, there was something about Dick that Jason wanted to find out more about. He was interesting and different – with the way he spoke, how he acted and how reserved he was. Dick wasn't like anyone he's ever met before and it was refreshing in a sense.

Knowing that Roy wouldn't understand, Jason didn't bother explaining it to him. Even though the two were similar, in terms of their social upbringing since Roy was also adopted by a rich man, they were different. Roy was a bigger jerk than Jason was and they both had a set of varying values based on how they were raised.

Sighing, Jason just continued to complain some more, vent his frustrations because he just needed an outlet. Who better than Roy?

“I don't understand why he hasn't called? I mean, I've never had anyone not call me back.”

"Confident much?"

Jason laughed. "Not really and that’s not what I meant."


Jason just rolled his eyes at that comment. "I'm going to go ask him."

"And then do what? What if he says he's not interested? What if you scare him away? I still don't get why you're trying so hard. Jason, you could do so much better.”

Jason sighed heavily. "I told you, that's not – fuck. Why do I even try with you? Look, to put it in Lyman terms, I just want to be friends. That's it." Seriously, that was all he wanted. Why couldn't Roy understand? It was so simple and yet, Roy chose not to listen. It's not like Dick was his type in the first place anyways because he wasn't. Not a single bit. There wasn't anything attractive about him except for say, his pretty blue eyes. All Jason wanted was to get to know him, to find out more about who Dick is. And maybe unravel the mystery behind that look in his eyes which was one
"Fuck it. I'm going." Jason abruptly stood up from his seat and grabbed his jacket that was lying on the floor. He slipped it on and headed towards the door as Roy was calling out to him.

As he strolled down the stairs, he passed by Alfred, their butler, waved at him and headed straight for the garage.

Whatever happened, he was going to find out the reason why Dick hasn't contacted him.

When he arrived at the restaurant, it was already a little late in the evening. Wasted part of his day moping around, playing video games with Roy and bitching when he could have just went to the source of his frustrations. Luckily for him, the place wasn't busy considering it was only a weekday. Jason spotted Dick as he walked through the door – he wasn't a hard miss. Found Dick with his back towards him, speaking to a few customers seated at a table. Jason went up to the hostess, the blonde girl he typically saw whose name he finally learned to remember, Stephanie, and asked to be put in the area Dick was in charge of for the day. He was immediately seated and waited for Dick to turn around so he could grab his attention.

"Hello." Jason noticed how strained his voice sounded, was a little perplexed about that. Maybe he was just nervous.

Jason drew in a breath. "Hey," he greeted and tried to remain calm, reeling in his frustration so he wouldn't just burst at Dick. He needed to do this tactfully – kind and civil. "How's it going?"

"...Fine. You?" The way he said it sounded a little cold and Jason got the inkling that Dick didn't want to talk to him. Now, he felt irritated. Maybe he won't be nice about it. Maybe he'll just bluntly say it. Yeah, that was more of how Jason operated.

"Funny you ask," Jason started, pulled his lips into a fake smile before it faded away. "I wanted to ask you something."

Dick arched a brow, head tilting slightly to the side in question. "...Yes?"

"Why haven't you called me back?"

"Uh, I –" Jason kept their eyes locked, intensely staring when he realized that Dick was trying to look away. "I just –" His voice dropped, low and soft. "I didn't have a reason to."

"Fair. But you could have maybe sent me a message instead of leaving me hanging. That would
have worked." Jason knew he sounded bitter, came off as angry but he couldn't help it. It wasn't enjoyable to be ignored.

Dick was squirming, fingers fumbling with the hem of his shirt. "Sorry. I didn't mean to ignore you. I just – I don't have a – um, a cell phone," he murmured. There was a bright red color crawling upon his cheeks.

Now Jason felt dumb for being a complete jerk. For blaming Dick, calling him out and putting him on the spot when it wasn't really his fault. There was no obligation for Dick to even call Jason so really, Jason was the one in the wrong. Yet, he was releasing all his anger onto Dick. Fuck, he was being an asshole.

Jason dragged a hand over his face, pinched the bridge of his nose in remorse. "Sorry. I'm sorry. Didn't mean to call you out like that." Because of course Dick wouldn't have a cell phone. He should have accounted for that.

"No. No. It's reasonable." He said, not even bothering to tell Jason otherwise and just took his accusation at face value. "I still had other ways to call you."

What the hell? Jason was being a complete jerk and wrongfully blaming Dick and yet, he was just taking it like it meant nothing.

This didn’t sit well with him and he felt awful. "Why are you just – why aren't you blaming me?"

"What do you mean?"

"I yelled at you."

"Yeah but it was my fault."

"No it wasn't."

"But –"

"It wasn't. It isn't. Just –" God damn, Jason was getting frustrated. He didn't want to drag this argument on because it was unlikely either of them would give in. Letting out a sigh, he shook his head. "Actually, know what? How about I take you out to apologize. When is your shift over?"

Dick was quiet again, almost rolling back into himself. "You – you don't have to. It's not your fault so you don't have to feel obligated."

Jason groaned, exasperated that Dick was not getting the hint and implication behind his intention. "That's part of it but, look Dick, I'm asking you out."

"Oh." He looked surprised. "Why?"

For real? How much more could Jason be blunt about this?

"I'm just – well, I want to be friends with you," he explained.

Dick still didn't look convinced, giving him a skeptical look. "Okay. But why?"

Jason sighed, feeling really frustrated. Like he was possibly talking to a child who didn't comprehend his words. "Because I think you're...interesting. And –" he cut Dick off immediately when he looked like he wanted to retort. "I want to get to know you. So please, tell me when you're off and I can meet with you."
Dick scrunched his nose and pressed his lips into a thin line, contemplating. He didn't look so sure about Jason's invitation and well, if he rejected, Jason would just have to try another time. He wasn’t giving up so easily.

"Okay,” he answered. “I'm off at 9:30. But I can't stay out too late.”

"That’s fine. We won't take long. I'll meet you in front of here then?"

"Yeah."

"Great.” Jason was grinning, happy to have gotten Dick to agree to go out with him.

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As planned, Jason was waiting outside of the restaurant when Dick emerged from behind the doors. He was wearing the same clothes as Jason had seen him in earlier. A pair of dark faded jeans with a slightly worn out navy hoodie and some old black sneakers. He looked presentable for the most part but tired, like he didn't have enough sleep. Actually looked worse than earlier, almost as bad as that other time he saw him where he looked like he was about to faint any minute.

That made Jason wonder if Dick ever got any sleep at all or at least the recommended hours a person should have every night. He definitely had time, Jason was sure since there were times he visited the restaurant and Dick wasn't around. He assumed he wasn't working all the damn time.

Dick waved at him humbly. "Hi."

"Hey, so, any place you’d like to go?” Jason asked out of courtesy, found that it was also a good way to gauge what Dick liked.


"It's my treat though."

"Jason, you don't have to,” Dick said and re-adjusted his backpack yet again. Jason seemed to think that was a sign of him being uncomfortable, noticed that he often fidgeted when he was.

He sighed, and slipped his hands into his pockets, fingers curling. "But I want to. It can be something simple. Anywhere you'd like to go. Just name it. I just want to chat with you.”

Dick puffed air into his cheek and brought a hand to his chin, thinking. Jason waited patiently for an answer.

"Anywhere?"

“Anywhere.”

“Okay. I have a place in mind…” He said, words trailing off.

"Cool. I can drive." Jason said as he whipped out his keys and dangled them.
"Really?" Jason asked, quite surprised at Dick's pick. Wasn't sure what to think of the place. They were parked in front of a small dimly lit shop that was cornered between a few local businesses.

"Yeah." Dick breathed and opened the door to the car. Jason mimicked his actions and followed him to the front of the building. They entered inside and Jason was surprised at what he found. Compared to the exterior of the building, which was dark, old and dingy, the inside felt cozy and aesthetically pleasing. Almost had an at-home type feeling.

The place was a mixture of a cafe and a book shop. To the right was the cafe, adorned with the kitchenette for coffee and food as well as tables and chairs. The colors of the interior design were light and warm, giving off a relaxing ambience.

The other side of the shop, the 'library' like area, was lined with shelves full of books, as well as tables and comfortable armchairs and couches spread throughout for guests to sit on. From the outside, the shop appeared small but it was actually quite spacious.

The place was well-lit, not too bright or dark, just the right setting for reading. Jason walked along the bookshelves, taking a look at the books. Despite his demeanor, he loved to read. Was grateful that his adopted father had a huge library at his expense.

As he took a closer look at the books, he noticed that they were a bit worn. Confused, he turned to look at Dick who was watching him. "Are these used books?"

Dick nodded. "It's not for sale," he said, quick to pick up on what Jason was trying to ask. "This place is basically a library with a cafe. The owners are nice. I come here to read on occasion when I have time," Dick explained.

Well that was quite a pleasant surprise. He didn't expect Dick to bring him to such a gem of a place.

"So you want to hang out here?"

"Yeah. If you don't mind."

"Sure. I like books."

Whoa. Jason was not expecting to see such a reaction from Dick. Actually, he never thought he'd see such a vibrant facial expression from the gloomy man. He had to take a moment to think, too flabbergasted to comprehend what was going on because Dick was smiling. He was fucking smiling. The corners of his lips were curved upwards into a bright and genuine smile. Teeth all showing and he was practically glowing. Holy fuck. Dick had a very pretty smile. Damn pretty fucking smile. Matched perfectly with those gorgeous eyes.

This blew him away. He just – wow. Couldn't believe what he was seeing. Dick often gave him awkward smiles or tired ones. But this one was beautiful. So beautiful he wanted to see it again but it quickly disappeared.

Shame. He should have taken a moment to capture it on camera.

To say the least, Jason was a little smitten by that smile. Okay. Maybe a lot.
"Do you want to go sit in that corner?" Dick suggested, already taking a step towards where he was pointing at.

"Good with that," he answered, following along. "Don't you want something to eat or drink?"

Dick threw him a quick glance and shook his head. "No I'm fine."

Jason was beginning to think the whole reason why they came here was so he could get Jason to not pay for him. It wasn't a place that made him obligated to treat Dick to anything which is why he chose this library cafe.

Smart. Jason had to give kudos to Dick. Despite him being conservative, he was at least thoughtful in a sense. Jason let it slide though, didn't want to upset him.

They found two comfortable looking arm chairs in the corner Dick was referring too. No one was within the area as they were mostly occupied in the cafe. The shop was also scarce of customers considering it was late at night. Most were probably out doing other things -- like partying. Well, this was good for them anyways -- quiet and peaceful.

Besides, what time did this place close anyways? Jason glanced over at the owners who were behind the counter, finally taking notice of them. They were a lovely and kind looking couple, probably in their middle ages. He was surprised they were open so late, figured they would have closed early enough to enjoy some free time to themselves.

"So," Dick said, snapping Jason out of his thoughts. "What do you want to talk about?" Dick asked as he pulled his legs onto the couch and wrapped his arms tightly around them.

"Anything is fine. Anything you'd like to tell me." Jason didn't have an agenda when he asked Dick out. Figured he'd just go with the flow since that was how he usually rolled.

Dick propped his chin on his knees and hummed. He didn't pipe a word and minutes passed without a single word being exchanged between them.

Seeing that he wasn't going to say anything, Jason decided to take the initiative instead. "Let's start with names then." They already knew each other's first name but not their full name. Jason debated on whether he should share his current name or the one he had before he was adopted. He settled for the latter, considering either way, most would know who he is. "I'm Jason Todd."

Dick didn't seem surprised by his name and simply gave his reply. "Richard Grayson. But I go by Dick."

Jason gave it a moment, to see if there was any reaction he might get out of Dick. Maybe a delayed one as the information sank in but there was nothing. Maybe Dick really didn't know anything about him? That was possible.

Jason went on to share a bit more about himself since this was basically a get-to-know-you session. Since he was the initiator, he had to offer himself up first. "I'm adopted."

Dick's eyes sparkled in interest at that, ears perking up. "Oh?"

"Yep." Should he tell him or should he not? Jason didn't think it mattered because Dick didn't seem like the type to judge a person based on status. Hell, he rejected his money. It should be fine. His opinion shouldn't change. "I'm Bruce Wayne's adopted son. So technically, my full name is Jason Todd-Wayne."
"Oh," Dick said, eyes wide. "I see." Based on his reaction, he definitely knew who Bruce Wayne is. "I know a little bit about the Wayne family from what I see in the news sometimes."

"Yeah. I was adopted when I was five since my mom died and my dad ran off on us. Bruce found me when I was trying to steal something from his car and decided to take me in. He has treated me well so I appreciate it."

Jason had a good relationship with Bruce. While he loved him, he also hated him at the same time. Bruce was a good father but he wasn't always around, too busy with work and what not but the man was overbearing and nosy. There were times he'd act like a clingy father, always wanting to know what's up with his sons. He was also quite the overprotective father as well. Didn't like it when people got close to his family for monetary reasons. He often had to screen his friends, giving them a pass or a fail. It was annoying and Jason hated dealing with it so he tried to keep information about himself low key. Despite all that, he was still a fairly good father.

"You have two brothers too don't you? I recall that Mr. Wayne had 3 sons."

Jason almost snorted at hearing Dick call him Mr. Wayne. Actually, it was amusing to him whenever he heard anyone call him that. To him, he was known as Bruce or Old Man. Or father as that is what his youngest brother calls him. Sometimes he'd clown on him and call him dad for fun.

"Yep, two younger ones. One named Tim, adopted. Then there's Damian, the biological son. They're all great. We also have a butler if we're speaking of the whole family," Jason said, smiling fondly at the thought of his family. As he was busy reminiscing on past memories, Jason missed the sudden smile that flickered momentarily on Dick's face. "How about you?" He asked.

Dick bit down on his lower lip, fingers curling around his legs. "I'm an orphan."

Jason blinked, green-blue eyes staring at him in surprise. He hadn't expected that. Just thought that his family might have just been unfortunate and couldn't provide for him.

"My parents..." Dick trailed off, gazing into the far distance like he was staring into nothing. Then suddenly, a sadness washed over his blue eyes. Eyes that were so clear a second ago were suddenly clouded with despair. It looked difficult for him to talk about his parents and Jason suddenly felt bad for asking.

"You don't need to tell me if you don't want to. I think I can understand."

Dick sucked in a heavy breath and nodded. "Thanks," he murmured. He leaned back in his seat, head lolling to the side and pressed his cheek against the chair. His eyes fell shut and he was taking in small shaky breaths.

Jason noticed how uncomfortable Dick was with how pale his face had become and the strain was clearly evident in his expression. They hadn't even been here that long but he felt like he should ask, didn't want to push Dick any further if he couldn't handle it. "Would you like to go home?"

"Yeah," Dick answered without lifting his eyes open. "If you don't mind, I'd like to go home."

Jason nodded, knowing full well that the man couldn't see him. "Sure. We can do that."

He opened his eyes and gave a sheepish smile. "Thanks."

"Yeah. Can I give you a ride back?"

"It's fine. I can walk. It's nearby." Dick rose from his seat and grabbed his backpack from off the
ground.

"It's okay. I can do it." Jason didn't want Dick going home alone when he looked on the verge of collapse.

"Jason..."

"It won't be an issue," he was adamant on taking him home. Wanted to make sure he got back okay.

Dick looked at him, was about to argue but he was probably too tired to protest and nodded his head.

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Jason arrived in front of Dick’s apartment and the man got out of the car. He lowered the window, leaning towards it as Dick peeked inside.

He smiled softly. "Sorry it was so short."

"It’s fine. Don’t worry about it."

"Also, thanks for the ride and your time."

"No problem. I had a nice time."

They stalled for a bit, silence falling between them.

"You know," he started. "You're the first person to ever take an interest in me. Actually tried talking to me." Dick admitted, almost shy.

Jason arched a brow. "Really?"

"Yeah. So I um – I appreciate it. It was...nice."

Jason felt himself break out into a grin. "Well I hope I get to know you better."

Dick's smile wavered, suddenly becoming tense, almost felt burdened by that comment. "That's –"

"It's fine. I'll see you later though? Call me when you have the chance."

Dick sighed but nodded his head. "Okay. I'll...try."

That's all Jason wanted to hear and he was hopeful that Dick would contact him soon. If not, well, he knew where to find him. They bid farewell and Jason was on his way home.

He never expected that he would take an interest in a man who he initially thought was a bit of an oddball. But the more he saw him and the more he watched Dick, the more he wanted to know about him. To unravel the mystery behind Dick Grayson.

That was besides the fact that he had a pretty smile and beautiful blue eyes. Jason was so not smitten by that. Not at all.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Just wanted to say thanks for all the lovely comments and support and for reading this fic! Keeps me going!
Also, I'll be trying to update this at least once a week :)

Jason Todd was a fairly interesting person, at least, that's what Dick thought. His first impression of him wasn't the greatest but after the last encounter, Dick would retract his statement about him being an asshole because he really wasn't. Just a bit blunt and brash but overall, he was fairly nice. He wasn't sure how he was with anyone else but at least to Dick, he was.

The other night at the library cafe had been awkward after Dick's sudden need to go home. Or more like, he needed to go home because he was having a mental breakdown. The story of his parents’ death wasn't something he enjoyed talking about or even thinking about. It brought back horrible memories, feelings that he would rather keep buried under. They weren't good for him and the thought of the night of their deaths would just turn him into an emotional mess. It didn't help with his mental health and he wanted to keep his mind clear – keep that darkness he knows that's in him at bay.

Feeling a little regretful, Dick decided to give Jason another try and by try, he had to work up enough courage to be the one to reach out to Jason, gave him a call. He didn't own a cell phone but he did have a landline as it was the cheaper option. It was mainly used for communicating for work and any other related business needs. It wasn't too big of a deal since he didn't have a need for a cell phone so any way to save him money helped a lot.

When Jason picked up the phone he sounded awfully excited which honestly made Dick feel relieved. He was so nervous that he actually dropped the call a few times after dialing the number. Wasn't sure how Jason would react and he knows he can be a little awkward on the phone too. Dick kind of had a bit of doubt that Jason was putting up a front, pretended to be interested because Dick wasn't that remarkable. He barely talked – couldn't talk much about himself. The past brought up bad memories that he would rather forget. They haunted him enough and he didn't want to even think about it if he didn't have to.

Jason was there to learn more about Dick and what could he even learn if Dick didn't want to talk about himself? His hobbies? Yeah right. Like he had any hobbies but he guessed that reading was a hobby of his. Was surprised to find out that Jason also liked to read since he didn't seem the type. Dick supposed that was one aspect they could share on. Other than that, he didn't do much else.

Either way, there was no benefit to Jason lying to Dick so he gave him the benefit of the doubt. This was the first person in a long time to genuinely make an effort to befriend him or at least talk to him. Most thought he was a creep or too weird and avoided him. It had happened pretty consistently throughout his life but he could understand why. If he was better at ignoring people, it would have helped but he wasn't.

So Dick invited Jason out. Hoped he wasn't being too demanding with not wanting to go to places that were too extravagant for him. In other words, too expensive that he couldn't afford it. Dick straightforwardly told Jason, stated that if they were going to hang out, it had to be cost efficient
for him. Can't be anywhere outside of his budget. Jason agreed and he didn't seem to mind it much. Told Dick it was whatever he was comfortable with. He appreciated Jason's consideration but deep down, he couldn't help but think that maybe it did annoy him. That part of him wanted to do more but he was restricted. If he did, he was good at hiding it.

Dick suggested a small cafe for lunch, a place he often went to. The price was good for the amount of food they served. He always tried his best to budget – considered a price to quantity ratio with a bit of quality factored into the equation as well. Dick didn't eat out as often, most of the time he would make simple meals for himself. It was the more affordable option and he didn't want to splurge for good food, worried he wouldn't have enough to pay for rent and his living expenses. His life was already a struggle to deal with and he didn't want any further problems.

They met up at the cafe and Jason had a wide grin on his face when he spotted Dick.

"Hey," Jason said.

"Hey."

And then, they just sort of stood there awkwardly, unsure of where to continue on from that. Good thing Jason had better social skills then him and actually did something, like opening the door to the cafe.

"Let's go in," he said and made a hand gesture for Dick to go first. Dick just stared at him but nodded his head.

Once inside, they found that the place wasn't too packed due to it being before lunch rush. They lined up to order their meal at the front. As they waited, Jason tried striking up a conversation, asked him for recommendations.

"...I don't know what you like." Dick didn't like being asked for his opinions because he always felt self-conscious about whether he picked something they didn't like.

"Anything. I'm not picky."

"Okay..." Dick stared up at the menu, eyes skimming through the various food choices they had. Like sandwiches, salads, soups and hot dogs.

"What about the chill dog?" Figured that might be good for Jason, it was flavorful and filled with protein. Dick himself quite liked it.

"Oh shit. How'd you know chili dogs were my favorite?" There was a silly grin on Jason's face and his eyes were sparkling.

Dick blinked at the man. "I didn't?"

Turquoise eyes stared straight at him and suddenly, he was chuckling. "I know that. It was a figure of speech. But seriously, it's one of my all-time favorite food."

"That's...good to know." Dick factored away the new piece of information since it might be useful later on.

They quickly ordered and went to sit down at a table. As they waited for their food to arrive, Jason once again, tried to get another conversation going. Dick almost felt bad because Jason was putting a lot of effort but at the same time, Dick just wasn't good at talking.
"How are you feeling?"

"Fine."

Jason eyed him suspiciously, like he wasn't sure if Dick was telling the truth or not. He wasn't but he wasn't going to tell him otherwise. Dick didn't sleep well last night and he was tired, just wanted to sleep but he already made plans and felt bad cancelling.

"You sure?"

Dick nodded.

"You just look tired." For being someone that seemed mostly disinterested in things, he was sure perceptive. Dick knew that he had dark circles under his eyes and he guessed they were pretty bad today but he always had them so it shouldn't have been that obvious.

"I'm fine. Don't worry." Dick waved him off, figured it was better for Jason's own well-being to not worry about Dick. He could take care of himself just fine.

"Hm. But –" Jason said and was staring at his face, making him feel a little uncomfortable. Dick started shifting in his seat, wanting to hide away from that all-watching gaze. “Your cheek…”

Dick brought a hand to his face and covered up the bruise. He had completely forgotten it was there, thought his hair had covered it enough but clearly not.

“It’s nothing,” he quickly replied.

Jason didn’t seem convinced and was eyeing him suspiciously, probably speculating a variety of scenarios of how he got it. “What happened?”

“Nothing. I accidentally bumped into the door.”

“On your cheek?”

Okay that sounded dumb but Dick wasn’t backing down and nodded his head. “Yeah.”

Jason hummed quietly, still not believing him but let out a sigh anyways. “Alright,” he said and shrugged his shoulders.

Dick relaxed, thankful he didn’t have to explain himself. It would have been awkward.

A moment of silence passed between them until Jason decided to start up another conversation about hobbies or what he liked to do. Dick’s answers were mostly short. He didn't have many hobbies besides reading books and watching movies when he can. He could barely keep the conversation alive so Jason shared a bit about himself, very general information like his own hobbies. It didn't go on too long since they were interrupted when their food arrived.

The food smelled heavenly and Dick was extremely hungry, hadn't ate since lunch yesterday. He ran into a bit of trouble and just completely forgot to eat.

"Looks amazing," Jason mumbled, stealing Dick's attention away from his delicious looking panini.

When blue eyes fell upon Jason, Dick watched as he picked up his chili dog and took a bite of it. He was eager to hear his thoughts on how it tasted. There was a bit of a mess that he made, sauce smeared at the corners of his mouth and tip of his chin, but the expression he made, one full of
bliss, answered Dick's question.

"It's so good," Jason muttered with a mouthful of food and then took another bite. He was making noises as he ate and Dick was a bit amused, found himself smiling at how Jason was enjoying his food.

It was relaxing to see someone eating their food so earnestly in his presence, with him as company. Dick's meal times weren't always pleasant. Sometimes they were but most of the time, they weren't. Eating with Jason was different. It was...nice.

Dick never really made any friends. Didn't actually have any friends. His parents’ death had traumatized him greatly and he became closed off when he entered the orphanage. The kids there had tried to talk to him but he would never respond. Eventually, they stopped including him and then when he started exhibiting strange behaviors, they started bullying him.

The kids at the schools he went to weren't any better. They also bullied him because he was different. Because they didn’t like that he was different. That he was poor, an orphan, called him weird and a creep.

It bothered him at first but as he grew older, he became numb to it. Tried to ignore the insults thrown at him as best as he could. It wasn’t actually too hard because his mind was too occupied on other things.

His current life was a constant turmoil. He worked two jobs that took up most of his time. Any free time he had was spent sleeping or eating. Sometimes when he wasn’t too tired, he’d indulge in reading books or watching movies. Dick didn’t have a TV so he often took a trip to the old movie theaters where they previewed movies for a dollar. They were typically older films but that didn’t bother him.

Other than that, he didn't live a very colorful life. He couldn't afford to even if he wanted, but he's been doing this since he was young so it was basically normal for him.

Jason though, was a complete curve ball. Dick couldn’t quite pin point what it was that Jason saw in him. Was it because he helped him? Or was he really that interested in being his friend? Or was it pity?

Jason did say he wanted to be his friend so maybe that was the truth. Still, Dick was skeptical but he didn’t mind him so much and honestly, was looking forward to learning more about the man.

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The next time they met was at a popular mom and pop coffee house Jason recommended. Dick made some time in the morning to meet up with Jason as the man had invited him out a few days earlier. He had work but it wasn't until noon.

“I swear Dick, this place has the best coffee.” Jason was grinning and sounded like an excited child as he talked about the coffee, rambling a list of drinks he liked best.

Dick wasn't much of a gourmet coffee drinker. He honestly took it black since it was the cheaper option and it was a necessity to keeping him awake.
They both ordered and Dick was going to get a simple black coffee with cream but Jason called him boring, then interrupted him and changed his coffee to a white chocolate mocha. And paid too. The jerk.

“Jason,” Dick started, about to reprimand him.

“It’s fine. My treat.”

“You can’t treat me,” Dick said and crossed his arms over his chest, but Jason ignored him.

After they ordered, they moved off to the side to wait for their drinks. Dick tried to slip him some cash but Jason didn’t take it, and it annoyed Dick.

“I’m treating you next time then.”

Jason just laughed and shook his head. “Sure. If I let you.”

Dick just groaned loudly and ignored him, focused his attention on his surroundings instead. The place was packed and there was a lot of traffic. The line was long and curved all the way to the entrance. There were people spread throughout the place, some sitting at tables, others standing around waiting for their coffee.

While he waited, he felt a strange and numb sensation tingle at the tip of his fingers and a chill crawled up his back. The wave of fear washed over Dick and his stomach churned, his eye twitching. His chest tightened, an ominous feeling rising within him. Something bad was going to happen but he wasn’t sure what.

He felt on edge, breathing heavily as his eyes darted around the shop, looking for any signs of something possibly going wrong. Dick had a bad vibe that something bad was going to happen to Jason but he didn’t know what. Either way, he needed to try and stop it before things went terribly wrong.

There was a constant flow of people walking around them, passing by or squeezing in between. They seemed pretty harmless but the crowd was growing as more people queued for orders. The moment that Jason’s name was called, Dick immediately knew that something would happen within the next few minutes.

He reached a hand out to stop Jason but was too slow. Jason was already at the counter, grabbing his coffee. Dick watched as a lady walked behind Jason, completely unaware of his presence since she was looking the other way. He quickly moved the moment Jason turned around and bumped into the lady. The impact caused him to lose his grip on the coffee, the cup tipping towards him but Dick had seen this coming and knocked the cup away with his hand. The cap was undone, blazing hot coffee spilling over Dick’s hand, a bit splashed onto his clothes and then crashed to the floor.

The whole room was dead silent until gasps and murmurs erupted, all eyes staring at the accident that just occurred.

“What the fuck?” Jason shouted.

Dick yelped in pain from the impact and Jason heard him. Turquoise eyes widen when he saw the after effects of the disaster. Jason immediately grabbed him by the arm and yanked him to the bathroom, running his hand under cold water.

“Fuck. Dick, are you okay?” Jason asked as he washed away the coffee and tried to cool his
trembling hand.


“Kind of? Are you fucking serious? It's boiling hot coffee. Just look at your hand.” He pulled his hand out from under the water to show Dick. It was shaking and burning an intense red.

A worker burst into the bathroom asking them if they were alright. The young man looked frantic and worried but Jason was pissed and angrily shouted at him. Told him ‘no he’s not all right’ and yelled at him to go get a first aid kit. The employee nodded his head and quickly left to retrieve the kit. Needless to say, Jason was a bit scary when angry. Luckily the anger wasn’t directed at him.

“God damn Dick, I can't believe you did that.” Jason growled, mad. Guess Dick spoke too soon. It wasn’t like he wanted to hurt himself. He knew, felt, that something bad would happen and he was only trying to help Jason. “Yeah sorry. I was watching you and when I saw that happen I just jumped. Didn’t want you getting hurt.”

“But then you end up hurt? That’s just stupid Dick.” Jason was breathing loudly, making loud grunts and murmuring curse words under his breath that seemed to get lost in the sound of the water running. He looked intense and quite frankly, intimidating. But Dick wasn’t scared, rather, a little delighted because he knew that his anger was about him being reckless – that it showed that Jason sort of cared.

The worker returned with the first aid kit. First, Jason gently dried his hand by patting it dry. He then examined the burn and found that it was just slightly swollen and red. It wasn’t anything too bad but Jason’s eyes were lingering a little longer than usual and that made Dick curious. Then he realized that Jason was staring at the scars on his hand. He was about to pull back unconsciously but Jason teared his gaze away, asking the employee or more like demanded him to hand over ointment.

They spread aloe cream onto the burn marks and then wrapped it with a bandage. Thankfully, it wasn't intrusive and Dick could still use his hand.

“Done,” Jason said, still holding onto Dick’s bandaged hand and was gently rubbing circles on his thumb. The gesture didn’t weird Dick out but he was a little confused. Though at the same time, he didn’t mind. It was oddly soothing.

Unfortunately, they were interrupted.

“Um. Sorry but – but we wanted to apologize for the accident,” the employee spoke up.

“Oh no. It's not your fault,” Dick said and teared his attention away from Jason to look at the young man.

“Exactly. It was that woman’s fault,” Jason bit back, still hadn’t released Dick’s hand yet.

Dick couldn’t really argue against Jason as the lady wasn’t watching where she was going. At the same time, he didn’t want to blame her completely.

“We want to offer you compensation. A gift card and your new coffee on the house.”

It wasn't much for what just happened but it wasn't their fault anyways. Dick was thankful and smiled.
“Thanks.”

Jason on the other hand was complaining under his breath, wanting to shout at the worker but he didn't. Probably didn't want to make a big fuss about it.

Jason had finally let go of Dick’s hand as they left the bathroom. When they came back out, the lady was gone and the coffee spill was cleaned up. The employees present apologized for the mishap and made them new coffee, refunded Dick's and gave them both a compensated gift card of about $50 each. They took it and left.

Thankfully it wasn't his dominant hand that was injured so Dick was able to hold onto his coffee well enough. Though he was pretty ambidextrous.

They found a table outside the shop as it was located at a nice shopping area, kind of like a town center. It was winter but the air wasn't too cold at the moment. Dick was bundled in a sweater anyways so it helped.

“Are you okay?” Jason asked, stared at Dick with a face full of concern.

Dick nodded. “I’m fine. Don’t worry. It wasn’t a big deal.”

“You shouldn’t have done that. I could have handled a bit of hot coffee.”

“It would have hurt,” Dick said. He didn’t feel it was right of him to just let it happen without helping since he knew about it. Knew that something would happen.

“I’m sure it would have been fine.” Jason shrugged it off like it wasn’t a big deal. “I have a pretty thick jacket,” he said and flaunted his coat, trying to lighten the atmosphere. It didn’t make Dick feel any better.

Dick grew quiet and stared at his cup, deep in thought. Jason must have noticed and cleared his throat, decided to change the topic.

“Hey, why don’t you try the drink and let me know what you think.” Jason gestured towards the cup, earnestly waiting for Dick to taste his coffee.

“…Okay.” Picking up the cup with his hands, Dick blew some air through the hole of the lid, hoping to cool it a bit before he took a sip.

It tasted sweet with a nice roasted coffee and a hint of chocolate. There was also a layer of whipped cream on top, something Dick really enjoyed. Mixed together, the blend was wonderful and heavenly.

Wow. “It’s…good.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I normally drink black so this is…delicious.” He smiled and took another sip.

“Black is so boring.”

Dick chuckled. “You’re going to get me addicted. Then it’ll be bad.”

“That’s the plan.”

He tossed Jason a side glare, but instead of making him feel remorseful for being a bad influence,
he was just grinning.

The next time he got a bad vibe, the accident happened before he could stop it. As he was trying to save a stranger from getting hit by a bike, he ended up hurting himself.

It wasn’t terrible since he made it in the clear as he pulled the person aside. But he fell down and scrapped his palms and knees, bleeding through his jeans.

What sucked was he was on his way to meet Jason. Luckily, someone nearby was able to patch him up but he still had blood on his jeans. At least Jason couldn’t see it underneath the table.

As Jason slid into the booth, having arrived late, he noticed the bandages on his hand. “What happened?”

Dick avoided the curious look he was giving him and threw out a simple lie. “I…fell.”

“On what?” Jason asked, raising a brow.

“The sidewalk.”

“Looked like you fell hard,” Jason said and reached across the table to hold his hands. He gently squeezed and Dick winced, the slight pressure stung since the scars were still fresh.

“Oh, sorry.” Jason pulled his hands away awkwardly.

“It’s fine. Just a scratch.” Dick did the same and rested his hands in his lap, hid them away from view.

“Geez Dick. First the coffee and now this? You need to watch out a little more.”

Dick smiled softly, happy to hear Jason was worried. “Yeah. I’ll try.”

Try as he might, it was still a difficult task for him to do.

This strange ability of his always brought trouble upon Dick.

His weird gut feeling happened on occasion. It was a little odd but every so often, he’d get a strange feeling, a bad premonition. As if he could read into the future, or at least, partially. It happened at random too so it was always unexpected.

Typically, Dick could tell when an accident would occur. A chill would run a course through his body, causing his chest and stomach to tighten. His hands would go numb and his eyes would twitch. They were all sensations that screamed at him to be careful. Or well, for the people around him to be careful.
It wasn’t something he could control and would always randomly come up. He could never guess when it would happen either as the accident could be as simple as someone tripping on their shoelaces or as serious as almost getting run over by a car.

It was annoying and part of the reason he didn’t have a good childhood. Actually interfered with his childhood because it would confuse him. He always thought he was just feeling sick but that wasn’t the case. As he grew up, he learned to understand that it was just an ability that was a part of him – something he couldn’t control.

It always caused issues for him, was what made him a creep. He would try to warn others that something bad would happen to them and when it did and they got hurt, it made them fear him. Thought he was some kind of bad luck.

He gets it. Really gets it. So nowadays, he tried his best to not weird people out. Still tried to help despite them being ungrateful to him. The praise didn’t matter. What mattered was his conscience and whether he was able to help them or not. Didn’t want people getting injured on account of his inability to do anything.

Dick hoped that he could keep this power of his under wrapped from Jason, didn’t want to freak him out considering he was the only person who actually wanted to spend time with him. Dick was enjoying his company and would be hurt to see their blooming friendship be ruined.

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Dick had been hanging out with Jason more frequently. They met about every other week or every two as Dick was quite busy with his schedule. Sometimes when he did have free time, he’d be too tired and slept the day away instead.

Jason on the other was a free soul, doing whatever he pleased. He didn’t seem to have any responsibilities, except for occasionally having to go to Wayne Enterprises when his adopted father requested his appearance. Other than that, he periodically had training or classes he needed to take. Probably being groomed to become a businessman at the company. Or so Jason had explained.

He had an easier schedule to plan around than Dick and often times, he felt bad for rejecting whenever Jason had asked him out but he didn’t seem to mind at all. They often didn’t go to places where money had to be spent because Dick couldn’t afford to. Yet, Jason still wanted to spend time with him. He was too tolerant of Dick which was nice but Dick knows he can be difficult.

Jason was slowly growing on Dick, integrating into his life. It was pleasant having a friend to spend time with because he’s never had this experience before. Most people he had tried to befriend (which weren’t many) had shunned him away. Called him unusual, creepy. A freak. A weirdo. Because of where he came from and his strangeness for warning people when bad things would happen. They viewed him as a source of misfortune.

His past wasn’t pleasant and he often tried to not think about it. But every so often he does. As he waited around for Jason, his mind spiraled into the depths of his memories. Dick was so deep in thought he hadn’t seen Jason sneaking up from beside him. Until it was too late.

“Boo!” Jason shouted, gripped his shoulders and shook him.

Dick yelped and roughly swatted Jason’s hands away. He tensed in defense, bringing his arms up
to cover himself.

“Hey! It’s just me, Jason.” Jason said, alarmed by the sudden reaction and raised his hands up.

“Oh.” Dick peeked through the opening and saw a familiar face. “Oh. Jason. You scared me,” Dick said and lowered his arms. A rosy pink crept upon his face, embarrassed at his over-reaction.

“Sorry. Didn’t mean to scare you that badly. I just thought – you know.”

“It’s okay. I wasn’t paying attention.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. It’s fine. Don’t worry.”

“Okay.” Jason still seemed curious but he dropped it seeing that Dick didn’t want to talk anymore. "Anyways, I am fucking ready to have some fun. Bruce kept me hostage and wouldn’t let me go until he finished saying what he needed to say. The man, I swear, needs to find other things to do than harass his sons,” Jason complained.

“Well, it sounds like you guys have a good relationship,” Dick said.

The two met up at a local park and planned to stroll around and enjoy the beautiful weather. It was still mid-winter but the sun was out and gave a bit of warmth despite it being a little chilly. It was still nice enough for a brisk walk in the proper attire. The two stepped on the trail and started walking side by side.

“We do. He’s just annoying sometimes. Over-bearing.” Jason raked a hand through his hair, pulled his bangs back in the process. Dick watched in awe, for once, realizing how handsome Jason is. He thought that at first but the more he stared, the more he had confirmed that fact.

“I wish I –“ Dick stopped himself before he could finish the sentence, shook his head and changed topics. “Never mind. How was your day besides that?”

Jason for sure had noticed but said nothing of it. “Boring. Had to sit through board meetings. Though I had lunch with my two brothers so that was nice.”

Dick smiled, feeling a little sad that he didn’t have a family of his own. The one that loved him was dead. The previous ones that ‘tried’ to care for him, well, didn’t like him so much.

“You know, I’ve always wondered.” Jason paused, puffing out air. “Just, you’re an orphan right? So as an orphan, were you ever… you know, adopted?”

Ah. Of course he would want to know. Dick expected this to come up in conversation. He had wanted to avoid it as long as possible. But well, it should be fine to let him know. At least the minimum details. They’ve been doing this thing for a few months now.

“To answer your question, I was. A few times actually. It just never worked out so I’d always end up back at the orphanage. I think after I turned 15, I was deemed too old. So I stayed there until I was 18, when they basically kicked me out because I’m a legal adult.” Dick shrugged his shoulders when Jason stared at him blankly, like he didn’t think that such a story was possible.

“I’m sorry.”

“Why are you apologizing? It’s not your fault Jason.” Dick looked over at the taller man, could see
a hint of woe on his face.

“Yeah but I shouldn’t have asked.”

“It’s fine. You’d know sooner or later.”

“But –” He tried to argue.

“Jason. Seriously, it’s fine. I’m over it.” It wasn’t a lie per say. More or less, he accepted the fact.

“Sure?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, than can I ask you another thing?”

Dick rolled his eyes. “Go for it.”

“Have you been living alone since leaving?”

Dick nodded his head. “Yeah.”

“Oh.” Jason had gone quiet and Dick cursed himself for killing the mood. Probably should have just rejected his question. “Fuck,” Jason shouted, startling Dick and others around him. “This is depressing. Let’s talk about something else.”

Dick breathed a relieved sigh. He didn’t think he could handle the conversation any longer and was grateful for the topic change.

They kept their pace steady as they continued around the park, chatting about books they’ve recently read as well as people watching. The park was occupied with families and children who were out having a good time, enjoying the minimal sun Gotham had to offer. It was a pleasant atmosphere.

As they rounded a corner, Dick felt that feeling rise within him. Again. He felt his heart rate increase, blood pumping his adrenaline as fear rose within him. Dick looked around for any signs of danger, as he always did. Had to be alert just in case. He spotted a group of people playing volleyball, watched as the ball was traveling back and forth over the net. There. He was positive it would happen there. He wasn’t sure what but it was a possibility. They needed to avoid walking that way.

“Hey Jason, let’s stop for a little. I’m tired,” he called and came to a halt.

“Oh come on Dick, we were barely going that fast,” Jason said, ignoring Dick and continued to walk forward.

“Jason, really. I need a break,” Dick pleaded.

“Jason, really. I need a break,” Dick pleaded.

“Dick. Don’t be a wuss!” He was walking backwards, motioning for Dick to come forward.

Dick’s heart sped up, his nerves running a mile a minute. “Jason, please, my feet hurt.” He was getting desperate and tried feigning pain. Maybe Jason would stop due to a slight injury.

There was a feeling of dread crawling within him. He was so worried for Jason, didn’t want him
getting hurt. Didn’t want anyone getting hurt. He could still remember that night. That awful night. When he could have –

“Really? Are you sure you’re not just making it up because you were completely fine.” Even though Jason looked concerned he was still walking further away from Dick.

The situation wasn’t the same. He knew it wasn’t as life threatening. He knew that even if he was hit by something or someone, the injuries would be light. Yet, he didn’t want that to happen. He didn’t, he couldn’t let it happen. If he did, regret would just eat at him. So Dick tried calling for Jason again but it was too late. The ball went off course, flying towards Jason and two of the players were gunning for it but they weren’t watching where they were going.

“Jason! Look out!” Dick yelled and sprinted forward, hoping to stop the collision. But the man was quick on his feet, turned around and caught the ball with his hand. Easily stepped off to the side to avoid the collision.

Dick came to a halt, watched as Jason completely avoided the accident, handing the ball back over to one of the men. He was apologizing, scratching his head and making animated hand gestures. Jason waved him off, probably telling him it was no big deal.

Once the exchange was done, Dick walked over to Jason. “Are you okay?” He said, tone filled with worry.

“Yeah. That wasn’t anything I couldn’t avoid.” Jason smiled, not an ounce of fear on his face.

Dick exhaled loudly, hadn’t realized he’d been holding in his breath. “I was still worried.”

Jason’s face brightened at that comment. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

Jason brought a hand and pulled a lock of hair out of Dick’s face. “Thanks.” Dick blushed from his touch, embarrassed. He was sure his hair was a mess from that short sprint. “By the way, kind of weird, but this is like at the coffee shop.”

“Um –” Dick hoped Jason hadn’t realized anything. He shouldn’t because it wasn’t like anyone would believe him. That Dick had some sort of weird supernatural powers. Even he had a hard time accepting it at times.

“You have a good eye for danger. Seriously. Save my ass twice. Least you didn’t get hurt this time.” His hand was still lingering close to his cheek, like he wanted to touch him but he was afraid to.

The tension in Dick disappeared when it appeared that Jason didn’t think anything of it. “Yeah,” he agreed. “I sort of do.” It wasn’t a complete lie.

“Is this maybe the reason why you stopped?” Jason asked, curious.

Dick felt his heart seize again, freaking out. “No.” He hastily answered, realized that he probably should have tried to act casually.

Jason raised a brow at him, a little confused. “I was kidding.”

“Oh.”
“Learn to take a joke Dick,” Jason teased.

He wasn’t laughing as he was internally having a breakdown. He couldn’t have Jason find out about it. Not as if he would and he probably wouldn’t believe him either. But if he ever did, he’d probably stop being friends with him and Dick didn’t want that.

“Yeah. Of course,” Dick said, trying to play it off.

“…Are you okay? Are you actually injured somewhere?” Jason asked, suddenly concerned and pulled closer so they were only a few inches apart. His face was full of worry and Dick found it endearing how he cared.

“I’m fine. Just fine.”

“Really?”

“Really. I just— I just need to sit.”

“Yeah okay, let’s take a small break.” Jason looked around for a bench they could rest on, spotted one close by and ran for it, probably afraid it would be taken.

Dick followed after him, breathing in and out as he tried to relax himself, could feel his emotions spiraling out of control. There was no point in fretting. There was no way Jason was going to find out and he was going to make sure of that. He just— he just needed to calm down and clear his mind. Bring himself back to reality or else, he was going to remember again.

And he didn’t want to remember.
Green-blue eyes blinked in confusion, stared at Dick as he meticulously took tiny bites of his salad. *Seriously*, a salad? Who eats salads these days? Definitely not Jason.

They were out for dinner and all Dick had ordered was a salad while Jason on the other hand had multiple dishes laid out in front of him -- tacos, fries and wings. He was planning on eating it all but thought he would share with Dick, wasn't going to let him eat just a plate of lettuce and vegetables. Dick was so lean that it made Jason feel like he needed to feed him. Had noticed that he typically ordered the most cost efficient meal on the menu which didn't always constitute a large meal. Jason understood he wanted to save but at the same time he deserved to have a good and delicious meal.

Jason pushed his plate of fries and wings towards the middle, attempting to give a hint to Dick but he didn't budge and kept stabbing his fork at his salad.

He exhaled. “Eat some.”

Dick's eyes widen in confusion and he stared at Jason, like he didn't get what he was getting at. “What?”

“A salad isn't going to fill you up so have some fries and wings.” Jason pointed at the food before him, urging him to take some.

“It’s yours though.”

“Yeah but you can have some.”

“But—“

“No buts.” Jason grabbed a fork and scooped a bunch of fries and wings onto Dick’s salad. “Eat. It’s yours now.”

Dick scrunched his nose, made an unsatisfied expression at Jason but he was smiling slightly, the corner of his lips curling upwards. He might have been hesitant at first but once that potato was in his mouth, his eyes sparkled and his lips spread into a wide grin.

That was to be expected since fries were much better than a salad.

It was fun watching Dick’s reactions to food he’s never tried. Had told Jason that he eats really plain since it was what he could afford and it made Jason feel a little bad, that he was missing out on delicious food. So Jason would occasionally get him to try something new – loved seeing his excited expression when something tasted good. It was refreshing because he was so genuine about it.

Jason had brought Dick to a local diner he often frequented. They switched off picking places to eat or things to do, figured it was fair so Jason wasn’t catering to whatever Dick wanted to do. It was still limited but Jason had fun either way. Didn’t matter what they did because he enjoyed Dick’s company.
While they were having a nice meal, just chatting about random things, they were unfortunately interrupted by an unexpected guest.

“Holy shit! Jason!”

Jason turned to the newcomer who was yelling his name, knew exactly who that voice belonged to. It was none other than Roy. It wasn't a surprise since they often ate out at the same places, yet this was too much of a coincidence and Jason found that a little suspicious.

“Jay! Jaybird.” Roy slid into the booth and nudged at Jason to scoot over while completely disregarding the fact that he was busy at the moment.

Jason glared at him but moved in anyways. When Roy tried to slip an arm around his shoulder, he slapped his hand.

“Fancy seeing you here,” Roy said with a huge grin on his face.

“Cut the crap Harper. Why are you here? How do you even know that I’m here?” Roy earned another slap to the hand as he was reaching for Jason's food.

“Alf. I asked him.” He tried again and was reprimanded once more. “Damn Jay, just let me eat!”

“War no. Get your own food. Better yet, leave. I’m busy.” Jason said and placed his attention on Dick who was just staring back at them in silence, wearing an uncomfortable expression on his face.

Roy finally took notice of Dick. “Oh.” He took one look at Dick for a split second then returned his gaze back to Jason, like Dick was just a decoration. “As I was saying—”

“Dude.” Jason didn't quite like his attitude towards Dick and was about to yell at him but Roy wasn't listening.

“I have a party coming up and you’re invited. You have to come.”

“You couldn’t have texted me?” Jason was in disbelief, couldn’t believe why Roy went through the effort to tell him in person.

“Needed to let you know face to face. Better that way you know?”

“Okay. So when is it?” Jason tried to school his expression but deep inside, he was thrilled for the party. Hadn’t been to one in a while and he was itching to just let everything go and have fun.

“This Saturday. I’ll text you the details.”

“You couldn’t have done that in the first place?!” Jason threw up his hands, frustrated at Roy’s idiotic reasoning.

“Nah.” Roy said and smirked, was having a blast at angering Jason. Dick on the other hand was just watching their exchange, not sure what to do besides sit there and just, listen. “You have to show up. Okay. Come! Also—” Roy spun around to face Dick and leaned forward, getting as close to the man as possible. God, Roy was so pumped full of energy. Idiot needed to tone it down. “You.” He pointed and Jason swatted his hand down.

“Don’t be rude, you jer—”

“You can come to.” Roy cut Jason off before he could finish and ignored him. “You’re Jason’s
friend right? Yeah. You’re invited to,” He said then turned back around to Jason and pressed a finger to his chest. “You make sure he comes.”

“Why?”

"He needs to come because the more the merrier."

"Okay...I mean, only if Dick wants to come."

“No! He has to come. Make sure he comes.”

“Did you not listen to me Harper?”

“Nope! Anyways, I got to go. See you Saturday Jason!” Roy left just as quickly as he came, said what he wanted to say and disappeared.

“Sorry,” Jason apologized to the still confused Dick. He was probably wondering what the hell had just happened. Jason was used to Roy’s antics but even then it was annoying. “He’s just like that so don’t mind him. That’s Roy Harper by the way. My best friend basically.”

“I could tell since I’ve seen you with him a number of times.”

“You’re right. Surprised I never introduced him yet.” Jason thought he might have mentioned Roy but he guessed not. “Anyways, if you want, you can come to the party.” Jason was asking out of politeness, figured why not since Roy seemed to be so adamant on him bringing Dick. “It might be fun. Roy’s parties are always wild.”

Dick wrinkled his nose. “I don’t know. I’m not – I’m not really a party person.” Dick poked around lazily at his food. “I just – I’m not sure Jason.”

Jason frowned. “You sure?”

“I wouldn’t be any fun anyways.”

“Don’t belittle yourself Dick. You’re plenty of fun.” From hearing him put himself down like that, Jason felt like he needed to get Dick to go. To get him out there, let him loosen up a bit, maybe distress. It could be fun and besides, Jason always had a blast. “You should go. It’ll be great.”

“I don’t know anyone and social settings make me uncomfortable.”

“It’s fine. I’ll be there. I’ll keep you company so you won’t be alone.”

Dick still didn’t look convinced and Jason put on his best saddest expression, pleading with his green-blue eyes. Not that it worked because he looked like an idiot when he did it. His face was too masculine to come off as cute.

Dick brushed a hand through his bangs, tugging them forward to cover more of his eye, like he was hiding himself. “Are you sure?”

Jason nodded his head. “Positive. You can stick with me.”

A soft sigh escaped his lips and Dick nodded. “Okay. I guess I’ll go.”

Jason smiled, satisfied with the results. “Great. I’ll come get you. You’re not working right?”

“Only until the early evening. I assume the party is at night?”
“Yeah.”

“Then I’m free.”

“Alright. I’ll tell you a time once Roy gets back to me.”

“Sure.”

Dick knew he shouldn't have come. Shouldn't have listened to Jason. Shouldn't have let himself be persuaded. Was misled to believe that the party would be fun. It was anything but fun and Dick was not having a good time at all.

Dick exerted effort in his outfit, made sure he chose something that was presentable which wasn't much compared to what the others were wearing at the party. Compared to them, Dick stuck out like a sore thumb. He didn't look bad per say but he didn't look good either. Dick was dressed in loosely fit black pants that bore a few holes around his thighs. It could be seen as a style, like those ripped jeans. It was something decent he found at the thrift store since the selection wasn't that great there. At least he wasn't wearing dad pants.

For his top, he had on a faded dark grey crew neck which looked fairly nice and he also groomed his hair as well, made sure it was neatly brushed – as neat as he could get it. The damn curls at the ends of his hair just wouldn’t stay flat though.

Shoes were a different story. It was harder to find ones that would match. He wore his sneakers which were a bit worn but since they were black, they didn’t look too bad.

Jason actually complimented that he looked nice when he came to pick him up. Unless he was lying and did it out of politeness which Dick thinks he might have. Well, that didn’t matter.

The start of the party was actually fine. They arrived to the house together and Jason was taking him around. He didn’t introduce him to anyone which Dick was glad for but he did give him a quick tour around the house, where the bathroom was and what room was what as well as the kitchen and refreshments table.

As they were standing around in what looked to be the living room, people would occasionally come up to greet Jason. Gave him hugs and what not while mostly ignoring Dick. Jason did attempt a few times to introduce Dick but not many paid attention. Kept tossing weird side glances at him instead. It didn’t bother Dick as much since he was used to it, used to being treated like an extra or an invisible wall.

It didn’t mean he liked it though.

Dick noticed that Jason was drinking a lot, taking shots whenever someone handed him alcohol. He could tell that he was getting drunk with how he was swaying and slurring his words whenever he talked to him.

A couple of times, Jason was dragged away from Dick to play a few drinking games or to grab a drink. But he always found his way back to Dick. That was until, about two hours in, he disappeared again and never came back.
It wasn’t a big deal at first but as time ticked by and Dick was left waiting alone, he started feeling a little anxious. He felt unwell and self-conscious being around a crowd he didn’t know. He hid himself in a corner, back pressed firm against the wall. Not having much to do, he fumbled with his sweatband, was picking at the loose threads as he people watched. Watched as people danced, flirted and drank and were pretty much being loud and obnoxious. Laughing and giggling, having the time of their lives while Dick was trying to keep calm.

A heavy sigh escaped from his lips and he felt his chest tighten from anxiety. He wanted to leave or at least, go someplace where there wasn’t any people around him. Dick knew he shouldn’t have come. Let himself be too easily convinced.

Dick thought about leaving but felt it would be rude if he just left after being invited. Sucking it up, he decided to stick around a bit longer. Let Jason enjoy himself for a bit before he bothered him to maybe take him home.

He was able to keep his anxiety at bay and was thankful that no one tried to talk to him because he didn’t want to talk to anyone. Though he did get a few strange looks coming his way. Some just stared at him, while others pointed and laughed. Probably making fun of him, asking their friends why someone like Dick was at the party.

Dick knows. He gets that he doesn’t fit in with the crowd and he doesn’t like being the center of attention either. Just wanted to shrink away and hide but where could he even do that? So he turned away from the crowd and just directed his attention to the wall.

It was a little better but then things suddenly went from good to worse. A couple that was standing nearby started making out, was getting all hot and heavy that they bumped into him. They didn’t even notice, so absorbed in their lust. At first, Dick just moved away but when he notice the hand dipping underneath her shirt – that was when he decided to leave.

Dick was so done here, couldn’t handle it a second longer. He went to search for another place he could stow away until Jason was ready to leave. As he rounded the corner, he bumped into someone roughly and almost lost his balance.

“Sorry!” Dick quickly apologized.

“Oh!” The man exclaimed and Dick recognized that voice. “It’s you! The weirdo!” He lifted his eyes and found Roy. The red-head reeked of alcohol. His face was flushed a bright red and he was not stable on his feet. “Fuck! I didn’t think you’d be here!”

Dick raised a brow and gave him a questioning look.

“I mean – *Fuck. Just, why? Why are you even here? It was meant to be a joke. A joke. I said it just for fun. I didn’t think you’d actually come,” Roy spat. “You don’t fit in here. I fucking don’t even know why Jason hangs out with you. I mean, *come on. Look at yourself.” He made a hand gesture at all of Dick and was bursting into laughter, causing the guys around him to laugh as well.

“You’re a fucking mess. You’re poor and you dress like a homeless. And your hair is disgusting and your face is just a whole other issue.”

Dick sucked in a shaky breath. He has had enough of this degrading act. *He gets it. He gets that he’s different and he’s unfortunate but he doesn’t need some rich drunkard telling him otherwise. Dick wiped all emotions from his face and forced a smile, an angry smile. “Well, Mr. Harper. Thanks for your hospitality.” Dick turned on his heel and was ready to head in the opposite direction, wasn’t going to let him have another word.
But then suddenly, he felt his wrist being grabbed. Dick was yanked backwards, fell against a broad chest. An arm was slinked around his waist and he shivered in disgust. “Hey, where do you think you’re going?” The creep asked, his breath stinking of alcohol. His face was pressed close to Dick’s and Dick was trying his best to lean away, pushing at his chest to get out of his hold.

“Let go,” he said, trying to be firm. Was being firm but it had no effect on him.

“Oh come on. Don’t play hard to get. I know what you need. I can help you so how about it? One night with me,” he sneered lustily. “And I’ll pay you big cash,” he whispered in his ears. That only creeped Dick out even more and infuriated him.

With all his strength, he shoved at the man and pushed him away roughly. “Fuck you,” Dick said and dashed away from Roy and his friends as they roared in laughter.

Dick could feel his heart beating loudly, wanting to rip out of his chest. His breath was short and his cheeks were burning hot. He was so mad, so mortified and so disgusted. 

_Fuck this._ Fuck it all. Dick couldn’t handle it anymore and he needed to go. _Oh god,_ he needed to go now or he was going to have a mental breakdown at any moment.

He searched around the house, looking for Jason to let him know that he needed to leave. Dick spotted him in the kitchen, back turned towards him and was about to approach him but stopped mid-way. Vivid blue eyes widened and he felt a sense of dread wash over him. Jason – Jason was making out with some guy. Some guy with dark hair and a fit body.

Jason’s hands were gripping on tightly to his waist, fingers pressed down into his skin. The stranger’s shirt was raised up, his chest exposed to all eyes. An arm was locked around Jason’s neck, hands buried deep in his hair as both legs were wrapped snugly around Jason’s waist as he had him pressed to the wall. They were kissing with vigor, rough and passionate, rocking against one another.

Dick couldn’t watch anymore and teared his eyes away, storming towards the exit of the house. He was so done. _Just. So. Done._ His hands were trembling, chest constricting in pain and he felt his stomach churn. He felt sick and angry? No. That wasn’t it. He didn’t want to hit Jason but Dick just – just felt –

Frustrated? Betrayed? Possibly. But overall, he just felt upset. _Disappointed._ Like, his heart had just been stabbed. He didn’t understand why he felt so sad but he just did and it was tearing at him.

He just wanted to go home, get in bed and sleep away his emotions. They were running an all-time high today and it was tough for him to deal with.

Running a hand down his face, he sucked in a shaky breath and closed his eyes, trying to relax. It wasn’t helping because he could just picture Jason kissing that man.

“Shit.” Dick cursed and felt his eyes sting. “Screw this.”

It didn’t matter how he was getting home but he was going home even if he had to pay an absurd amount of money for a taxi ride. He could not spend another second here or else, he was going to break.

Chapter End Notes
I'm sorry...?
Chapter 7

Jason woke up with a major headache. There was a throbbing pain near the back of his head and it hurt whenever he so much as moved. He hadn’t drunk this much since the time he passed out on the street a few months ago.

He groaned loudly, hands clutching onto his head as he tried to remember last night’s events but nothing came to mind. Fuck. How many shots did he take? How much alcohol did he consume? He knew a lot but how much was a lot?

All he could recall was Roy and his buddies handing him glass after glass and he drank them all.

His vision was blurry as he peered around the room, trying to make sense of everything since his memory was in a haze. Once things came into focus, he noticed that there were things he recognized that weren’t his. Then he realized he was in one of Roy’s rooms. So apparently he hadn’t left the house yet, probably passed out here.

There was rustling beside him and Jason turned, found a raven-haired man sleeping beside him and he gasped a little. “What the fuck?” He croaked then immediately shut his mouth when the body twitched again, worried he might have woken him up but the man didn’t budge an inch.

Jason didn’t…or did he?

Finally full of alert, Jason lifted the covers to check to see if their clothes were intact. Thankfully, they were. All that were missing were their shirts but he couldn’t confirm that they didn't do it one hundred percent, so he carefully slid out of bed. He didn't feel any weird kinks or soreness in his body, just fatigue. Jason assumed he didn’t sleep with him but searched the room for any signs of lube or a condom, double checking for evidence.

There were none so he was in the clear. He did however notice he had a bunch of hickeys on his chest. Probably his neck too.

“Fucking hell,” he murmured. He couldn’t remember last night’s events and it annoyed him. Thought deeply about it and tried to digging his memory for any piece of information.

Bits and pieces were slowly coming back and Jason remembered kissing the guy somewhere in the house. He wasn’t sure where but he was totally hitting on him and well, Jason being drunk, probably thought why the hell not and went with it. He was kind of cute after all. Sort of reminded him of a certain someone.

Quite honestly, Jason was surprised they didn’t fuck, but assumed they were probably too drunk to do it. Which was a blessing for him.

After confirming that he did not have a one night stand, he let the information blow over because there was a bigger issue at the moment, his head. It hurt like someone had hit him in with a ball and he needed something to mend his headache. He grabbed his shirt and whatever else that was his and left the room. Jason went downstairs and found a sea of drunk people scattered all over the floor or whatever they could sleep on. The place was a dump with cups and plates everywhere, just tons of garbage.

Well, he wasn’t planning on sticking around for clean-up. Planned to leave once his head felt better. He found a few over-the-counter pills in the cupboard and took them as well as a bottle of water. Leaving the house, he found his car still parked outside and got right in. A tired and long
sigh escaped his lips as he slumped against his seat.

What a fucking night. It had been a while since he partied that hard and now he sort of remembered why he didn’t quite enjoy the day after. Maybe he’ll just tone it down a bit for the next time because he hated being hung over.

Leaning back onto his headrest, he closed his eyes and rested for a moment. He was trying to mend the pounding in his head. As he sat there, he was filtering through what he could remember from last night and felt that there was something missing. Something really important that he should remember.

“What am I forgetting?” He murmured aloud, hoping that would help jog his memory. “There was something. Someone...”

Jason felt like there had been someone else with him. A girl – no wait, a man. With a pretty smile and blue eyes but awful dark hair.

Then it clicked. “Fuck! Dick!” He couldn’t believe it. He had completely forgotten about Dick. “Oh god. He must be pissed.” Shit. Jason had completely left Dick hanging and didn’t even know if he even made it back home.

Jason turned on the engine and dialed Dick’s number. The phone rang but no one picked up. He tried again and there still was no answer.

“Fuck. Fuck! He better be okay.” Even worse, he hoped he wasn’t mad.

Jason pulled away from the curb and sped off, heading straight for Dick’s home.

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“Dick?” Jason called as he knocked on the door and waited for a response. When he got nothing, he knocked again and hoped—prayed that Dick was home. That he was okay.

He waited impatiently for someone to answer and when Dick had finally opened the door, he breathed a sigh of relief to see that he was home. But the state he found him in wasn’t what he was expecting.

Dick looked sick. He was dressed in loose sweatpants that barely sat on his hips and a tattered sweater. The color of his skin was pale and his hair was a complete mess. There were dark bags under his eyes and they were slightly red, a bit swollen even, like he hadn’t slept at all or was possibly crying.

Dick stared at Jason and pulled his lips into a tight line. He didn’t look happy to see him and Jason couldn’t blame him.

“Dick—I’m sorry. Fuck. I’m really really sorry.” Jason sincerely apologized, felt extremely terrible for what he did. Last night’s events were still a blur to him but he did remember a few things. Like how drunk he got, how he made out with some guy and most importantly, abandoned Dick.

A soft sigh fell from Dick’s lips and he folded his arms across his chest. “It’s—“ He mumbled as he leaned against the door frame and paused for a few seconds to gather his thoughts. “It’s fine
"It’s okay. Don’t worry about it,” Dick gritted and avoided his gaze, was staring at the ground instead. Just from that mere reaction, Jason knew that what he did was not okay with Dick.

“It’s not okay. I fucked up. I’m sorry Dick. I just—I don’t know. I know I left you alone and I’m sorry about that. But did anything else happen? My memory is still a little fuzzy.” He knew he sounded like a jerk when he said that but he seriously didn’t remember much and needed to know. Wanted to know what happened while he was busy being a fucking drunk.

Dick was laughing but it wasn’t his nice sweet laugh or his awkward one. No. It was different. Almost like ‘are you fucking kidding me?’ type laugh. “Your friends kept pulling you away and you just up and disappeared at one point in time. I got tired of waiting and it was honestly boring so I left.” Dick was not sugar-coating anything and he spoke with a bit of venom in his tone. Fuck, he was really angry at him.

“Is that it? Nothing…else?”

“Yeah. That’s it. I went to find you to tell you I was going to leave but you were drunk and well—“ A frown fell upon his face and he was scowling. “Kissing some guy.”

“I—uh. That part I remember.” Jason watched as Dick rolled his eyes at that comment. He didn’t know what else to say about that besides the fact that he was drunk and well, the guy was cute and the make-out was hot. That was really it. “I just—“ He didn’t know what to say.

“It’s fine. You don’t have to explain yourself.”

“...Okay,” he sighed, relieved he didn’t have to talk about that. Still, nothing was solved between them. “Look, Dick. I’m really sorry for what I did and I’m sorry you had a bad time.”

Dick shrugged. “It’s whatever.”

The man was completely brushing him off and it bothered Jason but he found it hard trying to get through to him. That Dick wasn’t willing to listen.

“Can I ask—how’d you get home?”

“Taxi.”

“Taxi?” Jason’s eyes were blown wide, surprised at his answer. Dick took a taxi? That service cost a fortune and he lived far from Roy’s. “You really took a taxi?”

“How else was I going to get home?” Dick snapped back and that was the first he’d done so. Seeming to realize how he was acting, he sucked in a breath and apologized. “Sorry.” Even though he had every reason to be pissed at Jason, Dick was holding it in. Why couldn’t he just blame him? If he did, Jason would have felt so much better. Would have tried to make things right.

“I’m sorry about that. I was your ride and I should have taken you home. Let me pay you back.”

“It’s fine. Don’t bother.”

“But I was your ride.”

“Well you were preoccupied. It’s fine. Just let it go. Okay? We’re just friends. It’s—it’s whatever.”
Dick huffed a breath of air and stepped back into his apartment.

“…Are you mad?” Jason knew it was a stupid question but he had to confirm it. He had to know. He wanted Dick to just come out right and say it.

Dick pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed in frustration. “I don’t have a reason to be mad. So no.”

“Just tell me if you’re mad. I ditched you after all.”

Dick finally met Jason’s gaze, had been avoiding him the entire time. What he saw in those gorgeous eyes wasn’t anger. No, it looked like disappointment and that hurt Jason a lot more. “I’m not mad so it’s fine Jason. You had fun and that’s what really mattered.” Jason was about to retort but Dick stopped him. “Look, I don’t want to argue. I’m tired and I have work later so please, can you just leave for today?” Dick pleaded and god, he sounded so distraught. Jason felt awful and so he dropped it.

“Okay. I’ll go but I’ll see you later though?”

“…Yeah.” Dick nodded.

It didn’t sound like Dick was keen on seeing him again but Jason left it at that because he was going to fix this. This whole situation was his fault. His fault for being a complete jerk, for being immature and leaving a friend behind.

He was sure, could feel it, that Dick was hiding something. Wasn’t giving him the full details of the night.

Jason was going to find out one way or another and he was going to make it up to Dick.

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Since he couldn’t get any information out of Dick, he went to his next source and tried extrapolating info from him.

Roy was too pissed ass drunk to remember much but he did have a few details that helped. Actually helped him so much that it pissed Jason off.


Jason glared at Roy and threw up his hands. “Dude. You told me to.”

“I was joking.”

“It fucking didn’t sound like a joke.”

“Well it was. You weren’t supposed to bring him.”

Roy was about to get his ass handed to him. “Are you serious?”

“Yeah.”
Jason groaned loudly and threaded his fingers through his hair roughly. “I can’t—“ God, he was so mad because he thought that Roy was being serious, but apparently had an ulterior motive. “What did you do?”

“What?” Roy gave him a questioning look.


“Uh—“ He murmured and squeezed his eyes shut as if he was trying to remember. “I don’t know? Said some things to him?”

“Like what?” Roy was seriously testing his patience right now.

Roy took a moment to think about it deeply. “Can’t remember. But I think one of the guys, I forgot who, told him he’d pay him money for sex.”

Jason’s anger was about to explode, it was reaching its limits. “They did what?” He growled.

“Chill Jason.” Roy could feel the impending danger coming his way. “It was a joke. Even if it wasn’t, he’d probably have to close his eyes when he did it anyways. That man is not nice to look at and he’d probably break him.”

That was the last straw and he couldn’t contain his anger any longer, so Jason grabbed Roy’s phone and threw it at the wall, breaking it into pieces. He wanted to punch his friend so badly but held back. Probably would have if he didn’t think about the consequences of it but he deserved it nonetheless.

“That was my phone!” Roy shouted, upset as he stared at the shattered pieces of plastic.

“Well fuck you Roy. You’re an asshole and you shouldn’t have allowed that to happen. Actually, you shouldn’t have cheered him on because you probably did! Probably started the whole thing anyways you fucking jerk.”

“Hey! He deserves it.” He argued back and stood up from his seat, tried to size Jason up.

“No he doesn’t!” Jason shouted, raised his voice as he shoved a finger against his chest. That only made Roy roar back just as loudly.

“I don’t get why you like him so much! What’s so good about him anyways?” He sounded like a jealous ex—well, he is an ex.

“I wouldn’t waste my breath telling you because you know what? You don’t deserve to know.”

“Well fuck you Jason.”

“Fuck you too Roy. You should take some time to re-evaluate yourself and then, come talk to me.”

“Like I want to!” Roy glared at him and Jason glared right back with the same ferocity.

“Oh, you will.”

Those were Jason’s last words as he slammed the door. He couldn’t believe that they’d done that to Dick. That they said something like that to him. What the fucking hell? That was just wrong on so many levels.
Jason breathed heavily, tried to calm his fiery rage. He shouldn’t have brought Dick to the party. More so, he shouldn’t have gone in the first place. He was an idiot for not seeing this coming because Roy’s friends were complete assholes, just like himself.

Even though he was infuriated at Roy and his friends, he was angrier at himself for allowing it to happen. That he didn’t do anything to help him. That things had gone so bad that Dick wasn’t willing to tell him what happened.

Dick was always a difficult person to talk to, someone who kept mostly to himself. He was closed off and only shared what he wanted to share. Seemed like he didn’t want to hinder others with his issues. So Jason had to think up a way to get him to talk to him or at least, find a way to apologize because a simple one wasn’t going to do it.

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Jason left the issue alone for a few days to give Dick some space before he started trying to weave his way in to apologize. So now, he found himself waiting outside of Dick’s work place., felt too awkward staking out his apartment. At least, in public, it wasn't as odd. He wasn’t sure when Dick would get off work so he just waited until he finally emerged. The moment he spotted him, Jason sprinted towards Dick.

“Dick!” Jason called and came to a halt when he noticed how Dick had taken a step back from him. He looked frightened for a brief moment but then seemed to have relaxed a bit.

“God, Jason.” Dick brought a hand to his chest and exhaled heavily. “You scared me.”

“Sorry,” Jason said, realized that he did just ambush and surprise him.

“What are you doing here?” He asked, cautious

Jason sighed and brushed back his hair. He shifted around, felt a little nervous. “I wanted to say sorry and make it up to you.”

“I already told you its fine. I’m not mad and you already apologized.” Dick was putting up a defensive stance with his shoulders squared and arms folded over his chest. He had his guard up, like he didn’t want to be knocked down. That what those guys said about paying him for sex had scarred him and he wasn’t ready to let himself be insulted again.

A sense of dread washed over Jason, gnawing at him. “It’s not fine. I was an asshole. I made you go and then I ditched you. I was not being a good friend.”

Dick didn’t reply to that and turned his eyes away, focused anywhere else but him.

Jason sighed. This was going nowhere. He couldn’t get through to him. “Can we just—can we talk about this someplace else?”

“I don’t want to.”

“I have something I want to show you.”

“Jason. What part of no don’t you get?” Dick threw his hands up and shouted, tone full of anger.
He finally snapped. “I don't want to go anywhere with you. And yes I'm mad!”

Seeing Dick lose his cool was a first for Jason. He was typically calm and composed and barely raised his voice unless it was something that excited him.

Dick was pulling at his hair in frustration, looked like he was about to rip a few strands out any moment. “Since you really want to know. I had an awful time, okay? It sucked and right now, I don't want to see your face.” Dick was clearly upset and Jason could tell from the tone of his voice, how it was slightly trembling.

People were slowly coming to a stop around them and watched their altercation. He didn’t want to be accused of anything, could tell just from the situation that he was most likely to be blamed seeing how Dick looked on the verge of tears. “I’m sorry but can we talk about this someplace private?” Jason asked, hoping Dick would agree with him.

“No.” He refused.

“Dick.”

“No.” Dick was so angry to the point of him being stubborn. He had every right but Jason just didn’t want to discuss this where everyone could hear him. But it looked like he had no other choice.

“Okay. Fine. I know I’m at fault and I know Roy said something to you but I don’t know what.”

Dick sighed and pressed his palms to his eyes. “It doesn’t matter what Roy said. I’m mad at you. I didn’t want to go but you convinced me. You said you’d stay with me but then you left. You freaking left me alone. You know that I’m not comfortable in those types of settings! That’s why I told you no. But I went because you asked Jason.”

The dread that had been sitting earlier in the pit of his stomach was now eating at him, digging deeper and deeper to his core. He felt remorseful, didn’t think this was the depth of Dick’s anger—his distress.

“I—” Dick drew in a shaky breath. “I’m mad at you.”

“I know. I’m sorry. I can’t apologize enough. But what those guys said—“

“It doesn’t matter. Okay? What they said, what they did doesn’t matter. That, I can just—I can just ignore it. You,” he said, finally dropped his hands and pointed at him. “I can’t.” His eyes were glassy and he looked like he was holding back his tears.

Suddenly, Jason wanted to gather him into his arms. Tell him sorry a million times over because he was right. He was the one at fault. He was the one that Dick was mad at and he needed to make it up to him. “Okay. I—I get it.”

“Do you?” His voice cracked, hoarse.

“I do. I really do. But can we—can we please go somewhere else?” Jason asked as he noticed that more people were watching them.

Dick heaved a sigh, giving in and nodded. They headed towards Jason’s car and got inside. Now that they were slightly in the comfort of their own space, he could clearly hear Dick sniffling. Jason looked over at the man and found him pressing his sleeves to his eyes as if he was trying to keep the tears in.
Jason wanted to say something but he felt like he'd just make it worse. So instead he leaned back and grabbed a box from the back of his car. He gently placed it in Dick's lap.

The man pulled his hands away to stare at the item. “What's this?” He murmured, soft.

“It's a... gift.” Dick was about to say something but Jason stopped him. “It's not what you think. I know how you feel about me spending money on you. Just open it and see.”

Dick sniffled and wiped his eyes. He lifted the cover of the box to reveal the gift within. “A book?”

“Yeah. It’s one of my favorite books and I’m lending it to you. For you to read.”

For the first time this evening, Dick looked at him. Really looked at him. Those beautiful ocean-blue eyes of his were clouded by tears and his eyes were puffy and red. Jason wanted to hug him but he refrained. Didn’t want to invade his personal space.

Instead he explained the meaning behind his gift. “I couldn't think of anything else that wouldn't make you any more pissed at me so I went with this.” Jason said and pulled the book out of the box. He ran his fingers over the tattered cover. “I want you to read it.” Dick gave him a quizzical look, arching a brow. “What I mean is. I want us to still be friends and I enjoy our book discussions.”

“I don't get it.”

Jason laughed. He didn't either but in a way, by lending him his most treasured book, it's like he was opening up a part of himself to Dick. “I—you know, I thought I had an idea of where this was going but now I don't know.”

Either way, Dick gently took the book from Jason, flipped it open and let the pages flow through his fingers like water. “It's pretty old.”

“I read the hell out of it.”

Dick hummed quietly but he seemed to have calmed down. He was still sniffling but there were no more tears falling. “Thanks.” Dick murmured with a faint smile on his lips. “I’ll be sure to take care of it.”

“It’s fine. I mean, I can always get a new one but this has sentimental values.”

“Oh?” Dick arched a brow, curious.

“It's... well,” Jason sighed and shyly carded a hand through his hair. "The first book my mom gave me. Not that I could read it then but I've kept it.”

“Oh.” Suddenly, Dick’s smile widened and Jason felt his heart skip a beat. “Then I'll take really good care of it.”

Jason was so smitten by that smile, the one he yearned to see daily that he was at a loss for words, but quickly found himself again. “Yeah. Of course. Please do. Also, I just wanted to say I’m sorry. Again.”

“It's fine Jason. I'm over it. I yelled at you and that was enough.” Dick said as he traced a finger over the cover, felt the bumpiness of the designs and lettering.
“I’m making a note to myself to not anger you anymore because you’re freaking scary,’” he joked but then quickly schooled his expression. “Are you sure you’re really okay? You said you had an awful time. Did...did anything else happen?”

Dick drew in a long breath, paused briefly then shook his head. “It's nothing for you to worry about. Besides...I think you need to reevaluate your drinking habits.”

Jason chuckled and wholeheartedly agreed. “I'll have to work on it.”

“You're friends are jerks too.”

“They're mainly Roy's friends.”

“He's the biggest jerk.”

“I would agree with that.”

“I prefer not to be in their presence again.” Dick looked at Jason straight in the eye, serious.

Jason could see that there were scars left behind and his heart ached knowing it was part of his fault. “Duly noted.”

He felt like a weight had been lifted from his chest from knowing that he was able to place a smile on Dick’s face again. He knows that Dick was holding back on a few other details. Didn’t exactly get to find out what Roy had said. He wanted to know but he wasn’t going to press for it. Dick had been through enough and at least he was able to vent. Even if just a little.

Turquoise eyes watched Dick as he was carefully flipping through the book and extended a hand towards him, gently grabbed a lock of hair, twisting it between his fingers before brushing it back.

Dick’s whole body froze and a faint red crept onto his face but Jason hadn’t noticed. Carefully, Dick turned away to face the window and that's when Jason realized what he had just done, cleared his throat awkwardly and pulled his hand back.

“I'll take you home?”

“...Yeah. That would be good.” There was a slight tilt to his lips as he said that and Jason tried not to grin widely as he turned on the engine.
"Good morning Master Jason."

Jason rubbed at his eyes, stared at Alfred blankly and nodded. He was still groggy, having just woken up and filtered into the kitchen for a drink of water. His precious slumber had been interrupted last night when his cell phone went off. Jason ignored it, but it rang again. Found that Roy was trying to call him, probably to apologize, but Jason was giving him the cold shoulder. He was sure he hadn't reflected on his actions yet and was trying to hastily apologize. He was going to give it a few more days before he gave the redhead the opportunity to explain himself.

Jason dragged his feet to the table counter, stifling a yawn and plopped down onto the stool. Alfred strolled by and set a plate full of pancakes, sausages and eggs before him along with a mug of coffee.

"Long night sir?" Alfred asked, slight smirk in the corner of his lips.

Jason yawned once more, oddly tired and picked up his fork. "Not really. Just something woke me up," he murmured, voice still clogged with sleep. He poked at his sausage and took a bite.

"Ah, was it Master Roy?"

Jason grunted. "Did he call the manor?"

"Indeed he did."

Sighing softly, Jason shook his head. Knew that his friend would do that. He always did whenever Jason ignored him. "Well, tell him until he's learned what he's done wrong he can't talk to me."

"Duly noted. Now, will you be out of the house for the day?" Alfred questioned as he started preparing a tray full of food. Probably for Bruce.

"Yep." Jason said and stabbed a piece of the scrambled eggs.

Alfred hummed, sounding pleased. "I assume you will be meeting with the mysterious Master Dick?"

Jason grinned at the thought of Dick. "Yep."

It wasn't news to Alfred that Jason had been spending time with Dick. He was the first person Jason had told in the family—about how they met and a bit about Dick himself and how they spent their time. At first, Alfred was quite disappointed in him for being such an irresponsible adult and bringing difficulty to others. That he should be thankful that someone as kind as Dick had helped him out. Then told him that he was wrong to judge him based on his living conditions and looks after Jason initially confessed that he wasn't that keen about Dick. He knows better now and planned to treat him well after what had gone down at the party.

It wasn't safe to say that he didn't get lectured because he did when he told Alfred about what happened, was asking for some advice on how to mend their relationship. Got a long spiel about how he should re-evaluate his actions and fix his terrible habits before he started giving him a few hints as to what to do. Alfred didn't straightforwardly tell him, wanted him to figure something out
for himself. It would be better if it came from the heart.

Honestly, Alfred was such a blessing for Jason.

Drawing in a deep breath, Jason smelt the fresh aroma of coffee. Wrapped a hand around the warm mug and took a sip, pleased at the taste, just how he liked it. The morning atmosphere was nice and peaceful and he hoped it would stay that way until he finished his breakfast. Unfortunately, his moment of bliss ended before it could even start as he heard loud footsteps approaching the room.

Jason sighed in disappointment and set his fork down. So much for his quiet morning. He was betting on his brothers sleeping in considering it was Saturday but that was always an impossible feat. Damian's an early bird, seriously, he was ten and preferred to be up in the morning, said it was a waste of time otherwise. Tim on the other hand didn't sleep much, mostly functioned on coffee and refused to go to bed on a timely matter.

It's not like he hated his brothers, he loved them actually but lately they've been annoying. Especially Damian because he kept pestering him about why he's been going out more than usual. Also asked him who he's been spending time with since they knew it wasn't Roy.

Jason feigned ignorance and dodged their questions, didn't answer them straightforwardly. Played it off that he was just busy doing other things. He knew that his brothers weren't open to newcomers, especially Damian. He took issue with people who would try to befriend Jason -- was always skeptical that they were only trying to use Jason for money and status which often was the case in the past when he was younger. He's not naive anymore to fall for such tactics but yet, his brothers were still worried about him. It was endearing but also annoying.

Tim on the other hand was mellower on the front. He judged but wasn't verbal about it as much as Damian was. At least, not in a rude way. Damian would just run his mouth, letting everything out that came to mind. The boy had no filter and it was a bit of an issue, but they were slowly trying to get him to change his attitude. It was a work in progress.

Needless to say, sometimes he just wished they weren't so meddlesome.

"Hey guys," Jason greeted when both Damian and Tim filed into the room. Damian looking well dressed and primed while Tim had bed head and was still in his pajamas.

"Good morning Todd." Despite them being brothers, Damian typically called everyone by their last name, a little strange quirk of his.

"Morning Damian."

Tim grunted, waving lazily as he fell into the chair beside him while Damian took his seat across from Jason. Alfred immediately brought out their food, always prepared without a hitch.

"Todd," Damian started as he picked up his fork. "I hear you've been out lately with someone I do not know?"

Jason internally groaned, tried not to show his dissatisfaction towards Damian. He didn't want to talk about it but he couldn't possibly avoid it so he decided to try and steer it in another direction. "Possibly."

"Care to tell me who it is so that I may look them up?"

"No."
"But you do not know what type of person they are." Damian argued as he scooped a spoonful of potatoes and kept his eyes locked on Jason, reading his every facial expression.

"I think I do."

"They better not be someone of lesser degree than us."

Jason rolled his eyes at the boy. Damian was spoiled by his mother when he was brought up and was taught to be an elitist. So when he came to Bruce's care, well, he was already a brat who had high confidence and placed himself on a pedestal greater than others. They tried to 'fix' it or at least, change his ways of thinking. It didn't go so well but they were able to at least tone it down a bit. But he was still judgmental about most things and didn't think about the deeper aspect of it.

Hence, the work in progress bit.

"You don't need to worry about me Damian."

"Tt." Damian clicked his tongue and ignored Jason. "I will do as I please and I'm going to find out who it is!"

"Sure Damian. Sure." Even though he was disregarding the boy, a part of him was a little worried. The brats were excellent at finding out things about him, being sneaky little detectives much like Bruce was when he wanted to be. Of course they learned from the best.

"Shut up and eat. You're so loud." Tim mumbled from beside Jason, was apparently in a bad mood. Poor teen was probably tired and sleep deprived. It was mainly his fault anyways for spending too much time gaming with his friends and then cramming in homework last minute.

"I do not listen to you Drake," Damian scowled, tiny eyebrows pressed together. God his face was going to one day become permanent like that.

Tim stuck his tongue out and Damian lashed back by throwing a piece of bread that hit him square on the head. Tim grabbed the bread and attempted to toss it back but Jason caught his hand. "Okay. No. We are eating peacefully."

They both groaned and Jason just rolled his eyes. The troublemakers. It's not like they didn't get along with each other because they did but at the same time, they didn't—always bickering and picking a fight. But there were times they would join forces when they found it beneficial and it was an absolute nightmare when they did.

"God damn you two. Wish you were nice and cute little brothers," Jason murmured aloud. The two didn't hear him as they were caught up in an argument about who beat who yesterday at a round of Mario Kart.

Jason quickly scarfed down his meal and left.
Jason finally arrived at his destination and found Dick waiting in front of the Italian restaurant he had chosen. It was a tad more extravagant than their usual choices but this was Jason's treat to Dick, an apology for being an asshole. For once Dick didn't deny his goodwill and let him do as he pleased which Jason was grateful for.

He lifted a hand to wave at Dick but found that he was occupied with something when he didn't reciprocate. Looked like he was fiddling with something around his wrist. Slowly, Jason approached the man until he was standing right in front of him, caught sight of a large bruise on the inside of his wrist.

Jason's brows pressed with concern. "What happened?" He asked, startling Dick. He was so absorbed in whatever he was doing he didn't even notice that Jason was so close.

"Oh." He said, eyes quickly meeting Jason's before he attempted to pull down his sleeve to cover up the bruise, but Jason stopped him.

"How'd you get this?" Jason asked as he held his hand, lifted it up to get a better view of the mark that was already an ugly purple.

"It's nothing. I accidentally hit my arm on the wall," Dick said and tried to pull his arm back. Jason could feel the hesitancy in his voice and released his hand. His behavior seemed oddly suspicious and he wanted to ask further details but Dick looked uncomfortable. He was hastily fumbling with the sleeve of his sweater, rolling them back down to cover up his bruise.

It wasn't like Jason thought he was lying because it could be true. Dick was a little clumsy and Jason often saw him with a few injuries here and there, like bruises or cuts. So maybe he was just overthinking it but he still thought it was peculiar.

Jason sighed and threaded a hand through his hair. "As long as you're fine then I'm okay. Anyways, sorry for being late."

Dick shook his head and let out a deep breath. "It's fine. I didn't wait long."

"Good. My crazy brothers stopped me before I could leave. They were complaining I wasn't spending enough time with them."

Dick chuckled and slipped his hands into his raggedy old jean pockets. "They sound adorable."

"More like a freaking terror. They are anything but adorable." Jason shuddered from the thought of what mischief they could bring upon him. Especially Damian. "Let's go in." Dick nodded and followed after Jason. The restaurant was a little packed but they had a couple openings left so they were quickly seated.

Some time had passed since that party fiasco and Jason gave Dick a bit of space for him to cool down until they got together again. This would be the second time they met after that altercation and Dick seemed to be feeling better, not as agitated as he had been before.

"I finished the book." Dick said the moment they were comfortably seated.

"What? Really? That was fast." Jason was surprised, not expecting Dick to finish so quickly. With the little time he had to himself, he figured it'd take him a while.

"I read fast. Also powered through it." Dick smiled, eyes crinkling at the corners. Despite him probably feeling better, he still looked awfully tired. Jason can't even remember a time where Dick didn't have dark circles under his eyes. God, he seriously needed more rest. Dick always looked
exhausted, so much that Jason wouldn't be surprised if he just passed out at any moment.

"What did you think?" Jason asked, curious about his opinion.

"It's beautiful."

Suddenly, they dived into a deep discussion about the book. Talked about their favorite scenes and what they thought about certain characters and the actions they took as well as the plot and the messaging of the book. Dick was really animated, analyzing the details of parts he liked and what parts he didn't like. It was a breadth of fresh air to see Dick doing most of the talking. It was rare since it was usually Jason but sometimes, moments like these, Dick would exert a lot of energy into expressing himself.

It was great and Jason wish he could see more. Wish Dick did it more often.

They leisurely ate their lunch as they talked more about the book and then started recommending each other some titles to check out. Came up with a great idea to each read a book they recommended and then discuss it the next time they met, almost like their own personal book club.

After they were done, they headed to the nearby library together since Jason didn't quite want to break off just yet. Jason offered to take him to the book store so he could just purchase something for Dick but he rejected the offer which was typical of him. Said it was easier for him to just rent out the books. Jason would argue but well, the library works too. He almost offered up his expendable library but that might be a bit of a hassle so he didn't.

They spent the rest of their time at the library until Dick had to leave for his shift.

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When Jason arrived home, he was surprised to find Damian waiting in front of the door, completely blocking his way from entering the house.

Jason raised a curious brow at his brother. "Were you waiting for me?"

"I was," Damian huffed, folded his arms across his chest. There was a tiny scowl on his face and he seemed annoyed. "I demand you to allow me to meet this person."

Oh. So apparently, Damian wasn't lying when he said he wanted to meet Dick. Jason didn't realize he took that much interest in his friends, but well, he often did. Most of the time he wouldn't mind, but Dick was important. Based on past experience, it would end in a disaster. The kid barely liked anyone and he was ruthless to those he didn't like.

"Going to have to say no Damian," Jason said and gently pushed his brother aside with ease. He walked passed him and Damian trailed from behind, making noises of displeasure.

"You can't reject me!" He yelled, stomped his foot.

"I can and I am. You're just going to be rude," Jason said. It was the honest truth. Damian held no respect for others, so it was hard for most to warm up to him.
Damian scowled, unhappy with the outcome. He rudely tugged at Jason's sleeve, gaining his attention. "I will find out! You'll see!" He shouted, emerald eyes burning with confidence and then quickly ran off.

Jason sighed, shook his head at his brother's ridiculous outburst. Why couldn't he be a normal ten year old? Well, it probably wasn't possible anyways because his mother is Talia.

He hoped nothing bad would happen, but there was always a possibility when it came to Damian.

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As expected, his prayers weren't answered. Jason couldn't even begin to understand how the boy got his evidence.

"I took a picture," Damian said and shoved his phone in front of Jason's face.

He blinked in surprise. "Okay. How did you even find me? Wait, are you stalking me?" Jason stared at the picture, saw it was a shot of him and Dick at a coffee shop. Jason's back was turned towards the camera but Dick was in full view.

"Secret," Damian said and slipped his phone back into his pocket before Jason could steal it away. "Now, you must dump that man."

Jason gasped, appalled at his words. "Damian, what the hell?"

Damian didn't seem the least bit remorseful. "Dump him. He is disgusting," he said and made a disgusted expression at the thought of Dick.

Jason was getting pissed. Would not tolerate this kind of behavior even if it was his beloved younger brother who was currently acting like a brat. "Damian," he dropped his voice down an octave, turning on his older brother tone. "Don't you insult a person based on their appearance."

"He's probably poor." Damian went on, completely ignoring Jason's warning.

"Damian. I'm serious."

"Tt. I don't approve."

"I don't need your approval to decide who I can and can't be friends with."

"I still don't approve. I'm not letting this go!" Damian shouted and stomped away angrily, always swift to disappear when a conversation wouldn't go his way. Jason sighed, frustrated. What went wrong during his upbringing?

Jason partly blamed his mom but that didn't seem to matter so much anymore since he’s lived with them for years now. Damian was Damian and it looked like he had to be careful from now on.
It didn't take long for Jason to be caught by Damian again despite him being extra careful. What made it worse was that Damian had intervened them while they were out at Gotham Central Park. While the two were on a walk, Damian approached them from out of nowhere.

"What the hell Damian?" Jason was surprised to find his brother standing right in front of him, hands propped against his hips and glaring. "What are you doing here?"

"Following you."

Jason groaned and bit down on his teeth, trying very hard to not reprimand him in public. "How did you get here?"

"I have my ways and I am not informing you of them."

"Are you serious?" Jason said and threw up his arms. Dick was standing quietly beside him, just watching and waiting to see what was going to happen.

"Because you won't listen to me, I decided to give myself the honor of breaking up your friendship.

"What?" Jason spat, confused. What hell was Damian going on about?

Damian ignored his brother and turned his full attention to Dick who was just staring at him, eyes wide with worry and confusion.

"You need to leave my brother alone," Damian demanded.

Oh no. This was not happening. Jason was not going to allow his younger brother to mistreat Dick. Not again, he had to stop this.

"Damian," Jason called in a warning down, signaling for him to step down. Damian wavered for a moment, threw a glance at Jason but then disregarded him and continued.

"No," Damian said and pointed a finger at Dick. "You. You are a nuisance to my brother. You are disgusting."

"Damian—!"

"You do not belong with us. You are poor and worthless. I don't approve of your friendship."

Jason had about enough of this. "Damian," he growled and grabbed his brother's arm, trying to yank him away but Damian fought back and stood his ground.

"No! He's worthless! Look at him! He should be ashamed of himself!"

"That is enough." Jason rose his voice, tone filled with rage and quickly, Damian zipped his lips shut. Must have realized that he had pushed Jason's buttons way too far. "Apologize to him now," Jason said and turned the fidgeting boy around to face Dick.

"No."

"Damian."
"No," he said stubbornly. "I was not wrong," he whined and stomped his foot. Jason had to suck in a deep breath, count to ten so he wouldn't blow his top. They were in public and he had an image to keep. Couldn't be seen as an abusive older brother since people were watching.

"You're not going to apologize?" Jason asked as calmly as he could.

"No."

"Then you're going home."

"I'm not going anywhere until you break it off with him."

Jason sighed in frustration and dug his fingers into his hair, pulling at his dark locks. "How did you get here?"

"I'm not telling."


Damian seemed to sense the danger he was in. "Drake dropped me off."

_Damn it Tim._ Those two were trouble when they plotted together. "Fuck," he swore. "Fine. I'm taking you home. You stay put."

"Tt."

Jason jogged towards Dick and touched his arm, could feel a slight tremor in his body. “Hey,” he called gently and looked over Dick. Could see his shoulder trembling, face devoid of any color. He was in a complete daze, staring straight at nothing, like he was someplace else.

Jason carefully reached for his hand and held it, felt how clammy and cold they were. Worry pooled at the pit of his stomach and he called out to Dick once more. But he didn’t get an answer.

Leaning in close, he pressed his forehead to Dick’s. That gesture seemed to have snapped him out of his daze and he gasped loudly. “Jason?”

“Yeah. Are you okay?” Jason asked softly, brushed a hand against his cheek.

A loud and distressed sigh escaped his lips and he sucked in a shaky breath. He closed his eyes and nodded his head. “Fine,” he murmured.

“Sure?”

“…Yeah.” Dick was lying because he didn’t sound like it at all.

“Dick, Damian doesn’t—he doesn’t mean anything bad by it.” Jason tried to explain his brother’s action, at least attempting to soften them up. He knew Damian had good intentions but they always came off poorly. “Don’t listen to him. You’re fine as you are.” Even though he said that, Dick was still not responding to him. Jason sighed frustratingly and squeezed his hand. “I have to take him home. Is it alright if I take you home too?”

Out of everything he said, Dick responded to that and shook his head. Jason expected that answer and he understood why but he wasn’t comfortable leaving Dick alone. The man was out of sorts.
“Will you be fine going home on your own?”

“I can manage.”

Jason was reluctant to let go but he did. Although he was worried, he was sure Dick would be just fine. "I'll come over tonight after I take him home." Dick nodded his head mechanically, just like a robot. Squeezing his hands on last time, he looked at Dick who was looking anywhere else but him and felt his stomach churn. Damn it, this was wrong. This was all wrong. Everything that Damian had said, it was getting to Dick and Jason could see the wheels turning in his head.

Those words--they heavily affected Dick. In what way Jason wasn’t sure but it definitely wasn’t anything good. Based on the bits and pieces that Jason was able to gather from their conversations, he speculated that Dick didn’t have a good childhood. There might have been an episode of someone saying those exact words to his.

If there was, then fucking hell. Jason would be beyond pissed at himself for allowing Damian to treat him this way, digging up bad memories.

“I’ll be back.” Jason promised, gave him one last look before he left Dick behind. He went to grab Damian roughly by the arm and dragged him away. “You are going to get a lecture and a punishment once we get back.”

"I did nothing wrong!" Damian whined, still didn't feel bad for his actions.

Jason drew in a heavy breath. "You did everything wrong Damian."

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Dick made it safely back home. He didn’t know how and barely remembered how he got home. All he cared about, all he had focused on were those words that were said to him.

Closing the door shut, he kicked his shoes off and dragged his feet towards his bed. He collapsed onto the mattress and curled up into a ball.

Those words stung. Were stuck in his mind, swimming around. He could remember the exact tone Damian had used, kept hearing the boy say it over and over again. Remembered those in his past who had said it to him. He knows it’s not the same theoretically and that the boy probably meant nothing by it. That there was no harm to his words, yet, it hurt him. It shouldn’t hurt. He should have been over it, but he’s heard it so many times throughout his life that he couldn’t help but remember those days.

Dick knew that he was different than Jason. That he didn’t exactly fit in. What Roy had said to him was partially right. What he and his friend had done – what they said – had pushed Dick slightly over the edge but at the time, he acted as if it didn’t affect him but it did. He thought about it every time when he was with Jason, couldn’t forget them.

How they treated him like a whore who needed money. God, that made him want to cry. To punch something, anything. But he did nothing, just kept it in.

It’s been so long. So long since anyone had said such words to him. Had insulted him and called him names to his face. Typically, they whispered about him behind his back. But Roy and
Damian? They said it right to him.

The situation could have been worse for him. He could have just—no, he was over that phase now. It's been done and over with, yet, he couldn't stop feeling that way.

Trying to calm himself, Dick breathed in shakily as he clutched his left wrist, felt around for his wrist band and squeezed it tight. If it wasn't for Jason’s help today, he might have been in a worse place. Even though the man didn’t do much, just him being there, making an effort to right his brother’s wrongs made it better.

It also helped when they spent time together. Dick was able to keep his thoughts at bay for the most part, partly distracted by Jason. However, now he was caught in the depths of his mind again. Caught in his dark memories that never seemed to go away.

Dick tugged at his covers and slid underneath. He wrapped himself into a burrito, snuggling close to the wall. Tried to revel in the warmth in hopes of it calming his mind. To rid his body of the chills that were attacking him.

Dick didn’t have a good childhood and had been passed around from family to family. The families had treated him well initially but things changed. They became…different, it became abusive.

Eventually, the constant derangement and poor treatment had made him numb to it. Dick started ignoring it, told himself that it didn't bother him. That their words didn't hurt when they called him worthless or when they told him he should have died along with his parents.

Every night before bed, he’d recite a mantra to himself, that he could just ignore it. That it didn't hurt him.

Sometimes it worked. Sometimes it didn't.

Damian’s words had brought up bad memories within him, made him feel overwhelmed with emotions. Dick had thought he was over it, that it wouldn’t bother him anymore but he was wrong.

It was tiring and it wore him down.

Closing his eyes shut, he tried to force his memories away but it wasn’t working. His fingers were numb. His body trembling and he felt cold, oh so cold.

"Don't think about it. Just don't. Just live life one step at a time,” he whispered, trying to keep himself up. Bundled deep within his bed, he repeated lines to himself that he used to do when he was a kid. A method to prevent himself from spiraling into the dark depths of his mind.

There was a knock at the door and it startled him but he didn't budge from his spot. When he heard his name being called by an all too familiar soothing voice, he got up immediately.

Jason's face came into view as soon as he opened the door. He looked winded, tired almost. But more than that, his face was full of concern and he was staring at him with such intensity.

“Dick,” he breathed, sounding out of breath. “Can I come in?”

“...Yeah.”

Dick stepped off to the side, allowing Jason to come in. Once inside, he closed the door shut but they didn’t move from their spots and just stood in the doorway.
“I wanted to say—“ Jason started awkwardly, seemed a bit nervous as he was playing with the tips of his bangs. “I want to say sorry for Damian’s bad behavior. He didn’t—” He stopped and sighed in frustration. Dick could tell he was having a hard time with how much he was fidgeting. “He didn’t mean it. He was just being a brat. He’s just—that’s just how he’s like. Was brought up spoiled and privileged by his mother and it sort of just carried over.” Jason explained.

“I know,” Dick murmured, trying to keep himself from falling apart. “I get it. He's just...he just loves you a lot.”

“Still doesn't mean he should have said that. Don't worry though, I've disciplined him.”

Dick shifted and leaned back against the wall, wrapped his arms around himself. There was a tightness in his chest, almost suffocating him and his body was trembling again. “It's fine. It's—it's whatever.”

“It’s not whatever,” Jason said and took a step towards Dick, closed the distance between them. “It’s not. Stop disregarding it.”

Those words hit Dick right on the mark and he knew that he was trying to deflect the situation. Dick avoided Jason’s gaze, turning his attention away. “It is fine. Don’t worry about it.”

A pair of hands grabbed onto his, pulling them upwards until they were in his view. “Then why are you shaking?”

Dick hadn’t realized how heavily his hands were trembling and tried shaking them off by curling his fingers in but they hurt and felt numb.

“I—I don't know.” Dick huffed. “I don't. I don't want to talk about it.”

“We don't have to. I just want to make sure you’re okay.”

Dick chewed on his bottom lip in worry, trying to steady his beating heart. His inner being was a mess, almost as if a tornado had hit him. Old memories were surfacing but he was trying to force them away. Tried to focus on the present. Tried focusing on Jason. Dick squeezed his hands tight and took small deep breaths and felt Jason squeeze back just as hard. Even though he wasn’t doing much, his presence was helping. It was pleasing and it helped calm him down, wrapped up his emotions into a bundle and squishing it down.

Jason gave him comfort and it helped.

“Can you stay?” Dick asked meekly, eyes flickering up to look at Jason. The man had his full attention on him. “I just. I don't want to be alone. It—sometimes my mind wanders to dark places.”

Jason brushed a thumb atop his hand and leaned forward, pressed their hands to his forehead. “Of course. Of course I'll stay.”

Dick breathed a sigh and mimicked Jason's moves. “Okay.”

“Is there anything you want to do?” Jason asked.

“Can we go out? I don't want to stay home.”

“Sure. Where do you want go to?”

“The movies?” Dick suggested, wanting to go to a place where eyes wouldn’t be on them. Where
he could hide in solitude with Jason.

“We can do that,” Jason said and gave a small smile.

Seeing his smile almost made Dick want to return it but he couldn’t move. Didn’t want to smile at all. He just wasn’t feeling it. So instead, he did his best to squeeze Jason’s hand, hoping he could convey his feelings through his actions. Jason returned the gesture.

“We can go to the old Gotham Theater,” Dick suggested.

“That old grimy theater? With the shitty chairs?” Jason looked appalled. Dick nodded his head yes. “Hell no. We are not going there. We're going to go to a theater that has recliner chairs and delicious popcorn. That's what we're going to do. And I'm paying. Don't you dare argue against that because I'm not having any of it.”

For this occasion, Dick wasn't going to. He's slowly learned to accept certain gestures from Jason and this was one of them. “Okay. I won't.”

“Good. Let's go then.”

Jason and Dick left the house, headed towards the theater. Never once did Jason let go of his hand. Kept their fingers twined together throughout the car ride and the movie.

Needless to say, Dick didn't mind it. It was comforting and soothed his nerves.

For once in his life, he wasn't wallowing alone in his depression and he had Jason to thank for that.

Chapter End Notes

…it was rough writing Damian being mean to Dick :( 

Also wanted to say thanks to my readers and for all the support! Will update again soon!
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It might have been his imagination, but lately Dick had noticed that there was a bit of tension between Jason and him. Not bad tension. But well, some sort of sexual tension? At least, that's what Dick thought but he could possibly be overthinking it. Or his mind was just playing tricks on him because lately, Dick was oddly becoming attracted to Jason. So much so that he felt an urge to see him more frequently.

When they first started off as friends, they weren't too intimate with one another in terms of hugging or casual touching. Dick often had his guard up, a bubble protecting himself that probably made it hard for Jason to burst. However, that's changed and his bubble had been popped. The intimacy between them had grown and Dick couldn't deny that he enjoyed it because Jason made him feel calm. Jason's warmth would linger whenever he touched him, almost as if he was leaving behind a mark. But that warmth would fade quickly within seconds and Dick found himself craving it.

Jason's touch was tender and light. It wasn't forceful and it happened naturally. Every so often, he would gently hold his hand, tracing along the lines of the tiny scars that decorated his skin. It slightly made Dick uncomfortable, felt like Jason shouldn't have seen them, that he was getting a glimpse into his past. He was sure Jason had his own speculations about how he got them but he was kind enough to not ask and Dick wholly appreciated it.

An interesting quirk that Dick had found out about Jason was that he loved playing with his hair. Would brush aside strands that blocked his vision or just simply out of place. Sometimes he found Jason burying his fingers at the ends of his hair, softly threading through. It was soothing and therapeutic, helped Dick relax and the tension in his shoulders would melt away. He'd sigh loudly, content and unconsciously lean into the touch. Could hear Jason chuckling beside him, lovely and bright.

At times, their shoulders would touch, pressed against one another when they sat side by side. It was as if they naturally gravitated towards one another. When Dick was feeling tired, he'd slyly rest his head on Jason's shoulder, eyes closing shut as he snoozed for a bit. Jason didn't seem to mind and would actually move closer, shuffling around until Dick was comfortable.

Today, they had gone to the movies since there was a new superhero film that Jason was dying to see. Didn't want to bring anyone but Dick along with him.

"She's a princess of this all female island, they're known as the Amazons, and she is badass," Jason said, describing the synopsis of the character origin to Dick as they waited in line for popcorn.

Dick didn't have a single clue about who this heroine was since he wasn't up to date with pop culture but it was adorable to watch how excited Jason got. Eyes sparkling with glee, smile wide and making animated gestures as he talked about the beautiful Amazonian.

They received their refreshments and got seated in the fancy recliner chairs that Dick considered a luxury. Seriously, it was one of the most comfortable chairs he's ever sat in. Jason was completely against Dick watching movies at the 'old crappy theater,' as he called it, and made it a mandatory date for them to watch a movie at least once a month. Dick argued and they might have gotten into
a bit of an altercation over it but somehow, someway, Jason won. Not to mention, Jason offered or
more like, told him that he was paying which Dick was heavily against. Got so mad at him he
ignored the man for a few days.

However, being without Jason was lonely and difficult. Unable to hold out any longer, he gave in.
Accepted his offer and strictly told him that any other time they're out, Jason is not paying. Of
course, Jason agreed, nodded his head with a smirk on his face. Dick should have known that he
wouldn't listen because it didn't last long. Sometimes, Jason would secretly pay without his
knowledge or straight up, handed his card over before Dick could do anything about it.

Dick tried slipping a few bills in his pocket whenever he wasn't looking but Jason would find out
and give it back to him. It was an on-going argument they had but it didn't completely deter from
them having a good time.

"Here," Jason handed Dick the bucket of popcorn and set it on his lap. "You hold it."

Dick held onto the bucket as he grabbed a bunch and stuffed it in his mouth. He smiled, loved the
way the buttery popcorn would crunch when he bit down, melting slowly on his tongue. "So
good."

Jason laughed. "You look so damn happy with just popcorn."

"I like popcorn."

"Dork," Jason snorted and reached over to grab some for himself. They're hands met accidentally,
lingering a little before they pulled back.

Dick was inwardly cursing the arm rests that acted as a divider between the two. He would have
liked for them to be closer but well, he loved the chair so he forgave it for being in the way. The
lights dimmed as movie previews started. He was slowly munching on the popcorn, couldn't help it
since they were right in his arms.

He was so focused on the screen that he jerked a little when he felt someone touch his arm. It was
only Jason and the man was snickering at him. Dick rolled his eyes and made a face, stuck his
tongue out like a child. Jason smiled and held out his hand, palm up and Dick stared at it.

Wiggling his fingers, he gestured for Dick and the man slipped his hand over Jason's, fitting
perfectly like a puzzle piece. They linked their fingers and set their hands on the arm rest between
them. At least it was useful for something.

The corner of his lips curved into a smile, grinning excitedly. Thankfully the theater was dark so
Jason couldn't see. He would have been embarrassed to be found out.

As the movie progressed, they slowly leaned towards one another, hands still linked. It was nice
and pleasant and Dick wished he could hold his hand all the time. He gave it a tight squeeze and
Jason responded with one as well.

As they entered the third act of the movie, the story intensified, deeply affecting them as the grip in
their hands tightened, not so much that it hurt, but out of anxiety and excitement; emotions running
high. There was so much going on and wow, Dick found himself falling in love with the beauty of
the story, the characters and their duty to do good. It was fantastic.
Once the movie had finished, Dick's eyes were covered in tears, glassy. They fell and trailed down his cheeks, rolling off the edge of his jawline. He sniffled a little, wanting to wipe them away but Jason was still holding onto one hand.

"Crying?"

"No," he sniffled, obviously lying.

"I teared up a little too you know," Jason said and reached over, running a thumb under his eye to wipe away the salty tears, but they still kept coming down.

"Sorry."

"Why'd you say sorry? It was a good movie. Really good. And well, it's sort of—sort of...cu..." Jason trailed off and mumbled something under his breath.

"What?" Dick asked, couldn't quite hear him due to the chattering of people leaving the theater as well as the credits rolling.

"Nothing. It's nothing. Anyways, ready to go?"

"Ugh. Give me a moment." Dick leaned back against the chair and tried to will away the emotions boiling within him. He sucked in a few breaths, trying to calm himself. After a minute or so, the tears stopped but he could still feel the swelling in his eyes.

"Here." Jason dabbed at his eyes gently with the sleeves of his sweater, drying them. "Good?"

"Good." Dick sniffled and gave a soft smile.

"Okay. Let's go." Jason tugged him upwards and Dick followed along.

Once they were out in the lobby, Jason stopped him and turned Dick around by the arms so they faced each other. He leaned down slightly, face close to Dick's. Teal colored eyes stared at him intensely, eyes squinting, and brows raised, making Dick squirm.

"W-What?" Dick stuttered, could feel heat creeping upon his cheeks. Jason was so close, face hovering mere centimeters from him.

"Your eyes are still red," he simply said and as if nothing had happened, straightened back. Dick heaved a sigh, didn't realize he was holding in his breath. The idiot scared him by his sudden actions.

"Geez Jason."

"What?" The man asked, grinning and was well aware of what he had done.

Dick threw him a playful glare, not at all mad at him but slightly annoyed. "Never mind. And yes
they are." There was nothing he could do about them; he just had to wait until they went away which could take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour.

"Here." Jason handed him his sunglasses that was casually hanging onto his shirt collar. "Wear it."

Dick gave him a look. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah," he said and gestured for him to take it.

Dick grabbed the sunglasses and slipped them on. "How do I look?"

Jason didn't pipe a word and Dick could see him just staring, like he'd been doing earlier. Then quickly, he pulled out of his stupor and pushed Dick's sunglasses up a little more. "Great. Looks good."

"Hm." Dick hummed. "Reminds me of the scene in the movie."

Jason almost choked on his own spit. "Oh god Dick." Jason looked at him in horror, as if Dick had found out his deepest darkest secrets. He was only making a reference.

"It's just similar since you gave me your sunglasses." Dick said innocently.

"Uh huh. Right. Right. Anyways," He said, clearing his throat. "Let's go eat?"

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They decided to walk to their destination since it was close by and they were in the city. It was easier to travel around by foot versus taking a car since that was a bit of a nightmare to get around in. As they were heading down the street towards the crosswalk, Dick suddenly got a bad vibe. His stomach tightened, knots forming and his hands felt cold, freezing.

This was bad. Really bad.

It felt just as bad as that night and there was no way he would ever forget that feeling. The pit of his stomach felt queasy and he just knew this accident would be disastrous. He had to stop it no matter what but he wasn't sure what was going to happen. He continued to follow alongside Jason, couldn't listen to a single word he was saying as he was freaking out of his damn mind.

Once they reached the end of the sidewalk, the light turned green, signaling that it was fine for pedestrians to cross.

God, no. This was a bad sign and he couldn't let them cross. Couldn't let Jason cross. Dick quickly moved to stop him, grabbed his sleeve and held him back. "Jason, stop," he said. "Let's wait for the next one."

"Why?" He asked, confused. "It's green. We got like 20 seconds. We can make it," Jason said, still walking despite Dick trying to slow him down by tugging him back.

Dick could feel his heart race, blood pumping rapidly through his veins. "We can wait for the next one," he breathed shakily. "Let's wait for the next one okay?" Dick was getting desperate. Really desperate and almost pleaded with worry. He could feel bile rise in the back of his throat, so anxious he wanted to throw up. So worried that something might happen and he couldn't help.
Jason noticed that something was odd with how frantic Dick looked and how hard he was clutching on tightly to his shirt. "Hey, what's wrong—?"

Then suddenly, they heard a loud screech. A car was heading straight for them, the driver slamming so hard on the brakes, the sound of rubber scraping against concrete shattered loudly as people quickly ran for cover in a panic. It was coming dead on for them. Dick needed to move. He had to move but he found his legs frozen, a deer caught in headlights, frightened.

Why couldn't he move?

The car was going to hit them. If they didn't move now, they could die. He tried to lift his legs but they wouldn't budge an inch.

Then suddenly, he was pushed to the side, his body slamming hard to the ground and he rolled to a stop. His head hit the cement, ears ringing from the sudden impact and mind swimming. It hurt but it couldn't have hurt worse than whoever had saved him.

Dick opened his eyes and found that he was alone. Frantically, he searched the vicinity for Jason and found him lying on the ground just a few feet away from him, immobile.

"Oh god, Jason!" Suddenly, horror hit him at what had happened. Jason had shoved him out of the way, covering for him. Vivid blue eyes scanned the area and he found the oncoming car had crashed into another, causing it to swivel towards them, so close. Oh so close to Jason that he was internally freaking out because that car might have hit him.

"Jason!" Dick jumped to his feet and felt light headed for a moment, almost collapsed back down. But he steadied himself, breathed in and out to stabilize. He slowly made his way towards Jason, swaying from side to side.

Dropping down to his knees, he gently rolled Jason onto his back. He was unconscious and there was blood dripping from the side of his face.

"No…" Dread pooled within Dick and he could feel his fingers trembling as he brought a hand to his neck, felt for a pulse. When he found it, faintly beating, he breathed a sigh of relief. He was alive, for the most part.

"Thank god," Dick breathed, held onto Jason’s hand and pressed it to his forehead. "Thank god," he choked out a sob. He exhaled shakily and took a look around, realized the crash was bigger than he thought. A few more cars had collided with one another, the front, the sides and the back were wrecked and dented, pieces of metal scattered all over the streets.

There was a crowd of people standing off to the side while others were lying on the ground just like Jason, with people crowding around—helping in any way they could.

Dick wasn't sure if Jason was hit or not but he prayed he wasn't. He checked over the man, carefully feeling around for injuries. He couldn't tell, being that he wasn't a medic and could only spot the obvious cuts and bruises on his hands and knees. It looked like he'd also hit his head seeing there was a bruise forming on his forehead.

Dick was losing his calm, could feel his stomach twisting, pulling at his insides. His breath shortened as memories of the past flooded his mind and all he could see were bloody bodies lying before him.
He couldn’t fail again. *No, not again.*

People were crowding around him, asking if they were okay. Asking if Jason was okay.

He snapped out his stupor and tried to focus on the issue at hand. "I-I don't know," he stuttered, too flustered to do anything. "C-Can someone please call 911?" Dick pleaded, hands shaking uncontrollably with anxiety. He couldn’t think straight, couldn’t begin to wrap his mind around what happened.

"On it." A middle aged man answered and immediately began dialing his phone.

Dick couldn’t do much considering there wasn't much he could do for Jason except pray that he was okay. That if he sustained any serious injuries, they weren't life threatening. He held on tightly to his hand, squeezed it and prayed.

Please let him be okay. *Please.*

These powers of his, if they had any meaning at all, any reason to why he got them, then he should be able to save Jason. He should have been able to save *them.*

But he didn’t. He failed and he let them die.

*At least,* he hoped that Jason would be okay. That he *did* save him. That he was able to stop his premonition and yet, why was Jason the one that was injured and not him?

God, if anything happened to Jason, Dick would just—

As he waited for the ambulance and the police car to arrive, people who were standing by and saw the whole accident were recapping the story to him. Apparently Jason had grabbed Dick by the arms and tried to shove them aside, attempted to dodge the cars, but unfortunately, it looked like he might have gotten hit by the tail end of one of the cars but they weren’t sure. They were separated with Dick being pushed to the side, just enough to avoid the hit while Jason didn't make it out safe.

The stories that were being told didn't help to alleviate Dick's worries and only increased it. As he held onto Jason's hand, stared at him intensely, he felt the man twitch. Slowly, he was coming to.

"Jason!" Dick shouted and the man winced. Realizing that he'd been disruptive, he lowered his voice and apologized. "Sorry," he said, paused and sucked in a breath. "Are you okay?" He was relieved that Jason had woken up, but his fears were far from over.

Jason groaned, and blinked his eyes. He squinted at Dick, looked confused. "Dick?" He questioned, thoughts probably muddled.

Dick sighed softly. "Yeah," he whispered. "Yeah it's me. Are you hurt anywhere?" Sapphire eyes roamed all over his body, watched as Jason tried to move, but winced in pain. He laid back down and scrunched his nose.

"Everywhere hurts," he grumbled. Then he looked straight at Dick, concerned. "Are you fine?"

The idiot should be worried about himself instead and not Dick. "I'm fine," he said and gently stroked a hand against his cheek. "Just fine. I'm more worried about you. You blacked out." Dick was trying his best to remain calm, but found it hard. Not with the way his chest felt tight, breath short and his body trembling. He felt exhausted and just wanted everything to be okay.
"I did?" Jason asked with a raised brow, confused.

"You were probably winded from the accident," Dick explained, wasn't exactly sure but that had to be the only outcome. "Is...anything broken?"

Jason hummed in thought to that question and tried wiggling different parts of his body, grimaced when pain shot through his body. "Think I might have sprained my wrist and ankle."

Dick exhaled loudly, hadn't realized he'd been holding in his breath. He felt a heavy weight lift off his shoulders, glad that Jason's injuries weren't life-threatening.

"Thank god you're okay." Dick squeezed Jason's hands and shut his eyes, held them tight and pressed his lips to them. "Thank goodness."

Jason stared back, blinked in surprise, but squeezed back with assurance. "I'm glad you're okay too."

Dick chuckled, a laugh of distraught and shook his head. "You could have been worse, Jason."

"Hey, I saved us," he joked but Dick didn't think it was funny and was not laughing. Jason realized he probably shouldn't have said that and mumbled sorry.

Dick didn't have a reason to be mad at Jason because he did what he had to do. If anything, it was Dick's fault for not stopping him. For not being adamant enough or just pulling him out of the way. It was a bad flaw of his and Dick just never seemed to try hard enough to stop what he knew was coming. It could have easily been avoided but no, he just—he wasn’t strong enough to do anything.

If he wasn’t around—then maybe this wouldn’t have happened. Jason wouldn’t have been in danger and he wouldn't have gotten hurt.

Dick was deep in thought as Jason laid there quietly, probably trying to rest or will away his pain. He could tell that it hurt from seeing the distressed expression on his face. Soon, they could hear the sirens getting closer and closer and finally the ambulance, firetrucks and police cars arrived at the scene.

The medic care quickly got to work, helping those who were injured. Jason was lifted onto a gurney and rolled into one of the ambulances. Dick also came along and they headed to Gotham Hospital.

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Dick waited in front of Jason's room, was told to stay there until they were done. There were a few nurses going in and out but he couldn't get a peek inside.

The wait was eating at him and he couldn’t calm down, too worried about Jason’s well-being that it made him jittery. A cold chill found its way into his body, made him shiver and tremble—nausea hitting him. His hands were clammy and he felt sick, wanted to vomit but didn’t want to leave his seat.

The nurses had noticed how pale Dick looked, how beads of sweat were forming around the edges of his face. They pestered him to get checked, wanted him to lie down and rest while also getting his injuries treated. Dick didn’t want that and argued that he was fine even though he wasn’t. The
nurses wouldn’t leave him alone however so he ended up agreeing. Dick was led away to a separate room and they cleaned up his cuts and bruises. There were a few scraps over parts of his arms and legs, nothing too bad.

There was a slight bruise on the back of his head but there wasn’t any lingering damage. Once they were done, they gave him some medicine, advised him to take a deep breath and that his friend would be okay before he let him go.

Dick quickly found his way back to Jason’s room and found that it was still occupied. It shouldn’t have taken that long for them to tend to his injuries unless they weren’t as light as he thought they were.

Out of nervousness, he ended up pacing around back and forth, couldn’t stand to sit still. He needed to move, to rid his body of the numbness. Dick was on edge and the doctors were taking forever.

He needed to know. He just needed to know so that he could have a peace of mind. So that he knew that he didn’t royally fuck up.

There was a lot of traffic happening in the hospital and one of the nurses directed Dick to sit down because he was being disruptive so he reluctantly did and resorted to tapping his foot impatiently.

Suddenly, a group of people burst into the area, being noisy and disorderly. Dick was curious and turned to look. When he laid his eyes upon the group, he realized that one of them was Jason’s youngest brother, Damian.

There with Damian were three other people. A middle-aged man who he knew was Bruce Wayne followed by a teen boy who he assumed was Tim and the other old man, in the nice tailcoat was probably Alfred, the butler. The family was hovering around a poor nurse, hounding them with questions. Asking them about Jason and his condition.

“Mr. Wayne, I can assure you that your son is okay. The doctors will be done shortly. If you could please wait over there.” The nurse looked tense but tried to calmly explain to them.

That didn’t help to put out the fire because Bruce just looked even angrier and so did Damian. While Bruce was attempting to argue some more, Damian was getting annoyed and decided to wander off. As he turned in Dick's direction, their eyes coincidentally met and immediately, he knew this wasn’t going to be good. Could see the boy’s eyes narrow with judgement, lips pulling into a scowl.

Dick probably should have hid himself better.

Damian stormed over to Dick without a care in the world and jabbed him in the chest with his tiny finger. “You,” he growled, voice filled with venom. “You did this. This your fault!”

“I’m—” Dick tried to defend himself but Damian wasn't having it.

“If Todd wasn’t hanging out with you, he wouldn't have gotten injured. It's your fault!”

Damian was causing a commotion, attracting attention from around them. People were watching, staring, all eyes on him and Dick wanted to just hide away. Felt embarrassed for being put in the spotlight, for being howled at by a boy.

“I knew he shouldn’t have trusted you!” Damian was going on a rant, throwing insults upon insults at Dick. It’s not like Dick could argue back considering he was a boy. A boy who had every right to be angry at him for hurting his beloved older brother.
He was still yelling, his voice growing hoarse and Dick could tell that his anger was real. Felt bad for making such a boy feel so hurt.

From the corner of his eye, Dick saw someone approaching them, the teen, Tim, quietly came up beside his brother and tried to hush him up. But Damian wasn’t having any of it and swatted his hand away. Told him to go away if he wasn’t going to help.

Then suddenly, Bruce was within a few feet of him and it felt extremely awkward. The man had an air of arrogance, and came off as intimidating. Dick was a little worried about what he might say to him.

“Damian,” Bruce said with an authoritative tone. He placed a hand on the boy’s shoulder and squeezed down, immediately shutting him up.

“Father,” he spoke and peered up at him. “You must kick him out.”

Bruce sighed. “I will handle this.” He gently nudged Damian aside, pushing him towards his other son.

Dick tried to swallow and felt a lump get caught in his throat. He was unsettled with Bruce standing right in front of him, towering over him like a man he once knew in the past. It frightened him and he could feel every inch of his body freezing up.

Bruce was gazing at him, those blue eyes judging him as they roamed up and down his body. There was a brief moment of silence as the man was deep in thought.

That was until he parted his lips to speak. “I have to ask you to kindly leave.” He said, finally speaking.

Dick blinked in surprise, confusion clearly written all over his face. He didn’t think that he'd be kicked out. “But sir—” he tried.

Bruce held a hand up and stopped him. “It’d be better if you left.” He repeated and used that same exact tone he had used on Damian. He could hear the boy snickering off to the side, caught a quick glance of his victorious smirk.

Dick wasn’t sure of what to do but what else could he do besides listen. This was his family. This was his adoptive father. Of course they had every right to have him leave.

An acidic bile threatened to crawl its way up Dick’s throat but he held it back. He wanted to stay, wanted to know if Jason was okay. All he wanted to do was confirm it and yet, he couldn’t. Not with the way his father was telling him to leave or with how his brother had just yelled at him in front of everyone.

He could feel his hands trembling violently. Dick was hurt and upset and wanted to argue with Bruce. Plead with him to at least let him stay until he knows Jason is fine but he knew they wouldn’t grant him that wish.

There was nothing he could do to convince Bruce otherwise. Not with how adamant he looked. His gaze was intense, eyes narrowing, daring him to challenge him if he was brave enough.

Dick wasn’t going to subject himself to another round of humiliation. He had enough and quite honestly, couldn’t handle anymore.

Nodding his head, he murmured a quiet apology. “I’m…sorry.” For hurting his son. For being the
one that caused the accident. For not helping when he could have.

Dick turned on his heel and left the hospital. Didn’t give one look back as he left with sorrow in his heart. With a feeling that this might be it. That this will be it.

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When the doctor’s finally allowed visitors into his room, Jason wasn’t surprised to find his family filing in through the doors. He expected they would arrive as soon as possible considering they’d be the first ones the hospital would call.

The family dispersed around his bed, all familiar faces in view. Except one. One that he wanted to see. Jason licked his dry lips, wondering where Dick could have gone. Maybe he was resting in another room? Dick did look like he was injured but Jason wasn’t awake enough to know what happened after he arrived at the hospital.

“Jason,” Bruce spoke as he stood at the foot of his bed.

“Hey Bruce.”

The man let out a heavy and long sigh. “Son, you scared us.”

Jason shrugged his shoulders, like the almost near death he was in wasn’t even a big issue. Bruce just shook his head and raked his eyes over Jason’s body. Found that his wrist was wrapped in bandages and sitting in a sling.

“Oh, sprained my wrist. Also got a concussion and some bruises,” Jason said and started listing off a few other injuries he had received. Most were minor.

“We know Jason. The doctor had briefed us already,” Bruce explained.

“Good. Because my head hurts and I can’t concentrate.”

“Todd, I can’t believe you were so careless.” Of course Damian wouldn’t be so kind as to not yell at him.

“Sorry Damian. My bad. Didn’t see the car coming you know?” Jason teased and the boy huffed, pout on his tiny face.

“Jason, we were worried. You don’t have turn this into a joke.” This time it was Tim who spoke up. The teen gently rested his hand over his brother’s and pinched him gently. “You jerk.”

“Ow! What the hell Tim?”

“That’s what you get for making light of this situation.”

“If I might add, you could have died Master Jason.” Of course Alfred would be the one to deal the finishing blow.

Jason winced and tried to shift onto his side but it hurt too much. He didn’t want to deal with the family fretting over him because they could be suffocating at times, always pestering him about everything.
“I know. I know. Just, wanted to make the mood less, you know, depressing.”

“Which is fine. But seriously, we were really worried Jason,” Tim said. “It was so bad Damian cried.”

“I did not Drake!” Damian argued and pouted.

“Sure,” Tim teased and earned a kick to the shin. “You brat!” He hissed, clutching onto his leg.

“Calm down. You’re disrupting Jason.” Bruce interrupted the two before a fight could break out. They stopped and instead entered into an intense glaring contest. Jason chose to ignore them and focused his attention back on Bruce.

“By the way, where’s Dick?” Jason asked and looked around the room at his family for an answer. “He was here with me but I don’t know what happened.”

At the mention of Dick, Damian broke out into a smirk and crossed his arms over his chest. “That charity case left.”

Jason’s eyes widen at that comment. “What?” He was not happy with the way Damian was referring to Dick.

“Father forced him to leave. It was his fault anyways that you got hurt.”

Jason closed his eyes and drew in a rickety breath to calm his anger before he exploded at his family. “You did what?” He growled.

“He doesn’t belong—“

“Bruce, you did what?” Jason cut his brother off and stared straight at his adopted father. Turquoise eyes burned with fury. “You—you fucking did what?”

“Jason—“ Bruce started, was going to try to calm him down, but Jason wasn't having any of it.

“No!” He yelled.

Bruce sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. “That man, you shouldn’t see him anymore.”

Jason's jaw dropped, appalled to hear him say such a thing. “What the hell Bruce? You have no say in who I want to associate myself with.”

“He is not worthy of your time.”

“Right! And he’s just a gold digger.” Damian piped in, adding fuel to the already blazing fire.

“Do you even know what gold digger means?” Jason snapped at Damian, beyond mad. There was vigor burning in his chest and he was so pissed.

“Tt. I do,” he argued. “He is only using you Todd. You can’t see it.”

“Just—shut up.” He hissed, couldn’t handle this anymore. What right did they have to judge Dick? They didn’t even know him. Barely knew a single thing about him. Because if they did, they’d realize that Dick was the kindest man Jason had ever gotten the pleasure to know. He’s calm and understanding while at the same time considerate. He was perceptive and took notice of a lot of details that Jason would have overlooked. Also, he was quite the conservative. He never looked to exploit others to make his situation better.
Jason understands that his family were worried about his well-being due to past experiences where people were after him for status and money, but Dick was different. He was none of that.

If they only knew. If they just took the time to get to know Dick, they would find out that he was a kindhearted soul. But even then, there was a dark past to him and Jason knew there was no matter how much he tried to hide it. Dick had his own demons that he battled against, demons that were deeply rooted within his being. So far carved within him that he had difficulty being himself. Being open and—and happy like the few times Jason was able to witness it.

Jason wished that one day Dick would tell him about it. About what was holding him back and maybe, just maybe, he could be the one to heal him.

But how could he if all he ever did was cause him pain? That his family and his friend were adding to the problem with their false judgement?

Fucking—Jason was livid.

“Jason—“ Bruce tried once more.

“No. I don’t want to talk about this anymore. What you did was wrong. It wasn’t his fault. None of it was our fault. It was simply an accident and I got hurt when I tried to save him. End of story.”

Bruce parted his lips, ready to retort but Jason threw a nasty glare at him, daring him to say another word. He didn’t.

Jason eyed every single one of his family members, could see that none of them were convinced about Dick (besides Alfred). That they had ill feelings towards him because of his background and looks. Decided to shift the blame onto him because who else could they blame it on? They always needed someone to blame so why not Dick?

“Todd—“

“Damian. No. We’re done. Now, take me home.” All Jason wanted to do was go find Dick but he wasn’t quite well enough to travel on his own. Knowing his family, they wouldn’t allow it so the first thing he was going to do was give him a call once he was back home.

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When he arrived home, Jason got situated in his room and kicked everyone out so he could have a bit of privacy. His cell phone had surprisingly survived the accident. Well, his screen was cracked but that was replaceable. Jason was just thankful that his phone still worked considering that was where he had stored Dick’s number.

He dialed his name and waited. A few rings in and the line was connected.

“Hello?”

“Dick—“ Jason was relieved to hear his voice. “Are you okay?”

He heard Dick sigh softly on the other line. “I’m…fine,” he spoke, voice low and quiet. From the tone of his voice, he sounded upset.
“Are you sure?”

“…Yeah. Yeah.” Then he heard some shuffling, like he was moving around. “How are you though?”

“Fine. I got a concussion, some bruises and a sprained wrist. Have to wear a sling for a bit. Other than that, I’m healthy,” Jason tried to throw a joke in there to lighten the mood. Even though they were miles apart, the atmosphere felt heavy. Felt as if Dick didn’t want to talk to him.

Dick chuckled which sounded really fake. “I’m glad you’re okay.”

“…Yeah. Same to you. Also, I wanted to apologize. For my family. They were rude to you.”

There was a brief pause. “…No. It’s fine.”

“What? Dick, you can’t be serious?” There was no way he should be okay with any of this. Not with how they treated him.

“I am,” Dick breathed. “They’re right. It’s my fault.”

“Dick—“

He quickly cut him off and spat out a sentence Jason didn’t think he’d ever hear. “I don’t think we should see each other anymore.”

Jason felt his world explode. His heart shattering into a million tiny pieces. Pieces that were struggling to be put back together.

“What? Why?” He blurted, not understanding the reasoning behind Dick’s intention. Couldn’t believe that those words came out of his mouth.

The man sighed loudly. “We’re too different.”

That, Jason gets, but at the same time, he didn't see an issue with it. “We made it work,” he started. “We’re getting along fine aren’t we?” Dick didn’t answer him and Jason felt irritation swell within him. “Are you just making an excuse? It’s really because of my family right?”

There was another slight pause. It was as if Dick was choosing his words carefully. “It’s not,” he replied. “We’re just different Jason. We have different lifestyles and it just won’t work.”

“I beg to differ.” They were getting along fine and they were even able to smooth out the few bumps that occurred.

“It’s true Jason. I hurt you. I’m nothing but trouble. All I do is take from you.” Despite him blaming himself, Dick sounded upset, almost frustrated.

“Dick. You don’t. Are you listening to me? Because you don’t. Stop making it a one way decision!”

There was more rustling on his side, and Jason could hear him sighing heavily. “I’m sorry Jason.”

“I swear to fucking god Dick—“

“I’m sorry. Thanks for being my friend. It was nice while it lasted.” He was completely disregarding everything Jason was saying and Jason was getting pissed. How could he just ignore him like that? Without listening to reason?
“Don’t you dare—" He warned but Dick hung up. He fucking hung up.

Jason dialed his number again but he didn’t pick up. He tried again and again. Still nothing.

He couldn’t believe it. Dick had broken up with him.

There was no way he wasn’t going to let it end like this. *Hell no.*

Chapter End Notes

 Ah... *runs and hides*
Chapter 10

After that whole catastrophe, Dick didn't have an ounce of energy to do anything besides work and sleep. Well, he tried to sleep, but had a difficult time because he couldn't get his brain to shut off. His mind ran a mile a minute, constantly thinking about Jason. It was annoying, but he couldn't help it, couldn't stop thinking about the man. It was overwhelming and it put him on edge, made him anxious and flustered and it was hard for him to calm down.

Sighing frustratingly, he flipped onto his back and stared up at the ceiling, counted the tiny little cracks.

Dick knew that this thing with Jason wouldn't last—had a feeling deep inside that one day it would explode. The bomb had been ticking, counting down to that very moment and it happened, in the most horrible way ever.

It wasn't like Dick wanted to break up with Jason. Hah. Break-up like they were in a relationship. Well, they certainly acted like they were dating the past month with how intimate they were being, but really, they weren't. They weren't even anywhere close to being a couple because who would even date someone like Dick? No one.

It didn't make him feel any better when he finally realized that he liked Jason. Really liked Jason. It took him awhile to notice that everything he was feeling, the unsteady wave of emotions hitting him face on, was due to Jason. That everything that man did made him feel so much in many ways that he'd never felt before. Caused him to react, riled him up enough to be angry and upset.

Which was probably why he felt distressed when he saw Jason kissing someone at the party. Got mad and yelled at Jason for a number of things—for ditching him, for what Roy and his friends did and for Jason having sex with some random guy because at the time, he didn't know that was how he felt.

It was confusing to Dick and he couldn't wrap his mind around his emotions. Couldn't understand why he felt what he felt. Why he was angry especially at the fact that Jason was getting it on with someone else, had bedded someone else. Dick didn't realize that it was the jealousy within him because he's never felt so much for another. Had never experienced such strong emotions—of love and adoration. Just wanted to spend time with Jason because he made him feel safe and himself. That he could be himself without being judged. It was—Jason was like his safe haven.

But it didn't matter in the end because they would never work out. His expectations were already low coming into the friendship and his hopes were a lost cause from the beginning. He had no chance and he didn't think he would. Dick didn't deserve someone like Jason, didn't deserve anyone at all actually. They were too different. Way too different and Dick had nothing to offer to Jason.

He was just extra baggage and Jason didn't need that.

Dick was poor—dirt poor. Worked two decent jobs just to make a living. Got paid enough for him just to scrape by without digging a deep hole for himself. It was already tough to meet his payments but he persevered. Did his best so he could have a place to live and not be out on the streets. Dick was a walking charity case, a nightmare of a person to be with. And his past—well his past wasn't something he could ever talk about. Those issues, that burden wasn't something he ever wanted to toss upon Jason or anyone for that matter. It was for him and only him.
Dick didn't want Jason to know anything about his past. Would carry it to his grave. It was—it wasn't something he wanted to remember and knowing how Jason was, how kind and caring he was, it would be awful for him to listen to.

Add to the fact that he was some sort of supernatural psychic freak. Which was the reason why Jason got caught in that accident. Was the reason why everyone around him kept getting hurt. God, he was just a jinx, caused bad luck wherever he went. Just like everyone had told him. Dick had tried to ignore it, to disbelieve their words that he was, but apparently, they were right.

So it was better if he just stayed away from Jason.

Jason was too nice and considerate. Always tip-toed around him, was careful at times so he wouldn't upset him. It was endearing and it honestly made Dick want to cry because he was the first to ever treat him with such tender. Even though it didn't exactly start off like that. Jason made Dick feel alive again—like he once was when he was young. When he was happy and loved, before his parents had died. Jason was the only other person who had ever made him feel so much like himself besides his parents. As sad as that was to admit.

Dick had never really planned on getting close to Jason, but slowly over time, Jason was able to lure him out of his protective shell. Popped him out of the bubble he'd protected himself with because of all the care he showed Dick.

Of course it wasn't like that at first, no. It took some time but even then, Jason was always considerate from the start. Always took the effort to make sure he was comfortable and kept his distance when he felt like Dick needed it. He didn't push Dick to do something when he didn't want to (except for the party) and didn't insult or judge him. Actually, he often stood up for him.

Dick turned onto his side, pulled up his blanket closer to his chest and heaved a sigh. It was nice to be able to feel so—so alive again. It'd been too long. Way too long since he's felt any happiness. He'd almost forgotten what that emotion felt like.

But unfortunately, it was short lived. Now that he was back to his normal life, a life before he met Jason, it felt odd. Almost lonely without his company. Oh who was he kidding? It was lonely without Jason and Dick hadn't realized until now how much of an impact Jason had left in his life. How huge his absence was, like a part of him was missing.

They spent so much time together, did it as often as they could and it was enjoyable. Dick would squeeze any time he had to be with Jason, even though he was dead tired and just wanted to sleep.

But now, he was back to spending his free time alone.

It didn’t matter though. Sooner or later, he’d end up alone again so it was better to break it off. Even though he missed Jason so much that it was suffocating him, Dick knew it was too good to be true. Now, he was just back to his boring life of survival, living life one step at a time.

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Dick knew it would be a difficult adjustment in his life without Jason here but he didn't think it would be this hard.

He had difficulty concentrating at work and was constantly being a hassle to others. Had dropped a
plate, broken it and was sent to the back to reflect on his actions and calm down because they knew that Dick wasn't often like this. That maybe he was sick or stressed and just needed a moment to breathe.

Dick sighed heavily as he leaned back in the chair and brushed a hand through his hair in frustration. Closed his eyes shut as he breathed in and out, regulated his irregular breathing. Tried to soothe his heavy heart, the pain that was constricting his chest. He felt sick and wanted to vomit, could feel his hand trembling, his nerves working an all-time high as his anxiety pumped through his blood.

Everything seemed so dull and lifeless.

Not a lot of time had passed since he broke off their friendship and Dick could already feel how much he was regretting his decision. He just missed Jason so much and whenever his phone rang, he'd want to pick it up, knowing full well that it was Jason calling. His home never received that many calls in the first place so it was obvious and besides, he had caller ID.

Dick never picked up though, knew that the moment he heard his voice, even just the sound of Jason breathing, he'd want to give in. He was lonely and things were quiet. He didn't exactly have any friends and Jason was basically it for him. He'd gotten used to that life and now, it was gone.

They hadn't even been together that long and yet, it felt like a part of him had been ripped apart. A void that was left behind and no one else could fill it except for Jason.

Sadly, there wasn't much he could do about it—well he could but he wasn't going to. Couldn't just go up to Jason and tell him he wanted to be friends again even though he wanted to so badly. Not after everything that had happened.

Not after how he failed to save his parents and continued to fail yet again.

It didn't help to know that Jason's family hated him. Could clearly remember the disgusted looks on their faces. He wasn't going to be that person who broke their bond. Knew how important family was and he didn't want to cause them to fight. Jason would defend him without a doubt, would fight against them just to protect Dick. He'd seen it before so it was likely to happen again even if they were his family.

There was a knock at the door, signaling that his break time was over. He hadn't realized he'd been so entrapped in his mind that he'd forgotten to check the time. Sighing loudly, he stood up from his seat, took one more deep breath and willed his nerves away. Curled his fingers tight, nails digging into his skin creating tiny crescent moons and tried to inflict pain on himself to numb away his emotions. To stop the shaking.

He turned the door knob and stepped out into the restaurant, resumed his job.

It was fine. It had to be fine. Soon, he would get over it. His life would fall right back in place and it'd almost be as if Jason had never existed.

He just had to make it work.
The week had been gruesome, long and tiring and Dick felt like he was going to die. Well, not literally but he felt like dying. Every hour of his life was miserable and he just wanted to sleep his worries away but the nightmares kept him wide awake. There were too many things spinning around in his mind, kept him up constantly even though he was so exhausted he could pass out. He'd doze at times but would jerk awake hours later, couldn't get a single peaceful rest.

Having finally arrived home for the night, Dick collapsed onto his bed. Fell flat on his front and just laid there like a lifeless statue. Work was extremely busy and he kept making mistakes. Found it hard to focus at work, was always in a daze. At first, his managers let it slide, but then he kept repeatedly making mistakes and ended up getting reprimanded for screwing up. They knew he was a good worker so gave him the benefit of the doubt, assumed Dick was having a rough time. But they still yelled at him.

They weren't exactly wrong because Dick was the one who brought it upon himself.

Dick was tired and annoyed at getting yelled at for simple tasks he should have been able to perform. Not irritated at those who were telling him off, but at himself. Yet, he was too exhausted to reflect on it and just wanted to sleep. That is, if he could sleep.

As he curled under the warmth of his blankets, bundling up in bed, and not bothering to change out of his clothes, there was a knock at the door. Groaning, Dick stayed put and refused to move. Whoever it was could just go away. But when the knock kept coming in persistently, he got annoyed and reluctantly got to his feet.

“Yes?” Dick called and looked through the peep hole to see who the visitor was. Blue eyes widened, shocked when he found Jason. An angry Jason who looked like he wanted to rip Dick apart. At least probably verbally.

“Dick,” he called, voice tight. "It’s Jason. I want to talk.”

Dick sucked in a deep breath. “Go home Jason.” He spoke behind closed doors. There was no way he was letting him in. He couldn't give Jason that opportunity because he knows he'll take it. That he'll try to convince Dick that he was wrong in his choice.

Jason banged his fist against the door, irritated and startled Dick. But he didn't budge.

“Why?” He hissed. "Why...did you do that?” He sounded upset, hurt and that pierced Dick's heart. Felt like he was at fault for making Jason feel this way though he was.

“I—I had to.”

“No,” Jason bit back. "No you didn’t. Whatever my family said to you, they’re wrong. So don't listen to them.”

“Jason. I—“

“No.” Jason cut him off abruptly. “Stop—just stop cutting me off and listen,” He said firmly and left no room for argument.

Dick didn’t want to listen and debated on plugging his ears. Wanted to walk away and hide so Jason couldn't find him. He wasn’t sure he could handle whatever it was Jason wanted to say. But when he tried to move, he found it impossible, found himself rooted to the floor because deep down, he wanted to know what Jason had to say. Sighing, he stayed put and pressed his hands to the door and allowed himself at least that. “Okay.”
Jason drew in a loud and shaky breath, sounded nervous. “I like being around you,” and then paused briefly, collecting himself. Could hear him shifting closer towards the door. "You’re fun and I like your company. You're also...really cute. God Dick, you’re fucking adorable.”

A warmth crept upon his cheeks, a rosy red slowly seeping into his skin. He blushed at that comment, felt his heart skip a beat. Dick was happy to know that Jason felt that way about him. That he was complimenting him because no one else had ever told him so. But at the same time, he felt dejected because they couldn't do this anymore. They couldn't be in a relations—they couldn't be friends anymore.

“I—" He paused, thinking how he wanted to respond to him. There wasn't an easy way to put this so he laid it out there bluntly. “Thank you Jason. But I can’t. We just can’t be friends anymore.”

“Dick, are you fucking with me?” He hissed. Dick didn't reply and could feel the anger radiating off Jason, seeping through the door as he pounded his fist once again.

Dick felt like giving in, wanted to ease his vexation, but he had to stand by what he believed in. That this was the best option. “It’s better this way okay? Please...go home. And don’t visit me anymore.” It hurt to say, felt like he was suffocating just trying to put out those words.

Jason was frustrated, could hear him pacing behind the door, huffing and puffing. And then, there was a brief moment of silence, like the world had frozen. Neither of them breathed a word or made a movement. That was until, he heard Jason's grueling voice. “Fine. If you’re going to be that way, then say it to my face.”

Dick sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. He didn't want to give into him, but he could hear the desperation hidden beneath that anger, so he decided to grant him this one last request.

“...Okay.”

Dick unlocked the door and slowly opened it. Jason was on the other side and he looked like a mess. His hair was not brushed, sticking up in all angles and he was dressed down, very much down, in just a pair of sweats and a hoodie. Blue eyes found its way to his arm, saw the sling and immediately felt guilt. His wrist was wrapped in bandages and the bruises were apparent on his arms and face. The blossoming purple spots were still very much there, standing tall and proud. Wouldn't disappear any time soon. He was sure he had injuries elsewhere, but luckily they were hidden beneath his clothes. Otherwise, if Dick saw them, he would have felt ten times worse.

“So—“ Dick started but Jason stepped towards him and aggressively grabbed Dick by the arms. He flinched from the sudden gesture, frightened and stepped back, almost shoving Jason away and tripping over his door step.

Jason's eyes widened in surprise, realized what he had done and backed away. “Sorry. Sorry I—I was just,” he paused and sighed, relaxed himself. "I'm just mad,” he said through gritted teeth.

Dick held a hand to his chest and tried to calm his rapidly beating heart. Jason had scared him, caused him to have flashbacks of memories he didn't want to remember. Quickly, he forced them away and willed himself to focus on the present.

“It’s fine. I—I overreacted," he huffed, shuttered his eyes shut briefly.

“No it's my fault. I’m sorry. I was just—sorry, it's frustrating and I just don't get it Dick. Tell me why," he pleaded, turquoise eyes pleing.

Dick sighed heavily and thought about that for a moment. Tried to figure out a way to explain his
reasoning in the best way he could put it. There wasn’t really any without him revealing all his
secrets, so he just went with what flowed easiest. “You don’t want me.”

Jason raised a brow in confusion. “Why would you say that?”

“Look…Jason, I’m fucked up.” It was true. He really was.

He looked appalled at hearing Dick say that and curled his fingers into tight fists. “What the hell
are you talking about?”

Dick grabbed at the hem of his shirt, tugged on it roughly. He could feel his hands trembling and
didn’t want Jason to know. “I’m...really really fucked up Jason. You don’t want to be my friend.”

“I don’t get it Dick. You’re fine. You’re anything but that.”

Dick laughed, distraught. “But I am. In so many ways, I am. It doesn’t matter though. Let’s just
end it here. Let’s just go back to being strangers.” Blue eyes fell to the ground, stared at his shoes.
He was avoiding Jason’s gaze, didn’t want to see his hurt expression any longer.

A moment of silence fell between them until Jason broke the barrier. “Is this—is this it then? Do
you really want to end it? Even after all I said?”

Dick sighed shakily, could feel tears stinging at his eyes and nodded.

Jason ran a hand through his hair, frustrated and exhaled loudly. Dick looked back up, caught his
attention and Jason looked—god, he looked so broken, as if his world had just crashed. Jason
didn’t want to accept it and Dick could tell, could see the annoyance clear in his expression, with
how reluctant he was to step away. How his eyes were dark and sharp, jaws tight, gritting his teeth
and the way he was constantly tugging at his hair, about to rip out a few strands.

Dick thought Jason would have pressed out but he didn’t. He let it go and dropped his arms to his
side, letting out a heavy sigh.

“...I want to refuse. I do, but if that’s what you wish. If that’s what you really want, then I can’t
convince you otherwise, so I’ll respect it.”

It wasn’t. But it had to be. “It is.”

Jason’s face fell, lips downturned and pulled into a thin line and his eyes, god, he looked
devastated, sad and glassy, glistening a layer of tears. He looked like a kicked puppy and Dick felt
terrible, like he was the one who had been wrong about everything.

The expression was clear on Jason and Dick knew he’d hurt him. That face that was always so
bright and full of life was devoid of anything. It was dark and gritty, like he’d lost all hope. Like
Dick had pulled the plug on his light and darkened his world to a pitch-black.

Dick felt awful and guilty, so bad that he wanted to take everything he said back. But the damage
was done and he had to roll with it. He had to accept it because it was his decision. This was what
he wanted and this was how he wanted to protect Jason—by not being near him.

"I'm—" Jason's lips quivered and he bit down with enough pressure he could draw blood. "I'm
sorry it didn't work out," he finished.

“I’m sorry too," Dick said because what else was there to say?
And with that, Jason left.

And now, Dick was really alone.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the wait after that cliffhanger! But I'm back after JayDick week and here is your well earned treat ;)

Also, I want to thank everyone for the continued support and lovely comments! You guys are awesome ~

Colorful lights penetrated his vision as the loud music disrupted his hearing. He was swaying to the beat, uncoordinated and off rhythm as his mind was clouded, too drunk on the atmosphere to be aware of his actions. But even then, he didn't care as he moved along with the sea of people, grinding against whoever was pressed against him. All he wanted was just to forget.

Roy had dragged him to the club, got him off his depressed ass since he was just moping in his apartment after he officially broke it off with Dick. Jason had rejected the offer at first, wasn't up for partying like he used to, and was still mad at Roy even though he apologized. The sincerity in his apology was absent and Jason didn't accept it. It needed to come from the heart and Roy's apology should be for Dick, not him. Though now with Dick gone and the man not wanting to see him, it was unlikely to occur.

Then the matter with his family? Oh fucking lord, his family. They were a nightmare in themselves and Jason had yelled at them, mainly Bruce and Damian, for their treatment towards Dick. But neither would listen even though Alfred had put in a good word or two and reprimanded them. Jason knew they were stubborn and angry at the fact that Jason was injured. He understood that they care about him, but their actions were still unjustified. Jason needed to lay down the law for them, tell them what exactly was wrong and have them fix their mistakes. And yet, he never pulled through with it. Not with everything that happened after. Jason was far too upset to do a thing about it and left it at that. Let them slide away with their wrongs like every other time.

And now, here he was. Whisked away by the very friend he'd yelled at for hurting Dick, when the man himself ended up breaking his heart. Which okay, he may understand a little from where he was coming from, but Dick wouldn't listen and that's what irritated Jason. Though Jason supposed he could have been assertive and blurt out his inner feelings but at the same time, he didn't want to push Dick so he backed off.

He supposed he could drown his sorrows with alcohol and people. At least Roy was around to keep him company despite their somewhat strained friendship. Considering he almost hit Roy again for insulting Dick. Well, not really insulting him, but yelled at Jason to get over it and that Dick wasn't worth his time.

And maybe he wasn't. That still didn't warrant the shit talking.

Roy had gathered a group of friends and they were partying it up at the club. Had hoped from one to the next and now they were currently on their fourth round. Even though Jason was more loosened up, he was still in a grim mood. The alcohol helped somewhat to lighten his emotions, but thoughts of Dick were still lingering about in the back of his mind.
Despite all the drinks he was handed, Jason hadn't actually drank much. He started off with a few, but eventually stopped himself. The alcohol reminded him of the last time he was drunk, brought bad flashbacks into his memories and he would remember what he had done to Dick. It was something he would never forget and taught him a valuable lesson, don't drink past your limit.

Holding onto that lesson, Jason casually drank. He had enough to get buzzed and not shit-faced. He didn't exactly want another episode of waking up in bed with a stranger. Jason had a reasonable amount to get him into a good mood, so that he wasn't brooding with thoughts of Dick. The emotional ride had been enough and he quite honestly didn't want to get on it again.

It was awful and Jason hated it. It was almost like he had gone through his own version of PMS. He'd constantly cycle through a roll of emotions, going from angry to depressed, depressed to disappointment and then outright just being a moody asshole. Then it would rinse and repeat. He had bad mood swings and snapped at anyone who so much as tried to talk to him. It was fucking him up and all those around him were affected, his friends and family. He practically chewed Roy's ear off when he wouldn't stop calling him.

Yeah. It was bad.

Jason left the dance floor and slid onto one of the stools at the bar. He ordered a beer and took a huge gulp, alleviating his thirst. As he sat about, listening to the god awful music, a woman sidled up to his side. He could see from the corner of his eyes that the woman was beautiful, dressed in a tight-fitted black dress with gorgeous raven hair and bright red lipstick. She was attempting to chat him up, asking him questions, but Jason was barely listening. He wasn't interested in her and couldn't care less what she wanted. But she wasn't getting the signal that he wanted her gone and kept trying. When she tried to latch onto him, curled her fingers around his arms and pressed close, breasts bumping against him. And that was when he decided to draw the line. Jason swiftly got up and jerked away, leaving the woman behind as she angrily shouted after him.

Jason was not in the mood for flirting. Even if he was slightly drunk, he didn't want anyone else but Dick. Dick was the one person he wanted to kiss, the one person he would allow near him. The one person he would immediately spoil and shower with love. The one person he wouldn't mind waking up to after a pleasurable night and then just lay around in bed with.

The one he—

And then suddenly, realization hit him as a light bulb flickered in his mind.

The reason why Dick meant so much to him.

Why he constantly wanted to see him. Why he was always on his mind, occupying every corner of his thoughts. Why he was so careful with Dick, treated him respectfully. Did things that would make him happy and laugh. Why he wanted so much for their 'friendship' to stay.

It was because he liked him.

Holy shit. He liked him and he hadn't even realized it.

What with all the touching he did, how he'd always hold his hand when he got the chance. How Jason would play with his long hair and feel the urge to caress his cheek and kiss his pretty lips.

How did—how the fuck had he not seen this coming? The signs were so obvious but Jason was blind as hell. Couldn't pinpoint his own feelings even though his actions were clear to him. He just thought it was a platonic thing, that maybe he just really liked Dick because he was different and
he was fun to be around. But in fact, it was because he loved him which caused him to be this damn depressed and desperate.

Fuck. It's not like it mattered anymore. It was over. Dick didn't like him. Didn't even want to talk to him. That's how bad everything had gone and there wasn't any way he could fix it. He already tried and it didn't work out. He’d royally fucked up and that was that.

Jason sighed heavily and walked away from the crowd to huddle in a corner, drowning in his sorrow and alcohol as he swished his beer around. While he was mentally shooting himself in the foot for being an idiot, Roy came up to him. The man reeked of alcohol, more so than the average and Jason grimaced as he took in his friend. He was swaying from side to side, his legs unstable and wore a huge grin on his face. Yeah, he was definitely drunk.

Roy tripped on nothing and fell against Jason roughly. He quickly picked himself back up before he embarrassed himself some more and slipped his arms around Jason's neck and leaned in close.

"Jaaaaaay!" he slurred and breathed into Jason's face.

Jason could smell the alcohol and scrunched his nose in disgust. "Ugh. Roy, get off. You're drunk," he said and tried to disentangle himself from his friend but the redhead had latched on like an octopus, had a leg wrapped around his ankle.

"Noooo!" He whined and pressed a kiss onto Jason's collarbone. "Come play with me."

"Roy..." Jason warned and narrowed his eyes at the man.

"Come onnnn Jaaaaay." He continued pressing soft little kisses along his neck and then moved to attack his jawline. "Let's go have fun. You need it."

Jason exhaled loudly as he ran a hand through his hair. He wasn't feeling it but Roy's offer did sound appealing. It was a good way to let loose and relax. He needed to release some steam and maybe a pity fuck wouldn't be so bad. He had to let out his stress one way or another and since it was Roy, he was willing. "Fine. Room?"

"Got youuuuu covered." Roy smirked and tugged at his arm, leading him towards the back of the club where the private rooms were.

They didn't get very far as Roy had pushed Jason against the wall, pressed in close so their chests laid flat together. Jason just rolled his eyes at how horny his friend was but indulged him anyways as the red-head kissed him, buried his fingers into Jason's hair and was obnoxiously rolling his hips, drying humping Jason's thigh.

"God Jay. It's been too long," Roy moaned noisily as he undid the top of Jason's shirt.

"Yeah, well, I don't make a habit of it." Jason let Roy do all the work, kissing him and undressing him. In the back of his mind, he knew he probably shouldn't do this. That he wasn't up for it at all. Only figured why the hell not? He was good in bed and well, Jason could use a good lay.

The red-head slipped his hands under Jason's shirt, dragging his fingers along his chest, feeling the rock hard muscles of his abdomen as he kissed Jason with fervor, probing his tongue in and out and panted into his mouth.

Jason was barely responding, putting in little to no effort. If Roy was aware, he'd be complaining about his lack of participation but he wasn't, so that just meant he was drunk as hell. Unmotivated, Jason rolled into the depths of his mind and contemplated his decision. Should he really go through
with this? Was this something worthwhile?

As he considered those questions, he thought about Dick. About how the man would react to him, of what he would say if he could just see Jason now. And well, Dick would probably be disappointed and suddenly, he felt his gut tighten with guilt.

He should have known better by now and he should have learned from his past mistakes.

And if he loved Dick, then he really shouldn't go through with this.

Jason gripped Roy's arms roughly and pushed him away.

With blazed emerald eyes, Roy stared at him dumbfounded. "W-what?" he stuttered, lips wet with saliva and drool.

Jason made a face, scrunched his nose and exhaled loudly. "Sorry Roy," he apologized. "I can't do this with you anymore."

"Whaaaat?" He slurred, still didn't get it. "Jaay? I don't—" he was still so pissed drunk and high on pleasure he couldn't comprehend a word Jason was saying.

Jason narrowed his eyes at Roy, observed his current state and could see that his face was bright red and he was sporting a very large boner. And in that moment, he realized that he felt absolutely nothing for the man and he wasn't going to sleep with someone he had no feelings for.

He liked Dick and he was going to be loyal even though they weren't dating. But it didn't matter because, hell, he's tired of never having a consistent partner in his life and Dick was going to be the one. Or well, he's going to try. Besides, Roy did nothing to his libido. Actually, the thought of having Dick in his bed was more arousing. Even if the man was a little lean and he'd probably be afraid to break him so, maybe he should just wait on that.

Actually, screw this. Why was he even thinking about those things at this moment in time? He had other important business to attend to.

He pulled Roy along and found one of their friends, Kory and handed him off to her. "Take care of this drunk and get him home." Jason didn't even wait to hear her reply and bolted out of the club.

He wasn't just going to let this pass. Nope. He wasn't going to just let Dick go like that. When nothing was Dick's fault. When the reasons he gave Jason were just outright stupid. Made no sense (okay, a little sense) but still, not enough to convince him to stay away. Jason said he'd respect his wishes and he was probably breaking his trust but he didn't care.

He wanted just one thing and that was Dick.

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Jason didn't bother waiting and went straight to Dick's place immediately after he left the club. Thank goodness, he had sobered enough to drive. As he rolled into Dick's neighborhood, he parked someplace relatively safe so that his car wouldn't get broken into. Though that was really the least of his worries because all he had on his mind right now was Dick.

He sprinted up the short flight of stairs and bolted straight for Dick's. He knocked on the door and waited for a brief moment but no one answered. Was he not home? He couldn't possibly still be at work. It was freaking one in the damn morning so there was no other place he could be. Dick was a homebody and he knew that. Drawing in a shaky breath, Jason tried again. Still no answer. He was
about to call out his name when he heard a loud retching sound coming from inside.

"Dick?" Jason pressed his ear against the wooden door and listened for a sound.

There it was again, the sound of Dick vomiting. The walls were thin and the bathroom was located near the entrance so of course he could hear it. Oh god, was he sick? Was he okay? He knocked again with more urgency.

"Dick? Hey Dick. Open the door."

When he heard the toilet flush, he assumed Dick was finished and waited patiently. There was water running followed by some shuffling and the door clicked open. There stood Dick, looking deathly pale and sick, haggard and yet, Jason just thought he was the most beautiful person he'd ever seen.

"Jason?" He asked, rather dazed and arched a brow at the man. He seemed to be in a bit of a muddle. "W-What are you doing here?" He squeaked, voice hoarse, and sounded like his nose was congested.

Jason knew he should probably do something about his poor condition, but he needed to get his feelings off his chest first before he lost his steam. He drew in a shaky breath and captured Dick's gaze. "I just wanted to see you again," he blurted.

Dick blinked, squinting his eyes. "I-I don't understand," he murmured and was trying really hard to focus on Jason but he was too unstable, had to lean against the door frame for support. "I thought I told you to stay away," he said and almost retreated back into himself, curling his arms around his body as he took a step back, ready to bounce inside his apartment and hide.

Jason sighed frustratingly and ran a hand through his hair. He was not letting this go. He was not going to let Dick run away. And honestly, the best way for him to get his feelings across was just to go with it. So Jason shrugged his shoulders, figured why the hell not and dipped in to cup his cheek gingerly, pulled the man towards him and smashed their mouths together in a kiss. Dick froze, body going completely still. He felt a hand press against his chest, almost thought that Dick was about to push him away but instead, fingers curled into his shirt, clinging on. Relieved, Jason smiled silly and deepened the kiss.

When they parted, a revelation hit Jason once his mind was able to process what he had just done.

"Did I just kiss you after you vomited?" His expression was full of horror and disgust.

Dick cringed but gave a weak smile. "Yeah."

"Ugh." He reflexively gagged and stuck his tongue out. "Gross."

Dick chuckled, albeit weak and coughing in spurts.

"Hey. Let's go in." Jason said and gently guided him inside, pulling the door shut behind him. "By the way, before I forget—" he said, pulling Dick's attention back to him and was met with those pretty sapphire eyes, staring at him intensely and curiously. "I like you."

Shit. Maybe that was too soon because Dick looked like he was about to cry, his eyes getting glassy as his pale lips quivered. He opened his mouth, was about to say something but then quickly bolted towards the bathroom instead. There was the sound of the door being slammed open, banging against the wall until it sounded like Dick had collapsed to the floor, once again, vomiting.
Jason chased after him into the bathroom, found Dick kneeling beside the toilet bowl, emptying the contents of his stomach. He crouched down beside the young man, gently rubbed his hand along his back, helping to soothe his nausea. He patiently waited until Dick was finished and once he was, he helped him wash up and then laid him in bed.

"God, you look like hell," Jason said as he tucked Dick into bed, made sure he was comfortable and wrapped him in blankets.

He shivered as a chill crawled down his spine, cold and trembling. "Yeah..." He mumbled, probably didn't have enough energy to say more. “I—“

Jason shushed him and pressed a finger to his lips. “It’s okay. We can talk later. For now…” he said as he pinched his brows, examining Dick’s complexion because it looked awful. “Are you okay?” Jason was concerned, pressed the back of his hand against Dick's forehead to take his temperature. The man was burning up and his skin felt clammy. He was pale as a sheet of paper and Jason could see beads of sweat forming at the edges of his hair.

Dick shook his head and tugged the covers up to his chest, rolling onto his side as he pulled himself into a ball. "Caught a cold from work...it's been a few days. Won't go away." He explained.

"Do you have any medicine?" Jason asked and gently stroked a hand down his cheek.

Dick coughed, wet and heavy and nodded his head. "Yeah...I took them all though."

Jason sighed, and gingerly brushed aside a few strands of hair that was blocking his vision. Dick's lips were quivering and chapped, and he felt awfully bad for his condition. "I'll go get you some."

"Jay..." Dick whined and reached to curl a hand around his wrist, not wanting him to leave. "Don't go," he pleaded and for once, he was actually being a bit selfish.

Jason chuckled softly and covered a hand over Dick's to reassure him that he wasn't going to just leave. "I'll be back soon. It'll just be a quick run okay?"

Dick reluctantly huffed a sigh and nodded as he let his hand fall back under the covers. He was a shivering mess and rolled the blanket tighter around himself to keep in the warmth. Jason noticed how thin the blanket was and could see why he was cold as it barely provided any heat. Grabbing the hem of his sweater, Jason slid it off his body and pulled it over his head. He gingerly helped Dick sit up for a moment and slipped the sweater on him.

Jason stared at the man and took in his appearance. It was a little odd seeing that he was all layered up, but it was appealing despite how baggy it was. And he thought to himself, it wouldn't be such a bad idea if he lent Dick some of his clothes considering he could use them. It was rather cute and he liked the idea of it.

Jason smiled softly and pecked his forehead. "Just another layer to keep you warm." Dick blushed, or at least, Jason thought he was considering his face was already flushed. Dick collapsed back onto the bed, energy leaving his body and his head fell against his pillows in a thud. Oops, maybe Jason should have helped him back in, but the man just slipped from his hold.

Sighing softly, he gently tucked him in and made sure he was warm and comfortable. "Okay. Be back soon. Ring if you need anything."

Dick hummed and Jason was off.
Jason came back with a heap of materials. He was carrying a bunch of bags in hand and had to neatly compact it so he could make just one trip. Once he entered the apartment, he dropped the bags to the ground as gently as possibly.

He huffed a breath and wiped a hand across his forehead, sweeping off all the sweat that accumulated from his quick errand. He'd been running at high speed to get things and come back to Dick. Jason didn't exactly want to leave him alone for too long so rushed back.

Jason dug through the bags and pulled out the extra pillows and blankets because how could Dick only have one set? He also grabbed a heat warmer as well because there wasn't any in his crappy apartment from what he noticed.

Now that he thought about it, Dick had scarce resources, so how did he manage to survive Gotham winter hell? It was cold as fuck and god, he could just imagine the horrors of what Dick had to deal with based on what he'd seen so far.

Sighing heavily, he tossed that thought aside because from here on out, he was going to make sure Dick was well cared for.

On top of all the supplies, he also purchased necessities such as cold medicine, food and liquids. First things first, he checked on Dick. Noticed that he was fast asleep, breathing deeply and snuggled into a ball underneath the covers.

He was relieved to know that he was able to sleep at least. He must have been exhausted enough to drift into a slumber easily.

Jason got to work and set up the heater, placing it nearby Dick to warm him up. Next he layered another blanket on top of the other then headed to the kitchen to put away the groceries.

When he opened the door to Dick's refrigerator, he wasn't surprised to see that it was pretty empty. There were some fruits and milk, as well as eggs and a few vegetables. Probably only bought what he was going to eat.

No wonder he was so freaking lean. God damn. Jason suddenly felt angry at the thought of how poorly Dick had been living his life and slammed the door shut.

"Oh shit." Probably shouldn't have done that considering how fragile it was. Luckily it wasn't broken, but maybe it would have been a good idea than he could have an excuse to purchase one for Dick. But knowing him, he probably wouldn't accept the gift unless forced upon.

Once he was done stocking the fridge with a variety of food, he started searching for the cups. As he opened each cupboard, he realized that much like his fridge, it was empty. There were some pots and pans, a few silverware, but other than that, his pantry mainly consisted of cereal and preservatives. His frown got worse the more he progressed through Dick's things, realizing that he was literally living life on the edge.

Curiosity got the best of him and Jason decided to give himself a tour of Dick's place. There wasn't much to see since it was small, but he was able to find out what the other room was and it most definitely was not the bedroom. It was a laundry room and a make-shift closet.

Jason scrunched his nose, displeased at Dick's lack of wardrobe. He didn't have very many outfits and what he did were old and worn down except for a few which Jason had seen him wear during work or their outings.
Come to think of it, whenever they did go out, Dick often wore similar variations of his outfits. Jason noticed it a few times at first, but then stopped paying attention as it didn't matter much to him.

One day, he's definitely going to take him out shopping or, he'll just magically donate his clothes to Dick. Though it wouldn't fit him too well considering he was smaller than Jason.

Jason exited the room and closed the door shut. He heard rustling to his right and glanced over at Dick, saw him shuffling around on the bed, but he didn't wake. Swiftly, he went back to his original task before he got distracted and found the cups. He filled a glass with water and poured out a few pills for Dick to take. He then settled himself near the edge of the bed and set the contents down on the ground, careful not to spill.

Jason gazed at Dick for a brief moment, unsure of what to do. He was sleeping and Jason didn't want to wake him up but yet, he needed to take his medicine. After contemplating for a few minutes, he made up his mind and gently shook him awake. It took a few attempts but his eyes fluttered up, blinking rapidly as he tried to focus his vision on Jason. He was in a daze, eyes bloodshot and barely opening and his voice was groggy as he murmured his name.

"Jay...?"

That was the second time Dick had called him by his nickname. He'd never done it before and he was curious as to why it just suddenly came about. Though he didn't mind it and actually liked it. A lot.

"Yeah, it's me," Jason said and tenderly brushed a hand through his hair, could feel how clammy and warm he was. His breathing was coming in short bursts as he wheezed, sniffling every few seconds. "You should take your meds and then you can go back to sleep."

Dick whined, and it wasn't often that Jason got to hear his reluctance. He understood the man just wanted to sleep, but he had to make him take his medicine.

"Come on, it'll take a few minutes," he gestured and got up to the edge of the bed as he helped him sit up. Dick was drained of energy and slumped against Jason's chest as he helped prop him up. He settled two pills in his palm and instructed him to swallow before handing the water to wash it down.

Once Dick was done, he kissed him on the forehead for a job well done and lowered him back down onto the bed. "See? Easy," he said and as he moved to get up, he was caught by the arm.

Vibrant blue eyes captured his attention and there was a sense of longing plastered on his face. "Stay...?" he simply said and Jason just rolled his eyes in amusement, a smile filtering onto his lips.

"Of course," he said and gingerly tapped his hand. "Just going to put this away," and dangled the glass for Dick to see. He nodded his head and relaxed into bed, releasing his hold of Jason.

When Jason returned from the kitchen, he found Dick intensely watching, still slightly awake, but was slowly dozing off as his eyes would flutter shut and then jolt awake. Jason breathed an exasperated sigh, realizing that Dick was waiting for him to come back. It was endearing but he also wanted him to just rest.

Jason plopped his butt softly onto the edge of the bed, but Dick made a noise, and patted his hand on the mattress.
He was positive it meant what he thought it did. "Uh, you want me to sleep with you?"

Dick didn't say a word and just nodded his head.

"You sure?"

Again, he nodded.

This probably wasn't the best idea considering he could also catch the cold or flu or whatever he had, but it was a great opportunity to indulge Dick in his needs. And besides, his immune system was fairly strong and if he did get sick, well, there was Alfred to care for him.

"Okay," Jason replied.

Dick shuffled towards the wall, making room for Jason. The bed was small, about the size of a full, and surely, did not fit the both of them well. As expected, it was cramped and Jason could easily roll off the edge. Luckily, it was close to the ground.

With his back hugging the wall, Dick was turned on his side, hands resting on his pillow and he stared straight at Jason. Sapphire eyes were still unfocused and he looked a bit confused, but definitely aware that it was Jason with him.

Jason scooted in a little more so he wasn't hanging off the edge, tried to leave enough space in between so he wasn't bursting Dick's personal bubble. He pulled the blankets over the both of them, toasty and warm and Dick smiled silly, content. He mumbled something soft, too quiet for Jason to hear and his eyes fell shut. Exhaustion quickly took over his body as he slipped into a deep slumber within minutes while Jason stayed awake.

His expression was peaceful, softly breathing through his congested nose. It was a bit ragged but nonetheless, normal breathing. Though his complexion was still dreadful, clearly sick to the core.

Hopefully the medicine would kick in soon and help alleviate some of the pain. As he lay there in bed, Jason's eyes started to wander as he explored Dick's features and eventually settled on his hands. Something attracted his attention and he'd noticed it before, but now that he was looking at it again, he could see it more clearly defined.

His hand was decorated in tiny cuts and marks, marks that looked like he'd been burned a few times. His skin was callous, hard at the inside of his palms and dry.

Jason couldn't help but wonder how he got these wounds. If it was due to work or his past, he didn't know, but he wanted to find out. The fact that he knew so little about Dick's past bothered him. Though he had his speculations based on a few hints that Dick had dropped mid conversation, implying that he might have been mistreated. Which explained his timid and conservative personality as well as the injuries he sometimes got and his odd reactions to certain situations and issues.

Jason reached for Dick's hand and slipped it in his own, holding it gently as he traced a thumb along the scars. Could see how some were deeper than others and pinched his brows, saddened at the thought of the pain he received.

As he continued to rub soft circles on his palm, the corner of his eyes spotted something peculiar and narrowed in on it. There was something popping out from beneath his sleeve and out of curiosity, he took a look and pulled down his sleeve.

It was a thick sweatband which wasn't something Jason had seen him wear before. Or at least, it
never caught his attention until now. Though maybe he did see it the few times Dick had worn a short-sleeve shirt. Either way, he didn't remember, but it was probably used more as a utility rather than fashion.

Figuring it wasn't comfortable to sleep with, he slipped it off and gasped when he saw the scarring on his wrists. Scars that looked like precise cuts, cuts he might have done himself. They were short and faded, almost blending into his skin but still present enough that Jason could feel the lumpy skin tissue. It seemed also as if he purposely hurt himself, unless someone else had done it.

Though now it made sense why he wore the band. It was to hide the scars.

Jason sighed, his heart weighing down. He ran a thumb over the cuts, feeling the slight bumps from when the skin had healed. Softly, he pressed his lips to his wrist, drawing in a shaky breath.

He hoped Dick hadn't hurt himself. He wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt that maybe, just maybe, someone else had hurt him. Because it was harder knowing that Dick had hurt himself purposefully. That at one point in time, he found his life invaluable that he figured that pain would help.

Or that maybe, death was better.

This was all speculation and he didn't want to draw those conclusions but he couldn't help but think about them.

One day though, he hoped he'll be able to hear Dick's story. He wanted to know so badly but he wasn't going to pry. Not until Dick was ready himself.

At least for now, he can afford to be angry on Dick's behalf, for whoever had hurt him.

Jason gingerly settled his hand back on the pillow but kept their palms flush together, fingers loosely threaded. He then brought his attention to Dick, who was sound asleep, and leaned in to kiss his cheek.

"Good night," he whispered and fluttered his eyes closed, tried to let sleep overtake him as well. But his mind was too awake, constantly running around in circles as thoughts shuffled around.

Every so often, as Jason was about slip into unconsciousness, he'd hear a whimper coming from beside him. Could hear Dick's breathing grow, ragged and heavy as soft cries filtered into the still night.

Jason would lean in, press close to Dick as he'd stroke his hair and whisper soft words of encouragement, chasing away the nightmares that attacked him. The whimpers would disappear as he slipped back to a calm, relaxed for a brief moment until the nightmares returned.

Jason didn't know what it was that was hurting Dick, but he kept himself awake, would soothe him back to sleep whenever the monsters would come for him.
Dick stirred awake and shifted slightly on the mattress. He felt extremely sore, parts of his body aching in places he'd never experienced before. He sighed heavily and slowly peeled his eyelids open, blinked a few times to stabilize his vision.

Everything hurt and Dick was miserable. His body felt sluggish with barely an ounce of energy within him, too lethargic to move. His throat was parched and he struggled to swallow, felt an itch every time he did. After all that rest, he was still exhausted, too tired to get up. So Dick lay still in bed, stared at the ceiling and examined the cracks that were strewn about, slightly dazed. His lips were chapped, cracking in certain places and he ran a tongue over his lips in hopes of moisturizing it a bit.

Another sigh escaped into the stale air and Dick pinched his brows as he tried to recall yesterday’s events. His thoughts were muddled and he was drawing a blank, couldn’t quite piece together his memories. Frustrated, Dick shuffled lightly and turned to his side, bumped into something unexpected. Startled, he immediately jumped back until vivid blue eyes fell upon a familiar face and Dick gasped in surprise to find Jason sound asleep beside him.

He gawked at the man, eyes wide and sparkling, enamored by his strong and sharp features, admiring once again how handsome he was. Jason looked so peaceful, expression blissful with how calm he appeared, like he was drifting about in a wonderful dream. Parts of his white hair gently fell into his eyes, the tips curling at just the bridge of his nose and Dick felt the urge to swipe it away. But he didn't, kept his hands at his side and just continued to stare at him.

“Jay,” he whispered, voice hoarse.

Slightly confused, Dick wondered why Jason was here and squeezed his eyes shut as bits and pieces of yesterday’s events slowly flooded his mind. But he was too disarrayed to comprehend them and it hurt his head to think too deeply, so instead he just focused on the man before him.

Drawing in a shaky breath, Dick slowly moved to close the small distance between them. He didn't know why he did so, just felt his body naturally gravitate towards the man, fueled by his want to feel Jason against his skin. Dick curled against Jason's warm body, gingerly tucked his head beneath his chin and tried to perfectly fit against him like a puzzle piece. There was a gentle heat radiating off his body, and Dick easily relaxed, felt a load of tension dissipate from within him. It helped to soothe away his anxiety, pushed it deep within him and kept it at bay.

As he lay there in close proximity to the man, he felt Jason shift and his heart immediately jumped, startled. Worried that he might have woken him up, Dick moved to distance himself, but was suddenly interrupted when Jason embraced him, pulled him flush against his body. His face fell into the man's chest, cheek pressed to his shirt. There was an arm snaked around his waist, holding him still and in place while a hand tenderly settled at the small of his back. There was also a weight on his head, which he could only assume was Jason resting his chin up above and he could feel warm air tickling his scalp.
Dick’s entire body froze, going completely still at the prospect that he might have woken Jason up from his constant movement. So he waited for a moment, watching to see if Jason would wake, but he didn’t. Instead, he heard soft breathing coming from up above, could feel a faint tremor ripple through Jason with every breath he took, his chest slowly rising and falling.

A sigh of relief escaped his lips and the tautness in his shoulders disappeared, glad that he hadn’t disturbed Jason. Since the opportunity was in his hands, he seized the moment and squeezed in the last few centimeters to curl against Jason, savoring his warmth.

It was so comfortable he didn’t want to move even though his dry throat was irritating him and he really wanted to cleanse away his dehydration with water, but now that he was caught in Jason’s arms, he was pretty much stuck. He had to admit he was still exhausted, had only woken up because he felt pain in his body. It ached enough to shock him awake, but it had simmered to a low and now he couldn’t feel it anymore.

Dick supposed he could sleep a bit longer seeing that he didn’t have to wake up yet. Slowly, he let his eyelids fall shut and snuggled against Jason, felt the man squeeze him tighter.

It didn’t take long for his conscious to fade as sleep swiftly took over.

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The next time he woke up, he found bright turquoise eyes staring at him. Eyes that glimmered a different shade when looked at under the limelight, greener than blue. Dick blinked in confusion, sleep still heavy in his mind.

He heard the man chuckle softly. “Awake?” Jason asked and brought a hand to his forehead, gently swiping away his damp hair to check his temperature.

Dick groaned, exasperated, but tilted his head forward in a small nod.

“You’re still a bit feverish,” Jason murmured.

He trailed a hand down the length of his cheek, thick fingers lightly dancing along his skin. His hair was soaked, sticking to the edges of his face and Jason gingerly brushed it aside and tucked a lock behind his ear. Dick breathed heavily and closed his eyes shut, focused on feeling Jason’s tender touch. It just felt so nice.

While he was deep in thought, memories of yesterday flowed into his mind, finally completing the puzzle. He remembered how his cold had gotten worse over time and how he had to miss a few days of work because he was too ill to do anything. Dick spent most of his time in bed, drifting in and out of sleep.

The first two days weren’t bad as he was still functional, but the third day hit him hard. Nausea ran high and caused him to be queasy, his stomach in a constant churn. Dick spent a period of time beside the toilet, upchucking whatever came out from within which was basically liquids. Most of the time, he was dry heaving since he barely ate anything the past few days, just didn’t have the appetite for it.

Then he had a surprise visit from Jason who showed up unexpectedly. When he’d first heard his muddled voice through the thin door, he didn’t want to open it. Didn’t want to face the man because he knew he was in an emotional mess and just seeing his face would create more chaos within him. Dick also didn’t want Jason to see him so close to death’s door, so sick he could collapse at any moment.
But at the same time he wanted to see him because he missed Jason. Missed his voiced. Missed being with him. Missed his laughter and his jokes. He just—he missed everything about him. It didn’t help that his emotions were in a constant jumble and Dick was practically vulnerable, giving into all his sentimental wants.

So he opened the door and the moment Jason’s face fell into his peripherals, nostalgia hit him hard. Despite the fact that Jason looked like a frantic mess, as if a tornado had breezed by him, or that his face was flushed a bright red and he reeked of alcohol, didn’t matter. Nothing mattered because in that moment, Dick realized how much he missed Jason. How much he yearned for the man. Could feel his chest constrict in pain at the thought of their relationship, felt tears pricking at the corner of his eyes, enough to make him want to cry.

He blamed it on the flu for royally screwing up his emotions.

Dick’s mind had been in a bit of a haze, confused. Jason was talking to him and while he could clearly see his lips moving, none of the words registered in his mind. He had difficulty focusing and couldn’t listen well.

Then suddenly, he was caught by surprise when Jason pulled him in for a kiss. He hadn’t expected that but it was just so—so gentle and soft and it felt so right. Like nothing he’d ever felt before. Jason’s lips were hot as he pressed against Dick. Could feel his lips tingle from the pressure of each kiss, felt Jason graze his teeth along his sensitive skin and it just felt so damn good. Jason was well experienced while Dick wasn’t and honestly, that was his first time ever being kissed, as embarrassing as it was to admit.

He wasn’t sure if he did well or not, but he mainly let Jason do the leading and stayed still.

Either way, the kiss was magical.

When Dick lifted his eyes once again, they caught onto Jason’s. Found him staring at him in concern, but there was a bit of hunger hidden beneath his mask. His eyes were almost feral, like he wanted something and it made Dick’s heart beat faster, pumping his blood. Heat rose within his cheeks, painting them a glowing red. Though he was sure he was already flushed from his fever.

Dick lowered his gaze and caught sight of Jason’s lips and boldly pressed a thumb to his bottom lip. His hand moved on his own as he was captivated, remembering the kiss and how soft they felt against his, warm and moist. He still couldn’t believe that Jason had kissed him. Couldn’t believe the man had confessed to him, told him he liked him. Dick had thought it was all an impossible feat, that it could never happen and yet, it did.

It was difficult for him to comprehend, to wrap his mind around the possibility of his dream coming true. He couldn’t understand why though. Why Jason liked him because what was there to like about him? He didn’t see the appeal. If Dick didn’t like a single thing about himself, then what was it that Jason saw in him?

While they were friends, Dick had wondered about the same thing. Wondered what it was that made Jason want to hang out with him? He didn't understand, and now, he couldn't even begin to imagine why. Just why? Friends and lovers were different; there were different sets of expectations and feelings tied into the mix. So different that Dick doubted himself heavily, believed that he could not live up to Jason’s standards.

Which is why he hadn’t tried at first. Had disregarded the fact that he could even like him and squashed it like a bug. He stayed content with just being his friend, but even that didn’t work.
Besides, Dick didn’t know the first thing about dating someone or what it was like to be in a relationship. He wasn’t confident enough to do it, felt like he would fail horribly and become scarred for life. He was afraid of upsetting others and disappointing them.

But now, he was willing to try. At least with Jason, he wanted to give it a chance.

Dick breathed in a sigh and found himself drifting towards Jason as the other leaned in. Their lips were so close, hovering just slightly above one another until finally they met and shared a tender kiss. Jason lightly nibbled at Dick’s lower lip, teasingly grazed his teeth across his chapped skin, just enough to hear him gasp quietly, raspy moans rumbling deep within his throat.

The kiss was short, but passionate and slowly they pulled apart. Dick’s lips tugged into a soft smile and he shakily brought a hand to Jason’s cheek, swiped a thumb under his eye. The man blinked, a bit surprised at the gesture, but chuckled, voice deep and alluring.

The moment was peaceful and Dick felt like he could let it continue on forever. Unfortunately, something caught onto the corner of his eyes and his mood was quickly destroyed. His shirt sleeve had slid down, revealing the one thing he didn’t like to see. Alarmed, Dick retreated his hand back in a snap.

A worried expression filtered onto Jason’s face, settling itself there as the man stared at him in concern.

Dick immediately noticed Jason’s worry, could feel it coming off of him in waves and tried to remain calm, but he was too frazzled to do so. He was breathing heavy, breath coming in short bursts as his chest rose and fell dramatically, trying very hard not to freak out. His wristband was gone and he couldn’t understand how it had happened. He rarely took it off so it was strange that it had magically disappeared.

Surely, Jason didn’t remove it?

“Dick? What’s wrong?” Jason asked, his voice filled with concern.

“I—my,” he started, flustered and okay, he was having a meltdown. Found it hard to breathe as he gasped for air. The worst of his fears were bubbling within him, ready to burst at any moment and fuck, he needed to find it soon. He needed to cover it up before Jason could see.

Oh god, Jason didn’t see his scars, did he? Because if he did—Dick couldn’t. No, he couldn’t live with that.

“What?” Jason prompted.

“My—it’s my wristband,” Dick tried once again, successfully able to articulate a logical sentence. He brought a hand to his chest, could feel his heart thudding rapidly and sucked in a large breath, trying to soothe himself. It wasn’t working very well. His anxiety was eating away at his sanity and he just—he really needed his wristband in order for him to calm the hell down.

"Oh."

By the inclination of Jason’s tone of voice, it sounded like he knew exactly what he was referring to and suddenly, dread washed over him. “You—?” Dick asked, let the question hang in the air. He was heavily implying that Jason had been the cause of the disappearance of his wristband. That he had indeed seen his scars.

A rugged sigh fell from Jason’s lips and turquoise eyes narrowed in remorse. “I did. I’m sorry,” he
apologized genuinely.

But it didn’t matter whether he apologized or not because it was already done. And there was nothing Dick could do to reverse the fact. He drew in a shaky breath and tried to contain his unease, his fears, but it was hard. As a countermeasure to his emotional turmoil, he fumbled with the blankets, tugged on them as he pulled it as high as he could in an attempt to hide himself.

Troubled, Jason stopped him and gingerly took a hold of the blankets before Dick could wrap himself up in a bundle. Jason let the covers pool around their waist and moved to grab Dick’s arm. He loosely held onto Dick’s thin wrist, careful with his strength. He didn’t want to rile him up by being rough.

Slowly, he tugged down Dick’s shirt sleeve to reveal the damaged skin. The scars were in plain sight for all to see and Dick couldn’t bear to look at them. Knew that these cuts were ones he made himself when he was at the lowest point in his life.

“These scars.” Jason said, threading carefully as he brushed a thumb over the lumpy scar tissue.

Dick chewed on his bottom lip, unease settling in his stomach, slowly blossoming and spreading throughout. He didn’t want to think about it. Not about the memories he’d kept buried in the back of his mind. Memories he’d locked away with a key and tossed into the depths of the ocean. Memories that brought about bad feelings and not something he ever wanted to encounter or feel again.

They were awful, so awful that sometimes he’d want to attempt it again at the mere thought of his past.

Because at that time, Dick figured that it was the best option to end his life. That the only way he could stop the pain was if he died. He believed it for a while, that death was better than living until he figured out that it wasn’t the route to go. That no matter how much he fell, that shouldn’t have been an option.

That wasn’t what his parents had wanted of him so he stopped.

On every rare occasion, when his mind would plunge back to the horrible things that were done to him in the past, he’d consider the option again, but never quite pulled through with it. It was difficult and at times, he’d relapsed. But he just had to keep telling himself that his life was at least worth living. That he could carry on and maybe, just maybe, things would brighten up.

It still wasn’t the most pleasant memory to think about. It made his insides churn, caused his hands to tremble uncontrollably as a chill crawled up his spine, making his skin clammy and cold. His chest would constrict in pain and breathing became hard, erratic as he clawed for air to enter his esophagus.

When the nightmares resurfaced, it was difficult for him to calm down and he had to channel his thoughts elsewhere. Or otherwise, he’d be stuck in an endless loop.

Jason must have noticed the small panic attack Dick was currently having and immediately took action to prevent it from getting worse.

“Breathe Dick, breathe. Take deep breaths okay? You’re fine. I’m here so you don’t have to worry,” Jason lulled, trying to pull Dick away from his nightmares. “Come on,” he gently urged and threaded Dick’s fingers in his own, rubbed tiny circles to alleviate his pain. “Follow me. In and out. In and out.” Jason breathed steadily, hoping that Dick would follow suit which would help to
regulate his erratic breathing.

Dick focused his attention on Jason, caught his eyes in a stare and kept them on him. Listened to his soothing voice, concentrating on just that and followed along with his actions. Gradually, the visions he was seeing dispersed and he was back in his room with Jason at his side. His breathing had normalized as the constriction in his chest subsided. But he didn’t move and kept his eyes on Jason, burning the image of his face into his mind. Ingrained the fact that Jason was currently here with him. That he was in his crappy apartment and not back there with those people.

“Jason,” he sighed breathlessly.

“Yeah. It’s me, it’s Jason.”

Finally falling back into the present, he allowed himself to relax knowing that he wasn’t stuck in the past. The fears were lifted from within him and the stiffness in his shoulders disappeared. But he was still a nervous wreck.

“I’m—“ he started. “These—these scares. They—um, they’re just—“ he was tongue-tied and couldn’t find a good way to explain why they were there. A way to paint the picture to show that he wasn’t suicidal. Except for the fact that he was, at least during the moments when he’d inflicted pain on himself.

"I don't want to pry but I am curious. Do you want to talk about it?"

At first, his immediate reply was no and quickly shook his head. Then he thought about it, digging a level deeper and figured that maybe he could get it off his chest. Part of him wanted someone to at least know that he'd had suicidal thoughts, but he didn't necessarily want to discuss it. Changing his mind, he nodded yes.

Jason’s breath hitched as he struggled to formulate his questions. His lips pulled into a thin line, brows furrowed and thought hard about how to best approach the situation. “Did you, hm,” he paused briefly to huff a breath. "Did you do these...yourself?"

Dick sucked in a breath and stalled for a moment before he answered with a weak yes.

Jason nodded and squeezed his hand as their fingers were still tangled. "Can I ask why?"

That, he didn’t want to talk about so Dick shook his head.

“Okay,” Jason didn’t press any further and let it be. "But some day you'll tell me?"

Dick slowly nodded and kept his gaze on Jason's, watched as he gave him a small smile in encouragement. “Yeah...” He answered and one day, he’d let Jason know, but today wasn’t the day.

Then that was it, the end of the conversation. Jason didn’t ask furthermore and instead, kissed his ugly scars, tender and sweet, leaving behind warm wet kisses. He grabbed the wristband that had fallen off the side of the bed and slipped it over Dick's wrist, hiding away his cuts once again. Dick ran his fingers over the spot, rubbing at it fondly and felt a calm wash over him. It was funny how he took solace in a simple wristband. It did nothing to alleviate the pain. All it did was hide his scars but it made him feel better than leaving it bare, almost therapeutic.

But that was the thing though, all it did was hide his scars. Pretended that they were never there in the first place, like they didn't exist. It's not as if Dick never saw them when he took them off,
especially when he showered. But it was okay when he was alone since no one else would know and he could mostly ignore it. Though the scars did bother him heavily so when he could, he avoided them.

The wristband was basically a safety net of his.

Jason stifled a yawn and slipped out from under the covers. He stood tall and stretched out his limbs, cracking parts of his body that had tensed over the night. Dick watched as the man did a few exercises, bending to the right, to the left and twisting and turning in flexible angles. Dick was too warm to leave the comforts of his blankets and laid there until Jason decided to help him out.

The man propped a bunch of pillows against the wall and carefully helped him sit up so that he could lean against something soft. It was so comfortable Dick just sank into the tiny nest Jason had built for him. And then he realized that something was amiss because he had more pillows than he remembered.

As he finally took notice of his surroundings, he found things that he didn't remember owning. Such as the extra pillows, blankets and a—oh. That's a—wow, a heater? There was a heater in his room and Dick was, oh no, he was ecstatic.

"Did you buy all of this?" Dick asked and gestured at the items, especially the heater. He had a finger pointed at the heater, deeply interested in the piece of electronic.

"Yeah. I figured you could use them and you don't have to pay me back," Jason added before Dick could argue.

He had wanted to, but decided to give him a pass because he really liked the heater, found himself falling deeply in love with it. He'd always wanted one, but they were kind of pricey for a fair sized one. Though he could afford it if he just worked longer and ate less, but it wasn't a high priority enough for him, so he was grateful for the gift.

Dick all but melted when Jason brought the heater close to the edge of the bed, could feel the warm air blowing at his feet. The corner of his lips tugged into a silly smile and Jason grinned at him in amusement.

"You're like a child." Dick whined at him and Jason just rolled his eyes. "A big child."

Dick curled his lips into a small pout and buried himself underneath the blankets. It was warm and cozy and he could just stay here all day long.

"Are you feeling alright?" Jason asked.

"Better," he answered. "Still feel like crap."

Jason chuckled. "Are you hungry?"

Dick pondered about that for a moment, but the thought of food made him want to vomit. He shook his head and heard Jason sigh softly.

"Juice then? Orange juice."

If it was liquids, he could maybe handle it. "Yeah, that will work."

Jason headed towards the kitchen and Dick watched closely as the man was able to find his cups with ease, poured some orange juice and brought it back with medicine. "Here." He handed him
the glass and two pills. He tossed the pills in his mouth, swallowed and washed it down with juice. Once the sweet and tart freshness hit his throat, he chugged it, realized he was thirstier than he thought.

"Thanks," he said, holding the glass in his lap. "For you know—for doing this," he mumbled. "You didn't have to buy me so much."

"Ugh, Dick. No." Jason stopped him immediately and took a seat at the edge of the bed. "I did this because I like you. It's not out of pity or whatever the hell you're thinking about. But because I like you and I want to do something nice for the man I like."

A bundle of nerves sparked within him, electrifying his body. Dick's pretty chapped lips quivered and he smiled. No one had ever done anything nice for him, at least to this extinct. Maybe a few in the past had some kind gestures but they were really minor. Extremely minor. Jason was different, he just gave him so much more. So much that it was making him emotional yet again and he felt like crying.

It didn't help that the flu amplified his emotions.

While he was busy feeling butterflies in his stomach, trying to stop his grinning because his cheeks were hurting, Jason dipped in and kissed him. Kissed him like it was the most natural thing to do.

He felt fingers brush his cheeks, diving deep into his damp hair and slowly pushed it back to reveal his face, leaving it completely bare.

That felt oddly refreshing. It'd been a while since Dick had gotten a haircut and he knew that he should have, but he felt better when he kept it long. It helped to hide his face and he didn't particularly like his face much so preferred it this way.

When Jason pulled back from the kiss, he gasped at Dick and gawked at the man, eyes intense and full of wonder. He was observing him and muttered something beneath his breath. It was so quiet that Dick could barely hear him.

But then he cursed aloud and startled Dick. "Fuck," he said. "Fuck, Dick." And Dick just raised a brow at him, oddly confused. "You're so fucking beautiful."

Dick looked at him as if he was crazy. Did Jason really just call him beautiful? Because Dick was the farthest thing from beautiful.

"I think you're blind."

"No, I'm not. You're beautiful."

"Jason. Seriously, you're just saying that."

"I'm not Dick. I mean it. You're fucking gorgeous." Jason pulled his hair all the way so he could get a clearer look at his face, stared at him in awe, turquoise eyes wide and mouth ajar.

Dick huffed loudly, bothered about the fact that Jason was claiming something he wasn't. "I think you're wrong."

"How?" Jason arched a brow at him.

"I'm not—I'm not beautiful or gorgeous. I-I'm hideous," Dick said because that was the truth. That was what he believed and that was what he had heard from others since he was young.
Jason scoffed in disgust, appalled by his comment, as if he himself had been insulted. "Fuck no. Dick, you're not hideous. What the hell? You're anything but hideous."

"But—" He tried to argue but was immediately shut down.

"No, you're beautiful, so don't try to argue against me."

"But the scars..." Dick murmured hesitantly.

Jason sighed softly and pecked his forehead. "They're there but they're still beautiful," he said and brushed a thumb against the few scars at the corner of his brows and edge of his cheek. "I like them." Smiling, he kissed them. "It's still you."

Dick choked back a sob and felt his eyes water. Part of the reason why he had long hair wasn't to just hide his face, it was also to hide his scars. It was easier to leave it long so others wouldn't be able to see his unattractive face and be disgusted by it. He would only trim it every once in a while himself when he needed to, as the barber often wanted to just chop it off, but he didn't want that.

Dick had a hard time believing his words when he'd been trained to think the exact opposite. But he knew that Jason wasn't one to lie, yet, it was difficult for him to come to terms with.

"I—um, thanks Jason." He wasn't sure if it was necessary to thank him or not when he himself didn't believe he was beautiful, but the comment was enough to bring tears to his eyes so he supposed it was the right thing to do. No one had ever called him that before so he didn't know what to feel.

Jason smiled softly and pinched his nose playfully. "Hey, can I give you a haircut?" He asked and released his hand, allowing all Dick's long and dark strands to flow back into its place. "Or a trim?"

Dick blinked at him, didn't think that the man would ask him such a question. He didn't want it all gone but figured it would be nice to have someone fix his hair. "Just a trim."

Jason beamed, excited that Dick had given him a yes. "We'll do it when you're better."

Dick nodded in agreement.

"So, what now?" Dick asked out of curiosity, wondering where they stood with one another.

"Good question." Jason hummed, thinking about it for a moment. "How about you tell me how you feel."

"Um. I don't—" He was about to say he didn't know when in fact, he did. He knew exactly how he felt but found it difficult to express. However, Jason deserved to know. Sucking in a deep breath, Dick gathered all of his courage and met his eyes. "I like you, but I don't think I deserve you," he said honestly.

With the snap of a finger, Jason's smile fell into a frown and a cloud of confusion filled his eyes.

"What do you mean 'you don't deserve me'?"

"I don't think that I'm—you know—I'm not exactly someone who fits you."

Now it was Jason's turn to look at him as if he was crazy. "What exactly are you talking about? Who is 'someone' that would fit me?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders, not knowing the answer to that question. It wasn't something he
thought deeply about and it never really occurred to him what type of person fit Jason. It just wasn’t someone poor like him.

“Someone more of your standing,” he offered and Jason scoffed, shook his head in disbelief that Dick had actually said that.

“You’re stupid Dick Grayson.”

“What?” He asked, a bit offended by that remark.

“You fit me just perfectly. It’s not about your background. It’s about you. And I fucking like you Dick.” Jason held his gaze and said that as clear and honest as he could without any room for confusion or misinterpretation. There was no way Dick could argue against that. He was rendered speechless and said nothing.

So Jason continued on with his confession. “I want to date you and I want to treat you well. Will you let me do that?” Jason reached for Dick's hand and placed it in his own, rubbed tiny circles on his palm and lifted it to press a kiss to his knuckles.

What kind of magic had been cast upon Dick to allow him to deserve such a man? Seriously, what had he done right in life that allowed him to meet Jason Todd?

The tears that had threatened to fall were back once again as he struggled to hold back his sobs. "Are you sure?"

“Dick—‘ he said, almost annoyed at having to repeat himself. “Yes.”

“...Okay,” he answered shakily.

“Okay to?”

“If you’ll have me then yeah, I want to date you. Just know that I come with a lot of baggage and issues.”

"Who cares about that? I’ll take you regardless of all the issues you have,” Jason said and curled a hand behind his neck, pulling Dick into a bruising kiss. It started him and Dick almost reflexively shoved him away, but stopped once he registered the feel of Jason's lips. It was warm and soft and he sighed contently, curled his fingers as he latched onto his shirt. He reminded himself that this was Jason and it was okay.

“What about your family?” Dick murmured into the kiss as the thought crossed his mind.

Turquoise eyes immediately lit up. Jason seemed to have forgotten about that. “Right. Them. Well, they’ll just have to accept it. And I’m sorry about their treatment towards you. If they hurt you again Dick, let’s just say they’ll have to deal with me.” A grin spread onto his face and Jason lightly pumped their foreheads together.

He said he wouldn't cry, but found tears trailing down his cheeks, no longer able to hold it in. The fact Jason was protecting him, him of all people, when he’d never been protected before was endearing and at the same time, heartbreaking.

Because if they ever broke up, if things didn’t work out, Dick knew that would ruin him.

All he could hope for was things would work out for the best and he would be sure to pull his weight.
When they say that sometimes people change when they're in relationships, for better or worst—it wasn't a lie. Jason had experienced it before in his past relationships where his exes had gone through drastic changes, tipped the scale from good too bad with the snap of finger. It was so horrid that he couldn't handle them anymore and broke it off.

Dick though? Not so much. He was way different than anyone he'd dated in the past. In terms of his personality or who he was, he was still very much the Dick Grayson he fell in love with, just a little amped up is all. Not a bad change, but rather a good one. One that Jason actually preferred.

He was slowly crawling out of his shell, the very shell he built to protect himself. Little by little, Dick became less reserved and more open as Jason coaxed him out, getting him to express himself more. To really show who he was when there were no restraints.

The interesting thing that Jason found out about Dick besides him being an adorable mess was that he actually enjoyed talking. He talked about everything and nothing but not about himself. That was a bridge they had yet to take. But one day, it'll happen. For now, Jason had just been trying to read in between the lines.

What was amusing though was Jason hadn't realized that the man loved to tell puns. Since when did he become such a pun-zilla? They were really bad too and he'd laugh at them and well, Jason couldn't ignore them so he'd play along. But honestly, it was really cute how he'd laugh at his own puns which automatically drew a smile on Jason's face. He'd never seen Dick laugh so much and god, the man barely laughed when they were friends.

It was just so different now that they were dating. They didn't have to be as reserved around one another, constantly tap dancing, and treading the fine line. Not to mention, the nonexistent but really existent sexual tension was no longer stagnating around them. It was finally gone because fuck, that was one of the most annoying things Jason had to deal with. Wanting to kiss him but not kiss him, and not even realizing he had those feelings until after the catastrophe that had sent him to the hospital, caused Dick to 'break-up' with him.

It was a good thing he persevered and didn't give up on Dick. He couldn't imagine not having him in his life.

Even though things had changed, they were also relatively the same but with a few extra perks, maybe a lot of perks. Like cuddling or hugging which they weren't able to do before. It wasn't done as frequently as Jason would have liked but it was still nice being more intimate with Dick to the extent that he would allow it. Before Jason would have to think about it but now he could just hold his hand without a second thought. Wrapping him up in his arms, pressing his weight to his shoulders, a hand to his waist, the small of his back or around his neck. Sharing sweet kisses, chaste kisses and sometimes passionate ones when they were behind closed doors. It happened mainly in the vicinity of Dick's home which he was now okay with having Jason over.

Hang-outs were upgraded and were now considered dates. While they did much of the same things, like movies or eating, it was different. A different atmosphere circling around them, like two birds in love. Though Jason still had to work around Dick's schedule, being that the man still worked two jobs. Two jobs that still tired him out and sometimes, he'd just fall asleep when he was with Jason.

That had never happened before and when Jason asked why, Dick explained that he wasn't always
comfortable sleeping when people were nearby. Now that things were out in the open and with him trusting Jason, it wasn't an issue. Apparently Jason hadn't realized the extent of his fatigue before they started dating. The man worked around 50 to 60 hours a week and they weren't those typical office jobs where he could sit in comfy chairs. No, he had to constantly be moving around.

It only made sense that it would burn him out, so much so that he could just pass out within seconds. At times, if they were watching a movie, Dick would doze off, body slumping and swaying from side to side. Jason would gently pull Dick towards him, position his head so it was resting on his shoulder. Or at times, if Jason was reading to him, he'd fall asleep about twenty minutes in. It was mostly cat naps though. But there were times Jason would let him sleep so he could catch up on his rest.

The whole reading aloud thing was new. It came about when Jason randomly started doing it and Dick found that he really enjoyed it. They'd laze around in Dick's home, cuddled on the bed as Jason's soft voice resonated within the tiny compartment. Or sometimes they'd go to the park to read and set up a picnic spot on the luscious grass. Sitting out in the warm sun, eating neatly cut sandwiches provided by Alfred and afterwards, Jason would read to Dick as the man laid on his back, head resting in Jason's lap with his pretty eyes closed, just listening and enjoying.

Honestly, it was relaxing being with Dick. They both put effort into their relationship, neither doing more than the other. Okay that was a lie because Jason did exert more effort but that was because he wanted to. Because he wanted to do a lot of things for Dick.

Like pay for him, which he was still heavily against but let it slide a few times. Dick explained that it wasn't his pride per say that was getting in the way, but it was the morals of his belief. That even though he was less fortunate he shouldn't take advantage of others' good will especially their money. It felt like stealing from them.

Jason begged to differ because it was his choice. Dick understood but even then he couldn't just be the one doing all the receiving. He wanted to give too and the whole argument went back and forth. It had always been a hot topic ever since they met and so they had to settle on a few new agreements, finding that middle ground which they did.

They made a rule where Jason could pay, but in return Dick would give him something that wasn't monetary. It could be as simple as a hug or a kiss since Jason did all the initiating on that regard. He wanted Dick to be the initiator sometimes which he agreed and did, albeit shy and awkward and made for a lot of fun for Jason to tease him for.

He still wasn't allowed to take Dick to any extravagant places and he understood that very well. Dick expressed that it made him feel uncomfortable and Jason didn't want to subject him to that ever again so he didn't. Besides, it didn't matter where they went because any place they went to was enjoyable as long as they spent time together.

Of course in relationships, arguments occurred and sometimes they argued. Jason found out the hard way that Dick could be stubborn though he should have realized that from the beginning and the many arguments they already had.

Their fights weren't anything big, really small actually and nothing worth fretting over. It wasn't something they couldn't solve through talking which was the agreed upon method for when either of them were upset.

All in all, their relationship was faring well, but as with all things they don't always go smoothly. There were always bumps in the roads that had to be fixed.
And this was just the beginning.

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One peculiar thing Jason had taken notice of was that Dick seemed to be a magnet for bad luck. Or maybe he was just good at finding danger. It had happened a few times before and Jason noticed but he didn't say anything about it. As he observed more, analyzed his findings, he'd come to the conclusion that yes, Dick was a little danger magnet.

They weren't necessarily bad as with the car accident, but well, they weren't all that good either. At times, they were minor like a glass cup being knocked over or someone slipping. Other times, not so much.

Jason swore that Dick probably had a sixth sense or something. He tried to be subtle and sometimes it worked, but Jason was able to see through it. Like how he'd randomly try to warn people to be careful but they'd just toss him a strange look. And then, end up getting hurt themselves.

Or Dick would jump in to help and instead be the one at the center of danger. Seriously, what kind of man jumped out for a stranger? Jason thought about putting a leash on him due to how many times he'd just do it without thinking. He didn't like seeing Dick get hurt. It was bad for his heart. Luckily, he only sustained minor bruises but Jason still didn't like it. Tried to stop him a few times which he was successful at. It didn't bode well with Jason that Dick was putting himself in harm’s way. Wished he'd use his brain a little more and think before doing.

So one day curiosity got the best of him and he just decided to ask him. He was tired of speculating and it bothered him every time Dick would try to warn someone. That he had a bad feeling and that they should be careful. Though instead of listening to his pleas, they ignored him and treated him like a creep.

It wasn't as if Jason didn't think it was strange because he did but Dick wasn't a creep. Just that his trait was a little odd and a bit interesting. There were times Dick would also warn Jason as well and after that previous near miss? Yeah, he fucking listened to him. Thank god because he'd almost got hit by a bicycle once.

"Dick, I got a question," Jason asked as he watched his boyfriend munch on fries.

"Hm?"

"Do you have a sixth sense or something?"

Dick nearly choked on his food, coughing in a fit and then downed his glass of water to shove the chunks of potato down his esophagus. Maybe he should have waited until he was done swallowing or took a more tactful approach.

"W-What?" He croaked, voice hoarse and vivid blue eyes widened in shock.

"An observation I've been making. You just have a knack for guessing when accidents would happen. So, is it a sixth sense? Or are you just that good at seeing things? Or I'm just crazy."

Seeing the horrified expression on Dick's face confirmed that he'd hit a nerve. The color drained from his cheeks as he paled and eyes glistened in fear. Holy crap, was it true?

"Y-You're...crazy." Dick tried, obviously failing to put on a front.
Jason narrowed his eyes at him, disbelieving. There wasn't an ounce of confidence in his tone of voice and he gets that Dick didn't want to be judged but well, he just really really wanted to know.

"You can tell me. I won't think any differently of you if that's what you're afraid of."

That seemed to have woken up something within him when Dick sucked in a heavy breath, chest pulling in and shoulders squaring. The muscles on his face relaxed a bit, lips loosening from a tight line, jaws no longer clenched and the fear in his eyes dimmed.

"You won't?" He asked as if to confirm.

Jason nodded. "Yeah, I won't. You know me. Whatever it is, I won't think any less of you."

Dick sighed and glanced around the room, checking to see if anyone was sitting around them. To their luck, no one was considering it was a weekday and no one really ate that late at night. Work and school prevented people from doing so especially on a Tuesday.

"...Okay. It's—well—if you think about it, it's sort of a sixth sense," Dick explained, tone a little shaky, probably internally freaking out. "I get a bad vibe and sometimes I can guess what might happen. Sometimes I don't. I don't know. It's just... a thing I've had since I was young. I—I didn't—" His breath was getting short, coming in bursts and Jason realized that he might be hyperventilating. Quickly, he reached his hand forward and took Dick's in his own. Squeezing, he held on tight, stared straight into his eyes, eyes that were lost in thought and gazing into nothingness.

"Dick," Jason called. "Dick, hey." In a soothing voice, he murmured words of encouragement, trying to pull him back from his thoughts. It was something Jason learned that he needed to do when Dick would sometimes stare at nothing. That whenever he found Dick just sitting still like a statue, blue eyes dim and dark, he was lost in thought. Probably stuck in a nightmare. It happened on occasion especially when something seemed to have triggered his memories.

At first he wasn't sure what to do and just left him as is, figured he'd snap out of it soon enough. But then Jason realized that sometimes, Dick would be stuck in that stance for far too long. Far too long for Jason to be comfortable with. Then the first time when he caught Dick crying, choking back on sobs as tears streamed down his face, he knew he had to do something about it.

So he did. He couldn't ask about what it was. Well, he tried but Dick wouldn't budge, so Jason ended up consoling him. Hugging him, holding his hand, any type of intimacy he could provide. Dick generally took it well and for the most part it worked. Though a few times, he'd flinch away and asked if he could have some space which Jason gave.

It was odd. Really odd and Jason couldn't help but think that possibly something more extreme might have happened.

As he continued to softly speak to Dick, a few minutes passed and he finally relaxed, his breathing slowing to a norm.

"Okay?"

Nodding, Dick let out a sigh. "Yeah."

Jason waited until Dick was well enough to speak again, when he was ready to explain his story.

"...When I was young, I didn't really understand what was happening. Just that I felt something bad might happen so I warned people. They didn't believe me until it did. Then they started saying I was bad luck." Shit, Jason had thought that as well but not in the way that these others had. "It
happened frequently. At the orphanage, school and foster homes I stayed in. They called me creepy. And they were...scared. But also angry at me. Said I was a freak and a...liar." Jason frowned, could feel his jaws clenching, fury rising from the pit of his stomach. He felt angry, so pissed that these people were verbally hurting a child. "Some of the families that adopted me didn't like it so they sent me back. I'm mostly over it. Just, I never realized that it was an issue until it was too late. I just wanted to stop people from getting hurt."

"I believe you," Jason said and he did. Dick had a heart of gold and always cared about others when no one cared about him. "I believe you," he repeated to ensure that Dick heard him well enough. "They were wrong. You were just a child." Sighing, he willed down his anger and brought a hand to cup his cheek.

"...Yeah." Dick leaned into his hand, smile small.

"Also, I get you want to help and its part of your nature, but please stop putting yourself in harm’s way. I don't like seeing you get hurt." Pushing his hair aside, he swiped a thumb over the scar above his brow. "Just," Jason sighed heavily. "Tell me and I'll help."

Chuckling, Dick nodded, seeming to be in a better mood. "Okay. I mean, I do it because I didn’t do anything when my parents die."

Jason arched a brow at that, didn’t realize he’d stepped on a landmine. “Oh?”

Dick nodded his head. “I felt something but I wasn’t sure so I didn’t say anything. And then, well, snap, their line broke and they fell to their deaths. Then I realized that what I felt was right. And now I can’t—I can’t let it happen to others,” Dick huffed a tired breath and squeezed his eyes shut briefly.

And then it finally dawned on him why Dick had been so devastated when Jason was hit by a car. Why he blamed himself and why he distanced himself. It just all made so much sense now. It was because of his parent’s death, his inability to save them was what caused him to believe that he was bad luck. That he failed to save them because he said nothing and now, he was trying to help everyone he came across. Which explained so much when Jason was injured. He must have really blamed himself for messing up.

Jason sighed and reached across to grab his hand. “Hey,” he said and kissed his knuckles gingerly. “It’s okay. I get it now. I—I understand so much.”

Dick’s eyes were slightly glassy as he stared back at his boyfriend. “Yeah?”

“Yeah. But I mean it, seriously, don’t you dare not tell me. I don’t want you getting hurt any more than you already do,” Jason warned, was serious because he knew he couldn’t stop him, but at least he could assist him.

Dick smiled, eyes bright. "I will."

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With one issue came another. This time it was a little more difficult than simply having a conversation with his boyfriend as it involved his family and his family was full of stubborn people.

With Bruce—oh fucking hell Bruce. The man was not happy that Jason was dating Dick. Had run some background checks on him and gathered information Jason partially already knew about. He had the power to find out but he didn't because he wanted to hear it from Dick himself. It was also
an invasion of privacy and he wasn't about to overstep his boundary. Most of it was general and nothing out of the ordinary. Jason knew that there was more than meets the eye but he suspected that Dick didn't report anything that had gone wrong.

The information that he received from Bruce was about Dick's family. How they died and how he became an orphan. That he went to child care services and stayed with an orphanage home. He'd been filtered through a few families, but never stayed permanently and was marked as a problematic child. So eventually, he ended up staying at the orphanage until he became of legal age and left. He worked various jobs to support himself and was now currently stationed at two. His education only went as far as high school graduate.

All in all, Bruce didn't approve. Blamed Dick for failing to protect Jason. That he probably had issues that Jason didn't know about. Didn't want Jason to have to deal with any problems that might occur and directly affect him. That he was too much 'baggage.'

Jason was pissed and blew his top at Bruce. Told him he could go fuck himself. Yelled at him for being a poor example of an adult because Dick was a great person and Bruce was just blinded based on what was reported. That he should open his eyes or maybe get them checked. That he should know better because he adopted two sons and had one of his own. And he also fucking donated money to charity, to child care services and orphanage homes and yet he can't understand Dick's situation? Couldn't give him the benefit of the doubt or the time to get to know him?

When he saw the man flinch, Jason knew he hit a nerve. And yet, Bruce didn't admit he was wrong because in his books, he was always right. He was the type that wouldn't apologize until months later when he worked enough courage to do so.

Fuck, for being a 'family' man, Bruce sure lacked some emotions. Jason didn't care, rolled his eyes and flipped his adopted father off, left him one simple remark before he slammed the door in his face. Told him the same exact thing he told Roy when they fought, to go re-evaluate himself and then talk to him.

Tim—Tim was a bit of a, well, curve ball. He didn't seem to particularly approve or disapprove. Said that Dick didn't look like his type. He wasn't fashionable or pretty, couldn't see what he saw in him unless he just wanted to tap his ass. But that probably wasn't the case. Tim did mention that Dick seemed to genetically have a nice butt despite him being on the leaner side and maybe that was where the attraction was at.

That wasn't the focus though. The focus was, Tim could care less. Just told him to be careful and mindful of his actions and to not get played again like he once had.

Jason told him to fuck off and he's not a dumb teenager anymore. He could never live through the days where he exerted a lot of effort and money on others only to realize that they were using him. Or more like, pointed out by Tim and Damian.

Speaking of Damian, oh boy, Damian. He was a nightmare. The worst of the bunch because he was the most unreasonable and entitled little brat. Claimed that Dick was using him, that he was after his money and deemed him a gold digger. Insulted Dick by calling him poor and ugly and disgusting. Looked like he crawled out of a cave. It was hard to listen to him trash talk his boyfriend and he had to defend him. He got into a long argument with Damian and currently, they were in a fight.

A fight that won't settle any time soon until they saw eye to eye and it was something Jason will have to work out.
At least one of them seemed to have congratulated Jason and that was Alfred. Bless his kind butler heart. The old man congratulated Jason when he told him because he was the one person Jason often blabbed to about Dick. So Alfred was able to create his own perception of Dick and well, it was quite good. He even warned Jason to not hurt the man and if he did, Alfred will have to kick his butt like when he was young.

Jason didn't like the sound of that but he was happy to hear that Alfred had noticed Dick's vulnerability hidden beneath his rock hard demeanor.

Yeah, Alfred was the best of the bunch. He was after all, always his favorite.

The rest of them, except maybe Tim, needed a lot of work. Especially Damian.

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Jason planned to arrive early at Dick’s apartment to spend the evening with him after he arrived home from work. However, he ran a little later than usual since he was caught off guard by Roy as he was leaving the manor. The redhead had cornered him because he had something important to discuss. Jason wanted to wait until later, but he wouldn’t leave. So he gave in, sat down and listened to Roy whine about his sorrows, complained how he had terrible luck with love.

So by the time he reached Dick’s, it was already late at night.

It was a good thing that Dick had given Jason a spare key which was unexpected and came completely out of nowhere. He gave it to Jason so he could let himself in when needed because there may be times that Dick might be asleep and can’t answer the door. Plus that meant he trusted Jason enough to let him have a spare which was the highest regard Jason had ever received.

Today was one of those rare chances he got to use it. When he spotted the lump of blankets on the bed, he knew his boyfriend was buried beneath those layers, sleeping. Jason chuckled to himself. Dick was probably awfully tired from work and just passed out when his body met the mattress. Jason only knew because typically, if he had time, Dick would have already been stripped out of his clothes, scattering them all over the ground and jumped right into his pajamas. Despite the fact that he didn’t have very many items, he was a tad messy. It was probably because he didn’t have time to clean up or was too tired. Jason on the other hand was a bit of a neat freak so he often picked up after him. He didn’t mind it anyways.

He slipped off his shoes and locked the door shut before he approached his boyfriend. As he neared Dick, he could hear noises, sounds that sounded like soft murmurs. It was almost as if he was talking to himself. Curious, Jason curved around the corner of the mattress and dipped down beside Dick.

The man was whimpering, mumbling words under his breath that sounded a lot like stop and no. He was struggling in his sleep, flailing his arms back and forth, legs kicking up and down like he was fighting against something or someone. His fingers were balled into tight fists, skin turning pale as he tried to fight off his attacker, but it looked like he was losing.

Jason leaned over Dick, hovering above him and laid a hand flat against his chest to steady him while he gripped his arm and gently tried to shake him awake.

"Dick. wake up," he called, hoping to pull him out of his nightmare.

Dick responded to his voice but not in the way that Jason had wanted. He didn’t wake, but instead was struggling harder, raised his voice as his cries grew. He was attempting to escape, shifting and
wiggling his body from Jason’s hold. His eyes were squeezed shut, brows furrowed and beads of sweat dripped down the side of his face, soaking his hair.

Jason was a bit frightened, worry pooling inside of him and with greater urgency, he shook Dick harder. “Hey, Dick! Come on, wake up!” He called, but the man didn’t respond well to his shouts and fought harder.

He cursed himself for using such a tactic and settled for something different. Something he typically did when Dick was in one of his trance. He leaned down and cupped his ear, pressed his lips close and whispered soothing and gentle words. Words that lured him out of his nightmares and prayed that it would work.

Suddenly, Dick jerked wide-awake and roughly shoved Jason away, pushed him hard against his chest. The man tipped back on his heels and fell down on his butt. He groaned loudly from the rough impact but his pain was nothing compared to Dick’s.

Dick was—he was breathing heavily, blue eyes clouded with fear as they jumped about, moving rapidly across the room as if he was searching for something. He was frantic, looked like he was about to freak out at any moment. He had his fingers buried in his hair, roughly tugging at them like a maniac.

Something was wrong, very wrong.

Carefully he got up to his feet and slowly approached Dick with his hands up. "Dick?” he called and upon hearing his name, Dick snapped his head in Jason’s direction. His eyes were filled to the brim with tears, blown wide with distress. He was a freaking mess with his sweat soaked hair and crimson smeared lips. His face was pale, ghostly white and he looked to be in pain.

It wasn’t the first time Jason had seen Dick wake up from a nightmare, but this had to be the worst one yet. He had a sinking feeling in his stomach that this had to involve something dreadful.

He drew in a breath and hesitantly tried again. “Dick, it’s me. It’s Jason,” he said in hopes of whisking him away from his dream captors.

When Dick didn’t reply, Jason tried once more and took a step forward. Immediately, Dick yelled at him, startling the man.

“Stop!” He shouted and Jason froze in place, stared at his boyfriend as confusion filtered onto his face. It was rare for Dick to raise his voice and the unease that had been flourishing within him burst open. Dick’s cry was filled with fear and it hurt Jason to see him afraid.

"Dick..."

"Don’t,” he warned through gritted teeth, tone low and dangerous. “Don't come near me."

Dick was agitated and crawled back towards the wall, distancing himself from Jason as he curled into a ball. He pressed the palm of his hands to his eyes and stayed there, unmoving. The air fell silent and all that could be heard were the sounds of Dick’s erratic sobs.

Jason rolled down onto his bottom and sat on the ground. He didn’t dare to approach Dick, afraid he would scare him away. Afraid that his actions might trigger something and make the situation worse. So he sat still and just stared at his boyfriend, examined his distraught form. Watched as his shoulders climbed up and down with every breath he hitched.

He wanted to do something. Wanted to help Dick, but he didn’t know what. Jason had no idea
what kind of nightmare Dick was in. Didn’t have a single clue as to why he reacted the way he did.

What could it even be? Obviously it was something that involved him struggling against another person. Was it Dick getting beaten? Or possibly bullied? Which made sense if he was trying to defend against an attack.

As he sat there deep in thought, not knowing what to do, he allowed his mind to dabble with a few possibilities. Trying to piece together the bits of information he’d collected over the course of having known Dick in an attempt to figure out what it was that was causing Dick to behave this way.

He knew it had to do with his past, he was sure of that. Most of his nightmares seemed to have involved something that had been done to him. He just needed to figure out what it was.

“Fuck,” Jason hissed under his breath and cracked his knuckles, pissed off at himself for being useless. He just wanted to help, but he was struggling to think of a way to calm the man. And it didn’t help that he didn’t know what the hell was going on either.

He needed to relax himself, cleanse his mind so he could think rationally. Drawing in deep breaths, he tried to calm his wild emotions and drew himself back to tranquility. Once his mind was erased of all anger, fear and worry, he focused on connecting the clues he had on hand.

First off, Dick was struggling against someone and was defending himself versus fighting back.

Second, he was definitely murmuring words like no and stop and please. At least that was what Jason could make out. Clearly, he wanted whatever was being done to him to stop and begged for mercy. Yet, whoever it was didn’t.

Third, when Jason tried to help Dick and held him down, the man struggled even more, became more frantic with his actions.

As he thought about it deeply, that last one seemed like a trigger. Felt as if Dick had actually felt someone restraining him, holding him down from up above. Which would be why he grew more panicky and thrashed about, trying to escape from Jason’s hold.

It sounded an awful lot like he could have—

Then Jason gasped aloud and covered a hand over his mouth to hush his voice. The pieces finally clicked together to form the complete puzzle. That had to be the case. It had to. At first, he’d thought that Dick was being beaten, but it wasn’t. It could have, but it was too different to be the case. Not with the way Dick reacted when Jason held him down.

It never occurred to him that this could be an issue. That something like this might have happened to Dick. If it did, then it would explain why Dick only allowed a certain amount of intimacy. Why he had told him he needed space sometimes when he was lost in thought and didn’t want comfort. It was the reason to all those times he’d flinch from a simple touch.

Fuck. It made so much sense. How had he not seen it coming?

"Dick," Jason whispered, saw his body jerk harshly upon hearing his name.

"Is it possible..." He probably shouldn't have said this. Knew that it would trigger something, but he had to. He had to get it out. It was something that needed to be put out there in the open. "That you were...raped?"
When his cries grew louder and scratched his ear drums, Jason knew he'd hit the mark.
When those words slipped from his mouth, that one word rolling just off the tip of his tongue, Dick started sobbing uncontrollably. His body shook, shoulders raising and falling in rhythm to his cries. Jason just sat there, unsure of what to do and was rendered speechless. He watched helplessly as his boyfriend cried. He wanted so badly to console the man, gather him in his arms and sooth away his tears. But he wasn't sure if it was okay to even touch him. Dick might freak out from the slightest touch like he had earlier. So Jason just waited. Waited and waited until Dick's sobs came down to soft sniffles and hiccups.

Finally, Dick lifted his head, hands no longer hiding his face and Jason could see how red-rimmed his eyes were, swollen and wet and fuck, he looked awful and he just wanted to take him into his arms. Tear filled eyes just stared at him, body a trembling mess as he tried to wipe away the wetness with the end of his sleeves.

Jason waited for a signal, a signal to tell him it was okay to come closer. That he could be at Dick's side because he was desperately wanting to, legs shaking with the need to help his lover.

It came in the form of a hand reaching out and immediately, Jason took it, climbed onto the bed and pulled him onto his lap, arms wrapped protectively around him.

"Hey, I'm here," Jason whispered as Dick buried his face against his collar and curled an arm around his neck as the remaining tears soaked his skin.

Jason lulled him and whispered sweet words, stroked his back until his trembles were no more. His cries were gone, eyes drying up but his hands were still cold, clammy as Jason twined their fingers together.

He waited patiently, giving him all the time he needed to gather himself back into one piece and finally, Dick spoke up.

"It wasn't—" God, his voice was awful, hoarse and grated his ear drums. "Wasn't exactly... rape," he whispered. "Just. He—well, this family." Dick didn't know where to start and was jumping all over the place. Taking a deep breath to calm himself, he started over again. "I was—was 13. This was the 4th family to take me in. It was a couple who—who wanted kids but couldn't have any. They um, they started off nice but it quickly went downhill. They fought a lot. I think they already had issues before they took me in," he paused to clear his throat and exhaled shakily.

"The wife was always out and the husband would yell at her. Often times, she didn't come home. Then one night, he uh—he." Jason noticed him struggling and squeezed his hand, giving him reassurance. Bright blue eyes turned to meet his gaze and Dick nodded as he squeezed back harder.

"He came into my bed. C-Climbed on top of me, held my arms down and uh, sort of, dry humped me? He came. I-I didn't really understand it at first. Hadn't taken sex ed yet."

Jason brushed aside his bangs and kissed his forehead as a means to keep himself at bay. That's not
to say he wasn't angry because he was *infuriated* and his body was burning with fury, ready to burst at any moment.

"...I didn't resist so he probably thought it was okay to continue," Dick huffed a pained breath and Jason's arms closed in tighter around his waist, curling around the man in protection.

"That's *not* okay." Jason growled, voice sharp and he gritted his teeth, was having a difficult time swallowing down this story calmly. "He was taking advantage of you."

Dick gave a soft smile, like he had realized it after it had happened. That at the time he thought that he wasn't being used or abused. That it was just—that he might have just been pleasing him because he was his foster father. That he had no other choice.

Dick squeezed his eyes shut before he opened them again. There was a darkness clouding his bright blue eyes and Jason knew he wasn't going to like what he was about to hear. "It happened for some time. Not—not every day. Every few. It started in the bedroom then he was just—just, feeling me up every chance he got. The kitchen and the—" Dick struggled to breath and cut himself off. "...He uh—he never penetrated. Just did about everything else, like using my thighs and—" he was stuttering, his breathing growing ragged and Jason knew he was about to hyperventilate, so he quickly stopped him, didn't want to hear any more.

"Its fine," Jason said and stroked his hair gingerly, threading his fingers softly through. "I get it. You don't need to describe it. *Don't* describe it because I'm fucking pissed." Jason was livid, ready to punch the living hell out of this person if he ever found out who he was. The motherfucking ra—child molester.

His hand curled into a tight first, knuckles going white. He was shaking in anger. Who the fuck would do that? What kind of messed up person would do that to a kid? *A freaking kid?* God damn. Dick was the same age as Damian at the time. Just thinking about it made Jason want to search for this bastard and beat the hell out of him and put him in jail. Make him serve his time for his wrongs. Fuck, he couldn't imagine how he'd feel if that happened to his brother because right now, he was about to go on a murderous hunt.

"Jay." Dick called and cupped his cheek, gently swiped a thumb beneath his eye to soothe his anger. "I'm okay. I'm—I'm *okay*. It was a *long* time ago. I just—*sometimes*, I get nightmares."

That still wasn't an excuse that it was okay because Dick never got the justice he deserved. Jason sighed loudly and bumped their foreheads together. "You don't deserve that. *It's not fair,*" he snarled.

Dick rolled his lips together into a tight line. "*I know,*" he whispered. "*It's fine Jason.*"

"*How?* You're having nightmares!" He growled, couldn't comprehend why Dick was saying this with such ease when the fact he was still heavily bothered by it. Dick smiled softly at him, eyes sad and glassy as he leaned in and kissed Jason chastely. The man huffed, still unsatisfied. "*That doesn't make it any better Dick.*"

"I know. I just wanted to." And he kissed him again, soft and tender and Jason could taste his salty tears. "*It's hard. I know,*" he breathed heavily and seemed to be struggling with himself. "*I don't like to think about it. It was a—a dark time. *Really dark.* I almost killed myself you know? These scars," Dick said as he pulled off his wristband, revealing the cuts. "*Are from that. But also because a lot of things built up over time, but that was just the last straw. I couldn't—I just couldn't do it anymore.*"
Jason traced his fingers over the lumpy scar tissues and pressed his lips to them. "What happened after?"

Dick shifted so his head was laying atop Jason's shoulder. He let out a sigh. "I struggled. I tried resisting, but he beat me, so I ran away. Slept on the streets until he found me. Forced me back home. He then attempted to—" Dick's voice hitched as fear struck his soul once more and his hands trembled, growing colder. Jason swiftly tugged at the covers and wrapped them up in a bundle, creating warmth to melt his chilled body. Dick breathed heavily for a moment, slowly coming back from his memories and continued with his story. "But the wife came home. Saw what happened. Freaked out and they fought. Fought so loudly and fiercely that the neighbors called the police. They hid me as the police were questioning them, didn't want them to find me. Then right after, the wife took me and left. She brought me back to the orphanage days after."

Jason blinked in surprise, hadn't expected that turn of events. "So, it was a good thing she found out."

Jason felt Dick nod against him, chapped lips pressing against his skin. "Yeah. It was thanks to her. She was—she was disgusted by what he did. Didn’t blame me though. Told me I wasn’t wrong, but she told me not to tell anyone. That I shouldn’t let anyone know if I didn't want to get in trouble. She said she couldn’t let others know about it either or it would ruin her. So I—|I kept quiet."

"Are you serious?" Jason spat and stared wide eyed at Dick, like he couldn't believe an adult woman would tell a child that. A child that she adopted and was being abused by her husband in which, she caught him in the act. Yet, she did nothing to help him.

"...Yes," Dick replied meekly as if he'd been slapped on the wrist, reprimanded for listening to her. Realizing his error, Jason quickly kissed him to mend his mistake. "I didn't mean it like that." "I know," Dick replied softly, not at all blaming Jason.

He sighed, upset at himself for hurting Dick. "I just...I can't. Okay," he paused, a bit tongue tied and struggled to set his emotions straight. He took a few seconds to gather himself once again. "So you just—she said that and then dumped you back at the orphanage?" Jason asked, could not believe what he was hearing.

"Yeah. She said she couldn’t afford to keep me.”

"That’s fucking horrible.” If they couldn't care for a child, why did they even adopt him in the first place? Why did Dick have to suffer because of this pair of inadequate human beings who couldn't care for a child and yet, wanted one? They should have been denied at the start. Jason also blamed child care services for not doing their job properly and handing Dick off to a fucked up family. That shouldn't have happened in the first place.

"I know. I realize it now. I wasn’t exactly okay after that. I—I didn’t tell anyone and I didn’t talk to anyone.”

He understood the implications hidden beneath those words. No one would. Dick was abused and he was traumatized by it. Couldn't comprehend what it meant exactly besides that fact that it hurt him—that it was disgusting and he hated it. Hated it so much he wanted to die. Probably had blamed himself for everything that had happened, everything that had gone wrong.

"Was that all that happened?” Jason prompted, wanted to see if there was something else he should know. Anything else that Dick might be keeping to himself. The man had a lot of hardships and he
was sure this wasn’t everything, but it was definitely one of the most heart wrenching and traumatizing one yet.

"...Yeah," he whispered and allowed his body to grow slack, all the energy drained from within him. "I'm tired. I don’t want to talk about it anymore." Dick murmured and huffed a breath as he snuggled against Jason, pressed close to his chest and tried to absorb his warmth. His body was still trembling slightly and Jason could feel the gentle tremors.

“You don’t have to. I think I’ve heard enough. We can just sleep,” Jason said and moved to lay the both of them down on the bed, arms still securely wrapped around Dick's waist.

Dick sighed as his head met the plush pillow. "But I don't want to sleep."

Jason sighed heavily and tried to adjust himself so he was laying on his side, still holding onto Dick as he attempted to pull the covers over the both of them. "We can talk about something else."

"I don't really want to. I've already burdened you with my issues," Dick said and settled his eyes on his lover. The color of his eyes were slowly returning, that vivid blue shining through and Jason could see there was a bit of light back in Dick.

"It's not a burden," Jason said and gently swiped away his bangs so they were out of his eyes. "Jay...you weren't supposed to know," Dick mumbled and cupped his cheek. "I didn't want you to know."

"Why?" Was it because he was embarrassed? Was it because he was afraid of being judged?

A small smile filled with remorse fell upon his lips and his eyes looked so dejected, almost heartbroken. "Because it feels like I've been soiled. That I'm not...innocent. That I'm...dirty. I told you I was fucked up."

"Jason," Dick murmured, eyes widening as they reopened, a little surprised to hear that. "When you're ready. When you allow me to, let me cleanse you if you still feel that way. Otherwise, I'll just love you." Jason squeezed his waist, holding him tight, never wanting to let go and exhaled shakily. He was afraid if he did, Dick would disappear from his reach. He felt like his heart might leap out of his chest, embarrassed. It was such a lame thing to say but he meant it.
Dick choked back a sob, restraining himself from crying again, but his lips were clearly quivering. "You idiot." Though he was smiling softly. "If you want...then," he said as he pulled at the collar of his sweater, exposing his neck, revealing that glistening sun-kissed skin. "You can."

Jason hadn't expected it to happen so soon. He had only wanted to make Dick feel better. To let him know that Jason didn't think he was dirty as he had called himself. That if he really felt that way, then Jason could replace that bastard's touch with his, so that Dick would only remember him.

"You sure?" Eyes flickered from bright sapphire eyes to his naked nape.

"Yeah." Dick leaned in closer, urging Jason on. "I can—this I can take. I—it’s okay Jason.”

Jason settled his eyes once more on Dick, to make sure this was what he really wanted. That this was okay and he wasn’t overstepping his boundaries. Once he saw the clear look in those vivid blue eyes, devoid of any regret, Jason nodded and went for it. He slung a hand behind his neck, fingers burying deep in his hair and grasped it lightly. He dipped in and pressed a kiss to Dick's neck, starting off small as he left behind soft wet kisses. But gradually, he started sucking his skin, biting and lapping at the speckled red welts he left behind. Creating bruises upon bruises that would swell and purple overnight. He could hear Dick moaning sweetly, and wow, he actually loved the sound of that and wanted to hear more.

Dick was clinging to him, arms wrapped around his neck as Jason flipped him to his back, climbed on top of him and pressed their bodies flushed together. He felt Dick's body twitch, freezing up and Jason immediately pulled apart briefly to stare at him, worried that he’d triggered something. But Dick looked fine, his blue eyes were bright and clear as the sky, staring at him with want and need, eyes passionate and he nipped at his lower lip. Jason waited for a sign that it was okay to continue and when Dick nodded his head, Jason smiled and dove back in.

Jason painted a slew of red hickeys all around his neck and collarbone, almost creating a necklace of his kiss marks. He greatly enjoyed marking his lover, had been wanting to mark him since they started dating but held back because he wanted Dick's consent. Wanted him to want it too.

Jason could feel his lips swelling, burning just a tad and figured he should probably stop now. He left one more kiss against Dick’s neck and collapsed back to his side, sighing heavily. Emerald eyes traveled to Dick’s nape, glossing over the red specks that decorated his skin and admired the wonderful work he’d done.

"It's warm and feels weird," Dick whispered and lifted his hand to his neck, feeling around for the swollen marks.

Jason chuckled. "You'll see the results tomorrow,” he said, glanced once more at his neck and added, “You might want to wear a high collar for work." He realized he might have placed them a little too high since there were also hickeys below his jaw and behind his ears.

Dick's lips curled downwards. "I don't have any."

"Guess...we'll get you some. And make-up." If someone could pull off a frown and still look adorable, it was Dick Grayson. "Anyways, let's—you know, let's talk about tomorrow. So tomorrow, what do you have going on?" Jason swiftly changed topics and could feel his lips burning, felt oddly flustered for some reason.

Dick gave him a stink eye because he was avoiding the question so Jason decided to just blab, threw out random plans he had in mind to distract him. Dick was going to find out what Jason had
done when he looked in the mirror and *well,* he wasn't going to like what he saw.

Jason definitely *definitely* went overboard.
Chapter 15

The fight between Damian and his eldest brother had continued on for far too long and Damian decided that he needed to end his altercation with Jason. Enough was enough and he didn't appreciate being ignored by the older man. Despite the fact that his attitude had been poor, he still believed that he wasn't wrong. His brother was blinded by the man's vulnerability, fooled by the act that he was putting on. Dick Grayson was a gold digger and he had his brother wrapped around his finger. Damian was going to prove once and for all that Jason was being played and that should help fix their relationship.

Damian had requested for Tim's assistance once again but the teen refused. That angered Damian and when he asked why, Tim told him he had homework to do and to leave Jason and his boyfriend alone. Damian scoffed at the word *boyfriend*, couldn't believe Tim actually deemed him worthy as Jason's boyfriend. No one was worthy of his brother. He deserved better.

So Damian decided to do it alone. Demanded Alfred to be his chauffeur and had the butler drop him off at the burger joint Dick worked at.

"What do you plan to do here Master Damian?" Alfred questioned as the boy got out of the car.

"That is none of your concern Pennyworth."

Alfred eyed him suspiciously, had an inkling of what the boy was up to but alas, he let it fly. "What time should I pick you up?"

Damian thought on that for a moment and came to the conclusion that he was unsure. "I will call you."

Alfred gave a curt nod in acknowledgement and drove away. Theoretically, he shouldn't leave the boy on his own, a little too young to be out, but Damian was no ordinary boy. He was well capable of taking care of himself. Besides, the wise butler trusted that Damian would be in good hands. Albeit, he did feel a bit sorry for whoever was about to deal with the little terror.

Damian entered the restaurant and scanned his eyes in search of a particular person. It didn't take long to spot him and when the man in question landed in his peripherals, a sly grin tugged at the corner of his lips and he quickly put his plan into motion. Damian strode towards the hostess and demanded that Dick be his waiter. She didn't seem very adamant and narrowed her eyes at the boy, glaring at him slightly for his rude remark.

"Where are you parents?" She questioned.

"None of your concern," Damian hissed. "I am capable enough to be on my own. Now, seat me," he demanded and dismissed her immediately as he turned his attention elsewhere, mainly on his target for the day.

The blonde sighed heavily and looked at the boy in confusion. Seeing that she probably wouldn't get through to him without an argument, she just shrugged her shoulders and sat him in a booth.

Damian sat in the direction that faced the kitchen so he'd have his attention on the man at all times, at least when he could see him. He waited a few minutes until his server finally arrived at the table. There was a soft smile on the waiter's face as he approached Damian, but when he immediately realized who it was, his expression fell. He appeared a bit perturbed, slightly shaken by the sudden visitation but swiftly shook it off.
The server drew in a breath as he came up to the side of the table. With a forced smile, he introduced himself. "Hello, my name is Dick and I'll be--"

But Damian wouldn't allow him to finish his sentence. "That took too long," Damian barked and leveled his eyes dangerously at Dick. The plan for today was to see how long it would take for Dick to snap at him. It was a test of Dick's patience and Damian was going to demand the most ridiculous things as a way to spite him but as a way to measure him as well. If Dick couldn't tolerate Damian and yelled at him, than that would be a disrespect to Jason, to the man he claimed to be dating. If so, then Dick was definitely not the one for his brother.

Jason deserved to date someone of high caliber, someone who respected his family and the man himself. Not someone who was purely after his money or his fame. Damian knew well enough how those people acted.

Dick pulled his lips into a thin line and nodded his head in apology. "I'm sorry to make you wait," he said.

An apology was something simple and Damian wasn't buying it. He scoffed and clicked his tongue. "Tt," and completely disregarded Dick's sincerity. He was skeptical and he knew better than to believe that an apology would come from the heart as most lied about what they meant.

Emerald eyes watched with caution, analyzing Dick's every action so he could use it against the man. Dick drew in a soft breath and tried to smile once more. "What would you like to drink?"

Damian squinted his eyes at the man and answered. "Coke."

"Okay. I will be right back with your drink."

"It better be quick," Damian prompted and crossed his arms over his chest as he held his shoulders high.

Dick only gave him a quick smile before he quickly disappeared behind the kitchen doors. The moment he'd walked away from the table, Damian started counting down and kept a tab on how long it would take for him to return. By the time two minute and thirty seconds passed, Dick returned with a glass.

As Dick was setting the drink down on the table, Damian decided to take that moment to make his comment. "Too long," he mumbled, tilted his head back to place his attention on the man, waiting for a reaction. But Dick said nothing. All he did was smile apologetically and murmured a hushed sorry. He didn't even look a bit irritated and that frustrated Damian.

It was annoying. That smile of his scratched at his nerves, made him want to wipe it off of Dick's face. And so, he decided to add it as another goal for the day. One way or another he was going to force his smile to disappear.

Damian pulled at the coaster where the glass was resting on and moved it closer towards him. Two fingers pinched the straw and Damian leaned in to sip his drink. After tasting the soda, he scrunched his nose and returned his attention to the man. There wasn't really anything wrong with it but he wanted to make a rouse just cause. "It's flat."

Dick immediately replied to his accusation not with an argument but with a fact. "I'm sorry. Fountain drinks are sometimes like that."

But Damian didn't care and tossed out another one of his demands. "Fix it."
Dick obliged and curled his fingers around the cup, lifting it back up from where he'd set it. "I'll get you a new one," he said without any fuss and disappeared once again. Damian started counting and was ready to compare his first time to his second, to see whether he was faster or slower this time around. It didn't take long for Dick to return and by the time it reached two minutes, he was back with a new glass, beating his previous record.

"Here you go," Dick said with that stupid smile of his as he settled the cup gently onto the table. "Hopefully it's better this time."

Damian didn't say a word and eyed Dick suspiciously, glancing from his drink to the man. "I'll be the judge of that," he mumbled and sipped at his drink, taste testing it. Emerald eyes lit up slightly in surprise to find that it was actually more carbonated. He expected to receive the same results. Hmph, guess he could give him a pass. "Fine."

A sigh of relief escaped his lips and his shoulders slumped a bit, relaxing. Damian was rather irked by that, didn't enjoy that the man was not having a hard enough time. He needed to increase his efforts.

"Are you ready to order?" Dick asked and brought out a pen and pad.

He supposed he could order since Damian already knew what he was going to get, it was typically the same thing every time. "The veggie burger."

A look of surprise passed through Dick's face briefly and quickly disappeared seconds later. Damian caught the look though since most people tended to have the same reaction when they found out that he was a vegetarian. He supposed it wasn't as common with the younger generation, especially someone his age.

"Okay. Would you like anything else?"

"That is all. It better be out quickly."

"I'll let the kitchen know."

While Damian waited for his food to arrive, he settled his attention on Dick. He watched as the man scrambled around the floor, moving from one table to the next, bounced around his side of the restaurant as he worked. That ridiculous smile of his was plastered to his face, never leaving no matter what he did. He took orders, served food and took care of the bills. Dick was constantly on his feet, running from one task to the next and never seemed to have a moment to breathe.

Damian watched carefully, eyes following Dick's every movement, taking in every expression that crossed his face. He wasn't sure if he was seeing things, but Dick seemed a little off. There was a slight paleness to his skin and there was unease in his body language. Over the course of the short time he'd been observing, Dick's actions grew sluggish. His shoulders became stiff, locked into the back of his sockets and he trailed his legs with every step he took.

Something was wrong though Damian couldn't quite put a finger to it. It was too difficult of a task to worry about when he had other priorities at stake so he just ignored it and returned to keeping a timer on how long it would take for his order to arrive.

About fifteen or so minutes later, his food was finally brought to him and well, Damian waited way too long.

"That took 15 minutes," Damian barked, looking extremely unsatisfied.
"You counted?" Dick blurted, shocked at that spectacle but then quickly realized his error. "I'm sorry that you had to wait so long."

"Tt. Of course you're sorry. It's one burger. It should have been done faster," Damian stated.

"I agree. It was just—the kitchen was backed up," Dick explained, hoping that it would ease Damian but it didn't.

"Mine should have come out first. It's one burger versus the many orders of others."

Dick didn't argue back against him and took it at face value. "Yes, I apologize. It should have been quicker. I am really sorry."

Surprisingly to Damian, the man was taking his attitude all too well and he was sure that Dick knew he wasn't at fault. Yet, he continued to apologize and cater to his needs as he should be considering he was on work hours. Though some would have at least tried to fight back, attempt to reason with Damian in a respectable way. Dick did none of that and maybe Damian should feel bad and stop his actions, but he didn't. He still wanted to be a difficult customer and kept up the act.

"Tt. Whatever, leave me be," he said and dismissed Dick entirely.

The man just sighed heavily, tossed the boy one more apologetic smile and this time, Damian noticed something odd about the color of his lips. They were less pink than usual and blended into the paleness of his face. Clearly, something was wrong and warning bells were going off in his head, ringing loudly and yet, Damian ignored it because Dick was none of his concern.

The man left, leaving Damian to eat his burger in silence as he returned back to his work. He was making slow progress on his meal and when he was about halfway through, he decided it was the perfect time to be a pest and cause another commotion. Slyly, he slid his glass to the edge of his table and pretended to accidentally spill his drink. The cup slipped from the surface and collapsed onto its side as the contents spilled out and onto the floor.

Dick heard the loud noises and emerged from the kitchen, heading straight towards Damian. Vivid blue eyes swiftly took in the scene and a look of concern filtered onto his face.

"Are you okay?" He asked breathlessly, tone filled with worry and Damian was taken aback by that reaction. It was just a drink. There was nothing for him to fret about.

"Fine," he answered slowly, didn't want to appear disturbed by the incident or his reaction. "But the table and floor are now dirty."

Dick blinked, relief washing over him and the concern on his face disappeared. "Okay," he breathed shakily and nodded his head. "That's—that's good. I-I can get this cleaned up then," he answered and left only to come back with a mop and towel in hand. Dick got right to work and tossed the towel onto the table, letting it soak up all the spilled soda and wiped the table clean before he attacked the floor. He cleaned meticulously, ensuring that there would be no leftover residue since the sugar would leave behind a stickiness.

Damian kept a watchful eye on Dick since that was pretty much all he seemed to be doing today. Watched as he cleaned up the mess without a single complaint. But of course that would be the case considering accidents happen and it's not as if he knew that Damian had done it on purpose. Or would it be something he would suspect Damian of doing.

Once finished, Dick returned back to his duties and Damian finished the rest of his burger in relative silence.
Dick came around once more and set his check on the table.

"Whenever you're ready," he said and was about to walk away again but instead, he lingered around. Damian narrowed his eyes at him, waiting for him to say what he wanted to say because there wouldn't be a reason for him to stand around like he wanted something.

"What?" he prompted and Dick flinched at his sudden remark.

"Um," he stuttered. "I was just...kind of curious. Why are you alone?"

"Tt," Damian scoffed, a bit disappointed that it wasn't what he expected it to be. "Am I not allowed?"

Dick shrugged and shook his head no. "I was only wondering."

"When are you done?" Damian blurted, the words rolling off the tip of his tongue as he switched topics.

Vivid blue eyes blinked at him in confusion and Damian just rolled his eyes at that stupefied look.

"As in work. When are you done with work?" Damian elaborated since the man couldn't comprehend.

Dick gazed at him, slightly skeptical and partly confused by what he wanted. "Why?"

"I demand you to wait for me."

"Uh...what?" Dick asked, flabbergasted.

"I plan to meet you after you are done."

"I don't understand. Why?"

"That is unnecessary. Tell me the time."

Dick scratched the back of his head, confused as he contemplated over his answer before he decided to give in "Eight."

"Good. I will be out front."

Damian dropped the exact change and walked out, leaving behind a very perplexed Dick.

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Damian killed some time by playing video games at a nearby arcade until it was time to meet Dick. His eyes caught sight of the man leaving through the front of the restaurant and as expected, he was dressed in a pair of faded jeans that loosely fit him with a few rips at the thigh and a hoodie that had seen better days, was once probably a deep blue but was now pale and grey-toned. The biggest offender to Damian though was his disgusting hair. Dick was in dire need of a haircut unless he just enjoyed the look.

Dick looked a little troubled with the way his brows were pulled into a thin line. His lips were curled into a frown and he was constantly swiping his bangs to the side like he was trying to wipe something. Dick glanced around the vicinity and when his attention landed on Damian, his expression did a complete flip and he was smiling. Damian was rather perplexed by his sudden change in demeanor. After everything he had done, Dick should have hated him and it was slightly
getting on his nerves that his tactics hadn't succeeded. It worked on the other poor souls that his brother dated and they gave in a lot quicker than Dick. It was easy to expose their true personality but with Dick, it wasn't. As it seemed, he was rather good at acting.

"You look absolutely horrid. Who dressed you?" Damian asked and shamed his wardrobe.

Dick just blinked at him like it wasn't even an insult, but rather, he was surprised Damian said that. "Sorry, I did," he admitted and while Damian knew that, he didn't think that Dick would admit to it.

"It's hideous. Don't you have a sense of fashion?" He scoffed irritability and scrunched his nose in disgust.

Dick just smiled sheepishly at him. "Sadly, I don't."

How could he agree when Damian was pointing out his flaws? While he was completely criticizing his wardrobe in front of his face and insulting him? Most would have been furious by now, becoming defensive and arguing with Damian even if it was a true statement.

Since Dick didn’t respond to his remarks, he pushed forth and added even more salt to the already open wound, rubbing it in as much as he could. "It's outright ridiculous. Your clothes are old and it looks like you got them from one of those thrift stores."

The slight glow in Dick’s eyes flickered and the expression in those blue eyes dimmed, disheartened and a bit hurt. He huffed a shaky breath and scrubbed a hand through his messy dark hair. "...I did," he answered ever so softly, almost ashamed of the fact.

Damian faltered, didn’t expect his words to be true and lost a bit of steam. Swiftly, he cleared his throat and switched topics, moving onto something completely different. "You don't deserve my brother," and while he believed that to be true, he felt like he shouldn't have said it, not after causing that saddened expression. But the goal was to break them apart, so maybe it wasn't wrong after all. He figured that this should be enough to shatter the hopes in this man's silly heart.

But once again, Dick failed to meet Damian’s expectations. Rather than backing down, he seemed to agree. Dick smiled fondly, puffing a soft breath and said, “I don’t.” But that look he wore made absolutely no sense. He was agreeing and yet there was a sadness lurking beneath his eyes.

This man, this person who Damian claimed to be a gold digger didn't seem like any of Jason's previous dates. He was different, significantly so. Most of the time, the gaudy women or men he'd insulted would break down into tears or bark right back at him, calling him an insolent kid. Dick wasn't like that.

It just couldn't be. Damian couldn't be wrong. He had to be right, he just had to. Everyone else was the same and all they wanted was their money. All they wanted was to use Jason, it just had to be.

Believing that was the case, Damian rapidly tried to think of something else to say. He couldn't accept the fact that this man wasn't who he claimed to be. That he was only putting up a front because Dick knew he was Jason's younger brother. That he had to act on his best behavior or else. Wracking his brain, he thought up a few difficult scenarios, something that wasn't dangerously suspicious but would push his limits. As he stared at Dick deep in thought, he noticed that the man was sweating a little and breathing heavily. His exhales came in bursts, rugged and short. Damian cocked his head to the side, pondering about his current state. Wanted to ask him what was wrong but was interrupted as his plot formulated and disregarded that hunch that’d been budding within him.
"I'm hungry and I want gelato," he huffed in demand.

Dick smiled tiredly and raked a hand through his hair. "Sorry, there's no gelato around here."

"I don't care. I want it. And I demand you get it for me," Damian said in a scowl, stomped his foot for effect.

Dick stared at him, exasperated and sighed loudly in frustration as he scrubbed a hand down his face. Damian smirked, triumphant. Maybe this was it.

But it wasn't.

"Okay. I'll go get some," he said and completely shattered Damian's prospects. How could he just simply agree so easily? "Just—just wait here. I'll be back," he said as he made hand gestures at Damian to stay before he walked away, leaving him behind.

*What the hell?* How is this possible? How has he not given in yet? How has he not *exploded* yet? This was getting beyond ridiculous. He had to be faking, he just had to.

Damian was determined to exploit him and thought to himself that maybe Dick was lying. Maybe he made an excuse to get away and just left him. He wasn’t exactly sure but he waited anyways, paced around the shopping center as he walked in circles.

It felt like an eternity when Dick finally came back. The man was carrying something in his hand and when Damian got a closer look, it was a small pint of ice cream. Gelato to be exact, obviously store bought but still very much gelato. It wasn’t what Damian asked for though because he wanted fresh gelato, from an ice cream parlor.

Damian parted his lips to retort but Dick was able to read him and replied before he could.

"Sorry. It was the best I could do. There's no gelato place around here," he breathed heavily, quite winded from the short trip he’d taken to wherever it was.

Damian wasn’t satisfied though seeing how out of breath Dick was, he snatched it from his hand and was about to yell at him when Dick suddenly collapsed to the floor and fell on his bottom. Frightened, Damian dropped to his knees immediately.

"What's wrong?" He asked and tried to hide the fear in his voice.

Dick huffed loudly, giving a weak smile. "Tired. I'm just...*tired*. I-I need to lay down."

"*Idiot!*" He shouted, reprimanding Dick who scrunched his face, cringing at how loudly he’d risen his voice. People were staring, watching them in awe as they passed by but didn't bother to offer any assistance to Dick. Though that was probably due to Damian glaring them off.

Damian slipped his fingers around Dick’s arm and gripped him roughly as he helped the man to his feet.

In the short distance, he spotted a bench and carefully led Dick towards it. Gently, he lay him down onto the bench so he could rest up.

Damian then left him alone briefly and returned with a bottle of water as well as the ice cream he’d dropped earlier. He pressed the cool bottle to Dick’s forehead, watched as the man lifted an arm to hold it on his own.
Dick sighed contently. “Thanks,” he murmured and Damian grunted in response. “I’m still sorry about the ice cream.”

Damian shrugged in irritation, annoyed that the idiot was still worried about some stupid ice cream when he looked like he was dying. What a fool. He didn’t say anything and slipped onto the edge of the bench, his legs meeting just the very tip of Dick’s hair. With the ice cream in hand, he popped open the lid and scooped out a portion with his spoon to eat. It didn’t taste that bad.

As they sat there in silence, Damian munched on his ice cream as he listened to Dick’s rickety breaths. Watched from the corner of his eyes as his chest rose and fell dramatically.

"Hey,” he called.

"Hm?” Dick answered weakly.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“What do you mean?”

“You say you’re tired but you look like you’re dying.”

Dick chuckled, sounding a little wet. “I’m just a little sick is all. A little rest will be fine.”

“If you say so.”

Even though it was late, Damian didn’t want to leave Dick alone. Felt like he’d be doing a very bad thing if he left behind a defenseless man who was so weak he could barely talk. Had no energy in him to even stand on his own. So he figured he’d keep Dick company while he recovered.

He’d glance every now and then, checking on Dick’s complexion which seemed to be getting slightly better. He was less pale than earlier, yet, he wasn’t exactly in tip top shape. Damian huffed a breath as he swung his legs back and forth, impatiently waiting for his ride.

A honk echoed at the two and Damian jerked his head in the direction of the vehicle. He found Alfred’s limo and jumped in joy as he hopped off the bench. He’d pinged for the butler earlier and he’d arrived just on time.

"Hey. Get in the car," Damian commanded which was basically his way of offering a ride home for Dick.

Alfred emerged from the car and walked up to the two. His eyes widened in surprise when he found Alfred’s limo and jumped in joy as he hopped off the bench. He’d pinged for the butler earlier and he’d arrived just on time.

"Hey. Get in the car," Damian commanded which was basically his way of offering a ride home for Dick.

"Idiot is sick. We're taking him home."

Surprisingly, Dick didn’t argue against him and complied. Though the moment he sat up straight, his body started swaying. Alfred and Damian snapped to his side and held onto Dick, bracing him from falling over.

“You shouldn’t sit up too quickly,” Alfred scolded in a gentle tone.

“Right, of course,” Dick sighed and nodded in agreement.

The two carefully helped Dick to his feet and guided him towards the car. Dick and Damian both
climbed into the back seat as Alfred rounded the front of the car to the driver’s seat. Damian threw a glance at Dick and found that he wasn’t buckled in yet. Pinching the bridge of his nose, he huffed and helped strap him in.

“Thanks,” Dick murmured, and received a hushed ‘tt.’

After he was safely secured, Damian settled his attention back on the man and found that he looked worse for wear. His body was trembling, and he had his arms wrapped around himself, rubbing his hands up and down. There were beads of sweat forming at the edges of his forehead and his lips quivered.

Damian bit his lip in worry. “Where to?” he asked.

Dick gave them his address and Alfred punched it into his GPS. Within a minute, they were on their way to his house.

When they finally arrived at Dick’s apartment, Damian scrunched his nose in disgust to find that Dick lived in a dump. It’s no wonder he was sick.

Dick wasted no time and unbuckled himself. He opened the door and unsteadily got out of the car without anyone’s assistance. He was slouching, had his hip resting against the side of the car as he attempted to right himself up.

“Do you need any help?” Alfred asked kindly as he was about to step out to assist.

Dick sucked in a breath and shook his head. He pushed himself up without any support and stood, tall and proud. “I’m fine. I—um—thank you for the ride. And—“ he said and returned his attention to Damian. “For your time, Damian.”

The idiot was still smiling and Damian couldn’t believe it, huffed loudly as he curled his lips into a pout. “Yeah…” he said since that was all he could say.

Dick shut the door softly and waved at them before he headed towards the apartment stairs. The car hadn't left yet as the both of them watched until he was inside the building, hoped that he was able to get to his room safely. When the car finally sped off and reentered traffic, Damian pulled out his phone.

Dick was different than anyone that Jason had ever dated. More tolerant and kind. Didn't yell at him or mock him because he was a kid even though Damian was clearly creating havoc for Dick and was utterly being a brat. Yet, he was respectful and did every unreasonable demand Damian had thrown at him. It was a test, a test of patience and personality. And Dick, well...he seemed to have passed. At least, somewhat close to passing. Not exactly a positive in his books yet.

Though Damian still felt awful for his treatment towards the man. If he had connected the dots earlier or actually took the time to acknowledge his suspicion, he would have been able to come to the conclusion that Dick was sick.

Sighing softly, he pulled up Jason’s name on his phone and sent him a text.

Go see your idiot boyfriend because he's dying.

Damian got an immediate response.

Stupid Todd 9:30 PM
*What?!?!??! How?!?! Wait... WHAT?!*

Damian didn’t reply and left it up to Jason to care for Dick himself.
Chapter 16

Jason noticed lately that Damian had been acting rather strange. Or more like out of character. He was being well-behaved and that definition and Damian do not go hand in hand. The boy was the complete opposite of behaved.

It started with the surprise text Jason had received from the boy. A text that told him he needed to visit Dick because he was 'dying.' Which honestly freaked him out because he wasn't sure if it was a joke or not. Made it worse that he never replied back with additional information. So Jason dropped whatever he was doing on the spot and rushed to Dick's place, found that his boyfriend wasn't 'dying,' but just really sick.

Jason found Dick resting in bed, looking rather pale and lethargic. He was breathing heavily and there was a sheen of sweat on his forehead. He did a quick sweep of the small apartment and found bottles of medicine on the kitchen counter. Assuming that Dick had taken his medicine, Jason didn't wake him up, let him rest as he watched over him for the night until he ended up passing out near his bedside.

When Dick woke up the next morning, he was surprised to find Jason there, already up and awake, reading a book right next to him as he softly threaded his fingers through his sweat soaked hair. He was feeling better though still quite nauseous, still felt chilled to the bone as slight tremors rippled through his body. He took the day off from work and stayed in bed, letting Jason nurse him and keep him company. They spent leisure time together, quiet and peaceful even though Dick slept most of the time. But during the times he was conscious, Jason would read a passage from his book aloud, soothing him back to sleep.

Jason learned about the reason behind Damian's mysterious text as Dick told him about his hectic day with the boy. He was beyond pissed to hear about what Damian had done, ripped into the boy as he complained loudly to his boyfriend. The surprising part was, Dick actually defended him. Said that Damian's attitude was poor at the start but improved by the end of the day. Still, that didn't excuse his actions.

When Jason arrived home, he lectured Damian. Gave him a stern talk and reprimanded him for his poor actions. He was expecting him to talk back but he didn't. Odd thing was, Damian listened and even apologized. Apologized. It's not something the boy did easily and it was weird, surprised the hell out of him. Jason was so confused by how obedient his brother was. Typically, he would have gotten defensive and tried justifying his actions but this time, he didn't.

Did Dick really make a huge impression on the boy? The man was charming, and Jason adored it, couldn't understand how others failed to see it. But maybe that charm worked on his baby brother. Not that Jason was bias because he wasn't. Okay, maybe just slightly but if anyone got to know him, they'd find out that he was in fact very charming.

Which could explain Damian's sudden interest in Dick. He had no tact and was plain obvious. Whenever Jason was about to leave the manor for the day, Damian would blatantly ask if he was going to see Dick. Then he'd ask about his well-being, like how he was doing or if he was still working himself to death. That he should probably lighten up so he doesn't fall ill again.

It was kind of endearing by how much he seemed to care for Dick in a roundabout way. He was warming up to his boyfriend slowly, at least from a distance, and it was a good thing that he was attempting to interact with someone new. Damian had a bad habit of not wanting to make friends, always skeptical of others.
Damian was so interested he even asked Jason about why Dick hadn't visited the manor.

"Why has Richard not visited yet?" Damian entered his older brother's room unannounced and interrupted him as he was changing. He didn't even bat an eye or apologize as he continued forth with his question. That wasn't anything new since his brothers did that on occasion.

Jason stared at the boy with an arched brow. "I think it's a little too early for him to visit." Jason didn't want to outwardly state that the reason he didn't bring him was because the family didn't seem too accepting of him. And because they were rude before so he wasn't willing to subject him to that type of behavior again.

"Why not?"

Jason sighed and finished slipping his shirt onto his body. "I think he'd be uncomfortable here."

"Tt." Annoyed, Damian stomped his foot. "Then I demand to be brought along next time you go out."

Well, Jason wasn't expecting to hear that from his mouth. He doesn't mind per say but, "As long as you behave."

Damian nodded. "Yes."

"No being rude," he warned. He was not going to be tolerant of poor behavior or him insulting Dick in public again. Jason wasn't going to allow anyone, not even his brother, to hurt Dick.

The boy agreed. "I promise." A promise? When did Damian ever make promises?

God, what kind of magic spell did Dick use on him?

Obviously not any real magic, but Jason had an idea as to what it was that piqued his interest.

Either way, because he agreed, Jason found himself bringing Damian on one of their dates.

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It didn't come as a surprise to Dick when Damian showed up on their date since Jason had asked him for permission first. Had to make sure that Dick was okay with him bringing along his brat of a brother.

What did surprise Jason was the fact that Dick seemed fine with the idea and also expressed his interest in Damian, said he wanted to get to know him since he seemed to adore Jason a lot. Jason wasn't opposed to the idea and thought it could be good for the both of them, a step towards friendship he supposed.

"You're going to be on your best behavior right?" Jason asked and narrowed his eyes at the boy sitting in the back of the car.

"Tt. Of course. A promise is a promise," Damian mumbled, acting offended from being questioned and fumbled with his seat belt.

Jason was skeptical but gave Damian the benefit of the doubt. The kid didn't often break his promises, the ones he rarely made, so he trusted his word. "Okay," he sighed and kept his eyes leveled on the boy.

Damian just rolled his eyes and glanced away, looking out the window. "He's here," he said and
pointed a finger towards Dick, found him in the distance as he was approaching their car. They were picking him up after work and then would head to dinner.

The car door clicked and Dick opened it as he slipped right into the passenger's seat. He gave Jason a soft smile, blue eyes dazzling with excitement before he turned his attention to Damian.

"Hey Damian. How are you?"

"...fine. And you?"

"Tired and hungry," Dick sighed heavily, looking a little weary. He leaned his head back and allowed the stiffness in his shoulders to relax. Jason was worried about Dick’s health especially lately. He seemed to be getting more tired by the day, but whenever he asked how he was doing, Dick would say he was fine. Which honestly wasn’t true, not with how many hours he’d been working.

Jason tried to probe Dick for additional info but he wouldn't budge. He was good at deflecting and would never be one to admit he was over working himself. At least he was being slightly more honest with his mood.

Exhaling loudly, Jason reached over and placed a hand over his. "How about you take a nap? I'll drive around a little."

"I'm fine." There it was again. "You can just go straight to where we were planning to go. I don't want to keep you waiting."

Jason was about to say something but Damian butted in and said it for him. "Tt. Lay down and sleep. No one is going to care." Well, he wouldn't have said it like that.

"Are you—?"

"Just listen to him Dick," Jason cut him off before he could argue and leveled his eyes sternly at his lover. Vivid blue eyes filled with distress stared back at him, intense and firm, not wanting to back down. They were locked into a staring contest, neither of them letting up until finally, Dick blinked away and huffed a frustrated breath. He murmured a soft okay and nodded his head seeing that Jason wasn't about to let it go. Besides he was the driver anyways, he could theoretically do what he wanted.

Jason pulled out of the parking lot, exited onto traffic and drove around the city, taking roads that had the least amount of stops for a smooth drive. When he glanced over at Dick to check up on him a few minutes later, he was out like a rock with his head sliding to the side and hands folded in his lap. Jason could see the dark undertones beneath his eyes and wished Dick would give his own body a break. He seriously needed one.

Part of him felt bad that he was making Dick go out instead of letting him rest when he had time. When he told Dick about it, the man said he didn't mind. Yet, seeing the state he was in, he probably shouldn't have listened to him. Knew that Dick was always pushing himself and he should had just forced him to sleep. Next time, he'll be more mindful about it.

"He is sleeping?" Damian piped in quietly.

"Yeah."

"Good. Keep driving," he mumbled and Jason caught sight of a little pout on his lips when he looked in the rear view mirror. It was a sign of worry and Jason felt the corner of his lips tug into a
small smile. The little brat was being considerate. A rare trait that he didn't often show but apparently for Dick, he did and it was clearly evident. He wasn't even trying to hide it.

Jason was curious and wanted to ask him about his sudden change in attitude, but felt like he should just observe instead.

They drove around for a while, letting Dick catch up on some sleep. The man was completely knocked out, didn't even react when Damian was yelling at Jason to stop letting people cut him off. Jason wasn't a passive driver, but for the sake of his boyfriend, he was driving safely and tolerated the boy being a back-seat driver.

Finally, after about an hour they arrived at their destination. Jason figured an hour of power napping would help Dick function for the rest of the night. Hopefully he didn't beat himself up too much for feeling like he made them wait an hour because he didn't. But even if Jason tried to argue against it, Dick would still blame himself.

Thankfully, Dick was too groggy to even realize how much time had passed. He could barely wake up.

"Hey babe," Jason said as he tried to shake him awake. Dick scrunched his face, groaned and rubbed his eyes like a child. Jason chuckled as he got out of his seat and rounded the car to open the door for his boyfriend. "Rise and shine."

Dick continued to grumble, murmuring words as Jason reached over and undid his seat belt. He felt like a mother at the moment.

"Come on, wake up," Jason said and kissed him on the cheek. Dick mumbled something incoherent and lifted an eye to take a peek at Jason. "What'd you say?"

"Shouldn't have napped." Jason grinned at his comment and helped him out of the car. He slipped an arm around his waist as he guided Dick to the door as the man was still trying to wake up. "I'm just more tired than ever," he complained, leaning against Jason's side.

"You'll wake up soon enough," he said and watched as Damian grabbed the door for them. What a gentleman he was being today.

Because Dick wanted to eat pasta, Jason had brought them to an Italian restaurant. It was within Dick's budget and also within the range that Dick would allow Jason to pay for since he planned on footing the bill today, treating his boyfriend and his brother.

They were quickly seated at a booth near the back with Jason and Dick sitting beside one another while Damian sat from across. His lover was still rubbing at his eyes, trying very hard to wake up and it was distracting Jason. He was being cute and Jason felt like kissing him, but he couldn't and it took every ounce of his being to hold himself back.

"Grayson, you're making it worse by rubbing it," Damian scolded.

Dick set his hands down and blinked a few times at the boy. "Oh? I suppose so..." He still looked really tired and his eyes were slightly red-rimmed.

"Tt. You need more sleep." For someone who wanted to get along with another, Damian was being so blunt with Dick though it wouldn't be any different than what Jason would say. Just that he'd use a different tone of voice, less sharp.

"I do..." Dick agreed and tapped a hand to his mouth as he yawned.
"Todd, you're not doing a very good job." Damian glared at him and shifted the blame.

"What?" Jason was taken aback by his sudden attack.

"Yes. It's your fault."

"Oh great, blame me."

"Yes," Damian said, nodding. "I do."

Jason sighed, pinched the bridge of his nose and looked Damian in the eye. There was a slight tilt to his lips and Jason could tell he was being playful, yet probably meant it. Cheeky brat.

"Alright, I'll take the blame. Now, let's pick something to eat so we can get our food because I'm starving."

As they were reading through the menu, their waitress came by to take orders for their drinks—water for Damian and Dick and a beer for Jason. When she came back with a tray full of drinks, she started setting a few of the glasses down on the table. As she was handing Damian his water, the glass slipped from between her fingers. Jason watched in awe as the whole incident unraveled before him, with how quickly Dick reached out and tipped the cup his way, causing the water to splash onto his side of the table.

Jason instinctively moved to the side, hugging the window as all the liquid soaked into Dick's shirt and pants.

"Oh my god!" The girl exclaimed in shock. "I'm so sorry!" She apologized frantically. "Let me just—let me get that cleaned up." She said and swiftly disappeared, probably went to get towels to soak up all the water.

Unfazed, Dick slipped out from his seat and stood. He attempted to squeeze out the water from his shirt while all eyes were on him. Jason could feel the awkward silence permeating the air and knew that Dick was probably feeling uncomfortable for being the center of attention.

The girl quickly returned, and apologized over and over again as she looked remorsefully at Dick. His lover just shook his head and dismissed her.

"It's fine. It was just an accident and it's only water."

"But—"

"No worries. I'll just go get cleaned up in the bathroom," he said and then headed off, quickly disappearing from all eyes.

The girl wasn't satisfied and turned her attention to Jason and Damian. "I'm really sorry about this."

"Its fine," Jason said as he looked past her and towards where the bathroom was. It wasn't a big deal and since he was in a hurry, he dismissed her so he could follow after Dick. He found his boyfriend hovering in front of the sink and could see the wet stain prominent on his shirt and pants. Dick was twisting his shirt, trying to squeeze out whatever water was left. It looked like he'd gotten most of it out but it was still damp, spreading throughout the bottom half of his shirt.

"Hey," Jason said as he walked up to his side.

Dick sighed in frustration, not looking happy about this situation. "It's just going to stay wet," he
said and gestured at his outfit. "If this bathroom had an air dryer that would have helped." Jason did a once through of the place and noticed it was only stocked with paper towels. Unfortunate for them.

Well, there was another option. Jason grabbed at the hem of his sweater, pulled it off and handed it to Dick. "You can wear this. I have a shirt underneath."

Dick blinked at Jason, surprised at the offer. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah. It's better than you wearing that," he said and pointed at his shirt.

A soft smile graced his lips and he gently took the sweater from Jason's hands. "Thanks. I'm uh— I'm going to change in the stalls...if you don't mind," he said meekly. There was a light sprinkle of pink dusting his cheeks and Jason knew he was embarrassed.

"Sure," Jason answered casually.

Dick nodded and hid behind one of the stalls. Jason knew, without being told, that he didn't like being seen shirtless seeing that the man had never once changed in front of him. He always went off to the bathroom to change or asked Jason to turn around.

Jason was curious, wanted to know why but didn't question him. He assumed that Dick most likely had scars on his body and wanted to keep them hidden. It was the most reasonable and if there was something else, well, he couldn't even guess what. Not that any of that mattered because if Dick didn't want to reveal his body to him then he didn't have to. Jason wasn't going to push for it and he understood the reasons behind his actions. A day will come when Dick is comfortable enough to show him and if it never came, then Jason was fine with it either way.

When Dick emerged from behind the door, Jason might have been a little breathless seeing his boyfriend in his sweater. It was slightly baggy, the sleeves running a little past his fingers and the hem dropping slightly below his hips. It was... cute.

"You look good," Jason blurted awkwardly and cleared the itch in his throat, almost made his voice crack. God damn, why couldn't he control himself in front of Dick?

"It's big," Dick murmured and frowned as he tugged at the sleeves. "I'm smaller than you."

"I am taller," Jason said.

"But you're wider and bigger." With the way he said it, it sounded like he was upset about the fact.

"...Is that an issue?" Jason asked carefully and fear swiftly filled his bright blue eyes. Did he come off as offending?

"No," Dick blurted, quick to shoot down his implication. "No. That's not it. I just—I meant—"

Dick was panicking and Jason swiftly moved towards him. He placed a hand on his waist and tugged him close, wrapped him in his arms to soothe his worries.

"I was teasing," he whispered and tried to calm down his lover. "You're fine Dick." He bumped their foreheads together and curled a hand behind his neck. "You're fine," he repeated once more in reassurance and dipped in to press their lips together in a chaste kiss. "Sorry. I didn't mean to freak you out."

Dick shook his head and sighed, voice shaking ever so slightly. "No—I just took it the wrong way."
Jason's face contorted in pain and he kissed him again, feeling awful for accidentally setting off one of his traumas. "There's nothing wrong with you, you know that right?"

"I know—I just," Dick exhaled and chewed on his bottom lip. "I don't hate it. I just don't like that I'm so thin."

Jason rubbed soft circles on his hip, could actually feel his bone and hoped that his touch was helping to drive away the anxiety. "Well, we can always work on that."

Dick puffed out an air and nodded his head reluctantly.

"Now, let's head back before Damian throws a tantrum." Jason shuddered at the thought of what sort of havoc Damian could release upon them.

When they returned to the table, everything was cleaned up and Damian looked to be well-behaved for the most part. But the moment they sat down, he started questioning them, or more like, bombarding Dick with questions.

"Why did you do that?" Damian asked, emerald eyes filled with curiosity narrowing down at Dick. Jason wasn't expecting that to be the first question he'd throw at the man. Figured he'd ask about how he was holding up instead.

Jason already knew the answer but he wasn't going to tell him and waited for Dick's response. Dick looked as if he wanted to avoid the question as he dragged his words a little bit, pausing every few seconds he tried to say something and chose his words carefully when he finally answered.

"I wanted to help so I tried to stop it."

"I understand your need to help, but you tipped the glass towards you. It was leaning towards me. Why?" Damian was quite observant, as expected of his little brother.

Sapphire eyes widened in surprise but he quickly schooled his expression back to one of passiveness. "I just guessed is all," he said and shrugged his shoulders, tried to play it off nonchalantly.

Damian didn't seem too convinced about that answer, still found it oddly suspicious, but he let it slide.

"Tt. You didn't have to do that. I could have handled it." This was basically his way of saying thanks indirectly.

"Its fine," Dick said and smiled. "Besides, Jason lent me his sweater." He tugged at the loose garment, trying to show to Damian that the accident wasn't a huge issue worth discussing.

Damian scowled. "That is not appealing on you," he stated unhappily. "I can also see them."

Dick blinked at the boy in confusion. "What?" Jason was also bewildered and turned his attention to Dick. That's when he saw them. Why didn't he see them earlier?

"This." Damian pointed to his own neck and Dick realized what he was implying as he shot his hand up to cover his neck. Well, at least part of his neck because Jason could clearly see the other hickeys placed all around his nape and collarbone.

Dick's face was flushed a bright red, the color spreading all the way to the tip of his ears. It was adorable how embarrassed he was but the man was also giving Jason dirty glares from the side.
"I see that my brother has already left his mark." Damian smirked, amused.

Dick groaned and buried his face in his hands. "I can't believe this," he grumbled.

To save Dick from further embarrassment, Jason decided to quickly change topics even though it was his fault. "Okay, we're moving on from that."

Damian just smiled haughtily, thoroughly enjoying this debacle. The damn brat.

------

After dinner, they decided to go on a walk at the nearby park. The sun was setting, painting the sky a warm yellow, still bright enough for an evening walk.

Dick was engaged in a conversation with Damian as the boy told him stories about his victories in beating Tim in their various video games battles. They were walking side by side with Jason trailing from behind. He so badly wanted to hold onto Dick's hand, felt the tip of his fingers itch with need, but he held back on account of Damian's presence. Didn't want the boy poking fun at them any more than he already did. The hickeys were enough as it was and he wasn't about to embarrass Dick any further.

Though he still wanted to do it and debated on whether he should or not. Just say fuck it and go with it or restrain himself like a proper adult. As he was lost in thought, contemplating with himself, he heard a yelp. Snapping out of his thoughts, he jerked his head upwards and caught sight of Dick flailing.

Immediately his eyes met with Dick's surprised ones as the man smiled nervously at him. Jason squinted at him, confused.

"What?" He asked, slightly worried that something might have happened.

Dick caught sight of his concern and shook his head. Instead, he lifted his right hand and pointed at it with his other. "Uh—" he stuttered and that's when Jason realized what was up. While he was busy fighting over his own decision of holding Dick's hand or not, Damian beat him to it, again. Appalled, he turned his attention towards his brother and leveled his eyes at him. "What are you doing?" He asked, suspicious.

Damian blinked him away, ignoring Jason and settled his gaze on Dick instead. "Come," he instructed and lifted an arm to point at something straight ahead. Two pairs of eyes followed his line of sight and their attention fell upon an ice cream stand.

"Ice cream?" Jason asked, dumbfounded.

"Yes. Now, let's go." Damian tugged at Dick with urgency as he tried to make him come along.

"Uh. Okay...?" Dick tossed Jason a worried glance, unsure of what he should do. Jason just shrugged his shoulders and went along with what Damian wanted. It's not like it would hurt anyways.

They bounced on over to the ice cream stand and stood in line. Damian was still strangely holding onto Dick's hand and he sort of wanted to just break them apart. Ugh, he couldn't believe he was getting jealous over his baby brother.

As they waited for their turn, Damian broke the silence between them. "I'm treating you," he
blurted and caught both Dick and Jason off guard.

"What?" Dick was blinking rapidly, confused.

"For last time. I'm treating you this time."

Realization must have dawned on Dick as his face lit up, a bright smile on his lips. "Aw," he cooed and squeezed his hand endearingly. "Damian, you don't have to."

"No. I am treating you," he stubbornly argued.

"You don't—"

"...Please." Damian pleaded and Jason was having a moment of panic. He kind of got the gist of what was going on but he never once thought that Damian would say please to someone he barely knew.

Dick cocked his head to the side and gazed at the boy. Damian was serious, expression full of sincere and yet there was a hint of worry lurking beneath those emerald eyes of his, almost afraid that he would be rejected.

Dick sighed fondly at him and pulled his lips into a gentle smile. "Okay," Dick answered and immediately, the stiffness in the boys' body washed away, his shoulders slumping to a norm.

"Tell me what flavor you want."

Dick hummed in thought to himself as he debated on the flavor. "Cookies n' cream." Damian nodded his head and when it was his turn, he ordered for himself and Dick.

Jason piped up from behind. "Where's mine?"

"You can get your own."

"Oh. I see how it is." Jason teased. He wasn't actually upset that his brother didn't get him one since he could very much get himself one. Besides, it was probably better he didn't get his own because Dick was offering him some of his as he held out the cone for him to take a bite.

"You can have some of mine," he motioned for Jason to take a bite and he gladly did as he leaned down and licked at his ice cream.

"Disgusting." Damian scrunched his nose in horror and stuck out his tongue like he was gagging. Jason just burst out in laughter, amused at how childish his brother could be.

"That's what you get for not getting me one," he said and then kissed the corner of Dick's lips, licking up the tiny speck of ice cream.

"Ew." Damian looked grossed out and kicked at his brother's shin. "Stop it."

"Hey!" Jason attempted to rough up his hair but the boy was smart and hid behind Dick.

"Just because you're using Dick as cover doesn't stop me," Jason said and made grabby hands at the boy.

Damian stuck out his tongue tauntingly. "Too bad."

Jason leapt towards the boy and caught him in a headlock as he rubbed at his hair, almost causing
Damian to drop his ice cream. Dick just watched in amusement, thoroughly enjoying the altercation.

------

After their little play date, Jason dropped Dick off at his place before he headed back home to the manor.

"So, how was it?" Jason asked, glanced back at his brother from the rear-view mirror and found a smirk on his lips.

"Not bad. He's...not bad."
Chapter 17

Jason sighed contently as he pressed into Dick. He had the man seated in between his legs with his arms wrapped firmly around his lover and listened to his soothing voice as he read aloud. It was light like a feather, soft and sounded like music to his ears and he just wanted to stay cuddled up in bed with him.

The ambiance was peaceful and Jason hummed softly as he ran his fingers through Dick's hair, gently gliding through. He felt Dick relax, almost melting into a puddle of goo in his arms. He chuckled quietly and continued to brush his hair, pulling back on the long strands and braiding it—well, as best as he could braid. The length was long enough Dick could sport a man-bun if he wanted. He often did tie it back into a tiny ponytail whenever it got in the way. Jason didn't mind it per se but he wasn't the biggest fan of the style.

He wanted Dick to get a haircut, but at the same time he was conflicted because his hair helped to hide his pretty face from the public. Jason knew he was being petty but he didn't want Dick gaining attention. Even if his lover wasn't well dressed, just his face was enough to attract attention since he was actually fairly good looking. Though in Jason's books, he was gorgeous, an 11/10. No one else could top that.

Jason twirled a finger around a strand, deep in thought. He figured that maybe he should convince Dick to get a haircut. He definitely needed one. The idea had occurred to him a few times but he often chose to ignore it. Thought it was fine the way it was. He'd forgotten about it for some time until Damian mentioned it again and Jason wondered how Dick would look with a suiting hairstyle.

It didn't help that Damian was constantly bothering him about it. Complained about how messy Dick's hair was, always tangled and in his face. That it was unappealing and didn't suit him and he needed it cut. Told Jason if he didn't do it, Damian would be the one to. Which honestly irked him so he supposed he should take the first step.

"Dick," he called, still threading his fingers through his boyfriend's hair.

Dick paused and answered Jason. "Yeah?"

"I was thinking." He had to ease into the conversation just in case he riled Dick. "How about we go and get you a haircut?"

Dick laughed, closed his book shut and tilted his head back to look at his boyfriend. There was a gleam in his eyes, a little curious yet anxious. "Are you going to be cutting it?"

"Hell no. I'd fuck it up," Jason said and tugged back his bangs to get a closer look at his bright blue eyes. Even though he did offer to trim his hair, Jason actually had no confidence in his skills. "We're going to go to a salon."

Dick frowned at that. "You know I can't really afford that."

"No worries. I'll treat you. I have a friend."

Dick made a face and flared his nose. "I don't know. I think my hair is fine. Hides my face." He shrugged.

"But you have a pretty face." Jason squeezed his cheeks together and kissed his forehead. "Real
pretty."

Snorting, Dick laughed it off. "Don't think so." The man's self-esteem was so low he didn't even realize that he did have a nice face. That he was handsome but thought otherwise and considered himself ugly. Dick didn't think he was worthy of anything or anyone; had no redeeming qualities when in fact, he did.

Dick nibbled his bottom lip, deep in thought as he contemplated the idea for a brief moment before answering.

"Okay," he breathed, finally having decided. "I guess I could use a cut. It is getting in the way."

Jason beamed with excitement. "I'll take you there today. Just going to give my friend a heads-up."

As Jason was sending a quick text from his phone, he could hear Dick sighing, twisting around in his seat and searched for his hand. He twined their fingers together and squeezed them tight. They felt clammy and right then, he knew that Dick was nervous, his anxiety resurfacing. Gingerly, he kissed the top of his head and smoothed a thumb down his cheek. "It'll be fine," he murmured.

Almost seconds later after he sent the text off, he got an immediate reply. "Looks like she's free now," Jason said, smile pulling at his lips. He glanced at the man and found a weary expression on his face. "Don't worry. You'll be in good hands," he whispered and kissed Dick on the lips in reassurance.

------

A slight tremor rippled through Dick's body as the man blinked nervously and clung on tightly to Jason's shirt as he led him inside the salon. The place was exuberant, bright in colors and lively with an assortment of staff and customers. Not exactly a place Dick was used to.

"It'll be fine," Jason murmured confidently and patted his hand before he wove their fingers together.

Dick drew in a shaky breath. "Sorry. It's just different."

"That's alright. Just try to relax, okay?" Easier said than done.

Jason scanned the area and spotted a dark haired woman bouncing towards them. Her face lit up, glowing with excitement and she waved a hand at them.

"Jason!" She exclaimed as she threw herself at the man, pulling him into a tight hug.

Jason chuckled in amusement and returned the hug, one armed. "Hey Donna," he greeted as he pulled back to meet her eyes. Jason had met Donna Troy through a mutual friend of theirs and they immediately hit it off and became good friends ever since.

There was a wide smirk on her face and Jason just sighed, knew that she'd been wanting to meet Dick. Her attention immediately shifted onto her target and she gazed at him intensely. Jason felt Dick shuffle slightly as he moved to stand behind him, uncomfortable from the sudden attention.

Jason watched the exchange closely, could see a look of surprise filter through her face and then suddenly switch as her eyes fell, squinting in calculation.

"You must be Jason's..." Donna glanced at Jason, checking to see if it was okay for her to continue on. Jason gave a curt nod in confirmation. "Boyfriend."
Dick's cheeks flushed a bright pink and he answered with a meek yes.

"Nice to meet you finally." She stretched out a hand for Dick to shake and the man stared briefly before he nervously shook it. "Jason told me you needed a haircut. And well, you are in desperate need of one."

Dick shrugged his shoulders, unsure of what to say. "I guess so."

She chuckled lightly, laughter filled with glee and turned her attention back to Jason, meeting his gaze. "I like him."

Jason arched a curious brow at her, lips pulling into an amused smirk. "Need I remind you he's mine?"

"Don't worry. I know." She winked teasingly at Jason and then swiftly stole Dick away from him, grabbed his hand and tugged him forward. "Let's get you started." Donna whisked Dick away and led him into the back of the shop to get him situated in one of the chairs. Jason was about to follow them, but stopped himself when he realized that his presence might make Dick even more nervous so he settled for waiting in the lobby. Besides, he trusted Donna to handle everything.

Jason observed from afar, watched as Donna lowered the chair back and settled Dick's head gently at the edge of the sink to wash his hair. The man was on edge, body stiff and he was constantly squeezing the arms of the chair with his hands. The tip of his toes were pointed upwards in a straight angle and Jason could clearly see the strained expression on his face, brows furrowed and lips pulled into a line. Dick was completely out of his comfort zone and while he felt bad, he didn't exactly regret his choice. Jason knew the outcome would be worth it and hopefully, Dick would like it.

Once Dick's hair was washed and dried, Donna started her magic. She brushed and snipped, working at the speed of light with her tools. She was fast but precise and slowly, a pile of raven hair formed at the base of the chair.

The transformation was breathtaking as Dick's hair got progressively shorter. So short that he could see the back of his neck and the tip of his ears, something he often had to search for because of all the hair. Due to how the station was set up, Jason could only see his back and badly wanted to see his face. However, they were almost done and within a few minutes, Donna turned to meet Jason and gestured at him to come over.

"You ready?" She was grinning, eyes glowing with excitement and while Jason should have felt the same, he was nervous for some odd reason.

Jason drew in a heavy breath and nodded his head slowly. "Yeah."

Donna gripped the back of the chair and spun it around until Dick was met face to face with Jason and just wow—fucking wow. Jason was speechless, gasped loudly at how beautiful Dick looked. He couldn't help but stare, eyes wide and bulging, about to pop out of its sockets. He couldn't believe the wonders that Donna had done. Dick was almost like a completely different person—almost. His hair was significantly shorter and no longer hid his face, but it was appealing and highlighted his gorgeous features. His bangs were trimmed, slightly parted at the side for a fringe as the tip curved just at the edge of his eyebrows. The sides were trimmed around his ears and beautifully framed his face and geez—Jason couldn't believe he could see his ears right now in plain sight.

Jason brushed his fingers through his freshly cut hair, felt how soft and bouncy it was and was just
so amazed at the shortness. He was so used to his long hair that this was foreign to him. He continued his ministrations and trailed down to curl a hand behind his neck, fingers burrowing into the edges to tickle his skin.

"God, you look amazing."

It was wonders what a haircut could do for someone. Though Dick was still dressed in tattered old clothes, he looked damn fine and just—Jason wished he'd brought Dick here sooner. He loved looking at his face and it—fuck, suited him outrageously well.

Dick smiled sheepishly and puffed a breath as a rosy pink dusted his cheeks. "Really?"

Not to mention that pretty smile of his. Combine that with his new hair, Jason was blown away. "Yeah," he exhaled loudly, breathless. The haircut was definitely worth it.

Donna chuckled to the side and rolled her eyes at Jason, knew that he was completely star struck. "Dick has a nice face so I figured a semi-short cut would suit him," she explained as she took off the cape from Dick and began shaking the excess hair onto the floor.

"Fuck Donna, you work miracles." Even though he was thanking her, he couldn't take his eyes off Dick and kept them steady on his boyfriend.

But Donna didn't seem bothered by it. She was just amused as she cleaned up the mess and couldn't stop grinning at the two lovebirds. Jason was in a trance and watched as Dick grew flustered, flailing his arms about as he was unsure of what to do with all the attention Jason was giving him. Unable to handle it any further, he turned away to face the mirror and stared at his own reflection. He tilted his head in curiosity as he examined his new look.

While Dick was occupied with himself, pulling and twisting his hair, Donna leaned in towards Jason and whispered in his ear.

"Dick is really sweet so you better treat him well or I'm coming after you," she warned with a slight seriousness to her tone.

Jason smiled, nodding his head. He knew she would stand by her word, but he planned to treat Dick well either way. "I will, don't you worry about that." After everything they'd been through? Fuck yeah he was going to be good to him.

They lingered around for a bit longer, just enough to thank Donna before they bid farewell and left.

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As Jason had guessed, Dick was getting a bit more attention than usual. He expected it, but he didn't think he'd get that annoyed by it. They were out having lunch and people were constantly looking their way, some staring or trying to steal a peek at Dick. The man himself noticed none of it, too occupied with his food and rambled to Jason about how weird his hair still felt.

Jason tried to shake away his irritation. "You'll get used to it."

Pale lips pulled into a tight line. "I don't know. Feels so breezy and naked."

"I like it though," Jason said and carded a hand through the side of his hair. "I like seeing your face."

Dick sighed but there was a color to his cheeks. "That's the weird part. I'm not used to seeing my
face, so I'm not sure how I'll like it."

"It’s fine. You look great, so don't worry too much."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Perfect." Jason swiped a thumb gently across his cheek and pulled his hand back. "Now eat." Flustered, Dick picked his fork back up and took a bite of his meal.

------

His new haircut had done wonders to him and Dick was slightly surprised. Overall, he’d been receiving positive treatment and dealt less with rude customers. Those he worked with were surprised and started striking up conversations with him. Conversations that didn't end too well since Dick didn't respond much. At least for the first week they tried but it quickly fell back into rhythm and they started treating him the same.

Except for the blonde girl, Stephanie who was always quite friendly with him. She was a rather perky girl.

Customers on the other end were nice to him. Not any different than usual but well, nicer than when he'd had his long hair. He noticed that he was receiving a few looks as well. Not the one he was used to getting. It was different, almost like people were in awe.

When he told Jason, his boyfriend had explained that it was because of his face. That he had a pretty face and it really matched his new hair. Dick understood that but he still felt uncomfortable. Didn't like all the attention he was getting. For the most part, he was at least being treated normally, so it wasn't a big issue for him. It was fairly nice.

There was one issue however. One that he briefly mentioned to Jason in passing and didn't want to expand on or make a big deal even though it was bothering him. It was at his second job and the problem had been stressing him out for some time. He was never directly involved in it though. Well, until now that he got a new haircut. Dick desperately wanted to stay out of it but for some reason or another, he’d gotten pulled into the mess.

The owner's son had started working at the restaurant, had been for a few months now and he was causing a problem with the staff members. A big problem that people were letting him get away with just because of his status.

The man, Mike, had been harassing the staff, both men and women. Anyone he found that was attractive to him so of course Dick was out of his range until recently.

Beforehand, Mike had been coming onto anyone that was by his definition, beautiful in his eyes. He hit on anything and everyone. Kept touching them inappropriately, like a slap to the butt or a hand to the waist. Making side comments about their bodies and attire. It was uncomfortable for Dick to watch and it made him want to gag. He also felt bad for the staff as well as they couldn't do anything about it.

Dick tried reporting Mike to the owners, but got reprimanded. He was even threatened to get fired. A few who had reported and attempted to cause a ruckus lost their jobs. Some quit, but they would just hire more on and the cycle kept repeating itself.

Dick knew he should have left the place the moment this started occurring, but he couldn't afford to. He had a tough time finding another job and he needed the money to make ends meet. So he toughed it out and tried to stay out of trouble.
Unluckily for him, he ended up on his radar. Ever since he got his new hair, Mike had attempted to chat him up. It started with small chats here and there. Then suddenly, it progressed and he just gave up all attempts and burst Dick's bubble, getting in his space.

There were times Dick would be washing dishes in the back and Mike would slide up to his side, run a hand along his butt and grope him. Dick would shy away, shake him off but he wouldn't let up. Kept himself firmly planted and inappropriately touched Dick, overstepping his boundaries.

Bad memories resurfaced within Dick and he wanted it to stop. He had tolerated it for some time and thankfully, his shifts at the diner weren't always scheduled during times Mike would be there so he had a bit of room to breathe. Still, it was a problem.

Dick hadn't been sleeping well as of late because of it. Often had recurring nightmares from his past, eating away at his mind. He didn't tell Jason since he was afraid to. Not for the fear of being judged but he didn't want any trouble. Jason would do something about it and he was sure it would be quite brutal. That's the type of man Jason was, taking action rather than sitting around waiting.

Stress slowly accumulated, piling on top of Dick to the point he could barely hold it in any longer. He wasn't okay with it when Mike did it to others and now that it was being done to him, he just couldn't let it keep going. It was disgusting and he was losing his patience.

He struggled a bit with his decision but when he remembered the promise he made to himself, the one where he wouldn't stand for this type of behavior, he let it all out. Dick was tired of being miserable and frustrated. He was tired of being treated as an object and he didn't want to experience such degradation any longer.

Dick was supposed to be better now. He was. He should be able to stand up for himself, tell him no but yet he let it continue. He let it continue, tolerating it until the day he couldn't anymore. Until the day that he was reminded of his abused past and that he just couldn't do it anymore.

So he snapped.

------

It was another night of work and Dick was in the back putting away stock that had been delivered. Despite the restaurant being busy, Mike was slacking and decided to bother Dick, lingering around him as he watched the man work.

"Hey Dick."

Irritation welled within him and a little voice told him to ignore the man, but he couldn't. So Dick sucked in a breath and mumbled a ‘hi.’ He wanted to ignore him but didn't. He knew better.

Mike shrugged off the unexcited greeting and shuffled towards Dick. "So..." he drawled, creeping up behind Dick and slyly placed both hands on his waist. Dick yelped, jumped away but the man kept his hands grounded on his hip, squeezing him tight to hold him in place.

"Can you please let go?" Dick could feel his heart beating rapidly, about to leap out of his chest. He could feel his anxiety rising, his throat clogging up as his breathing grew weak.

"Nah. Think I like it here," he said and curled his fingers deeper into his skin. "You're so thin. Bet you'd be good when I bend you over."

A cold shiver slithered its way down Dick's spine and he tried to tear away from his grasp but Mike wouldn't let go. He pressed Dick up against the counter and spread his large hand flat against
his back as he pushed him down, bending him over so he could gain more access to his ass. He moved in and held his pelvis flush against Dick’s behind.

"What do you say?" He rolled his hips and Dick could feel it. His whole body froze and sweat formed on his hands. It was hard and thick and he knew the feeling all too well. It was clear to him that the man was hard.

"Let me just do you once. I'll even pay. You need money don’t you?"

Dick was having a meltdown, terrible memories flashing before his mind. Memories of those days where he couldn't do anything besides let it happen. But no, not today. He just—he couldn't subject himself to this again.

"N-No," Dick said, his voice shaky and tense but it was a denial nonetheless.

Mike paused in his hip thrusting and spoke aloud. "Excuse me?"

"...No," he said more firmly and forcefully pushed him away, maneuvering out of Mike's hold. Dick turned around and settled his angered blue eyes on the man, stared him straight in the face and could see how shocked he was to be rejected. "I said no."

Mike appeared unsatisfied, angered if anything. "Are you sure?" Mike questioned and narrowed his eyes as he crossed his arms disdainfully. "I'll get you fired if you don't do as I say."

Dick fluttered his eyes shut for a brief moment and drew in a rickety breath. For a moment there, he almost considered it, but he made a promise to himself. A promise he intended to keep. "No."

Mike was definitely mad and threw his hands up at Dick. "Alright. Fine. You could have had it easy, but I guess you'll just be jobless now," he sneered before he strolled out the room in a sulk.

All it took was one word from Mike and Dick was immediately fired. He was told he had been fired because he tried to seduce Mike which obviously wasn't true. If he was going to get fired, fine, but he wasn't going to be falsely accused. He tried to argue, but no one listened to him. He'd been working here for so long and yet, the owners didn't believe him. Told him his behavior was unacceptable and kicked him out.

Dick was devastated when reality finally hit him as he walked out the diner in shame after being yelled at in front of the entire staff. And maybe, just maybe, he should have done it. Let Mike do whatever he wanted because he needed the job. Because he needed to live. How else could he survive?

God damn, Dick had royally fucked up and now he was regretting his actions.

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Dick was pacing back and forth, restless as a million things ran through his mind.

Jason was currently at his apartment to spend some leisure time with him but instead was stuck watching Dick acting agitated. "Hey, what's wrong?" He asked, brows pinched with worry.

Dick sighed. "Nothing. I don't want to talk about it," he said and collapsed in his chair. Jason had purchased a nice little mini table set with two chairs for them to eat at since Jason deemed it unsanitary for him to eat on his bed and the ground.

"Babe, you look distressed." Jason reached out to squeeze his shoulder and Dick tensed reflexively.
"Sorry," he apologized and took in a shaky breath, trying to relax.

"No it's fine." Jason looked concerned and brushed a hand near the crook of his shoulder and neck. "Are you sure you're fine?"

"I'm—" Dick exhaled. "I..." He started, biting his lip in anxiety. He didn't know why he was hesitating to tell Jason. He knew the man wouldn't be angry if he told him, so he should just do it. Dick drew in all of his courage and blurted, "I was fired yesterday."

He watched as long and thick fingers curled into a tight fist, eyes wide and livid. "What? Why? The one at the diner or burger joint?"

"Diner," he breathed, contemplating whether he should tell him the reason or not. Or should he just give him the bare minimum? He could even make up a story. But none of it seemed fair to Jason so he let it all out.

"Remember how I mentioned the son briefly? Well...he's been harassing me."

There was a brief pause before his boyfriend spoke. "...In what way?" Jason quirked a brow and his eyes darkened dangerously.

Dick chewed his lip and didn't reply, glanced away to avoid his gaze, but Jason seemed to have guessed what it was.

"He touched you?" He prompted, voice low and bitter. Dick huffed a rugged breath and slowly nodded his head, still refusing to meet his eyes. "What did he do?" Jason hissed sharply and Dick twitched from the anger filled in his tone. It was slightly frightening seeing him this mad.

"He...came up from behind. Bent me over and well, rubbed against me." Jason slammed his fists on the table and Dick jumped in surprise.

"He did what?" There was venom in his tone and when Dick finally looked at Jason, his eyes were burning with rage. Teeth grinding and jaw tight, pulsing.

Dick hesitated to continue, but was more afraid Jason would snap if he didn't. "He tried to get me to—to sleep with him. For money. To keep my job." He could feel his hand shaking, the energy draining from within him as his body grew numb. "I said no," Dick whispered.

"So he got you fired?"

"Yes."

"Fuck! Dick!" Jason shouted and scrubbed a hand frustratingly through his hair. "Why didn't you tell me? How long had this been going on?"

Now this was the part he didn't want to answer but knew that he should. "Ever since I got my hair cut. About two weeks."

Jason growled, his mood dimming to one fueled with anger. "Dick!" He slammed his hand on the table again and stared him square in the eyes. Beneath all that rage, Dick could see the concern lurking beneath his fiery expression. "Why? Why didn't you tell me? I could have helped you."

"I didn't think it was a big deal." But it really was. He just didn't want to trouble Jason.

"God," he breathed loudly, nostrils flaring and pinched the bridge of his nose. He was exasperated,
his exhales coming in large bursts. "Are you serious? How is that not a big deal? You've been—you know!" Jason was being considerate in not outwardly stating the cause. "How could you have just let it happen?"

*Let it happen?* Dick didn't *want* it to happen. He didn't just *let* it happen because he wanted to, he had no other choice. His job was on the line.

"I didn't."

"*You did.* You let him touch you."

"I didn't *want* it." His voice grew louder, firmer, a ting of irritation bubbling.

"You should have rejected him. Should have *told* me."

Now Dick was livid. For being accused of doing *nothing* when all he wanted was to do *something* but he was restricted by his job. By him having to make a living for himself. "I couldn't reject him! Or I'd be fired."

"Well you're fired now."

God damn it all. Jason, Jason of *all* people should have listened to him. Shouldn't be arguing against him, blaming him for something that wasn't his fault.

He could feel tears pricking the corner of his eyes, threatening to fall out. He felt sad, angry and embarrassed all at once. "It's your fault," he murmured, shifting the blame to Jason. "If it wasn't for this haircut, he would have left me alone."

Jason gawked at him, dumbfounded that Dick had said that. "Are you serious? How does a haircut make a difference? He was doing it to others right? Why didn't you do anything about that?"

And now Jason decided to turn it on him and Dick was about done with this. He didn't want to talk about it anymore and his emotions were slowly overtaking his reasoning. "I don't know!" He shouted, finally had enough and Jason was surprised, taking a few steps back at the outburst.

"I don't know Jason! I—I wanted to help them but who was I going to tell when all they would do was fire them? *Look at me,* I've already lost my job. I didn't *want* any of it. Told him *no,* yet he wouldn't listen. And *now,* I have to find another job. Do you know how hard that is? For someone like *me?* Who has *nothing?* Who just—scrapes by on what I can make?" He was venting, he knew it. It was the first time in forever since he'd been this angry. So angry at everything that he let it all out. Irritation, stress, issues he couldn't contain anymore. Admitted that his life sucked. That it would *always* suck. That he couldn't do anything about it and that all he'd ever do was struggle in life.

It fucking *sucked.*

He was breathing heavy, chest rising and falling dramatically, winded and avoided Jason's gaze to stare at the table as if it was the most interesting thing ever.

Then he heard footsteps, footsteps moving away from him, the sounds getting further and further. Then the door opened briefly and fell shut with a loud bang. When he looked up again, there was no one in sight.

Jason was gone. *Gone. Left him.* Dick had royally pissed him off.
He'd done it now. It was all his fault. Of course it was. He'd yelled at Jason and then blamed him for something that wasn't even his doing. He was just concerned, but Dick wouldn't listen, was too wrapped up in his own issues to comprehend and see the worry clear in his eyes.

The tears that he'd been holding in freely fell as they dripped from the corner of his eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

Once a fuck up always a fuck up. Dick could never do anything right.
Chapter 18

Happy (early) New Year's! :)

Jason had to leave to cool down his emotions or else he might end up doing something he'd regret. Dick rarely ever got angry and on the small chances he did, like this, it had to do with something that built up over time, something he couldn't hold in any longer and just explode. It'd been a while since he'd seen him so angry, so expressive. Letting out all of his emotions, how he felt about himself.

It was a shocker to Jason. For once, he'd realized how low Dick's self-esteem was. He knew it wasn't very prominent, often hidden beneath his trauma and based on everything he'd said about himself, it just—it woke Jason the fuck up. That his boyfriend could think so lowly of himself. That he was trash when he wasn't. Jason knew he wasn't. That's not how he saw Dick.

To him, Dick was kind. Hard working and always did what he could do. He was considerate and loving and fucking hell—he was not the person he thought he was. He had been through some shit, but in the end, he turned out so much better than others he'd known.

Jason huffed a breath and frustratingly ran a hand through his hair. He was pissed at himself, disappointed and ashamed that he'd blamed Dick. That he'd let his anger get the best of him, so much so that he couldn't listen to anything Dick was saying. Even though some of them were fairly valid reasons. But the employee, that man was in the wrong and it wasn't something that Dick should have let slide away just because he was the owner's son. Dick's actions, what he'd done when he rejected his advances were justifiable. And that type of behavior should have been reported.

Obviously, legal action could be taken because Dick was fired without reason. Though the owners could spin it any way they would like. He knew that it might be a hard battle to fight if they tried, but he knew that Dick won't do anything about it. So fine, maybe Jason will do something about it.

For now, he needed to apologize to Dick and maybe beg for his forgiveness. Jason hadn't made it far from the apartment, actually had gone to sit in his car to let all of his irritation out. Once he felt better, he went back to Dick's apartment and found his boyfriend standing in the kitchen running a hand through the water.

Jason drew in a shaky breath, slightly nervous. "Dick—" he called and took a step forward. "I want to apologize. I'm really sor—" But then he paused when his eyes caught sight of blood, blood dripping down his finger.

Dread filled him. "What happened?" He asked, face pinched with concern.

Dick sniffled and sucked in a breath. "I cut myself," he simply stated and Jason flew into immediate alert.

"You cut yourself?!" He exclaimed and watched as the man jerked slightly from the sudden
"Not like that," Dick corrected himself and finally turned to look at Jason. Dick's eyes were slightly red-rimmed and he knew he'd been crying. "I was upset and I just—" he murmured and then pointed a finger towards the mess he'd made. Jason's eyes followed his line of sight and spotted a cutting board with a poorly cut orange resting on top. "I needed to do something to take my mind off of our—" he paused mid-sentence and didn't finish what he was saying. "And my hands were shaking and the knife slipped."

The tension within his shoulders slipped away and Jason sighed in relief knowing that Dick was okay. That he wasn't hurting himself. "Is it deep?" he asked as he settled himself right beside the man, peering into the sink to try and catch a glimpse of the cut.

"It's small," Dick replied and turned the faucet off. He grabbed a towel to dry his hand and lifted it towards Jason to show the slight cut he'd received. It was at the edge of his pointer and it didn't look bad but there was still some blood oozing out. Jason gently snatched the towel from Dick and wrapped it around his finger.

"Hold," he instructed and then went off to search through the cupboard for a box of Band-Aid he remembered purchasing. He found it and started tending to Dick's wound, neatly bandaging his cut to allow it to heal. Afterwards, he steered his lover towards the bed and gingerly sat him down.

There was a slight tremor rippling through Dick's body as he shook. His eyes were blown wide, anxiety filled within them and he seemed a little frustrated. "Sorry," he murmured and turned to look at Jason as he sat down right next to him. "For yelling."

Jason sighed and shook his head. He stretched a hand and placed it over Dick's knee, giving him a gentle squeeze. "It's not your fault. It's mine and I'm sorry. I didn't mean to blame you, I was just mad."

Dick huffed a breath and pulled his lips into a thin line. "I know," he whispered softly. "It just hurt to hear."

"I realized that after thinking about it. I needed to cool myself off and I'm sorry I left. I'm sure I freaked you out."

Dick nodded in agreement to that. "It's fine. I was just," he made some funny hand gestures, trying to articulate his feelings but Jason didn't get it so he answered. "Upset."

"Ah." Jason should have expected that. "I didn't mean to hurt you, you know that right?" He asked and brought a hand to cup his cheek, swiping a thumb gently across the dark bags under his eyes. "I was mad at the situation and pissed at that fucker."

"I know Jason," Dick said and placed a hand over his. "I know why you're mad. And I feel bad for blaming you."

Jason chuckled softly and rolled his eyes in amusement. Typical Dick would never fault Jason and instead put the blame on himself. "You're such an idiot. It's not your fault either, okay? And next time, tell me if something like this happens. No matter what, I want to know."

"But—"

"No buts Dick. Tell me."

Dick spent a moment to ponder about his words, contemplating his plea before he nodded his head.
in agreement. "Okay."

"Good," Jason said, glad to hear him agree to something. "Do you want me to do anything about him?" He asked, thinking that maybe he should get Dick's permission first before doing something.

Dick scrunched his face. "I don't think you should." And Jason saw that coming. "But—" he added and immediately piqued Jason's interest.

"But?"

"If you want, you can."

Jason arched a brow at him curiously, surprised that he agreed so easily. "Are you giving me free reign?"

Dick just sighed and nodded his head before he swiftly changed topics. He obviously didn't seem to want to talk about the asshole anymore. "I need to find a new job." And he supposed that this was probably more important to Dick than anything.

Jason deliberated, trying to think of something that he could do to help Dick. He hummed aloud when suddenly, an idea lit up in his mind. He blinked his eyes in interest as his lips curled into a grin. "I think I can help with that."

Dick stared at him, vivid blue eyes filled with surprise. "You can?"

"Yep," Jason said and dipped in to kiss him. "I can."

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"Are you sure?" Dick leaned in and whispered into Jason's ear.

Jason just laughed and said, "Sure."

"But I—"

"Its fine Dick," he said and cut off his boyfriend. "Seriously, it's fine. I talked to Donna about it and she's cool with it." Jason squeezed his hand in reassurance, could feel they were slightly clammy and knew Dick was a bit nervous. He wanted to drive away that anxiety and make him feel calm. Though it didn't help one bit when Donna had bounced over and attempted to smother him in a hug.

"Dick!" Donna greeted and Jason immediately stood in between her and his boyfriend, keeping her at arm's length.

"Sup Donna," Jason greeted with a smile and she just rolled his eyes at him.

Jason had been able to strike a deal with Donna in getting Dick a job at the hair salon as a receptionist. It didn't take much effort honestly, just a simple call and discussion and she was immediately on board.

"Hey Jason," she said briefly before she turned her attention to Dick. "I'm so happy to have you working for us."

"I—um," Dick said and brought himself out from behind Jason. "I'm thankful for your help. But am I really fit for the job?"
Jason and Donna both stared at him like he was crazy. They didn't really understand what Dick was trying to get at.

"Yeah of course. It'll be fine. I have full faith in you and I think a receptionist job will be good. It won't be full time however," Donna said and even then, Dick looked slightly squirmy.

"What's wrong?" Jason asked as he brought a hand to the small of his back and gently rubbed soothing circles.

Dick bit his lower lip in contemplation. "I—" he started and puffed a heavy breath. "I think I'll look out of place."

Part of Jason understood that and knew what Dick was getting at. It was a salon and a highly fashionable one and yet, Dick was the complete opposite of what their shop stood for. He also didn't dress well either, not that he could afford to be. Jason was about to say something but Donna beat him to the punch.

"Don't worry about that. You can just be yourself," she said with a bright smile. "We have loyal customers and if they're going to judge you then they don't deserve our business."

Dick didn't seem so confident about that. "Are you sure? I don't want to cause any issues."

"I'm positive," she said with full conviction.

"Okay. Then I can—I can do this."

"Great! Let's talk schedule yes? Since you have another job we'll have to coordinate with."

"Yeah."

Jason and Dick followed Donna into her office and they sat down and started working out Dick's schedule. He was only going to work part time a few days a week since their shop opened at 9 in the morning and closed at 7 in the evening. Which actually left a bit of time for him to relax on some days since Dick often worked long shifts as well as night shifts.

This would hopefully be good for him, but Jason wasn't too worried and had full confidence in his abilities.

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It'd been about two weeks since Dick started working at the salon. His co-worker, the other receptionist he often ran into was named Cassandra but went by Cassie. She was nice and energetic, much like Stephanie. It was kind of nice talking to her since she seemed so free and didn't judge Dick at all, just spoke to him normally about her days and her life. It was enjoyable.

It was hard getting used to the salon at first since he was at the front and center. He had to learn how to work the computer and their system and checking in their clients and book appointments. It wasn't hard but it was new to Dick. He also took calls and greeted customers as well. Basically, he was the man at the front. It was similar to his waiter job, just slightly different. The one perk though was that he got to sit down, at least giving him some time to relax his muscles a bit.

Within the two weeks, Dick's experience had been both positive and negative. Positive on the note that people were generally nice to him. Negative that he'd messed up a few times and there were still a few people who would give him that all knowing look he knew so well, the one where they were silently judging him. He was used to it though so it didn't bother him that much.
What mattered was his boss and Donna was mostly nice and fair to him. Often complemented him when he'd done a good job and if he did make any errors, she would kindly tell him what he could do better next time. Her feedback was very positive and Dick appreciated that.

But of course, Dick being Dick, things don't always go smoothly. One way or another, trouble would find its way to Dick.

While Dick was seated at the front desk, a woman in her mid-40s entered the salon. She looked fairly classy, dressed in an outfit that looked like designer clothes, not that Dick would know but he just assumed. There was just a bit of arrogance wrapped around her and her face was tight, eyes squinting and she looked sort of mad. But Dick greeted her nonetheless.

"Good afternoon. How may I—" He was immediately cut off by the woman as she scoffed at him. "I don't need your help. They already know who I am," she spoke, snarky and ignored Dick as she strode right past him.

"Ma'am—" he called out and got up front his seat to stop her. "You need to check in first." He didn't know who this woman was and even if she assumed they knew her, she couldn't just waltz right in. But the lady clicked her tongue at him and continued forward.

Dick breathed heavily and attempted to stop her when he felt something rise within him—a bad vibe coming forth. With more urgency, he tried to stop her once again.

"I think you should wait in our designated area," he said as he came up behind her.

"No need. I can just wait over there, away from you."

She wasn't listening to him and it was irritating the hell out of Dick because he needed her to or else she could get hurt.

"Please ma'am, you need to wait—"

And then suddenly, the woman slipped, losing her footing and stumbled to the ground. She fell on her back and the whole room dropped dead silent, all eyes falling upon the poor lady who was groaning as she turned to her side, attempting to get up.

Dick rushed towards the lady and stretched an arm out for her to take, but she swatted it away. "Freak. I don't need your help," she muttered and pushed herself up to her feet. "This—" she raised her voice for all to hear, capturing the entire room's attention. "This is unacceptable. Who left a mess here? And my clothes are all dirty!" She shouted and stomped her foot angrily as she pointed at the small puddle on the ground.

But no one answered her. Even more angered, she turned her attention to Dick, the closest one to her and blamed it on him. "You!" She accused. "This is your fault isn't it? I can just tell from your appearance. You're a screw up." She was ridiculing him in front of everyone and Dick could feel his hands trembling, his insides churning.

"It's—" he started. "This isn't my fault." He attempted to argue but the woman wasn't having it.

"No! You need to be fired," she demanded and finally, that's when Donna showed up.

"What's going on here?" She asked and the woman redirected her attention to the owner of the shop.

"Him." She said. "This was his fault. You need to fire him immediately."
Donna threw a glance towards Dick, examining him while she tried to calm the hysterical woman. Dick was trying hard not to freak out, not to have a mental breakdown, but he could feel his chest tightening. Was feeling overwhelmed and his head was spinning, breath shortening and coming in quick bursts. He needed to leave, go someplace quiet so he could think clearly. He needed to go. Now.

His body jerked wildly when he felt a hand on his arm.

"Whoa! It's okay Dick." It was Donna. "I'll handle this," she said and smiled gently at him. "How about you go take a walk for a minute?"

Dick nodded his head almost mechanically, listening to her every word and left the salon. He went outside and found an empty bench, placed himself right on the wooden seat. He fluttered his eyes shut and began taking deep breaths, trying to calm his anxiety. He was on the brink of hyperventilating and he knew. The nerves within him were slowly spreading, but Dick tried hard to contain it, to bring it back down. It'd been a while since something like this had happened to him, something so aggravating and humiliating. He was so shocked he wasn't sure what he could do about it.

As he sat there lost in thought, he could hear Jason's voice speaking to him. Could hear that beautiful tone, the one he'd used when he was soothing Dick away from his nightmares. It calmed him and he could already feel himself relaxing, his breathing returning to a norm. While he was busy meditating, someone showed up beside him and startled him.

"Hey." But once he'd realized who it belonged to, the tension withered away.

"Donna," he murmured and opened his eyes, found her sitting right beside him, looking at him with worry.

"Are you okay?" She asked and Dick nodded in response.

"What happened?" he questioned and was surprised to hear how stable his voice was.

"Well, a lot. But as a result, I kicked her out."

"What?" He exclaimed, shocked to hear that. "Why?"

Donna chuckled at the horrified expression on Dick's face. "She was rude. Insulted my employee. My good friend's boyfriend. Basically, she was an ungrateful bitch and we don't serve people like that."

Dick blinked in surprise to hear those words coming from her mouth. He didn't expect the end result to be like that, or her reasoning to be, well, quite valid. "But—" He wanted to interject, but Donna waved him off.

"Don't worry about it. It's not your fault anyways. Besides, you tried to help her."

"I—yeah. But you didn't have to kick her out."

Donna just laughed. "But I did. She hurt you," she said and placed a hand on his shoulder softly. "I don't accept that kind of behavior."

Dick gazed at her, locked eyes with the woman and tried to read her expression. He was searching for something, trying to find something that would help fuel his doubt, but there was nothing but sincerity in her eyes. So he breathed a sigh and nodded his head. Donna gave him a gentle squeeze
"Are you okay though?" She asked again, trying to confirm his sense of mind.

"I'm fine," he mumbled. "I'm just a little overwhelmed."

"You can take the rest of the day off," she offered and Dick gawked at her.

"But my shift isn't over yet."

"I know, but don't worry. You'll still get paid. Think of it as a treat. And also, I called Jason to pick you up," she said with a wide smile and winked at him. Dick gasped and just stared at her in disbelief, couldn't believe he was getting such treatment from something that was probably his fault. If he'd just been a bit more adamant, he could have prevented the incident.

And as if on cue, Jason arrived at the scene and was frantically rushing towards him.

"Hey!" he huffed, out of breath. It looked like he'd ran a mile with how his hair was all over the place. "What happened?" He asked.

"I think Dick can tell you that. Now, take him to lunch," she instructed and got up from her seat. She walked over to Jason's side and shoved him forward, caused the man to almost fall face forward into Dick.

"Hey!" He yelled frantically as he tumbled towards his boyfriend but Dick was quick and reached out to grab his hands, catching his fall.

"Have fun!" Donna waved at them with a huge grin on her face as she walked away.

Jason just stared at her and scratched his head in confusion while Dick was chuckling quietly to himself. He was grateful to know that Donna had her back. He'd never experienced it before until he met Jason. Never knew what it was like to just talk to someone normally, for someone to do something nice for him every once in a while. Typically he was always blamed for everything that had gone wrong. People had shunned him, but now, it was different. He had people looking out for him and it was a nice feeling.

"Dick?" Jason exhaled and snapped him out of his thoughts.

"Hm?" he answered and found Jason leaning in close, his face hovering a few inches away. There was a large hand caressing his cheek and he hadn't realized that Jason had been touching him until now.

"You okay?"

Dick smiled softly and gave a slight nod. "Yeah. I'll be fine."

"Yeah?"

"Yep."

"Want to tell me what happened?"

Dick chuckled to himself and grabbed a hold of Jason’s free hand to thread their fingers together. "Over lunch."

"Ah, yeah. We can do that."
Dick smiled and leaned in to kiss him chastely. “Also,” he whispered. "I think I like Donna. She’s…really nice.”

Jason's eyes widened in surprise and then he burst into laughter. “You better not be thinking of ditching me for her.”

There was a sparkle to his eyes and he grinned teasingly. “Of course not.”

“*Good. Now, let’s get you fed.*”
Dick exhaled loudly as he twirled a pen in hand, maneuvering it clumsily between his fingers in an attempt at doing some flashy pen tricks. He was a tad bored since the day was a bit slow at the salon although it was packed with ladies dying their hair. Bright blue eyes stared off into the distance, gazing at the shelf of hair products while messing with the pen until it slipped out of his hands and flew across the room, hitting a man square in the face.

"Ah!" Dick jerked up in his seat, chair rolling back on its legs and hitting the wall behind him. But he didn’t care because his attention was focused elsewhere and quickly approached the red-headed customer. "I'm sorry!" He apologized and carefully watched the man bend down to pick up the pen from off the ground.

"No worries," he said, lifting his head to meet Dick's gaze and flashed a smile. "It didn't hurt."

Dick just stared at him for a brief moment, surprised at how bright his eyes were, a brilliant green. They nicely complimented the splash of freckles adorning his cheeks. Realizing that he’d been staring, Dick cleared his throat and smiled awkwardly as he took the pen from his grasp. His face was heating up from embarrassment and he just wanted to hide away. No more attempting to do weird pen tricks since he obviously couldn't really do them.

"I'm still sorry."

The man just chuckled with a wide grin on his face and shook his head at Dick. "Nah, don't worry about it. It was nothing anyways. Just an accident."

Dick still felt bad. "But—"

And the redhead stopped him with a hand. "It's fine..." he said, faintly trailing off and gave Dick a quick once over. "Your name...?"

"Oh. Name. I'm Dick Grayson."

"Wally West," the redhead said and held his hand out. Dick eyed him briefly before he took his hand and shook on it.

"Nice to meet you."

"Same to you. Say..." Wally started and quirked his mouth up in a slight pull. "Want to get lunch today on your break?"

"Uh—" Dick stuttered, slightly taken aback by the invite. He wasn't expecting this to go anywhere and he was somewhat skeptical about it. "Why?"

"Why not?" He shrugged. "It'll be fun!"

Suddenly Dick was having slight deja vu all over again. It kind of reminded him of his meeting with Jason and while he wanted to say no, he didn't think it would be such a bad idea. If he was still the same person he was before he met Jason, he would have automatically turned him down but he figured that this man, Wally, didn't actually mean any harm.

"I guess it should be okay."
"Great! When is your break?"

"Uh—" Dick quickly glanced over at the clock to check the time before he replied. "One is good."

"Oh cool! Then we should be able to go after my appointment," Wally said with a big smirk on his face. His eyes were sparkling in excitement and he seemed oddly perky about it. Which wasn't a personality trait Dick dealt well with but he figured he'd give it a shot.

"Yeah."

And with that, Wally was called away for his hair appointment by one of the hair stylists, Kory, who he learned was also Jason's friend. She sometimes worked at the salon but was often busy with her other job as a model.

"See you after!" Wally said as he got up to leave his seat.

"Yeah..." Dick said with a small smile and returned back to his seat. He sighed softly under his breath and rolled his eyes to the side, watching Wally from afar. The redhead was talking aloud and making animated hand gestures at the woman, making her laugh and giggle.

Dick wasn't quite sure how he felt about this. He was a tad nervous, could feel his fingers tingling and his heart pumping rapidly. But part of him was slightly ecstatic about the possibility of meeting someone new. Someone that seemed to be genuinely interested him.

He just hoped that was the case.

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"So—how did you land a job at the salon?" Wally asked while munching on his French fries. The redhead had finished early and waited around in the lobby for Dick’s break. During the time, he'd been pestering Dick about where he was from and what he did which Dick didn't answer and avoided him, so instead he resorted to giving information about himself.

His name is Wally West. He’s from Central City and was currently in town at Gotham for a job relating to his work. Apparently he's a mechanic so for the time being he's in town for a bit. Then he proceeded to offer more information, like his age and the school he went to. And surprisingly, he was around Dick's age, in the young 20s. And already quite...successful. Which kind of made Dick jealous.

They got through all or well, most of the formalities before they headed out to grab a bite to eat nearby. One thing Dick learned during their brief time together was that Wally loved to talk and he just never shut up. Not that Dick minded since he didn't have to do any of the talking so that was a bonus for him.

Dick exhaled softly and reached out to take a sip of his water. He wasn't exactly sure how he should answer that since it was Jason who helped him. Should he say the truth or should he spin it lightly in a way that wouldn't raise any questions. He wasn't sure if it'd be wrong of him to say that he was hired due to a favor.

"Uh, a friend recommended me," Dick said.

"Oh, a friend? Well, this friend of yours is very smart then. You seem like a good person and a good worker!" Wally exclaimed and Dick couldn't help but gawk at him. How could he claim that Dick was a good person when he barely knew him?
"I—I'm not sure about that," Dick mumbled aloud, couldn't help but let those words flow from his mouth.

Wally paused as he was just about to take a bite out of his burger. He blinked at the man curiously and arched a brow, confusion written all over his face. "What do you mean?"

"I mean—I don't know how you can say such things. You don't even know me."

Wally hummed aloud and set his burger back down on his plate. "That's true. I don't. But I can tell just by looking at you. You have...hm, how do I put this? Soft features?" Bright emerald eyes narrowed in on Dick, squinting at him, examining him as if he was trying to find an answer to his explanation. "It's your eyes," he finally said. "Your eyes are gentle."

"Oh. I—" Dick didn't know how to reply to that because no one had never said such things to him before. Especially not on their first meeting and only within hours of really speaking to one another. Wally was such a strange man. Friendly but odd and Dick didn't know what his intentions were. If he was doing this to extort him or something. Not that Dick had anything. Or maybe just to make fun of him?

Wally chuckled softly and stretched out his arm, gliding his hand gently along his shoulder and gave him a reassuring squeeze. "Don't look so frightened. It was a compliment."

A shaky gasp escaped from his lips. He wasn't aware that his expression was showing through and he quickly tried to cover it up. That reaction only roused Wally up some more and his laughter continued.

"You're interesting," he chuckled and smiled at him. "Seriously, I want to get to know you more. I bet we'd be good friends."

Friends? Was that what this was? Did Wally want to be his friend? If he did, he couldn't understand why. Dick had no friends aside from Jason though Jason was his friend turned boyfriend. And while Jason's situation was different, it was still difficult for Dick to come to terms with anyone wanting to be associated with him. Not after all the emotional and physical abuse he'd gone through in the past. It was hard for him to trust anyone.

Dick became speechless and didn't know what to say so he sealed his lips shut instead. He felt bad for not reciprocating the same feelings because he simply couldn't. However, Wally didn't seem to mind as much and gave him a smile, a smile that seemed to show that he understood.

"Let's eat! You've barely touched your food," Wally pointed out, causing Dick to glance down at the meal he'd ordered. He was right, he hadn't touched his sandwich since the moment it was delivered to him and he could feel his stomach growling, begging to be satiated.

Dick nodded at Wally and started snacking on his fries while the redhead began another story of his.

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"Wait, say that again?" Jason blinked rapidly at his boyfriend, giving him a look of shock at what he'd just told him.

Dick sighed. "I think I made a friend."

"Tt," Damian scoffed and side eyed the man as he poked at his food. The boy had tagged along with Jason today, wanting to see him since they haven't met in a while. "By the way, Richard. I
"Hey, I'm talking here," Jason said and glared at his brother from across the table but he paid him no mind and ignored him, directing his attention to Dick. Dick watched as the boy examined him, slightly taken aback that he was complimenting him. At least, he thought it was a compliment in a Damian-like way.

"You think so?" Dick asked and cocked his head to the side as he brushed a lock of hair behind his ear. He was still getting used to it and after all that fiasco, he'd been a bit skeptical of his looks but nothing else emerged from it. Rather, he'd only received normal reactions from those who met him. Besides, he actually liked it shorter, it was easier to care for and his head felt fresh and light.

And regarding Mike, well, Jason said he'd taken care of it. When asked what he'd done, Jason simply said that he just got him fired. How exactly he achieved that was a secret. All Dick knew was that Jason was able to expose his wrongdoings and basically embarrassed him and his family which resulted in their business garnering a terrible reputation which kind of lost them a lot of business.

Dick felt slightly bad about it since he'd work there but Jason convinced him otherwise so he learned to let his feelings go and move on.

"Yes. It looks...good," Damian mumbled and quickly turned his head away, redirecting his attention elsewhere. But Dick could see the slight pink dusting his cheeks and the tips of his ears and knew that he was embarrassed. It was honestly really cute.

"Thanks Damian," Dick said with a smile.

"Okay, moving on from that," Jason said to steer the conversation back to his initial question. "What's this about some guy asking you out?"

Dick narrowed his eyes at the man and exhaled gingerly under his breath. "That's not what I said."

"That's what it sounds like," Jason grumbled, clearly irritated. His expression was hard, brows furrowed and eyes glossed over with annoyance.

"I said, I met someone during work and he invited me out to lunch."

"And you went."

"I did. And it was fine. It was harmless."

"Doesn't sound like it," Jason huffed and crossed his arms over his chest as he leaned back in his chair. "What's his name?"

"Wally."

"Full name?"

"I'm not giving it to you," Dick said knowing full well what Jason planned to do.

Jason rolled his eyes, exasperated that he was rejected. "Fine. What else did he do?"

"Nothing. We just chatted and that's it."

"Really? That's it? He didn't have any, you know, ulterior motives?"
Dick gave him a look of reprimand, as if Wally was the type to have a motive behind his actions because he surely didn't seem like it. Not that Dick wasn't skeptical, he was but he just couldn't see him wanting anything else from Dick because what did he even have to offer? Nothing really.

"I don't think so."

"Don't be ridiculous," Damian finally spoke, capturing both their attentions. The boy seemed to be seething with anger and judgement, green eyes narrowing dangerously at Dick. "He must be up to no good."

"Right," Jason jumped on board to agree with his brother. "He's hitting on you, I'm sure."

"Why would he do that?" Dick was a little dumbfounded at their accusations.

Jason and Damian stared at him in disbelief, or more like, just Damian since Jason already knew what he was like.

"Are you serious?" Damian questioned and Dick just blinked at him in confusion. The boy pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed heavily. "You are, aren't you? Tt. You are such an idiot."

"Damian," Jason warned but the boy didn't apologize.

"Richard is blind. That man is up to no good and you should be more careful," he said and Dick didn't expect him to be this worried about him. Even though they were falsely accusing Wally, he couldn't help but feel a bit endeared by the boy.

"That's so thoughtful of you Dami," Dick said and the boy gasped, appalled.

"N-No," he stuttered, tongue tied. Embarrassed, he said no more and reverted back to eating his meal.

"I'm not happy about this," Jason interjected.

"Why not?" Dick shrugged his shoulders at his boyfriend. "He wants to be my friend."

"That's it! He doesn't want to just be your friend. I bet he wants to get in your p-pa—" he stopped abruptly, glancing at his brother who was watching him closely and he groaned. "You know what I mean."

Giving him a look, Dick just drew in a breath and shook his head at Jason. "I'm sure it's nothing like that. Unless you're implying that everyone who wants to be my friend wants just that? Like you?"

"W-What?" he stuttered, shocked Dick would say such a thing. "T-That's not what—I didn't—" he was speechless and Dick couldn't help but grin in amusement.

"I'm kidding," he joked and reached out to gently cup his cheek. "I don't think that of you," he said.

Jason murmured some words under his breath and pinched Dick playfully on the arm for frightening him like that. "Good."

"And I'm sure Wally doesn't have any ulterior motives. At least I don't get the vibe. And it's not like people would want to be my friend just because or even, you know, hit on me," Dick said and waved his hand, dismissing those reasons.
Jason just rolled his eyes. "Whatever you say."

"So you're okay?"

Jason scrunched his nose, not quite on board with the idea. "I... guess."

"Good. I plan to meet with him again."

"What?!" He exclaimed loudly and received a dirty glare from Damian for hurting his ear drums. "What do you mean?" He said, lowering his voice down from his initial outburst.

"We set up a date to meet up again."

"I—I'm coming too," Jason said.

Dick raised a brow at him in question. "Why?"

"I want to meet this Wally person."

"I don't know," Dick said, not quite sold on the idea of Jason meeting Wally since that could end up being a disaster. As much as he loved Jason, the man could be quite intimidating at times though he didn't think Wally would be quite scared off by him. There was just something about the redhead that made it easy for Dick to predict his personality traits.

"Oh come on. It won't hurt."

"Tt. So he says," Damian muttered.

"Shut up," Jason tossed out, shushing his brother but he only riled him up even more.

"I'm sure Todd would just ruin it for you," Damian snarled.

"Hey, I'll be protecting him," Jason commented and that earned a look of interest from Damian. Suddenly, the boy was relaxed, expression glowing with interest and thought.

"I suppose that would be better."

"See? Damian agrees," Jason said and captured his lover's gaze. "It'll be fine. I'm just looking out for you."

Dick didn't think he needed such protection but Jason was really insistent, murmuring words of "please" and "come on," even going so far as to threaten that he would just show up even if Dick said no and "did he really want that to happen?"

He thought about it for a moment before giving his answer, not quite sure if he wanted Jason there or not. "I'll think about it and let you know," Dick said and Jason just groaned at that, wanting the answer now but he'll just have to wait for it.

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The moment he saw Wally's confused expression, Dick knew that it was a bad idea and he shouldn't have gone through with this decision but it was too late to go back on it.

"Hi Dick," he blurted before asking about the man standing beside him. "Who is this?" He waved his hand at Jason who had his lips pulled into a smirk. There was an air of conceit wrapped around Jason, permeating into the air. He was oozing with confidence, masculinity and Dick just wished
he'd tone it down a bit. It was almost as if he was here to challenge Wally.

"He's—"

"I'm his boyfriend," Jason cut Dick off and held out his hand. "Jason."

"Oh." Those emerald eyes of his brightened, glowing as a flash of realization flickered in his eyes. "I see," he said, grinning bemusedly as he shook Jason's hand, gripping tightly before letting go. "You're overprotective huh?"

Taken aback, Jason scoffed. "No," he said in denial but that only caused Wally to roar in laughter, now confusing the both of them.

"What's so funny?" Jason asked, unhappy about how their introduction unfolded.

The redhead was still giggling, unable to control his laughter, laughing so much that tears formed at the corner of his eyes and he had to wipe them away. "It's just--" He breathed out but was interrupted by another burst of chuckling.

Vivid blue eyes gawked at Wally, watching as he tried to reign himself back into a calm. And finally, his laughing came to a halt and he exhaled loudly, taking a few deep breaths.

"I just didn't think you'd have a boyfriend. A very overprotective one." Wally was smiling and Dick could tell he didn't mean any harm by that comment. "It's kind of cute honestly."

"Cu-cute?!" Jason was appalled and Dick couldn't help but chuckle at that, surprised he was able to rouse Jason up so quickly.

"I agree. It's kind of adorable," he said, jumping in to add more fuel to the fire.

"Adorable?!" Jason looked as if he was about to collapse or walk out from the constant flow of compliments coming his way, words that didn't exactly fit his "manly profile," as he once put it.

"Yeah. Both of those things," Wally was still grinning in amusement.

Jason ran a hand down his face in embarrassment and groaned loudly, trying to hide the slight blush threatening to crawl upon his cheeks.

"Don't worry, Jason. I'm not after your boyfriend. I just want to be his friend."

That perked his interest and Jason dropped his arms to the side, leveling his eyes dangerously at the man, judging him in speculation. "Why?"

Wally shrugged nonchalantly. "Why not?"

Dick wanted to say something, but Jason didn't let him and held up a hand to prevent him from speaking his mind.

"Good point," Jason spoke slowly and continued staring at the redhead, the two entering into a stare off. They were sizing each other up, Dick could tell as he watched them closely, could see it in their body language, how they moved themselves and the stern look in their eyes.

Dick was getting slightly nervous, afraid that things might blow up. That Jason might find something wrong with Wally or that he'd scare off his "first" potential friend. He didn't know what to think and it made him anxious. Caused his heart to thump wildly against his chest, impatiently waiting for them to say something, anything.
"This is getting nowhere," Jason finally broke the silent barrier and said. "I can't quite read you."

Wally chuckled. "I'm typically easy to read but if you want to know, I just find Dick interesting and I want to be his friend. That's it."

Jason hummed aloud to himself in question and contemplated that reply. "Dick is interesting so I could see why you're interested."

"I'm not after him romantically. I have a girlfriend after all," Wally added. Jason blinked, eyelids fluttering rapidly. "Oh?" And suddenly, the feral intent within him subsided, almost like an overprotective dog and he relaxed, shoulders slumping. "Really?"

"Yep, her name is Linda. So you don't have to worry."

"Hm," Jason murmured. "That does make me feel better."

A sigh of relief escaped from Dick's lips and the anxiety within him washed away as quickly as it had appeared. He was glad they were able to come to an agreement of sorts though there wasn't a need for one in the first place.

"So, how about I tell you a bit about myself to reassure you?" Wally offered.

"That's what I'm here for," Jason gave a small smile.

"Alright, let's get to it then," Wally exclaimed in excitement and pushed the door open to the restaurant, holding it open for both Jason and Dick.

They exchanged looks with one another and Dick shrugged his shoulders, taking a step forward to walk through the door while Jason followed behind him.

"Guess we'll see how this goes," Jason whispered loud enough for only Dick to hear and slyly slipped his fingers between his boyfriends', twining their hands together.

Dick smiled softly and lifted their hands to kiss the top of Jason's, making him blush from the sudden boldness and spewing incoherent words. He chuckled at Jason and murmured, "Yeah."

"So, what did you think?" Dick asked while on their drive back from their lunch with Wally.

"Enjoyable. He's a hoot," Jason was beaming even though he'd gone into it quite negatively at first. But Wally was able to work his magic and charmed his boyfriend, as he had done with Dick. There was just something about the redhead that drew him in.

Must be his humor and easy going attitude. It made it easy for Dick, made him feel relaxed and less on guard. He often forgot that he was out in public among judging eyes and only had his attention focused on Wally, enraptured by his many stories.

"He's fun," Dick agreed. "I like him. As a friend of course."

Jason laughed. "That better be it. Can't have people stealing you away from me."

"That'd never happen," Dick said and it was the truth.

Jason glanced away from the road for a second to gaze at his lover, his facial expression soft and
warm. "Yeah," he murmured and stuck out his hand, palm up for Dick to take. It was a small habit of theirs, holding hands while Jason drove.

The corner of Dick's lips spread into a smile, a bit of accomplishment filling his soul. "I'm happy I was able to make a friend," he said aloud for Jason to hear. And really, it was a huge accomplishment for him. He never thought there would come a day where someone would strike a conversation with him. Someone other than Jason would take an interest in him and want to befriend him seeing that he was such a gloomy person.

That his circle that started with just Jason would actually grow to include others. First Damian, then Donna and now Wally.

It was a little frightening for him since he'd never experienced such a thing, and at the same time, it thrilled him. That he was able to even make it this far.

"I can see it on your face," Jason said and gingerly squeezed his hand. "You've been grinning the whole time."

"I was?"

"Yeah. You were. Not physically but your eyes said it all."

"My eyes huh?"

"Mhm, those pretty blues."

Heat filled his cheeks and Dick couldn't help but squirm a little whenever Jason would call him pretty or any part of him pretty. It wasn't something he was used to yet and it made him feel weird, like the word was foreign to him. A word that others didn't often use to describe him.

Awkwardly, Dick cleared his throat and didn't comment on what Jason had said. "I hope we'll stay friends."

"I'm sure if you work on it, it'll be fine."

Dick wasn't too confident in himself but he liked Wally and really enjoyed his company. So he was going to be sure that he'd work on keeping in contact with the redhead and not letting his anxiety or fear get the best of him.

"Thanks Jason," Dick said.

"Anything for you."

They made it back home to Dick's place and filtered into the apartment, shedding off layers of clothes before collapsing onto Dick's bed breathlessly. They peeled apart the blankets and crawled beneath the mound of fleece. Jason slipped an arm beneath Dick's thin waist, feeling the softness of his t-shirt as they tumbled around, trying to get into a comfortable position so they could snuggle. Their legs were in a tangled mess, chests pressed close to one another. Jason leaned down to brush his lips chastely against Dick's before he started telling a tale, a story he'd prepared ahead of time.

And as Dick listened to the beauty of Jason's smooth and deep voice, his eyes fluttered shut and he slowly drifted off to sleep.
Chapter Notes

Well, this one took longer to get out than expected. Hope you all enjoy!

"You want to what?" Jason asked, slightly taken aback by his best friend's proposal. Despite the many fights they've had, the two were always able to come to terms, reconciling one way or another.

"Apologize," Roy said, throwing him a serious look, a look that meant what he said.

Jason was still confused and blinked at the red-head before he walked over to take a seat on his bed. "Apologize?"

"Yes, apologize. You know, say sorry," Roy said while making hand gestures, hoping that would get it across Jason's thick skull.

"...You never say sorry."

"Wow," Roy scoffed in hurt. "That was rude."

"It's true." Jason shrugged his shoulders without any care for his friend's feelings. The red-head sighed and ran a hand through his hair, seemingly frustrated.

"Okay, so I do, but I want to apologize to Dick for my, you know, bad behavior."

"It was fucking awful, I admit," Jason said and nodded in agreement. He'd been wanting Roy to apologize to Dick but he didn't want to force it. It had to come from the heart rather than force and well, it looked like he'd reflected on his actions. But the issue here was, was Dick willing to meet with him? He remembered that Dick had stated never wanting to see Roy again, or something among those lines. "I'm not sure if Dick will want to see you," he said truthfully.

Roy grimaced, his face scrunching in displeasure. "Can you try to convince him? Please?"

Jason licked his lips in contemplation. "I could try."

"That's all I ask so thanks," Roy exhaled loudly and strode towards his friend, dropping down right beside him. He nudged his arm, a grin tugging at the corner of his lips. "Let me know, okay?"

"Yeah sure, I mean. I'm glad you've thought it over," Jason said. "It just only took an eternity."

"Hey! I—" Roy started, but sealed his lips shut seeing he probably didn't have a good excuse for it. "Okay, it did."

Jason always knew how to one-up him. A bonus for being friends for so long and Roy just never seemed to figure out a way to combat it.

"You did, but its good you came around." Jason admitted and gave him a pat on the back as a way of complimenting his actions.
Roy beamed for being praised by his friend and chuckled. "So, with that done, care to join me for some food?"

"If you're paying, yeah sure."

The red-head just rolled his eyes, not amused at all, but agreed anyways.

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It didn't come as a surprise to Jason when Dick gave him an odd look when he asked about Roy. Obviously, Dick wasn't fond of him at all which he understood. It was just, he never thought that he was that bothered by the red-head.

"I'm not sure..." He answered and shifted around on the bed, re-positioning himself so he was sitting up rather than laying against Jason's side. They were at his apartment, cuddling in bed and chatting when Jason decided to spring the question on him.

"He looked really sincere," Jason pressed, wanting this issue to be resolved for both their sake's. "Roy wants—he wants to make amends. He's reflected and...I think it's a good idea." Jason gently reached for Dick's hand and laced their fingers together, holding it up close to his lips to press a small kiss to his knuckles.

Dick huffed a breath and fluttered his eyes shut briefly. "I don't know..." he murmured quietly, a brief look of pain passing through his face.

"It'll be fine," Jason said and heard Dick groan at that remark.

"I know. It's—I just—I don't hate Roy. It was a bit—the experience was traumatic for me," he exhaled loudly and fell against Jason's side, his face buried into the crook of his neck.

"Oh," Jason said in surprise. He hadn't realized it was that bad for him, but well, when he thought about it some more, he supposed that it was. After all, that was the night he made an awful mistake and yeah—that. Things he wished he hadn't done if he was in his right mind. It was too late anyways and well, they've passed that hurdle already.

"I don't particularly like to think about it..." Dick said, his voice trailing off. There was a heavy sigh and Jason felt his body shift, felt Dick snake an arm around his own, gripping on tightly. "I guess I'm not opposed."

Jason didn't say a word and peered down at his lover, gazing at the top of his dark hair. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. I mean, it's a good thing. Besides, I'm sure you want us to get along, no?" Dick answered and turned his head slightly so their eyes would meet.

It would be a lie if he said no because in reality, Jason did. Roy was in the wrong and it really hurt Dick, so it would be good if they could at least make amends and be on speaking terms.

"I do," Jason mumbled. "It'd be nice."

Dick nodded and gave a soft smile.

"So you'll do it?"

"Yeah, just let me know when and where."

"Cool. I'll let Roy know and set something up," and then Jason leaned down and pecked his
forehead. "You're just the best."

Dick just rolled his eyes, but his face was beaming with glee.

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A wave of nerves rippled through his body and fingers squeezed tight around the wheel. Roy could feel the pit of his stomach churning, nervous. Even though it was his idea, he was still feeling a little unsure about how Dick would react. Would he be angry? Would he lash out at him?

Honestly it was shocking that he even said yes because Roy had expected him to say no. After all he’d done, he probably didn't deserve the right to apologize. He had been stubborn and reluctant after it had happened. But after a while, his feelings had flowed to a calm and he was able to reevaluate himself.

Roy was parked at the front of the manor, waiting for Jason to come out. He'd offer to drive them both and was going to pick Dick up afterwards except the man had work and said he'd just meet them there, so the ride would just be him and Jason.

It didn't take long for Jason to filter out of the manor, spotting his car quickly and dashed towards him. He opened the passenger seat and grinned at his friend.

"Hey," he greeted.

"Hey."

"You ready?" Jason asked as he sat down and closed the door shut.

"Ready as I'll ever be," Roy drew in a deep breath and hoped to relax himself before their meeting.

Jason just laughed and gave him a playful punch on the arm.

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Roy had to do a double take, blinked rapidly and rubbed at his eyes. Were his eyes deceiving him or was this really Dick Grayson, Jason's boyfriend? He just looked so different and was standing at the front of the building waiting for them.

For one, he didn't have that long hair any longer. It was short and nicely groomed, fitting to his features. And his face, fuck, wow, his face. It was actually quite pleasing to look at—okay, he was pretty decently good looking. Not that he would have known about it underneath all that hair. And his outfit, it was affably chosen. Roy suspected that it was thanks to Jason though. The man was dressed in fitted clothing, less tattered, though it didn’t really match.

Dick wore dark washed jeans, a forest green shirt and a mustard and red plaid flannel. Yeah the colors did not match at all, but he didn't look bad.

"Did you give him a make-over?" Roy asked quietly under his breath as he walked side by side next to Jason, approaching the restaurant from the parking lot.

Jason could only chuckle and Roy took that as a yes. "It was kind of hard."

"I can imagine so," Roy said.

Dick quickly spotted them and Roy noticed how he slightly tensed up when their eyes met, but immediately relaxed when his attention was on Jason. There was a soft smile on his lips and he
gave a small wave.

"Hey," Jason greeted and leaned forward to give him a kiss, but Dick was quick to react and placed a hand to his lips, shaking his head. Which Jason just sighed at and murmured something quietly, so quiet that Roy couldn’t catch his words.

Dick pinched his cheek playfully and then turned to look at Roy who'd been standing there awkwardly for a brief moment. "Hi," Dick said a little uneasily and shifted around on his feet, unsure of how he should act.

And okay, Roy should have expected it to be awkward. "Uh, yeah, hi." He wanted to mentally slap himself for not being as smooth as he imagined himself to be.

Jason just looked at them with an arched brow. "Okay...let's go get a table."

And boy, wasn't he glad that Jason was around to lead them in. So they headed inside and were quickly seated. Jason and Dick sat right beside each other and Roy placed himself right across from his best friend, didn't want to exactly have direct eye contact with Dick. It would have just been even more awkward than it already was.

Hopefully they could chase away the heavy atmosphere soon.

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Yeah no, it was awkward as fuck and while Roy tried to apologize to Dick, it was a little weird with Jason around since the man was staring at them intently. Or, he'd tried to give opportunities for Roy to talk to Dick and say what he wanted to say.

Given, they were good opportunities but whenever he tried to say something, the words just got caught in his throat and he couldn't voice a single thing he'd been reciting in his head. And it didn't help that he was a little distracted by how well Dick and Jason got along. How...much of a couple they were together.

Roy was kind of envious of their relationship and he never knew there was such a side to Jason. He could tell that they were heads over heels for one another. Jason was just so careful around the man, and at the same time, sweet. Hah, sweet. He never thought he'd use that to describe Jason.

Jason was helping Dick out every step of the way, ordering his water or his food for him. Making sure he ate his food, urging him to eat. Making small talk with him or stringing him along whenever Jason was caught in a conversation with Roy. He'd check up on him every moment of the way and Dick would comply, but also give him this look, a look that said he didn't need to be cared for, though at the same time he didn't seem to mind it. They'd bicker a little, pushing and pulling on one another, but it was more of a playful bicker.

Like Jason complaining about not letting him kiss him which Dick just replied that he didn't like it when they were doing it in public.

This was all so refreshing and new to Roy. It was...different than when they'd dated. Different than all of Jason's other relationships. He rarely cared about the other or was even this helpful. Often just disregarding them and setting the focus to himself—selfish, is how Roy would describe Jason then. But right now, he was anything but selfish.

Roy was so focused on watching them that he was a little startled when Jason slid his chair back and stood up. The red-head blinked at him in confusion.
"Bathroom," Jason explained and then not so subtly winked at him.

Roy just rolled his eyes, getting the hint and waved him off. "Okay, have fun." Or not.

Now he was left alone with Dick who was just poking at the pasta noodles in his bowl, almost like he was trying to avoid Roy.

Roy sucked in a large breath and gathered up his courage. It was now or never, Jason couldn't stay in the bathroom forever. He needed to get it out and this was his best chance. The red-head cleared his throat, capturing Dick's attention as those vivid blue eyes settled on him. God, they were gorgeous.

"Dick," he said.

Dick blinked, eyes wide and gazed at him, setting his fork down on the plate, showing that he had his full attention on Roy. Roy could feel the pressure, could feel a rock pressing down on his shoulders. A dryness tickled his throat and he could feel his esophagus clogging up, those words refusing to come out. But no—no, he had to.

"I'm—" he started and huffed a breath. Come on Harper, you can do it. "I'm—uh—I'm sorry."

Part of his feelings for Jason still lingered within him even though they had broken up long ago and resorted to being friends. And as friends, he thought he'd always have Jason at his side. Even though Jason was dating others, he knew they meant nothing to him. That was until Dick came along and Roy noticed how different Jason was acting. How invested he was in Dick and it made him jealous, jealous that Jason had never paid that much attention to him. Rather, all they did was argue and fight. It was such an unhealthy relationship and it angered him, frustrated him that they couldn’t make it work even though he liked him so much.

His feelings lingered for some time, but now he was kind of over it. Which was why he'd been able to come to terms with himself, his feelings and take the next step and apologize to Dick.

There was a slight pause and Roy held his breath, anticipating Dick's response. The raven-haired man was deep in thought, his eyebrows furrowed together in consideration.

"I—" he mumbled and hitched a breath. "I accept your apology."

And god damn, wasn't that a relief? He could feel all the pins and needles, the heavy boulder sitting on his shoulder slowly dissipate, his body feeling lighter than he'd been all day.

"I'm glad," Roy said with a smile. "If you want, I can get the others to apologize too." But the moment he said that, he saw how tense Dick had gotten, his shoulders squaring and his face scrunching in pain.

"I'm okay," he quickly rejected and Roy noticed that he was uncomfortable. "Yours is enough."

"Okay," Roy replied and said nothing more of it.

Jason finally returned from the bathroom and retook his seat at the table. He was wearing a huge grin on his face, revealing the fact that he probably knew what had happened. "So, how was it?"
Roy said nothing and kicked him in the shin from underneath the table. "Did you take a shit?" He questioned, switching topics. "You took so long," he teased.

"I did not!" A slight red trickled onto his cheeks and Jason was embarrassed while Dick was chuckling at his side. He jerked his head to the side and stared at his boyfriend. "I didn't," he grumbled, not happy about the accusation.

"I know," Dick said and patted him on the arm, but he was still laughing at him. It was kind of pleasing to see the two getting along so well and Roy couldn't help but smile as well.

Much to say, the rest of dinner went well.

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Roy was the first to exit the restaurant and held the door open for Jason and Dick. He waited a moment for them to pass through while at the same time, a couple entered the doorway, conversing happily. The man muttered a quick thanks and brushed by Dick and Jason.

Once the two were out, Roy released the door shut and settled his attention on them both. "So—" he started but quickly paused when he noticed the strange atmosphere around them. Could tell that something was wrong with how Jason was looking worriedly at Dick. Dick, whose complexion was pale, as white as a sheet of paper. His eyes were glossed over, hazed as if he was staring off into space.

"Hey?" Jason poked at Dick, curling an arm around his boyfriend's, helping to hold him up and steadying his feet because he looked like he was about to collapse. "Are you okay?"

Dick took a moment to answer and nodded his head, but he looked nowhere near alright.

"You sure?" Jason asked, skeptical.

Dick nodded once more and waved his head. "Fine...I'm fine," he murmured. Jason exchanged a glance with Roy and Roy just stared at him, searching for an answer. But the man had nothing and just shrugged his shoulders.

"Let's get to the car, yeah?" Roy asked, pondering that maybe he was just feeling a little ill and needed to sit. Though he was completely fine the whole time during dinner.

Jason mumbled an 'okay' and followed after Roy, holding on tightly to Dick as he guided him to the parking lot around the corner. The red-head kept his pace steady, walking just slowly enough in front of them for Jason to stay in sync.

He pulled out his keys from his pockets and hit the button, unlocking his car as the lights flickered on for a second. Roy was about to open the door when he heard a loud retching sound from behind. Swiftly, he turned around and found Dick bent down at the side of the parking lot, hurling as Jason was hovering around him, obviously worried. Asking him a bunch of questions as he rubbed gently along his back.

Roy jogged right over, keeping his distance as he grimaced at the wet sound of Dick vomiting out all the food he'd just taken in. He turned away, directing his attention elsewhere since it was hard to watch and waited until Dick was done.

It didn't take long but the retching stopped and now all he could hear was heavy breathing and Jason asking him if he was okay and what not. He could hear Dick's soft murmurs, raspy and quiet, but he couldn't quite make out the words.
Finally, Roy brought himself to their side and found Dick crouched down on the ground with Jason rubbing soothing circles on his back and handing him a handkerchief to wipe away his vomit.

"Hey, is Dick—are you okay?" Roy asked, worried. Dick didn't say a word, but nodded his head. There was a slight tremble to his body, almost as if he was shivering from the cold, but he was sure that wasn't it.

Jason kept up his ministrations and turned to look at his best friend. "Can you go get us some water?" He asked with a pleading look in his eyes. Roy couldn't very well say no and mouthed an okay, disappearing down the street. There was a mini mart right nearby and he quickly jogged over to purchase a bottle of water and maybe some medicine just in case.

Roy scratched at his head as he carried the bag back towards the parking lot, confused as to what happened. Dick was completely fine and there were no symptoms of him being sick so it didn't make sense. Unless he'd gotten food poisoning? Which was possible though both he and Jason seemed fine.

Either way he didn't know the answer and hoped maybe Jason could find out what was wrong by the time he got back. It was a short walk back and when he turned the corner into the lot, they were nowhere to be found. As he searched around, he found one of his car doors was opened.

He ventured towards his car and found them both in his back seat. Jason was seated on the left side with Dick laying on the seats, head resting on his thigh with Jason's leather jacket draped over his torso.

"How is he doing?" Roy asked as he pulled out the bottle of water and medicine to hand to Jason. Jason took it from him, not answering his question and roused Dick up, getting him to drink the water and take a pill. The man did as he was told, groggy and his eyes appeared to be slightly puffy, almost red, but it was hard to see in the dim light considering the sky was dark.

Dick sniffled a little and dropped back down onto the seats, curling up against Jason like a puppy. He was shivering, his body unstable and Roy felt kind of bad.

"He's fine," Jason answered without looking at Roy, eyes glued to his lover and carefully threaded his fingers through his hair. "It'll just...take a moment."

Roy nodded. "Its fine," he said and closed the door shut, deciding to give them some time and allowing for Dick to rest up a bit before they headed off. He was sure if he drove, the car motion would worsen his condition.

The red-head lingered around the car parking lot for a bit, and having nothing else to do, he passed the time by playing some video games on his phones. Unsure of how to interpret the situation, he let the issue slide away from his thoughts, figuring it was better to leave it alone for now than to dwell on it. No matter what he thought about it, he couldn't come up with an answer anyhow.

Besides, he was kind of just waiting around to ask Jason.

About twenty minutes might have passed before he heard the car door opening. Roy whipped his head in the direction of the sound and found Jason motioning a hand at him, beckoning him to come over. He did.

"Uh—" Jason started, blinking up at his friend. "Maybe sit in the passenger seat?"

Roy just shrugged and closed the door, rounding around the car to the other side to sit in the passenger's seat at the front. He settled himself in comfortably, shut the door and turned around in
his seat to face Jason. He had a direct view considering the man was sitting diagonally across from him, located right behind the driver's seat.

"So?" Roy piped up in a soft voice.

"He's asleep," Jason murmured and locked eyes with his best friend, but still kept his hand steadily stroking through Dick's hair, caressing him, lulling him.

Roy nodded at that statement and took care to not rouse him up. "What happened?"

Jason scrunched his face, pulling his lips into a thin line. "He just felt a little sick." But the way he said it, almost uneasy, made Roy think others. The red-head narrowed his eyes at him, squinting in skepticism.

"You sure...?" He prompted, hoping to poke him for further information.

That made the man squirm, shifting uncomfortably in his seat. If it's one thing he knew about his best friend was that Jason didn't often like to lie unless he needed to. And this might be one of those circumstances. He was struggling with the information he wanted to relay.

"It's not really my place to say," Jason murmured, tired turquoise eyes rolling off to the side briefly to glance down at Dick before returning his gaze to Roy.

"You don't have to say it. Just a general...?"

And then there was a heavy sigh, not just any normal sigh, it sounded distressed. Jason was clearly very perturbed by whatever was bothering Dick.

"It's just—Dick thought he saw someone he knew or well, heard. It startled him and made him feel sick."

Roy's eyes widened in shock, confused by the fact that a person could create such a reaction in another. "Really?"

Jason pinched the bridge of his nose, squeezing his eyes shut as he nodded. "Yeah," he breathed. "It's not someone he was fond of."

"Ah," Roy mumbled, he still didn't really get it. "Was it though?"

"Hm?"

"Was it the person?"

"No," Jason answered sharply, a tone laced with venom, so harsh that it could sting.

Roy knew it wasn't directed at him specifically, but he was taken aback by how vicious Jason sounded. Something he didn't often see. Angry? Yes. Furious? Yes. Downright looking out for blood? No.

He wasn't an idiot and it wasn't hard to figure out that whoever it was had done something to Dick and what that was, he had no clue, but definitely something terrible enough to cause the man to react in such a way.

It was a little disheartening to know.

"I see..." Roy said, not knowing what else to say. "Is Dick alright now?" A hint of worry found its
way into his voice and the red-head settled his gaze on the resting man.

"Yeah. Shaken but he's fine. Just needed some rest to calm down," Jason answered with a soft smile. There was a warmth evident in his voice, tender and almost, dare he say, adoration.

A chuckle escaped from his lips and Roy just shook his head at his friend. "You seriously love him a lot."

Jason gave him an odd look, raising his brow so high it almost touched his hairline. And then he burst into quiet laughter, a grin wide on his lips. "Yeah," he exhaled. "Yeah, I do."

"I can tell. I've never seen you like this with anyone else."

There it was, that smile that just screamed 'I fucking love Dick Grayson.' A smile that was so obvious that one would have to be blind to see how much he freaking adored his boyfriend. His feelings were so real, so there, it would be hard to ignore.

And honestly, it was something that Roy had always secretly wanted, but never got. And well, it was kind of okay at this point. The two were strangely made for one another and he won't lie, butterflies were literally fluttering about in his stomach today just watching them. It made him oddly giddy seeing how—how cute they were.

Fuck, he couldn't believe he was admitting this after all he'd done to ignore Dick's existence, pretend that Jason wasn't fucking in love with the man.

Guess he just really decided to open his eyes and look.

Roy said nothing more on the matter and moved to open the door. "Ready to go home?" he asked as he set one foot out and glanced back at his friend.

"Yeah," Jason murmured with a slight smile.

Without further ado, Roy got into the driver's seat and turned on the engine to his beautiful car, hearing it come to life wonderfully before he backed out of the lot and entered into the stream of cars.
"Jason."

Jason was casually lounging in the living room when suddenly he heard his name being called. He turned his attention towards his guest and found his adoptive father. "Bruce," he greeted with a slight nod, acknowledging his presence before he turned his eyes back to the book he'd been reading. But when he realized his guardian wasn't going to leave, he sighed heavily, bookmarked his book and closed it shut.

Bruce took that as a sign to enter so he did, only having to take a few steps due to his long strides to make it to the couch. He sat down a couple of inches away from Jason and exhaled loudly before turning his curious eyes onto Bruce. "Yes?"

The man squirmed slightly which was a sight to see because Bruce rarely ever squirmed. He was being weird and that kind of frightened Jason, but nonetheless, he kept his eyes on him and watched as Bruce cleared his throat and awkwardly said, "How are you and your—you know—your boyfriend doing?

Okay. Awkward. Really Awkward. Bruce was never one to be interested in his relationships and often let him be. Okay, he lied, Bruce cared a great deal about who he was dating. Often muttered oppositions here and there; though it seemed to have toned down a bit. At least in regards to him dating Dick. It might be thanks to Damian since he'd been feeding Bruce details about his boyfriend.

Bruce was opposed to him dating Dick and they rarely spoke after their disagreement when he went official with Dick. His reasons were absurd and unreasonable, and were basically bullshit. He characterized Dick as someone who was unsatisfactory and unfit for Jason. Which Jason argued against and called him a hypocrite. He just didn't know Dick and if he just gave him the chance, he'd probably realize what a joy it is to have Dick around.

This turnaround had to come from his brother. As of late, Jason had noticed that Damian would often drop details about Dick during dinner. Such as talking about the few times he'd went and hung out with Jason and Dick. The kid had taken a liking to his boyfriend and was always hovering around him, trying to treat him to nice things which Dick couldn't deny. It was endearing and kind of cute. Cute in the sense that he got to see his feisty little brother being adorable to Dick in his own odd way and then turn around and brag about it to Bruce. Which probably fueled the man's curiosity and caused him to poke Jason for more details. Besides, it was rare for Damian to like anyone and if he liked someone, than that meant there was something about them that drew him in.

"We're fine," Jason said and arched a brow at him skeptically.

"Just fine?" Bruce repeated and was attempting to strip out some more information. God damn, Jason didn't want to talk about relationships to Bruce. Just thinking about past memories made him shudder and he felt his skin crawl at the thought of them. They always ended up terribly and well, his dating choices back then weren't the greatest.

Jason sighed heavily. "Okay. It's going great. Now, what do you want from me?"

Bruce smirked slightly, almost amused. "Why do you assume I want anything from you?"
Jason leveled his eyes at the man and gave him an 'are you for real look?' which Bruce just shrugged his shoulders at him. "Bruce. You always want something when you start these conversations." He had a point.

The man hummed aloud and finally gave in to Jason's glare. "Alright. I was curious about the man you're dating and why Damian keeps talking about him."

"I knew it," Jason snapped his fingers like he'd struck a good bargain and collapsed back against the couch. "Knew it."

"I'm curious. I didn't like your exes and neither did Damian." Of course he'd bring that up. What with him dating Roy which was really just casual but it ended poorly and was a mess. They were better off as friends though the sex was good.

Jason had a few other relationships, a couple of people he'd briefly dated and went on dates with. Though not much happened.

He did have a bit of a crush on Donna when he first met her but ultimately it just flourished into something platonic rather than romantic. So in conclusion, Dick was his most stable and somewhat long-lasting relationship.

"If you want to put it that way then yes, my choices were shit."

"This man—"

"Dick," Jason said. "His name is Dick."

"Dick," Bruce corrected and continued on. "Makes you more stable and responsible. You're not as wild as you used to be."

"Touche Bruce. Touche. After the first time he'd angered Dick and had hurt him terribly, he'd decided to change himself. So in a sense, Dick had basically reigned him in from his party days. Because of that, he rarely ever went out to get pissed drunk and pass out who the fuck knows where. He'd turned over a new leaf and was able to limit himself to what he could handle. Even though his partying was how he ended up meeting Dick in the first place so he was at least grateful for that. But from then on out, he minimized his drinking and only drank casually, enough to be buzzed. He was afraid he'd end up doing something regretful again and didn't want that to happen."

"I would agree to that," he said and wow, agreeing with Bruce wasn't something he often did either.

"Then—"

"Oh great. Here comes the real question you wanted to ask." And Bruce just rolled his eyes at him.

"I'd like to invite Dick over so we can officially meet him and I also want to apologize."

Oh what the fucking hell? Bruce apologizing? Bruce wanting to apologize? That was a first and it blew Jason's mind away. He was never one to admit his faults and if he did, it would take forever. But the fact that Bruce wanted to apologize for his shit behavior was really great. It was also a good opportunity for him to attempt to weave Dick into the family so he wasn't opposed to the idea.
"Doesn't sound like a bad idea. Let me ask Dick first."

"Great. We can pick a date when he agrees."

"Sure thing."

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Jason watched in awe as Dick shoveled food into his mouth, eating like he'd never eaten before. He was actually eating like a normal human rather than poking around at his food, going at a pace that was like he hadn't eaten for days. It was actually refreshing to see him enjoying his food wholeheartedly. Dick was often reserved especially when they first started their abnormal friendship. He barely ate anything and when he did, he was polite about it.

But since he was more comfortable with Jason now, he'd often make noises as he chewed, moaning and groaning like he was having a foodgasm. Which was a good thing as odd as it was to hear those noises. Besides, he wanted Dick to put on a few pounds or more since he was far too lean. There was a bit of progress in weight gain but not much. He'd be sure to watch him closely though.

As Dick took another bite of his burger, their eyes met briefly and Jason smiled at him. "There's ketchup on your cheek," he said and reached over to wipe it away with a napkin.

"Thanks," he mumbled and took another bite of his burger. "Mmmm," he moaned, making a face as he savored his food. It was kind of doing weird things to Jason's poor heart and he tried to ignore it as best as possible.

"I have a question," he said and decided to get right to the reason why he'd asked him out so he could stop his thoughts from getting sidetracked.

"Hm?" Dick asked and blinked at his boyfriend.

"Bruce would like to invite you over to the manor for dinner."

Upon hearing that, Dick completely froze and almost dropped his burger. His pretty blue eyes were wide with shock, staring at him nervously. "...Yeah?"

"Yeah," Jason said and brushed a hand through his hair. "He uh—he said he wants to meet you properly. I mean, you don't have to come if you don't wa—"

"I'll come." Dick said and cut him off, surprising Jason by that answer. He was sure he'd say no because of how they treated him before so he hadn't expected a yes.

"Are you sure?"

The corner of his lips lifted into a small smile and Dick nodded. "Yeah. I—I want to go. I want to meet them properly too."

Jason exhaled loudly and he was kind of irritated at how nervous he was. But that was to be expected when he was going to be taking his boyfriend to officially meet the family. "Okay. I'll also be sure to lecture them beforehand. Best behavior and no off-handed comments," he said and reached over to brush aside part of Dick's fringe that was curling into his eyes. Dick all but smiled as he took another bite of his burger.

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Dick had been anxious all day, his nerves bouncing around. He couldn't find a moment to calm down and it was eating away at his sanity. Although he wanted to meet Jason's family, he was just extremely nervous. So nervous he might end up vomiting. The thought of meeting his father who had yelled at him before frightened Dick. He just hoped things would go smoothly. At least he was comfortable enough with Damian and Jason since he barely knew a thing about the others. He also wasn't the most socially adept person so he was worried he'd fuck up and Jason's family wouldn't like him.

It didn't help that he had to be presentable, putting on his best outfit which was a nice grey sweater and black pants. He saved this particular outfit for special occasions for when he needed to look clean.

Jason had picked Dick up and during the whole ride to the manor he was on edge. They lived quite far out from the city which he hadn't expected and was surprised to find out how far Jason drove every time to see him. He'd exerted a lot of effort just to visit him at his crappy apartment. It kind of made him happy to know he cared that much.

Once they arrived at the manor, Jason parked on the driveway and turned off the engine. He drew in a deep breath and turned his attention to Dick.

"You doing okay?" Jason asked, concerned.

He wasn't but he had to be. "Yeah. I'm just a bit nervous."

Jason gingerly stroked a hand down his cheek and pulled him in to press their foreheads together. "Relax." Easier said than done. "I made sure they'll be on their best behavior," Jason said and snatched him in a kiss, helping to draw away some of his nerves.

"Yeah. Okay."

They got out of the car and Jason firmly held Dick's hand as he led them to the front of the house. Needless to say, the manor was amazing. Dick was blown away with how gorgeous and huge it was. The place was beautiful, glamorous and looked quite antique. The furniture and decorations were nicely arranged, fitting together like a complete puzzle. Everything looked so expensive that Dick didn't want to touch anything, afraid he’d break it so he refrained himself from being too curious.

There were paintings hung around the wall, some of them portraits of the family, some of them intricate artworks. Despite the fact that the place was huge, it felt very homey. Almost made it seem like home, at least to Dick it did. He could sense that the manor was well lived in and used. Dick didn’t know how to explain it but he could just feel it. Just—the family’s presence permeating the air, filling each room. It was—it felt nice and Dick was a little jealous since he’d never had something like this. Just his little shack and the previous ‘homes’ he’d lived in.

Suddenly, he felt very out of place, but he tried to not let it get to him.

Jason led Dick to the family room and he felt his chest constrict in pain, felt butterflies flying about as his stomach churned and twisted. His hands were getting warm, sweating and he could feel Jason squeezing down tightly onto his hand. It was his own way of trying to reassure Dick that things would be fine and telling him to relax.

Dick had expected to find the family there but as he entered the room, it was empty. That was until Damian decided to pop out from the other side. Immediately his emerald eyes settled on Dick and he grinned at him.
“Grayson. You’ve arrived,” Damian said with a smirk to his lips, eyes shining with excitement. Like he’d almost missed him if that’s what his expression meant.

“Hey Dami. How are you?” He greeted and reached a hand to ruffle his hair.

“Tt. Fine,” the boy answered sulkily. The first few times Dick had attempted to touch his hair, he’d swatted his hand away. But recently whenever Dick tried, he let him and actually seemed to enjoy it. Well, at least they all thought so since he didn’t object. “I trust my brother has been treating you well?” Damian prompted in his own way of asking about Dick’s well-being while also tossing a glare at Jason. Jason only chuckled at how much of a protector Damian was trying to be even though Dick was his boyfriend.

“I’m good,” Dick smiled softly and added, “Jason’s been treating me fantastically. You don’t have to worry about that.”

Damian squinted his eyes skeptically at his brother before he nodded in acknowledgement. “If he doesn’t then I will handle it.”

“Oh?” Jason arched a brow at the boy. “You threatening to punish your older brother?” Jason challenged and folded his arms across his chest.

“Yes,” Damian simply stated. “If you hurt him then yes.”

“Well then, I accept because I probably deserved it.” Damian blinked rapidly at the man, taken aback by his brother’s comment and fought back a blush that was slowly creeping upon his cheeks. “By the way, why are you only nice to Dick?” Jason pouted and went to ruffle his brother’s hair.

“Ugh! Unhand me Todd!” He shouted and ducked away from Jason except the man wasn’t having it and chased after him.

Dick just watched the exchange and laughed in amusement, enjoying himself. The butterflies that’d been fluttering about in his stomach had disappeared and he felt calm, more at ease than when he’d arrived. The boy’s bickering helped him and he hoped his anxiety would stay put for the duration of his stay.

As Jason and Damian were battling it out on the ground, another person entered the room. It was Tim, the teenager who looked a little tired out. His hair was a wild mess, sticking up in all sorts of places and there were dark bags clearly prominent under his eyes. His clothes were rumpled like he’d just woken up. Maybe he’d been sleeping?

Jason paused mid-action, had Damian locked in a choke hold as he was about to give him a noogie, but got distracted by Tim’s appearance. During that brief moment of disturbance, Damian slipped away from his hold and distanced himself from his brother. Jason didn’t seem to care much as he had his attention on the teen.

“Did you just wake up?” He asked.

Tim stifled a yawn and nodded his head lazily before he collapsed on the couch, slumped over. “Yeah.”

“What the fuck? Did you stay up all night again?”

Tim nodded his head and fell to his side as he lay listlessly on the couch. “Sleepy. I need my coffee.”
“Tim—“ Jason said and pinched the bridge of his nose, exasperated. “You need to fix your schedule.”

“No,” he whined and pulled his legs onto the couch, curling up into a tight ball.

“Hey,” Jason called and watched as Tim closed his eyes. “Stay awake!”

Tim mumbled something and shook his head no, but in that instant, Damian rushed towards the teen and jumped on top of him, plopping his butt right on top of his stomach.

“Oof!” Tim cried and winced from the sudden attack.

“Up Drake. You must not be rude to our guest. Look at you. You need to clean up. You are unpresentable,” Damian reprimanded and bounced up and down on Tim, annoying the hell out of the teen.

“Ugh! You brat!” Tim growled and twisted in an attempt to push Damian off. He succeeded and the boy fell to the ground in a loud thud.

“Why you—“ Damian’s eyes were burning with rage and Dick didn’t know what was about to happen.

“Okay! Okay.” Jason interjected and held up his hands. “We’re not fighting with Dick here so calm the hell down.” Jason glared them both down, using his older brother advantage to make them submit. They kind of seemed reluctant and if Dick didn’t know any better, they may not have listened to him if he wasn’t here. Jason exhaled loudly and tossed a glance over at Dick. “I’d usually let them fight it off but that would be poor manners. At least for today.”

“It’s fine?” Dick questioned and titled his head to the side, a little unsure of how they solved things here. But he supposed if fighting helped to release their rage than that was maybe not so bad?

“I mean, if you want them to we can have that happen—“

Someone cleared their throat, interrupting Jason mid-sentence. All eyes turned towards the newcomer and they found a fairly older man dressed properly in a tailcoat and formal wear. Dick remembered this to be their butler, Alfred, since he drove him home that one time.

The butler stared at the group disappointingly. “We will not allow such behavior to happen while we have a guest here.”

“—Right,” Jason muttered and took back his words immediately. “We’ll just—yep, leave it at that.”

"Now, Master Tim, do get yourself cleaned up for dinner."

Tim groaned at his remark as he rolled off the couch. He waved a lazy hand at Dick, a late greeting before he slowly trudged out of the room.

“Master Damian,” Alfred turned his attention to the youngest of the group and stared him straight in the eye. “I do believe we will not be engaging in arguments this evening, correct?”

“Tt.”

“Correct?”

“—Yes.”
"Good. Now." After he was done reprimanding his children, he placed his full attention on Dick and gazed at him with a very stoic expression. It was a bit intimidating, but Dick had learned from Jason that he tended to look a bit serious most of the time. He did call him their sarcastic butler who can be very nice when he wanted to be. “Master Dick.”

Master? That was strange and weirded Dick out, but he didn’t dare argue against it. “I have not had the honor of introducing myself properly yet. I am the family butler, Alfred Pennyworth at your service.”

“Oh. Um—it’s nice to meet you. I’m Dick. Well, Richard Grayson.”

Immediately, Alfred’s facial expression softened and there was almost a gentle look in his eyes. “Pleasure is mine,” he spoke kindly and Dick hitched a breath at how tender it sounded, almost parental. Dick parted his lips to say something, wanting to ask something, but unfortunately, he was interrupted since Jason decided to take that moment to interject.

“Alfred is a God send,” he said and then waved his hand dramatically. “Seriously. I’m not lying. He’s also the best cook ever. You’ll see.”

Alfred chuckled softly and rolled his eyes comically at Jason.

Finally, the man of the house, the one who had invited him over showed up right behind Alfred.

“Ah. I see you have finally decided to show your face Master Bruce,” Alfred said sarcastically and Dick almost wanted to laugh, but held back on account of him not wanting to appear rude.

Bruce said nothing and cleared his throat as he pulled his lips into a smile. He walked towards Dick and stopped just a few inches before him. The man extended a hand out and Dick stared at it for a few seconds, a bit wary before he shook his hand. Bruce’s grip was strong and firm and it was a little different than most he’d shaken. Not a bad thing per say.

“It’s nice to finally meet you. I’m Bruce Wayne.”

“Dick Grayson.”

Bruce smiled and released his hold of Dick to settle his arm back at his side. The corner of his eyes softened a bit as a look of remorse filled his vivid blue eyes and might he add, they were quite gorgeous.

“I’ve been meaning to apologize to you.”

Oh. An apology. Dick wasn’t expecting one.

“For my outburst at the hospital. I am sorry for what I did and that was very wrong of me to do when you were not at fault.”

“Um—“ Dick was flabbergasted, and he became speechless. He didn’t know what to say at all. It was rare for anyone to apologize to him, and when he said rare, he meant never except for Jason. Most didn’t feel guilty of their actions, too prideful. And eventually Dick had learned to accept it, that he was at fault for everything. So hearing this—it was gratifying and honestly made him extremely happy. Almost bringing tears to his eyes. It took him a moment to collect himself, but he managed to do so. “I accept your apology,” he breathed.

Bruce sighed in relief and that caught Dick by surprise. The man didn’t strike him as being nervous so seeing that added a bit more to the sincerity in his apology. The fact that he had to work
up enough courage to say sorry.

“That’s good to hear,” Bruce said.

Dick gave a small smile and felt Jason place a hand at his back, knew that the man was probably happy about his father’s apology.

“If you sirs are finished, dinner is served,” Alfred interjected.

Bruce glanced to the side to give a slight nod at his butler before he turned around and looked at both Dick and Jason. “Shall we then?”

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Dinner was lively to say the least. Damian was a complete chatterbox, updating Dick on all sorts of things while Tim was telling Jason about his science project. Alfred did not sit at the table but he was around. Bruce on the other hand would make small talk here and there while Dick ate in relative silence, only answering when there were questions directed at him or making the occasional side comments.

Overall, it was a pleasant dinner. Probably what a normal family was like. Kind of reminded him of when he had dinner with his parents and the circus when he was younger. It’s been—wow—a really long time since then. It made him feel a bit sentimental and envious and his vision was starting to get a little foggy at the thought but he tried to shove it to the back of his mind. Didn’t want to worry Jason or anyone else who might have noticed.

As he dabbed at his eyes a little bit, he felt someone staring at him and caught sight of Bruce watching. He was wearing a small smile on his face and Dick gasped in horror. Had the man been watching him the whole time? He suddenly felt really embarrassed for being caught crying or almost crying.

"I—"

"You’re fine. I won’t ask.” Bruce said.

Dick drew in a shaky breath and dipped his head. "Okay." He felt relieved that he didn’t have to explain himself. He wasn’t exactly up for an emotional conversation with the father of his boyfriend.

Bruce had asked Dick to stay a while longer after dinner was over and invited him to watch a movie with them. Dick had declined initially, didn’t want to overstay since he was only there for dinner. But one way or another, Damian and Jason had both coerced him into watching a movie with them.

So there he was, sitting on the couch in their huge home theater because of course the Wayne family would have one. Honest to say, it was quite comfortable and relaxing, more so than the theaters he often went to. At least he wasn’t going to the crappy cheap one anymore and had upgraded to the nicer ones with reclining chairs.

Jason tossed a blanket around them, tucking them both so they stayed warm and cozy. It was so comfortable that Dick found himself dozing off half-way through the movie. He was tired, had worked a lot of hours the previous days and it was taking a toll on his body.

Exhaustion hit him hard and he ended up passing out.
When Dick had woken up, bleary eyes scanning the room, he found that everyone else had fallen asleep as well. Everyone except Bruce. The man was wide awake, noticed Dick shuffling around and had his eyes on him. God this was sort of awkward.

Bruce rose from his seat and left the theater. Dick felt like he was being called upon and decided to follow. Carefully he disentangled himself from Jason so he wouldn’t wake him before he ran off to follow the man out of the room.

They ended up in the kitchen and Dick found Bruce leaning against the kitchen counter. He didn’t know what to do so he stood around awkwardly, fidgeting with the hem of his sweater as he tugged and pulled at it anxiously. What did he want from him?

“You can relax,” Bruce said nonchalantly, but there was a touch of gentleness to his tone. “I just wanted to tell you that you’re welcome here any time. And if you need anything, anything at all, please let me know.”

“I—” Dick was about to argue, but Bruce hushed him.

“I can tell Jason likes you a lot and you’re good for him. Good for each other.”

Was this Bruce’s way of giving his approval? By indirectly implying that they can be together? That maybe, just maybe, it was fine for them to be together? Because part of Dick still believed he didn’t deserve Jason. That this happiness was only temporary and in the future, Jason will realize how much of a mess Dick was. That he probably shouldn’t have stuck it out with him and leave.

It was always one of his greatest fears and it worried him. Scared him even because Jason had changed his life significantly. If their relationship ever ended, Dick knew he would be devastated. Because everything would change and he’d end up going back to his shitty life.

But even then, he trusted Jason. Even though he doubted him, he still trusted him. It was silly and contradicting but he just—he believed in Jason. Knew how much he loved him and that he wasn’t the type of person to abandon him.

Oh god, he felt like crying.

Dick drew in a shaky breath and held back his tears, but it wasn’t helping. His vision was blurring and before he knew it, tears streamed down his cheeks. Bruce was startled, alarmed that Dick was weeping and swiftly strode over to his side. He hovered before him, unsure of what to do as he held out a hesitant hand. It must have been a minute or so when Bruce finally decided to gently tap his shoulder, just enough to comfort him but didn’t overstep his boundaries.

They stood there in silence, Bruce quietly attempting to lull away his cries as Dick just cried pathetically. He wished he had a better hold of his emotions, but he couldn’t help it.

They heard footsteps approaching them and soon, Jason appeared at the doorway, rubbing tiredly at his eyes. “Hey,” he murmured, but when he found Dick sobbing, he was suddenly wide awake. “What happened?” he asked and bounced over to his side, wrapped his fingers tightly around his arm.


Turquoise eyes flickered from Dick to Bruce, searching his adoptive father for an answer, but the
man shook his head, didn’t seem to know a thing as to what brought about his tears. “Okay…” Jason mumbled and pulled his lover towards him as Bruce stepped away. “Do you want to talk about it?” he questioned and placed a hand at the small of his back, rubbing small circles to calm him. Dick shook his head no and Jason huffed a breath. “Okay. That’s fine.”

“You’re welcome to stay the night,” Bruce offered, interrupting the two.

Dick hadn’t expected to stay the night at the manor, but considering it was already late, he might as well stay.

“Ah yeah. We can uh—we can use my room. Or if you prefer, the guest room,” Jason was stammering, embarrassed and it was a little funny to Dick. Caused him to chuckle a little and lift up his emotions.

“I would like that. And your room is—um—it’s fine. We can stay there.”

“Cool,” Jason murmured, trying to play it off slightly. He was probably feeling awkward for having this conversation in front of his guardian even though all they would be doing was sleep. “Let’s go up then?”

“Yeah,” Dick replied.

Bruce was already heading towards the kitchen and waved a hand at them. “Good night,” he said. “Good night and…thank you,” Dick mumbled and saw the corner of Bruce’s lips curl into a smile before he left the room.

Jason held his hand and guided him out of the kitchen, down the hallway and up the stairs to his bedroom.

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“So this is your room,” Dick said as he glanced around.

“Yes,” Jason answered and kicked the door shut with his foot.

“Hm. I expected there would be more of…you,” he sniffled, calming down a bit though a few tears were still falling.

Dick would have joined him but he decided to take a stroll around the room instead. It was spacious but felt a little empty. At least in terms of a personal touch, there didn’t seem to be much. Essentials? Yes. There was a king size bed placed in the middle of the room with a fancy bed frame. A variety of drawers and bookshelves were lined along the wall and each shelf was filled to the brim with books, books that appeared old and torn like they’ve been read many times.

There was also a flat screen TV pinned to the wall and an abundance of video game consoles neatly sitting in an organized cabinet. There were a few pictures that Jason framed up on the wall. One of him when he was younger standing next to Bruce and Alfred, possibly when he’d first been adopted.

Dick paused before the corner of pictures and gently brushed a finger over the glass. Jason was so young, almost as young as Damian. But he looked angry, eyes squinting in a glare and lips forlorn while Bruce appeared stoic. But underneath all of that, Dick could see the slight smile on his lips.
He was glowing even if just a bit. The picture was quite adorable and he kind of wanted to see more of his older photos.

“I never thought you’d be the type to hang up pictures,” Dick said and dabbed away his dears with his sleeves before he turned around to look at his boyfriend. Jason just sighed, pushing up on the bed to beckon him to come over. Dick closed the gap between them and Jason roughly tugged him at the waist, pulling him close so he was settled in between his legs.

“I need one of us together,” he said and squeezed his sides, tickling him.

Dick chuckled, squirming a little. “I’m not really meant for pictures.”

Jason rolled his eyes in annoyance and moved back so he could pull Dick onto his lap. He snaked his arms firmly around his mid and held him still around his waist and cuddled his lover. “Didn’t I tell you that you were gorgeous?”

“Yes but—“

“No buts. We’re going to take a picture right now.”

“Jason. I look gross and tired,” Dick complained and pointed a finger at his eyes. “Look at these bags,” he said and rubbed at them playfully, trying to make a point to Jason, but he didn’t seem to care. “And I just cried.”

“You’re still pretty anyways.” Jason ignored his whine and pulled out his cell phone. “Now smile,” he instructed and held up his phone so that the screen was faced towards them. Their faces appeared and Dick cringed upon seeing his haggard face and decided to hide against Jason’s shoulder. “Hey, come on.”

“No.”

“Dick…”

“No Jason.”

“Fine, I’ll just take it like this,” Jason muttered and Dick heard the shutter go off a few times before it became dead silent. Out of curiosity, he lifted his face to take a peek and that’s when Jason snapped a shot.

“Jason!” Dick shouted and the man just grinned teasingly at him.

“Hah. Got you,” he said and showed the picture to Dick. It honestly looked kind of hilarious but horrid. Jason looked fine as he usually did, handsome with a charming smile plastered on his face. While Dick was there, part of his face popping out from where he was hiding. Cheeks smushed against his shoulder and mouth ajar.

“Ugh.” Dick groaned, unhappy with the photo. “Delete it.”

“Hell no. Memento. This is my new screen saver.”

“No!” Dick tried to grab for his phone but Jason pulled away.

“Too bad Dickie.” He snickered and locked his phone before he tossed it aside. He then moved to grab Dick as he struggled to fight for the phone and flipped him onto his back, had him flush against the soft linen sheets.
“Jay!” Dick grumbled and attempted to wrestle him away but stopped when he found Jason pinching the edges of his sweater. Blue eyes immediately fell upon his lover and he caught the look in his eyes. They were feral, glowing under the limelight, more green than blue. There was a look of want in those eyes, lust filled and Dick felt his heart seize, felt breathless at Jason’s alluring look. His heart was pounding rapidly, begging to burst out of his rib cage.

Was this—? Could this be?

Dick drew in a shaky breath and tried to stay calm but it was hard. Not with the way Jason was looked at him, as if he wanted to devour him. Those eyes of his, he’d seen it a few times before and knew that Jason wanted him.

“Can I?” Jason whispered as he dipped in, getting closer and closer until their lips were just a few centimeters apart from each other. So close that if either of them moved just a bit, their lips would brush.

Dick wasn’t sure if he was ready or not. He knew what this meant and while he didn’t hate the idea of having sex with Jason, he just wasn’t sure if he could handle it. But since it was Jason, because it was Jason than maybe he could—maybe it’ll be fine. And with the way his emotions had been today, riding on a slightly bumpy roller coaster, he wanted to say fuck it and say yes.

And he did just that.

“Yes,” Dick whispered and that was all it took for Jason to crush their lips together, kissing him hard and rough, like he’d never done before.
Dick was never one for physical contact. Not after all that he’d experienced. He loathed it when people touched him, anyone really. But not Jason. Jason was different, he was his lover, his boyfriend and despite his trauma, he wanted to feel Jason, wanted him to run his hands all over his body. Wanted to drown in his warmth, his touch. Everything.

In all honesty, this feeling was foreign to him. The want and the need to be with someone else. It was strange and it wasn’t something he’d ever felt before. And what made the situation even stranger, at least to Dick, was that he was slightly aroused. Could feel heat pooling in his lower body, pleasure slowly creeping within him. And underneath it all, he was nervous and those nerves were causing him to falter. Made him tremble as his heart lit on fire, his insides burning wildly as he fought with himself, debating on whether he could do this or not.

As much as the thought of Jason touching him was fine, the reality of it was that it did feel a bit frightening and he had trouble relaxing. But he tried not to show it, tried his best to absorb the fact that it was his boyfriend that was touching. That the rough hands grazing his chest were Jason’s.

The soft kisses he'd place along his neck, running his tongue down and over his collarbone to suck a bit of his skin, leaving behind tiny red welts, were in fact Jason’s.

Dick sighed heavily, chest lifting up as Jason captured his lips, kissing him passionately while he licked his lips, asking for permission to enter his mouth. Dick willingly parted them and their tongues engaged in a dance as they clung to one another, exchanging saliva, tasting each other. He was sure he was being clumsy with how inexperienced his kissing was. How their teeth would bump every time and Jason would chuckle into the kiss. It was slightly embarrassing and he could feel heat spreading across his cheeks, so he settled for Jason leading him, nibbling his lower lip teasingly and drawing out a moan.

That was—that wasn't something he wanted to happen. Mortified, Dick sealed his lips and swiftly shut himself down, not wanting Jason to hear any more of his weird sounds. Except Jason wasn't going to allow him to do just that.

"Dick—" Jason murmured and kissed the corner of his mouth. "It's fine. You don't have to hide it. I love the sounds you make."

That didn't actually make him feel any better. Memories of the past flashed through his mind, memories of him telling Dick to scream louder. Encouraging him to moan loudly so he could listen to his sweet voice. Dick knew it wasn't the same, yet his mind was not allowing him a moment of rest. His body was tense, on edge as his toes curled tightly, hands balling into tight fists. His brows were scrunched together, creating little wrinkles in between.

Jason noticed how anxious his boyfriend was and moved to soothe him. "Relax," he murmured and gently trailed a hand down his cheek. "Just relax. I won't hurt you."

Dick sucked in a shaky breath and shook his head, trying to rid himself of all the memories that were attempting to penetrate his mind. He wanted them gone and tried to focus on the now. "Trying," he murmured, but it was hard.

“Okay, just breath and focus on me,” Jason said and recaptured his lips, mouthing against him as
he kissed Dick over and over again, distracting him so he could run his hands underneath his sweater, gently pulling it up to expose his mid-drift. And the moment Dick felt cool air brush against his bare skin, he froze. His body went completely still and he remembered how his hands felt. Remembered how he'd always attempted to strip Dick, ripped off all his clothes until he was naked beneath him. He knew that it wasn't him. That this was Jason and none of it was repulsive and yet, he was scared and he just couldn't help feel that way.

Jason realized immediately that there was something wrong and stopped. He pulled back from the man and gazed down at him, examining him with a look full of concern. "Dick?" Jason called in a soothing voice and Dick's body jerked as he let out a sigh. "Are you okay?" He prompted.

Dick exhaled and squeezed his eyes shut before he turned to the side and buried his face against the sheets. "...Fine," he breathed but he was obviously lying. He wasn't fine at all.

"Dick—"

"I'm fine. I'm—I'm just—don't worry about me. It's not you, it's not. It's just me. It's me and I'm fine. J-Just continue."

"Dick." Jason called once more in a tone filled with worry but he cut him off, didn't want to hear what he had to say. There was too much going through his mind and he just wanted to forget everything. Didn't want to feel or hear anything. He just wanted everything gone.

"No," he murmured. "No. It's okay. Just go. You can just—" and he knew he was stammering, was blabbing words that just seemed to flow from his lips. Was going into a trance and could feel himself losing his mind. Could feel his airways getting clogged as breathing became hard for him. And oh god—he was freaking out. He was not—

"Hey!" Jason shouted and he could hear him, he could, but he just couldn't respond. Was too lost in his nightmares to see anything, to hear anything. Someone was calling his name, murmuring words. Someone touching him, gentle and warm and he could feel the warmth blossoming, slowly spreading throughout his body. He knew this touch. He knew who it belonged too.

So Dick drew in a breath and tried to bring himself back to reality. Tried to fight his way back from his nightmares, shoving it down to the back of his mind and focus on Jason and just Jason.

But it wasn't working. It just—it wasn't. Every time he tried to picture Jason, he could just see him. His ugly mug glaring down at him, eyes glimmering with disgust as he grinned. As he tugged and pulled at Dick, restraining him down so he wouldn't fight back. So he could do whatever he wanted with him. As he touched him, ran his dirty hands all over his body. As he he—

And god—he could just feel him again. Felt his hands tugging on his sweater. Felt his body being touched in places that shouldn't be. And under all of that, he could feel his body being moved, felt himself being lifted, pulled upwards so that he was sitting. A warm hand on his cheek, caressing him and something pressed against his cheek. It felt ticklish and oddly warm.

But his mind was someplace else, far far away. And all he could see was darkness. Everything was pitch black and all that stood in his vision was the man, the old man gripping him roughly around the wrists as he held him down, his large body hovering over Dick’s tiny frame.

Fuck. Fuck. It was so dark. So scary. But it wasn't real. None of this was real. He was gone. He'd been gone since forever. He wasn't here, not here in his boyfriend's home. Not here at all. He can't—he's just not here!
"Dick!" And then finally, he heard his name. A frantic voice calling out to him, and he'd woken.

"W-What?" He croaked and he felt a weight collapse against him, felt arms squeezing his mid as someone rubbed their face against his own.

"Oh god. Fuck. You're okay." Jason was breathing loudly, his exhales coming in strong bursts. Or was it Dick that was making all the noise? It took him a few seconds to realize that it was him who was breathing dramatically. He was struggling, gasping for air, attempting to open up his lungs as he tried to calm himself. His face felt wet, damp in tears.

But he was fine. He was fine. The man was no longer there. He was gone, forever and Dick was safe. He was definitely safe.

He found Jason hovering before him, most likely staring at him, but his face was blurry. Almost looking through a frosted glass. He could make out his shape, but he couldn't see him, not with all the tears continuing to flow.

"Hey," Jason mumbled and Dick could just hear the concern in his voice and the fear lurking beneath his calm tone. "You okay?" He was being extra careful with Dick and he knew better than to agitate him when he'd just had another episode.

Dick breathed shakily and nodded his head. "Yeah."

"Are you sure?" Jason prompted.

"Yeah. I'm sorry." He apologized.

"It's not your fault so don't apologize. I shouldn't have done that. I shouldn't have—fuck," he cursed aloud, sounding disappointed in himself. "Shouldn't have pressured you."

"But I said yes," Dick argued.

"You did. I know you did but you weren't ready. I should have known. I shouldn't have done anything. Should have taken it slow and yet I—"

"It's not that. That's not the reason. I just wasn't—"

"Hey," Jason stopped him before he could have another freak-out. "Relax. Just breathe okay?" Dick nodded at his boyfriend and wiped away his tears so he could at least see his face. He drew in a few deep breaths, remembering to practice that exercise Jason had taught him so he could settle his nerves just a bit. He took a moment to collect his thoughts before he explained it to Jason.

"Good?"

"Good," Dick answered.

"So, did I trigger something?" He murmured hesitantly.

"A little. It wasn’t—I knew it was you. I knew. Just, when you touched me, I remembered things. Your touch was fine. It wasn't disgusting or anything. It just—I felt nervous and scared. Not that you would hurt me because I know you wouldn't. It just brought up the past and it was hard for me to forget."

"Sorry," Jason immediately apologized.

Dick shook his head, finally able to see Jason as the fog in his eyes cleared. The man looked so
upset, disappointed in himself. His face was scrunched up, little wrinkles forming at the corner of his eyes, between his brows and around his lips. And he knew he'd scared him with another one of his break-downs.

"Don't say that," Dick said and searched for his hand, holding it firm in his own as he tugged and pulled at his fingers. "It wasn't your fault. None of it was your fault Jason. It's me, okay? It's all me."

"Dick, are you seriously telling me to blame someone who obviously has trauma? I think not. You don't need to blame yourself."

"But—"

"Look, let's not blame each other. You weren't wrong and I wasn't wrong. It just—it didn't work out and we jumped too quickly into it. We can—we can slowly work on it, okay? So that eventually he'll stop haunting you. So you won't have to remember anything about him. We'll take it slow."

Tears pricked his eyes once more but Dick blinked the tears away, forcing them down. He was so done crying. "Thanks," he murmured, couldn't believe how good Jason was to him. "Thanks Jason."

"Of course. Anything for you."

"I'm sorry I said yes and we ended up like this," he gestured.

Jason just shrugged his shoulders and thought nothing of it. "It's fine. I didn't expect you to react poorly. You probably didn't either."

And that was a fact. "I just wanted to try."

"I know. We did and we found out that we should probably take it a step at a time."

"Yeah."

Jason sighed and bumped their foreheads together. He had him bundled in his arms. "Is it okay if we stay like this?" He asked for permission, wanting to know it was fine to continue holding him.

"Yeah, it's okay. It's soothing," he answered and Jason squeezed him even tighter, making him feel safe and warm, protected from all his past memories.

They sat there in relative silence as the mood dwindled down from an all-time emotional high as Dick's breathing finally normalized. He shuffled a bit, moving to make himself more comfortable on Jason's lap as he positioned himself sideways so he could lean against his chest.

"Hey," Jason said and broke the silence. "I wanted to ask, but I saw some of the scars..." he murmured as his words trailed off.

Right. Of course he would have seen them. "They weren't from him. He didn't hit me. Maybe because I was obedient for the most part. But these scars are from before. This family—un—they took me in. But the mother was—she was abusive. She wasn’t like that at the start but when she found out her husband was cheating on her, she kind of took it out on me. So she—she hit me instead of her kids."

"Wait. If she had kids, why did she adopt you?"
“I’m not sure about that. It seemed like they just wanted a third child, but couldn’t have one.”

“But she hit you. She fucking hit you after adopting you and that’s not right.”

“I know, but I was ten. What could I do about it?”

“Dick, you should have called for help.”

“But I was afraid.”

Jason sighed, frustrated and bumped his head with his own. “Okay. I get it. You were a kid and you were afraid. So what did the husband do?”

“Nothing. He did nothing. He came back a few times only to be yelled at and was fed up so he left. Then things got worse. She became aggressive, angrier and started hitting me more. Even made me do gruesome chores like cleaning the entire house.”

Jason scrunched his nose in distaste. “Can I look?” He asked, searching his eyes for a sign of confirmation.

Dick hesitated to show Jason, didn't want him to see all the parts that he hated about himself. But sooner or later, Jason would find out and he couldn't keep hiding it forever so he nodded his head yes. Ever so gently, Jason pulled the sweater up and over Dick's head to reveal his upper body.

Dick knew he was lean and that was one of the things he didn't like about himself. Jason knew it, but it was different seeing him naked versus seeing him underneath a layer of clothes. Dick wished he could gain some fat and muscles in the future, work himself to be a bit more tone. Similar to Jason, but not as built.

There were cuts and bruises decorating his skin, spread sparsely throughout his body. Some on his sides, his back and even on his front. They'd healed over time and some blended into his skin but they were still very much there. Jason traced a finger lightly over the lumpy scars, following the lines as he jumped from one cut to the next. They extended to his legs, but he wasn't planning on showing him. Didn't plan to reveal it until he was ready. This was already enough to make his skin crawl.

Jason was intrigued and couldn't keep his eyes off him. Kept feeling over the bumps of his scars, never once pulling back. It made Dick slightly nervous, how focused he was on them. Wondering what he thought about them, how he felt.

"What did she hit you with?" Jason asked out of curiosity.

"A rope. Belt. Stick. Sometimes other objects."

"You..." And that was all he had to say before he drew in and kissed him instead, murmuring words between every kiss. Cursing loudly, frustrated that he couldn't do anything, that there was nothing he could do. "Fuck. Dick. I can't—" he said and drew in a rickety breath, trying to hold himself down from breaking apart. "I wish I was there to protect you. God. I so wish I had found you earlier."

Just knowing that Jason cared enough to feel this way brought a smile to his face. It wasn't much and it didn't change anything, but it was something and it meant a lot to Dick. "Thanks Jason."

"You deserve so much," he said and pecked his forehead, threaded his fingers through his hair, gently gliding through. "So much more. You didn't deserve any of this."
Dick said nothing. Didn't pipe a single word as he let Jason pamper him, sighing contently from feeling his warmth. Besides, what could he even say to that? Everything that happened had already passed and nothing could be done to change that. He'd been abused—many times by multiple families. Was treated less than a human being and he couldn't do anything about it. Did nothing about it, but he was only a child, a child who couldn't defend himself. Sure, he could have fought back and he tried, but they just punished him even further.

It was a losing battle. A fight he couldn't win no matter what so he let it happened. Was trained to believe that he was worthless. So he accepted it and decided to hide away his past so that no one would know, that not a single soul would find out. He tried his best to live life one step at a time, tried to not let his nightmares get the best of him. Let himself believe that it wasn't worth it to be angry, to hate because it would consume him, eat him alive until that was all he felt.

So it was better to not feel anything. To not care and numb himself to any sort of emotions. It worked for a period of time, but everything changed when he met Jason. And it changed for the better.

Now he wanted nothing more than to be by Jason's side. To learn and heal so he could become whole once again, like he once was before his parent's death. He wasn't sure how long it would take for him change. Or even how long he'd be together with Jason. It might not even be an eternity but he sure wished—would try his best—to make it last as long as possible.

"I love you," Dick whispered those three little words he'd never once told anyone else except for his parents.

Jason's actions came to an abrupt stop and he gawked at the man, eyes wide and full of shock. "Yeah?"

"Yeah," Dick answered with a small smile. "I love you Jason."

And maybe he should have said that a little sooner because the smile on Jason's face, the way his expression instantly glowed was worth it. "I love you too," he murmured, voice sounding slightly wet but Dick wouldn't comment on that.

Jason moved to grab the sweater he'd momentarily tossed to the side and slipped it onto Dick. They then climbed underneath the sheets and got comfortable in bed, cuddling against one another as their limbs twined, legs hooked and warms around each other's waist. They didn't fall asleep immediately, was wide awake after that episode so they talked instead. Talked about everything and nothing.

They talked and talked until eventually they tired themselves out and one of them started yawning, slowly dozing off. And finally they passed out, sleep overtaking them.

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After that emotional night at the Wayne's, Dick spent the next few days recovering from the mental exhaustion. Well, as best as he could because he still had work. However, the thoughts of what had occurred still resurfaced whenever he blanked out. It wasn't something he thought he would ever do, nor did he expect it to turn out so badly. And after a good day of thinking it over, he realized that he shouldn't have forced himself and scare Jason like that. He felt bad about it, putting Jason through his issues once again. Though Jason was always understanding and Dick really appreciated it because whenever he went through one of his break-downs, he always felt like he'd been a burden on Jason. But he knew that Jason never once felt that way. It was really just all in his mind and his inability to think positively.
Besides all of that mess, he enjoyed his stay at the manor and found Jason's family to be quite endearing. They were kind of different than when he first met them. Less uptight and more free, acting like themselves. At least, that's what Dick thought because he wasn't sure since he didn't really know any of them besides Damian. They all treated him well and even conversed with him the next day, trying to buy his time but bribing him with movies and the like (that was mainly Damian). Even Tim joined in, though his bickering with Damian was constant, it was still fun. He was eventually coerced into spending most of the day with them until Jason finally shooed them away to take Dick back home.

Although it was only two days away from home, Dick kind of missed the company. It was...nice. Something he hadn't experienced in a while, a home full of life. While part of him wanted to stay a little longer, he had to come back to reality and go back to his normal life. At least he could now visit whenever he wanted, though he didn't quite have the confidence to ask to go. Not yet, so he supposed he'll have to let Jason do the honor of "dragging" him there. Which he fully expects him to do because well, it's Jason.

Dick sighed heavily as he clicked open the door to his apartment. He shuffled inside and kicked the shoes off his heels, shoving them off to the corner. Tiredly, he dragged his body with much effort all the way towards his bed and collapsed face forward. Work had been grueling and his body was exhausted, drained of energy. He could barely feel any strength in his limbs and his body felt sore all over. Sometimes, he wished he didn't have to work two jobs just to make ends meet and right now, he was feeling just that.

The constant long shifts and lack of sleep had caught up to him, finally taking a toll on his body. His movements had become sluggish the past few days, and it didn't help that his bills were coming up so he'd taken on more shifts that he could handle. He knew it too, but even then, he took them. Not to mention, any free time he had he'd try to spend with Jason. While that was fun and he loved spending every moment with Jason, sometimes he just wanted to rest. And rest was what he really needed right at this moment.

Dick yawned loudly as he rolled onto his side and curled into a ball, tugging at the sheets to cover himself. He was still in his work clothes and he smelled of oils and fried foods. Yet, he couldn't care less. Every fiber in his muscle ached and all he wanted to do was sleep the night away. Which might have to wait as he recalled that he was supposed to give Jason a call. They've been doing late night chats during times they couldn't meet up, but Dick was just way too tired to gather any energy to call. Maybe he'll just do it when he wakes up.

His eyelids grew heavy and he could feel his vision blurring. The thought of Jason fluttered about in his mind, but was swiftly swept away as a wave of darkness enveloped him and Dick passed out.

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Dick stifled a yawn, slowly waking from his slumber. He stirred in bed, rolling onto his side as he tugged at the blankets, cocooning himself further into the warmth. He drew in a breath and immediately started choking, coughed loudly as a burnt taste penetrated his esophagus. Swiftly, his eyes shot wide open, bulging like a bug when he found flames blazing before him.

“What?!” Alert, Dick jumped up to his feet and took in the room before him. He found himself in a cloud smoke, completely filling the room as the fire burned brightly, shredding through his walls and making its way towards the ground, capturing everything that was in its way as it ate up all of his possessions.
Dick couldn’t wrap his mind around the situation and was unsure of what had transpired during his sleep. Where was the fire coming from? From what he remembered, he hadn't turned anything on when he came upon. Not even the lights. Which only meant that someone else in the complex had caused the fire. Who, he didn’t know and couldn’t even begin to guess. All he knew he had to do right now was escape and quick. He needed to get out before the fire consumed him as well, before it locked him inside with no way out.

Realizing the imminent danger he was in, Dick’s eyes shifted to his door and there, he found that part of the fire had already spread, slowly climbing its way up from a corner of the door and curling around the knob. He wasn’t sure if he should risk it, but it was the only plausible way of getting out. It was better than being trapped inside so he rushed towards the door, but in a swift second the fire expanded, blocking his way as it rapidly grew.

Okay. Seeing that he couldn’t get through the door, he switched his objective to the window since that was the only other source of getting out. Dick's room wasn't on the first floor but thankfully, he wasn’t too high up. Just on the third floor. He could jump out the window, it would fit him since it was big enough and maybe the few bushes could pity his fall. At most he'd break a bone or two.

But was it worth it? Dick didn’t know.

He was slowly starting to lose his calm, unease blooming within him, slowly spreading like the threatening fire swirling around him. He wasn’t sure what he should do. The flames were getting out of control and the smoke grew dense, filling the room as it thickened, and clogging Dick’s lungs. He was struggling to breathe, his breath coming in short bursts, mixing in with coughs as the smog scratched at the back of his throat.

Shit. He just hoped that someone would come to his rescue before things got worse.

Chapter End Notes

...Dick's just a magnet for bad luck =I
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long update! Been busy and was on vacation. But now I'm back and...... you may have noticed the chapter number has been updated. Yes, it's nearing the end sadly ;(

See the end of the chapter for more notes

For someone who had special powers to perceive the bad that would befall upon others, Dick could never quite see his own misfortunes until they were too late.

Dick typically knew when someone was in danger, but when it came to himself, well, it just never worked. There were no warning signs of his own danger. He couldn't feel that same sense of dread crawling up his spine, an inkling that told him to be careful. A feeling that he might be in jeopardy. None of that ever happened for him, so by the time he was able to escape any type of danger, the damage had already been dealt. It didn't help that he had no one to help him, to protect him while he was often there for strangers he didn't even know.

It's not as if he could blame himself or his powers. Life would have been like this even without his powers so he tended to take it at face value, never bothered blaming his powers for his own misfortunes. It was just life.

He thought the worst had already happened to him, but that was never the case with someone who was cursed. Really, he might as well be cursed. And once again he found himself in the state of peril and he wasn't quite sure if he'd make it out. He was stuck inside of his apartment, engulfed in flames with no way out as the smoke continued to penetrate his lungs, filling it.

He needed to get out and fast, but the door was blocked and he couldn't exactly just shove his way out, afraid the fire would swallow him up. It was hot and scorching, he could feel his insides burning, like he was about to melt. Beads of sweat formed at the edges of his hairline, slowly dripping down. He was sweating, his skin become sticky and wet, soaking into his clothes and clung tightly around his body.

Dick drew in a large breath and pulled his shirt collar up to cover his nose, preventing the toxic fumes from clogging his throat. It wouldn't help in the long run, but he could hold out until he got rescued. If he got rescued. His mind was running a mile a minute, heart beating rapidly as he tried to think—think of a way to escape, but no matter how hard he tried, nothing came to mind.

Fear had taken over, his mind packed with thoughts of the end. Dick was scared, worried that he might actually die here. That this was it for him.

He hadn’t even accomplished anything yet. Had just finally been able to stand on his own two feet. Slowly overcoming his traumas, gaining his self-confidence back and just—having a life for himself.

And then there was Jason, Jason, his—god. He couldn’t even think of Jason clearly, just the thought of him caused his emotions to burst, the gate flooding as the anxiety poured in, filling him whole. His body was shaking, and he couldn't breathe.
He didn’t want to die. Didn’t want to leave Jason behind.

He needed to focus. He just had to. Needed to push away all his worries and bury them so he could focus on finding a way out. Dick slowly breathed in and out to clear his mind, used his sensory to pick up any sounds he could hear. And then there it was—sounds of footsteps running by his door, footsteps climbing up and down the stairs. As he listened harder, he could hear the sirens, could hear people shouting and yelling and he felt relief wash over him. Knew that help had arrived and soon, he'd be free of the fire.

But of course they wouldn't know that he was inside the room and he needed to do something about that. As his eyes scanned around the area, he spotted the window he'd forgotten about momentarily and rushed towards it. He opened it with sheer force and stuck out his head, gasped loudly as he breathed in the fresh air. Frantic blue eyes narrowed in on the fire trucks lined up along the sides of the streets, could see the men in uniform rushing to put out the fire as a few were suiting up to enter the building.

With urgency, Dick waved his hand and started shouting with all of his strength. "Help!" He screamed and coughed loudly, hadn't realized how damaged his lungs had become due to the smoke. His inner walls itched, irritated and his voice was raspy, sounded almost as if he'd been a long time smoker. It hurt to use his voice, but it didn't matter because he needed to get out. He tried again and again, screaming like a lunatic and waving his hands ferociously. Finally, someone spotted him. One of the firefighters' eyes locked in on Dick and he nodded his head at the man before he turned around to round up his fellow teammates.

"Wait there! We will come to you!" The firefighter responded and Dick nodded his head. He watched as they disappeared inside of the building and felt his internal mental clock ticking down, waiting anxiously for his rescue.

He was glad that they were here, but they needed to hurry because Dick could see the flames spreading from the corner of his eyes as it slowly started to creep towards him.

Dick trailed away from the window and retreated to a corner of the room, farthest away from the fire. It was spreading wildly, attempting to eat him alive as it surrounded him with no way out. The room was filled with smoke clouds and he could barely see the door anymore. Dick coughed loudly in between breaths, choking on the foul air. Could feel his breathing growing weak as he struggled to keep himself afloat within the heavy fumes. Could feel his vision blurring and no—no, he needed to stay awake. He couldn't pass out now, but his conscious was fading and his body went slack, slumping against the wall. He could feel the energy leaving his legs as he fell on his bottom.

Dick refused to let himself pass out and started pinching his legs in an attempt to stay awake. It was helping slightly and thankfully, the firefighters had arrived as he could hear shouting and banging from the opposite side of where he was at.

Someone was attempting to break down the door and Dick tried his best to let them know he was here. He screamed and shouted, “I'm here, right here!” and finally, he heard something fumble, sounding like chunks of wood crashing down onto the floor. From his bleary eyesight, he could make out silhouettes of three large men who swiftly came to his side and whisked him away in their arms.

Before he even made it out of the room, his conscious slipped and he passed out, relieved that he'd finally been rescued.
Jason didn't receive a call from Dick last night which was a little peculiar, but he assumed Dick was probably tired and forgot about their scheduled call. Though typically he'd at least give him a quick ping of some sort, a sort of quick 'I can't today' type call. It's not as if Jason was worried, but it was just slightly out of the ordinary so he tried to call him, but he didn't pick up.

Either way, they had date plans today and Jason was on his way to pick the man up.

At least he thought he was.

“What the fuck?” Jason hissed sharply under his breath as he pulled up to the apartment building. Well, what used to be a building because now, it was more or less burnt down into ruins.

As Jason put his car into park, his eyes scanned the area, could see a crowd of people standing along the streets. Some crying and some in tatters. There was a hoard of policeman and firefighters running about, helping those who needed help. The fire had been extinguished, completely put out but the building wasn't saved.

He at least hoped no one was critically injured or worse, dead. Jason plowed his way through the sea of people, searching for Dick but he didn't see him and suddenly dread washed over him, filling his core as his heart sped up. Anxiety tickled his skin and he was beginning to panic from Dick's absence.

Dick was nowhere to be seen and he just hoped—prayed that nothing happened to him. That he was okay and he was able to find shelter somewhere.

If only he had a cell phone than Jason would have been able to contact him but he couldn't so he had to rely on others. Jason jogged right up to the small group of officers and started poking them for answers.

"What happened here?" Jason asked, was surprised at how steady his voice came out. He tried his best to remain calm, keep a level head.

One of the officers turned to meet him and answered. "A fire broke out last night due to someone leaving their stove unattended. It wasn't easy to contain since the foundation of the place is unsatisfactory and thus, the fire spread quickly. We didn't receive a call until it was too late."

Jason felt his chest constrict at the news and now he was even more worried about Dick. "What happened to the residents?"

"Most of them were rescued and got out fine. Some were injured and are currently in the hospital for treatment."

Hospital? Fuck. "What hospital?"

“Gotham Central."

That was all he needed before he rushed towards his car, got in and sped off towards the hospital. Jason drove with such speed, breaking all laws and was actually lucky enough to not get caught. He parked at the first spot he could find, did a poor job at it, but he didn't care. He was in a rush to find his boyfriend.

Jason sprung in the lobby loudly after having ran his way from the lot and banged his fists against the counter. "Is there a Richard Grayson who was checked in today?"

The receptionist just gave him a look, glaring at him slightly before she started typing on her
keyboard. "Let me check." While she did that, Jason was tapping his foot impatiently, wanting her to give him an answer soon. It was taking far too long for her to search him up and by too long, it was only a minute or two.

"Yes," the lady answered. "He was checked in today. Are you a family member?"

"Yes." He was lying, but it was the best way to get himself in.

"He's in hall C, Room 205."

"Great. Thanks," Jason swiftly waved her off and sped towards the room Dick was currently occupying, got yelled at to please walk and growled at being reprimanded, but slowed down anyways.

His heart was pounding wildly, still anxious and worried about Dick's well-being. From what he knew, Dick didn't have any family or relatives so there was possibly no one set as his primary contact. Or worse, he might not even have any medical insurance in the first place. God, the —Jason hadn't realize how much he didn't know about Dick's financial issues. He knew the man was not well off, but by how much? He wasn't sure. All he knew was that he'd have to have a talk with Dick and find a way to help him out. That is, if he lets him.

His train of thought came to an abrupt end as he found himself standing in front of room 205. Saw Dick's name scribbled on the door. Jason drew in a shaky breath, felt tense about what he'd find behind that door. He hesitated for a brief moment, fingers gently touching the knob before he turned it and pushed it open. He could hear the sounds of a heartbeat coming from the EKG, slow and steady which was a bit of a relief to hear.

As he finally stepped inside, he closed the door shut behind him and took the time to gather in the sight before him. There he was, lying in bed, sound asleep. From a glance, Dick appeared fine for the most part, and didn't seem to have any life threatening injuries on him, at least from the naked eye. Underneath? Not so sure.

Relief washed over him at the fact that he was alive and breathing. The tautness of his muscles relax, and he sighed heavily. "You idiot," Jason whispered and thanked whatever God was up there that Dick was okay. "You freaking scared me," he added before he pulled a chair beside the bed and collapsed in it. He settled his eyes on his lover and searched his entire body for anything amiss. But there was nothing except for a few bandages here and there.

Jason rummaged underneath the blankets for Dick's hand and held it tight, squeezing it with such pressure that he roused Dick awake. There was a soft groan followed by the twitch of fingers.

"Dick?" Jason murmured, a little taken aback that Dick had reacted to his touch. He didn't expect to wake him up, didn't mean to do it.

"Jason?" His voice was raspy ad he sounded god-awful.

"Hey babe," Jason greeted playfully as a way to settle the mood between them. He stretched out an arm and stroked his cheek gingerly, watched as Dick lifted his eyes, blinking rapidly before he settled his attention on him. He seemed a bit confused.

"Where am I?" he asked and scrunched his face, disoriented.

"Hospital."

"Hospital?" Yeah, he was definitely confused and didn't seem to remember what had happened.
"There was a fire at your apartment." Maybe that would help to kick start his memory a bit, get it running.

Then suddenly, Dick's eyes lit up, widening like it was about to pop out of its socket and he abruptly sat up in bed. "Ow!" He groaned, buckling back down from the sudden pain.

"Whoa," Jason called and stood up, moved to help him lay back down. "Calm down there. Are you injured anywhere?"

Dick shook his head. "Not really. Just my head and my throat."

Jason exhaled loudly and gingerly carded his fingers through Dick's hair, working out the tangles at the ends of his dark strands. "Are you okay?"

"Fine. I'm just—I—"

"Hm?"

"I—I don't know what happened. What happened?" Dick asked and cocked his head as he stared at his boyfriend, searching for an answer. "I passed out as they rescued me. And I don't remember anything after."

Now that made a lot of sense as to why Dick didn't contact him and the fact that he was confused.

"I went to your apartment and it's completely burned down. I couldn't find you and I—I kind of freaked out," Jason admitted and cupped his cheek, swiping a thumb gently across his dusty skin. "I'm glad you're okay though. I asked the police officers what happened. Apparently someone forgot to turn off their stove and set the place ablaze."

Dick was horrified at that, so shocked he didn't know what to say and just gawked for a moment. "E-Everything?"

Jason had a feeling of what he was getting at. "Yeah, everything," he answered calmly.

"What—" he croaked. "What am I going to do?"

Jason could see the distress clear in his eyes and immediately understood the concern Dick was having. It wasn't hard to guess anyways. He was worried about where he would be living now that his apartment was burned to a crisp. And while Jason could see the wheels spinning in his head, he already had an answer for him. Had one since the moment he saw what had happened.

"Dick. If you're worried about where to live, I can help you with that."

"What?" Dick blinked at him, perplexed.

"You can live with me," Jason simply stated.

Dick faltered for a second, was frozen before he swiftly became coherent once again. "At the mansion?"

"Yeah."

"But—I can't. I mean, I—I don't know." He murmured, conflicted with himself.

"We've dated for a while now so it's fine. If you have an issue with it, you can tell me and we can work something out."
"No," Dick breathed shakily and shook his head. "That's not it. It's just—this would be helpful, but what about your family?"

“And what about them?”

“Are they—would they even want me?”

Of course that would be his main concern and Jason should have expected that. That Dick would worry about being an intrusion when he knew that his family would take Dick in a heartbeat, no questions asked.

"I think my family would be very happy to have you. But if it makes you feel any better, I can ask. Also, you don't—okay. I may be overstepping my boundaries with this, but you don't need to find another place. You can just—" he paused briefly and hitched a heavy sigh. "Dick, you can just stay with me. I think it would—it'd be better."

Dick didn't seem too convinced about that and retorted. "I don't know," he murmured, an expression of struggle spreading thinly across his face. "I don't want to intrude."

"Fuck that," he grumbled and decided to let out his true feelings. "You're not intruding. I just—I want to take care of you. I don't want you living in a dumpster of a place. I want to be able to be there for you in case anything ever happens. Like this." Jason huffed a distressed sigh, leaned down and gently brushed his lips across his forehead before bringing them close together, staring him in the eye, serious about what he'd said. He hoped he'd conveyed his feelings so that Dick would understand. So that Dick knew that Jason wanted him.

Because he did. He so did. He wanted to be there every step of the way. Wanted to be able to help and protect him when no one else could. This ordeal had frightened him, scarred him. He could have lost Dick and it would have been that easy. It also didn't help that he knew about his past and how awful it was and for once in Dick's damn life, he needed something good to happen to him. Jason wanted to take away all the bad, cleanse Dick of his terrible luck and just—he just wanted him to be happy.

That's all he wanted.

Jason patiently waited for Dick's reply, anxious and praying that he would say yes.

It took a moment.

Or two.

But eventually, after what felt like eternity, he finally gave him an answer.

"Okay," he murmured, eyes slightly glassy as he drew in a deep breath. "Okay. I—we can do that. Thanks Jason."

Jason couldn't help but smile and captured his lips in a warm kiss, could feel how chapped and dry they were. "Anything for you," he whispered and kissed him again. "Now, let me ask my family."

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It didn't take much effort for the family to agree to Dick moving in. Actually, they answered so swiftly Jason didn't even get to finish his story until after they made a consensus decision. Honestly, all Jason had to say was ‘Dick needed a place to stay’ and Damian was the first to pipe up and say yes before they all jumped in and followed suit. After he'd finished his complete story
about Dick's current situation, they felt so bad that they broke apart to set up a room for Dick.

It was funny how quickly they took a liking to Dick after their objection at first, well, some of them objecting.

Damian was probably the most excited about having Dick join the family and he was actually quite angry about the fire when Jason had told him about it. He even went as far as to yell at him for not doing anything even though it wasn't his fault since he was never there in the first place and had no idea.

Though Jason had to admit, it felt somewhat nice to have someone blaming him instead of him blaming himself even though it wasn't his fault. As odd as that sounded, it was a bit of a reminder that as much as he wanted to be there for Dick, he couldn’t and it wasn’t his fault that things just happened.

The whole family wanted to visit Dick so badly they just invited themselves to the hospital. It was kind of overwhelming for Dick and Jason could see how on edge he was with the way his voice was slightly trembling. Was probably nervous from all the attention he was receiving since he wasn't used to it.

"Um—" Dick wasn't sure what to say as they were all hounding him with questions. Especially Damian.

Everyone was in the room, except for Bruce, all talking among each other while Jason and Dick just kind of listened. It was mainly Damian spewing stories about things he'd done this week while also arguing with Tim on the side.

Jason just hoped Bruce would return soon and when he did, the room grew silent as he entered the door.

"What's the verdict?" Jason asked and settled his eyes on the man. Bruce had gone off to speak to the doctor to handle all the paperwork and the bills.

"He can be discharged as of right now," Bruce simply stated with a smile. Since Dick hadn't sustained any serious injuries and was healthy, he was free to leave. It was just—they needed to handle his paperwork first which thankfully, Bruce did.

"Oh," Dick finally piped in and blinked at the man. "Is it—" Dick sucked in a large breath and hesitated to finish his question. Jason pressed a gentle hand to his arm, giving a small squeeze to urge him on. Dick nodded and parted his lips to finish his thought. "Is it okay for me to stay?"

Even though Jason had told Dick about what his family had said, he still wasn't satisfied until he confirmed it himself.

The corner of Bruce's lips tugged into an amused smile and Jason could just see him turning his eyes. "Of course. You are welcome to stay as long as you want," he said.

"Tt. You can stay as long as you want." Damian added.

Tim gave him a look. "...Are you trying to steal him away from Jason?" He poked, teasing the boy and earned a nasty scowl.

"Whoa, Damian. I think you're too young to be thinking about love," Jason hoked and could see a bright red coloring the boy's cheeks.
"No!" He grumbled, denying their accusations. "It. That's not what I meant."

Jason laughed aloud at his little brother, knew that the boy didn't really have a crush on Dick. It was more of him looking up to Dick as a possible older brother or maybe just a brother he wanted to protect. It was really funny how much of a liking he'd taken to him since they'd argued so much about it before.

While the others were filing out of the room, Jason stayed behind to help Dick out of the bed and change into a pair of suitable clothes that Alfred had brought for him. He basically had nothing left of his own since it all burned down except for his essentials that he kept on himself. But everything else? Gone. Though that was all monetary value and could be simply replaced. Well, on Jason's budget it can be.

Dick disappeared into the bathroom and quickly switched out of the hospital scrubs into a pair of pants and t-shirt. He came back out and Jason couldn't help but notice that these were actually Tim’s clothes that surprisingly fit, though a tad short.

Jason then swiped the hoodie off the bed and handed it to him since it was still chilly outside.

"Your family is way too nice," Dick commented as he zipped up the sweater.

"They just really like you is all," Jason replied with a smile on his face.

Dick just raised a curious brow at him. "But why?" He questioned and Jason just chuckled at that.

"You're charming."

"Am not."

"You so are. You just don’t know it." Taking a step forward, Jason tapped a finger against him forehead, teasing him. "You’re just so blind."

Dick wiggled his nose and huffed a breath. "You keep calling me names."

"It’s all in fun Dickie." Even though Dick was pouting, he could see the faint smile on his lips, how the corners lifted just a bit. He’d been in a terrible mood ever since, stressed and upset. But who wouldn’t be?

Jason closed the gap between them and tugged at the edges of his sweater, pulling Dick flush against his chest. "Hey."

"Uh?" Dick blinked in surprise. "What are you--?" And before he could even finish his sentence, Jason captured his lips before parting to bring their foreheads together.

In a breathless voice, lips hovering just above Dick, he said, "I’m so fucking glad you’re okay." And then drew in a shaky huff, his tone changing to one of slight displeasure. "I’m pissed I wasn’t there."

Dick sighed softly and gazed into his eyes, bringing a hand to gingerly cup his cheek. "It's fine. I'm okay and everything's been done."

"I know, but—"

Dick pinched his cheek to stop him from scrutinizing himself even further. "Jason. Don’t blame yourself. It’s not your fault okay? So don’t worry. I’m fine. And now that we'll be living together,
you'll be there.”

Jason exhaled for the umpteenth time. He wasn't satisfied with himself but understood what Dick was saying. Even though he knew, even though he thought he'd already settled his feelings, he couldn't let it go. Not after knowing everything that had happened to Dick in the past. It was a little heartbreaking to keep seeing him hurt.

Jason covered Dick's hand with his own and chewed his bottom lip. "I know. I just—I don't want you getting hurt anymore."

Dick all but rolled his eyes and leaned back on his toes to kiss Jason, the rare time he ever takes the initiative. "Thank you Jason."

And Jason just gawked at him. "For what?"

"Everything," Dick said and Jason continued to stare at him like a deer in headlights, still a tad taken aback by his suddenness.

As he was about to add on, they were suddenly interrupted as the door burst open and Tim popped his head in through the opening. That fluff of black hair curling over his eyes. “Can you two stop flirting and hurry up?”

Jason groaned at that remark and Dick swiftly disentangled himself from Jason, painting an awkward smile on his face, embarrassed that they were caught. "Yeah okay," he answered and Jason just shook his head at his brother.

He is definitely going to be locking his doors from now on. *For sure.*

Chapter End Notes

[Tumblr](http://example.com)
Chapter 24

Life at the manor was different. So different that Dick had trouble adjusting to the sudden change in lifestyle. *For one*, the manor was huge and Dick wasn't used to living in such a large place. His small apartment was barely the size of the current room he was staying in. In all honestly, he could even fit his tiny apartment *in* his room. That was how big it was. Not to mention throughout his life, he’d always had to share whatever it was that he had or owned. This type of life—the one that Jason had, was too luxurious for him.

It's not as if Dick didn't like it, because he did. It’s definitely better than the shit hole he’d been living in and he loved the extra space he had so it didn't take long for him to get used to the manor itself.

The one thing he had to work on adjusting to was the constant flow of having people around him. Not just any people, but ones who were nice to him. Treated him respectfully and helped him around. Showing him that they really cared which came as a shocker to Dick. It was abnormal and he wasn't used to it at first. He actually felt overwhelmed and often retreated back to his bedroom, but day by day, the more he interacted with the family, the more relaxed he became and realized that he actually enjoyed their company. The family was so kind to him and often wanted to spend time with him. It brought smile to his lips, eyes crinkling as he tried to hold back his tears. A stream of warmth would bubble in his chest, flowing throughout his body, making him feel oddly...happy. It's just that—he'd never been treated so well before. Well he *had*, but it's been such a long time since.

Despite the fact that Jason asked him to stay for a while. *Or well*, to actually just live with him and his family, Dick was slightly against it. He didn’t feel comfortable enough to do so even though he did agree. It felt like he was intruding on their family time and he didn't want to be a charity case. Didn't want to live there free of pay and even if he offered to pay rent, it's not like they needed it. And if he tried, he knew that Bruce and Jason wouldn't accept it.

Dick was distressed, conflicted because part of him liked staying at the manor and he found that he could get used to this lifestyle. But another part of him felt guilty, his conscious refusing to accept the hospitality that was offered to him. He wrestled with his feelings, trying to find a balance of sorts, but he just couldn't convince himself to stay at the manor free of guilt.

So he left. Well, he *tried* to leave but was quickly caught. And the person who caught him was the most unexpected.

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"Dick," a deep voice softly called out to the raven-haired man, almost startling him. He would have been if he wasn’t prepared for someone to stop him in his tracks.
Dick’s breath was caught in his chest as he struggled to breathe, felt a shiver crawl down his spine, his body becoming tense, frozen. Until finally, he was able to register who that voice belonged to and let a small groan escape under his breath. He’d made it to the bottom of the stairs and was about to sneak out of the manor, to where, he wasn’t exactly sure since this mansion was practically in its own world, far away from civilization.

He hadn’t thought his plans through carefully, but all he knew was that he needed to leave and there was no way he could tell them because if he so much as breathed a word of wanting to leave, they sure as hell wouldn’t have let him. And right now, well, he knew he wasn’t going to be able to escape. Though it wasn’t as if they would force him to stay. They weren’t restraining him or anything, but he just—Dick didn’t know why but he felt bad. Felt like he’d be crushing their feelings.

Though it didn’t make it any better if he just ups and disappears without saying anything.

Footsteps were slowly approaching him, the sounds of slippers clacking against hardwood floor. Adrenaline rushed throughout Dick’s body, pumping his heart so rapidly that all he could hear was the beating within his chest, thudding loudly. A tremor rippled through his body and his hands were shaking, a numbness tickling the tips of his fingers.

"Are you trying to leave?" Bruce murmured after finally coming to a halt, just a few steps away from him.

Dick held his breath, his voice lost within his fear and settled for a nod. He was on edge, his nerves shooting through the roofs and it didn’t help that Bruce was the one who caught him in the act. If it was Jason, he could have dealt with it, but this man? No. He just—all he wanted was to run away. He couldn’t bear to face Bruce.

Dick could feel blood rush to his head, a small migraine attacking him as his vision swayed. His breathing grew short, struggling to breathe as anxiety attacked him. He wanted to run, run as far as his legs would take him but he couldn’t even budge an inch, his legs frozen, feet glued to the ground.

While he was fighting the fear budding within his chest, he felt a hand at his chin, gently caressing it before his head was tipped back and the hand that’d been touching him disappeared. Dick’s beautiful blue eyes met with Bruce’s and he inwardly cursed himself for allowing Bruce to grab his attention.

"Um," he muttered, slightly nervous.

"You know you can stay. It's fine if you stay," Bruce simple state with a small smile, the corner of his lips tugged up just a smidge.

A gasped escaped into the still air. Dick was speechless, couldn’t find any words to say. What could he even say to that? He didn’t know. Dick had only thought of himself as being a nuisance, overstaying his welcome and intruding on the family. So those words that came out of his mouth? Was unexpected.

Dick’s emotions were in a jumble, bouncing all over the place. He nibbled on his lower lip, biting it as he tried to calm himself, get back in control. But he found it hard, distracted by Bruce’s intense gaze.

"The family adores you. And you, despite our ill-treatment, you've been nothing but kind to us."
"But—"

Bruce held up a hand to stop him from talking. "I'm sorry if that might be the reason for your hesitation. And I hope you can forgive me—us—for that."

Dick drew in a sharp breath and nodded his head slowly. He’d already forgiven them ever since they’ve made amends. Besides, they’ve been nothing but nice to him since and that was all Dick really needed.

"Look, Dick. I want you to stay. I—I want to do something nice for you. So allow me to give you a home to stay. You don't have to feel bad. Just please accept my gesture. And if it counts, I know Jason really loves you. Damian does too and Tim adores you. Alfred thinks of you as another grandkid of his."

Dick was stunned, surprised at the words that flew out of Bruce's mouth. He hadn't expected him to say that at all. Hadn't—didn't think Bruce would ever say something like that. He barely knew the man so why did he want to help him so badly. It made no sense and it was just so—so—frightening.

Frightening because he'd never had someone who wanted to help him this badly. And he was afraid that it wouldn't last. That one day Jason and him may break up and he'd lose all of this—everything. That they would leave him behind and he didn't want that. Dick didn't want to get used to a life he couldn't always have. A future that seemed so wonderful, only to disappear in a moment’s notice like thin air. He didn't want to go back to being alone and that thought was what scared him the most.

Being alone, after having been with someone just wouldn't be the same and Dick wasn't sure if he could handle it.

Which is why he was so hesitant with living with Jason. He knew the man loved him. He knew that for sure. But he didn't want to be completely dependent on Jason either. He wanted his own independence and if their relationship went up in flames, then he'd at least have a standing of his own to fall on.

He probably shouldn't even be thinking this negatively but he couldn't help it. He'd always been full of bad luck and having a sort of contingency plan, a back-up, wasn't always a bad idea.

It was a risk he'd be taking. Was he willing to take it? He wasn't completely sure, but part of him wanted to try. God, he so wanted to give it all a chance.

"What are you afraid of?" Bruce questioned and broke Dick out of his thoughts.

"Huh?"

"What is it that you're afraid of?"

Dick's eyes widened in surprise, couldn't believe that Bruce was able to read his mind. Had he been that transparent about this thoughts?

"I'm not—I—I'm not afraid of anything," he denied but his voice was shaking.

Bruce sighed softly and threaded a hand through his hair. "It's okay to be afraid."

"But I'm not," he said firmly, hoping his confidence was apparent.
Bruce didn't quite believe him. "It's normal to be scared. And we all—we like you Dick. We enjoy your company and I'm sure we'll come to love you too. So don't be afraid to take a leap of faith."

Those words sounded too good to be true and even though Dick had heard them, he had difficulty believing them. But the sincerity in his voice, the way he said it, was honestly the sweetest thing he'd ever heard. Had ever been said to him and it was slowly winning him over. Okay well the second sweetest because Jason held first place when he'd told Dick he wanted to protect him.

Dick spent a moment to think to himself, juggling his answer carefully before he made his decision. He dropped his bags to the ground with a loud thud and sucked in a shaky breath. His stomach churned, butterflies fluttering about and he could feel his emotions burning him, stirring about rigorously.

"Okay," he whispered and could feel a sting behind his eyes.

A soft smile fell upon Bruce's lips. "Good," he muttered and then turned his attention away from Dick, lifted his head and stared past him. "You can come out now."

Dick blinked in confusion, unsure of what he meant by that. But his curiosity was swiftly answered when he heard an all too familiar sigh coming from behind him. Dick twirled on his heels and found Jason emerging from the shadows of the house.

"Jason?!” He exclaimed.

Jason didn't say a single word and strode straight towards Dick. He gathered him in his arms in a crushing hug, squeezing him tight like he never wanted to let go.

"You fucking idiot," he murmured as he buried his face against Dick's dark hair.

"What?"

"You are so stupid."

"Hey!"

"I'm taking you back to our room," Jason said and slipped an arm beneath his knees and in one swift move, he tipped him off his feet and lifted him in a bridal carry.

Dick yelped from the suddenness and hooked his arms around Jason's neck, holding on tightly to balance his weight in case he fell to the ground.

"Seriously. You are such an idiot. I'm this close to lecturing you."

"I—"

"You thought I couldn't hear you leave?" Jason said and glanced down at him as he made his way carefully up the stairs.

"Well, I thought—"

"You thought yes," Jason said and cut him off. "We live next door Dick. Even though the walls are soundproof, I could just tell by your strange behavior these past few days. You've been avoiding me a lot too."

"...Was I that obvious?" Dick was trying to be subtly but it was hard with so many people around the manor.
"Yeah. Too obvious."

Dick groaned loudly and slumped his face against Jason's chest. "Sorry."

"No," Jason said and stopped, finally having reached the top of the stairs. He paused for a moment to gaze at his lover. There was a hint of sadness lurking beneath his expression. "I'm sorry for making you feel...insecure?"

"Jay—"

"Dick, I love you and I meant it when I said I wanted to protect you. For life."

“But—“

Annoyed, Jason grumbled. "For fuck's sake! For once in your life can you just stop arguing against me and listen?"

Dick immediately sealed his lips shut and stared silently at Jason. His brows were pulled tight into a line and the frustration was evident on his face.

"I want to be with you forever. Okay, yeah, this is cheesy as hell but seriously, there's no one else I'd rather be with than you. And if we ever have issues, we can talk about it like adults. Okay?"

Dick exhaled and fluttered his eyes shut. Those tears he'd fought down were slowly resurfacing again and he knew he was about to be an emotional mess. So he tried with all of his effort to hold it all back. "Okay," he whispered, voice rickety.

The corner of Jason's lips curled into a soft smile and he leaned down to press a kiss to his forehead. "I promise to treat you well," he murmured and Dick buried his face into the crook of Jason's neck as he was carried away to Jason's bedroom.

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Gradually over time, Dick was able to adjust to his new life and was now comfortable with it. The freedom was refreshing and it was exhilarating being able to do anything without restrictions.

While he had a room of his own, he often spent a lot of time in Jason's room when they hung out. There was just something about Jason's room that he liked more than his own. Probably the sentimental value of it, how his room seemed to hold more history, telling a story of Jason since the first day he came to live at the manor. It was calming and Dick enjoyed that feeling of always having a place to call home. A place that was just you.

Dick had never had a stable life, often moving from one place to the next. He'd really hoped that his old apartment could have been his 'home' but that also was a bust. It didn't help that a lot of his belongings had been burned to the ground. Not that they were super important either. Though he had to go shopping for a new wardrobe which he often held off on.

For a time, he was stuck wearing Jason's clothes. Not that he minded because they smelled liked his boyfriend and it was comfortable. But the clothes were quite bigger on him considering he was lean. The clothes barely framed his body and often hung baggy on him. Though the length wasn't bad. At first he had tried on Tim's clothes and while they fit well, they were short on him.

So Dick settled with the larger option as well as the bonus of being able to smell Jason, a scent he took comfort in. Luckily, he didn't have to wear them long as Alfred had actually bought him clothes which he was thankful for. Though the choice wasn't something Dick would have chosen
for himself. The style was fashionable while Dick was more of a simple dresser. And the quality, well, the quality was nothing like Dick's cheap clothes.

Dick's poor habits was hard to get rid of and he often wore the nice clothes out to work and stuck with Jason's when he was lounging around in the manor. They were like his own personal pajamas even though he was sure these weren't cheap either.

Though Jason didn't seem to mind. He actually quite liked it and had mentioned it a few times that he liked it when Dick wore his clothes. While they were nothing fancy, just sweats and a t-shirt, they were appealing to Jason.

"You look cute in my clothes," Jason said and tugged at the sleeves of the shirt. The fabric hung loosely around Dick's body and it made him look a tad boxy, but definitely boyfriend material.

"Oh?" Dick asked and arched a brow.

"Yeah, it's—I don't know. Sexy?" Jason muttered as he roamed his eyes up and down Dick's body, taking in his current form while the man stood there gazing back at him in amusement. Jason reached out a hand towards his lover and Dick just sighed as he dragged his feet to the edge of the bed, letting Jason grab the sides of his shirt, tugging him forward to settle in between his legs.

Dick wasn't going to lie, but he secretly enjoyed the slight attention he got whenever he was wearing Jason's clothes. Not to mention he loved the smell, a mixture of Jason's body wash and his natural scent—musky with just a hint of freshness. It was the main reason he chose to wear it.

Jason tilted his head back and puckered his lips, wanting a kiss. Dick rolled his eyes but complied and dipped in to press their lips together.

"Good to know you like it," Dick said and Jason chuckled as he wrapped his arms tight around his mid, pulling him into a warm hug before they flopped down onto the bed and settled down for a movie.

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Dick was still working two jobs, switching from the hair salon to the restaurant. Even though he didn't necessarily need the money, he was still working long hours and it tired him out. Though the nice thing was he didn't have to take public transportation. Alfred or Jason would be the ones to chauffeur him back and forth from the manor and his jobs. He felt a little bad but they didn't seem to mind it so he learned to accept that.

Jason did try to convince him to reduce his hours because he was working himself too hard. Dick needed rest and relaxation or he was going to collapse again. The man got sick way too often and it was worrying. Dick considered it at first and eventually, after much begging and talking to, he gave in considering a lot of his living expenses were taken care of.

He was so used to living with that burden, of having to fend for himself, that it was hard to adjust to when he didn't have to constantly worry about how much he needed to save just to have food on the table and a roof over his head.

It took a while for him to get used to it, to accept the help that he was given without wanting to give back, but once he did, he just felt so much freer. Less stressed and worried.

And eventually, he ended up quitting his job at the restaurant and kept the one at the hair salon. Jason had convinced him to try going to school if he was interested in learning and well, Dick was. So the two often spent a lot of time reading in the library and Jason teaching him a variety of
topics.

Dick got along well with Damian and Tim and the two boys often took him out even though theoretically, he should be the one in charge. But the boys wouldn't let him and dragged him along to places they wanted Dick to visit. They often went out when Dick had time and it was never anything extravagant. They'd go to the movies or to eat. To the park or shopping or even the arcade. Whatever they wanted to do, Dick often went along because he enjoyed every bit of it.

Being able to spend time with people he enjoyed was a bliss and Dick never wanted to give it up.

And his mood, his path to healing was progressing well for the most part. The past got a bit easier to handle whenever it resurfaced as Jason had helped him to channel those negative thoughts to him. To let Dick talk about them freely whenever he needed. Helping him formulate those horrible memories, those nightmares into something else. Jason could never replace them and they would never go away, but he could help Dick make new memories, ones that he would remember and ones that would drive away the pain.

As for the touching, well, that was a work in progress. It didn't help that the family didn't know about his past either or the fact that Dick was sensitive to certain touches. They had to tread carefully, but eventually they found out.

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Bruce sighed heavily, having arrived back home from a long and grueling day at Wayne Enterprise. He was stuck in meetings for most of the day, listening to executive members arguing. Nothing came out of it as there were too many disagreements and all Bruce had wanted was to come home to relax. But they wouldn't allow it and invited him along to drink which Bruce objected, but was basically coerced into going.

By the time he made it home, it was late. Sluggishly, he dragged his feet down the long hallway, heading towards the stairs while he was slowly undoing his tie. As he passed by the living room, he spotted something from the corner of his eyes. He paused, doing a double take and confirmed that there was an arm dangling off the side of the sofa. Out of curiosity, he decided to take a detour and entered the room.

There, he found Dick sound asleep with his back flush against the cushions, an arm folded across his chest as the other hung loosely off the edge. His breathing was soft, quiet and he looked peaceful. But Bruce couldn't help but wonder why he was down here in the first place and not his room. As he inspected the area further, Bruce found a book lying on the ground near the foot of the couch.

Ah, he must have been reading then, passing by time since Jason was out of the house. He made plans with his friends and informed Bruce of his activities. Dick was invited to go along as well, but he rejected.

Bruce sighed softly. Well he couldn't just leave Dick here so he figured he could wake him up and get him to go sleep in his room instead. It was more comfortable that way than spending the night on the couch.

"Dick," Bruce called gently, hoping the man would wake. He gave it a few seconds, but there was no response so he tried again. "Dick." Still no reply.

He settled for giving him a gentle shake. "Hey. Dick," Bruce tried once more while he shook him slightly, hoping this would do the trick.
Dick stirred, but he didn't wake so Bruce squeezed his arms tight and shook him a little harder. In an instant, Dick's eyes shot wide open and he slapped Bruce's hand away roughly. Surprised, Bruce took a step back and narrowed his eyes at the man, watched him closely as Dick jolted awake, jerked up in his seat as he stared straight ahead at nothing. His body was trembling and his breathing was rigid.

Something was off. "Dick...?" Brice murmured softly and Dick's entire body shook wildly as he hastily turned away from him. Bruce was about to interject again when he noticed how Dick's shoulders were rising and falling dramatically. Could hear his breathing growing louder, wheezing. And suddenly, he realized he needed to do something and quick because he was sure Dick was hyperventilating.

"Dick. I—Can I—?" he was trying to ask for permission, but received no response. Dick's mind was already somewhere and no matter how much he tried to talk to him, Dick couldn't hear him. So he just had to proceed with caution. Carefully, he brushed a finger against his arm and Dick reacted violently as he jerked away.

"Hey," Bruce murmured in a soft tone. "It's ok. It's me. It's Bruce—Bruce Wayne. Look, Dick, I won't hurt you." Even through all of that, Dick couldn't hear him. Frustrated, he kept up his ministrations, whispering calming words to let the man know that he was fine and that whoever or whatever it was that was causing him to react badly wasn't here.

It might have seemed like an eternity, but eventually, he was able to get Dick to calm down. The darkness in his eyes dissipated, his vision clearing up and he finally met Bruce's gaze, blinking confusedly at the man. "Bru—?" He muttered, eyes wet with tears. He seemed to be coming back to reality but part of him was still a little lost somewhere.

"Yeah, it's Bruce," he said and gently touched his shoulder, giving him a small squeeze. "Just breathe okay? Wherever you are, you're not there. You're here, in the manor and safe." Bruce continued speaking softly to Dick, pulling him out of his nightmares and watched closely as his the man relaxed, eyes falling shut while he focused on Bruce's voice. He was breathing in and out, regulating his breathing as he took long and deep breaths.

They continued like that for a while until Dick was finally back to normal. The tears had stopped falling and his breathing had regulated. He exhaled loudly before he lifted his eyes open, those vivid blues once again bright and clear, no longer hazed with the fear that was pulling him away from reality.

"Are you okay?" Bruce asked.

Dick sucked in a shaky breath and nodded.

"Do you want to go to your room?"

He nodded again.

"Can I help?"

Another nod.

"Okay."

No words were spoken between them as Bruce slowly assisted Dick, helped him up to his feet before he carefully slung an arm around his thin waist and guided him up the stairs and to his bedroom. Dick's body was still slightly trembling and his skin was clammy. He hardly had an
ounce of energy in his legs, was struggling to keep his footing, so Bruce had to really pull his weight in helping him. It was more effort than he’d like since he didn't want to unnecessarily agitate Dick again so he was careful with how he was holding him.

Once they entered Dick's bedroom, Bruce helped him into bed and tucked him in, immersing him underneath the covers.

"If you need anything, anything at all, please let me or Alfred know," Bruce said and kindly patted the blankets.

Dick said nothing and nodded his head before he curled into a ball and squeezed his eyes shut, burying his cheek into the plush pillow.

Bruce took one last glance at the man before he left the room. He could feel his heart beating rapidly, the anxiety slowly dissipating from within. He was so shocked about the break-down, scared that he couldn’t snap Dick out of it. Worried that he might agitate him even further and screw something up.

It wasn’t hard to guess that there was seriously something wrong. What, he didn’t know so he figured he’d go to the source material.

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Jason didn't know why Bruce sent him a text, but it sounded urgent so he dipped out of the party early and returned home. Besides, it was really just Roy's party, a tame one where they played games, ate and chatted. Nothing too hardcore because Jason wouldn't allow it.

When he arrived home, he searched the first floor and found Bruce in his office. He didn't bother knocking, swiftly opened the door and walked right in. Bruce caught his attention and blinked at him, surprised. He’d been immersed in his reading and didn’t take notice of his son immediately.

"You wanted to talk?" Jason asked and plopped down into one of the empty chairs in front of the desk.

Bruce sighed softly. "I did."

"Okay," Jason said and nodded at his adoptive father. "What is it?"

Bruce leaned back in his chair and drew in a deep breath before he settled his gaze on Jason. There was a look of concern lurking beneath his blue eyes and suddenly, Jason felt his heart seize. He hoped that he wasn't about to be delivered some sort of bad news.

"It's about Dick," and instantly, the pit of his stomach collapsed and he felt knots forming.

"What happened?" He questioned, trying to remain as calm as possible.

Bruce smiled small. "He's not hurt," he said in reassurance and that made Jason ease slightly, but he was still on edge. "It's just, something happened."

Jason blinked at that remark. "Oh? What?"

Bruce pinched the bridge of his nose, brows furrowing and exhaled loudly. "I found Dick asleep on the sofa today. It was late and I tried to wake him up so he could go sleep in his room. But he freaked out and started hyperventilating."
Oh. That—that wasn't good. The family didn't know about Dick's past because he didn't feel it was right of him to tell them. And yet, he should have. Even though Dick was getting better, a lot better than when he first met him, he would still have nightmares from time to time. And often times, they were triggered from someone suddenly touching him, usually in his sleep or if he didn't see the person.

It probably would have been smart of Jason to at least warn the family so that Dick wouldn't experience an episode. But he supposed it was too late and the cat was out of the bag now.

"Explain to me what you did. Were you hovering above him?" Jason asked because he needed to know.

Bruce arched a brow questioningly at Jason. "I was."

"Okay. He, yeah, he doesn't like that."

"Care to elaborate?"

"I will but tell me what happened first?"

Bruce squinted his eyes but nodded anyhow. "When he woke up, he appeared panicked and was muttering words and crying. Then he started hyperventilating and to calm him down, I just talked it out slowly with him. Eventually he did and I took him back to his room."

That was good. At least Bruce knew how to handle the situation even if he didn't know what exactly was going on.

"Thanks—uh—for doing that," Jason said and received a grunt from the man before he gestured at him to explain his part.

Jason drew in a shaky breath, wasn't exactly ready to tell the tale of Dick's past. He wasn't quite prepared, mentally at least, to have to admit to those events again. But he had to do it. Bruce needed to know and while Jason knew it wasn't his place to say, he just hoped that Dick won't be too angry. Besides, Dick might have expected this outcome because of what Bruce had seen today.

Jason fidgeted in his seat, restless as he battled with how he wanted to start the story. Just out with it or ease him into it?

It was probably better if he just gave him the punch.

"I shouldn't be the one to tell you this. Hell, Dick should be, but I doubt he has the effort or the will power to tell it to you so I'll do it in his place instead."

Bruce stared at him, curious but attentive and waited patiently for Jason to continue.

"When he was young, he was sexually abused his foster father. Or well, one of his foster father."

In that instant, Bruce's eyes widened in disbelief, shocked beyond his entire being. He looked so confused, an elaborate stream of emotions passing through his face before it settled into something full of rage. Where his brows were crumpled, lips pulled into a frown as eyes burned with fire.

Jason took it as a sign to continue. "The couple had issues and the wife was mostly gone. Probably feeling abandoned, the sick bastard turned his attention and preyed on Dick," he said and paused for a brief moment as he collected his emotions. Jason found it hard for him to talk about it even though it didn't even happen to him. But just the thought of it, the fact that it did happened,
sickened him. God, he wondered how Dick was even able to tell him. He must have felt worse.
"The bastard attacked him in his bed at the start and eventually continued his advances throughout
the house, bending Dick to his will. He tried to escape, but Dick wasn't able to until the wife found
out and practically dumped him back at the orphanage. Which was probably a godsend for him."

Bruce's expression was furious and Jason could see his hands tightening into a ball, skin turning a
pale white.

"Dick still gets nightmares and sometimes he'll just stare off into the distance, probably trapped in
those memories. He's gotten better and I've tried to help him."

"I see."

"It's just—he still gets triggered at times. That fucker was tall and bulky. Like us," Jason explained
and gestured at himself and Bruce. "It can be intimidating and it makes him feel unconsciously
cornered." Which made sense as to why Bruce freaked out since it happened to him the first time
too.

"You should have told me so I would have been cautious."

And of course he would say that. "I know but I couldn't exactly tell you. Dick didn't want anyone to
find out and that includes me but I did."

"How did you find out?"

Jason sighed and really didn't want to tell Bruce about every single one of Dick's traumas. "Scars. I
found scars on his wrist."

And a look of sadness flickered in his eyes.

"He'd been abused by a previous family, beaten by the mother. He was shunned and constantly
bullied and just—so many other things." Jason didn't want to tell all of Dick's deepest secrets so he
only gave the minimal. Just enough for Bruce to know what kind of life he led before, well, before
they met.

The room fell silent as both of them just sat there, Jason watching Bruce closely as the man took
everything in. As he allowed all the information to sink into his mind so he could analyze it. After
a moment, Bruce finally broke the barrier. "Okay. I'm going to look into this."

"Bruce—"

"I just want to know. I want to know who they are. I won't do anything that will involve Dick's
participation."

Jason seemed skeptical about that matter, but that was also his reaction at first as well. He wanted
to do something, but he didn't want to cause a ruckus. Though since Bruce was willing to take
matters into his own hand, he'll let him do just that.

"Fine. Just leave Dick out of it."

Bruce exhaled loudly, seemingly satisfied with that answer, but there was still a bit of unease
lurking beneath his eyes. There was something else he was hiding and he knew the man was
itching to say it. However, for some odd reason, he was hesitating. What with the way he was
drumming his fingers against his desk. Jason gave it a moment, refusing to leave the room even
though his business was technically finished, and it really only took a few minutes for the man to
crack.

“I could have saved him,” Bruce whispered and Jason blinked at him rapidly, confusion spreading thickly across his face.

“What?”

“I could have saved him,” Bruce stated once more and locked eyes with his son. “I was there. *That night.* The night his parents died and I—I could have taken him home. I—I wanted to, but I hesitated. And when I made the decision, he was already gone.”

Jason was speechless, didn’t know what to say to that. What could he even say to that? There were so many—*so many* outcomes that could have occurred from Bruce adopting Dick. It would have saved him, would have protected him from all those *disgusting* human beings. But then, it would have possibly changed his fate. Even Tim or Damian’s. Who knows if Jason would have been adopted then?

Well, none of that mattered. Because what’s done was done and as much as he wanted—*wished* that had been the case, it wasn’t. Dick wasn’t saved.

But at least now, he could be. And Jason was going to be sure of it.

He took a brief moment to let the information sink in his mind, letting it all process before he said anything.

“You knew?”

Bruce nodded. “I did. Not at first. It took me a while to realize who he really was and I—”

“You felt bad.”

“Yes.”

“Well, I’m glad you did. Because you were an ass.”

Bruce slightly rolled his eyes at that comment but he couldn’t exactly argue against that so he just agreed instead.

“It would have been great if you did,” Jason whispered in all honesty, wishing that hadn’t gone through any of the abuse. “It would have been…*good.*”

“I know son, but—“

“The past is the past,” Jason said, finishing his statement for him. “I know.”

Bruce gave a soft smile and Jason could see the regret clear on his face. He just knew how much his adoptive father was beating himself over it despite the fact that it was years ago, so many years ago and there was nothing that they could do to fix it. Except provide a loving home and family for him. And he was sure that is what Bruce is currently brewing up in his mind right now.

“I’m going to go check on Dick,” Jason said and watched as Bruce waved a hand at him, dismissing him.
He found the man fast asleep in his bedroom and gently sat on his bedside to avoid waking him up. Well, he thought he was asleep because the moment Jason had sat down, Dick moved.

"Dick?" Jason whispered softly in case Dick hadn’t woken up from his sudden intrusion.

"Jason?" Dick answered and his voice was soft and small which made Jason quickly realize that he wasn't asleep at all.

"Yeah, it's me," Jason murmured and reached over towards the lamp to flip the switch on. Light filled the room just a smidge as some of the darkness was chased away to the corners. "How are you?" Jason asked, watching as Dick shuffled onto his back so their eyes could meet.

"Okay," he mumbled and sighed softly when Jason stroked a finger down his cheek before he cupped his face. "Did you tell him?"

Jason rolled his eyes, amused since he saw this coming. "I did and I'm sorry."

"No. I should be sorry. I—I frightened him I'm sure. He probably thinks I'm weird." "Nah," Jason waved him off. "He doesn't. He was just concerned about it."

"But—"

"It's fine Dick."

Dick drew in a deep breath and fluttered his eyes shut as he nuzzled against Jason's touch. "You sure?"

"I'm positive. He was actually really worried that he told me to come home early."

"Oh," Dick muttered. "I didn't want him to know. I didn't want anyone to know. I'm sure—I bet he thinks I'm disgusting." "No," Jason rejected that last remark. "You're not and he most certainly does not."

Dick puffed up his cheeks and lifted his eyelids to meet Jason's stare head on. "You're not and he most certainly does not."

Jason shook his head and cut him off. "Trust me. He's just mad, not at you but at what happened. I've told you this before and I'll tell you again, you're not disgusting. So don't you ever blame yourself or feel ashamed," he said and leaned down to press a chaste kiss to his lips.

Dick said nothing more and bit on his lower lip as he nodded his head. He exhaled quietly, eyes getting slightly glassy. "Thanks," he murmured and then added, "I want to apologize though. I feel bad."

Jason groaned at that, couldn't believe Dick was even thinking that at this moment when he was feeling vulnerable. "It's fine. It can wait. For now, let's worry about you. Do you need anything?"

Dick hummed aloud and smiled small. "Yeah. Can you sleep with me?"

Jason chuckled. "Of course."

He crawled into bed, getting underneath the covers and pulled Dick close, holding him tight in his arms. Jason had a protective arm wrapped around his torso as he hooked a leg around his calf, pressing their bodies flush as they clung onto one another. He wasn't typically clingy, only when he wanted to be. But in this type of situation, his body moved on his own accord and all he knew was
he just wanted to keep Dick safe.

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Dick and Jason had woken up a little bit later than usual and as they headed into the kitchen for something to fill their hunger, they ran into Bruce. Immediately, Dick left Jason's side and made a bee-line straight for Bruce. He'd been wanting to apologize to him since last night and this was his opportunity.

"Bruce, I—" he started, but he never got the chance to complete his sentence because before he knew it, Bruce had him in a bruising hug.

Jason just gawked at them from the side, couldn't believe his eyes right now.

Dick's body immediately stiffened, not from being uncomfortable, just from the fact that his boyfriend's father was hugging him. Him, of all people.

"Don't say anything," Bruce muttered and squeezed him tight in his arms. "I'm sorry for last night and I'll be sure to be careful next time."

"It's—it's nothing. I mean, it's my fault—"

"No," Bruce said and pulled back, releasing him from his hold, but he still had his fingers gently wrapped around his arms as he stared at him, capturing his full attention. "It's not your fault. You did nothing wrong, okay?"

Dick was really confused and was rendered speechless. He didn't know what to say and was at a lost. This man that he barely knew, had only gotten to know him the past few months was telling him that he wasn't wrong. That—that he wasn't wrong at all. Because all his life, all he'd done was blame himself and no one had bothered to tell him that he wasn't at fault. Not that anyone ever knew about his condition, but still. It was—these words just brought tears to his eyes and for the second time in his life, he could feel like he was able to breathe again. Like another weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

Bruce smiled tenderly. "Don't ever blame yourself or say sorry again."

Dick pulled his lips into a thin line and held back a sob. He didn't want to cry. He just—he didn't, but there were emotions rumbling inside him and he just wanted to let it all out. To be accepted by someone who at first hated him was—it was blissful. "Okay," he whispered.

"Good," Bruce answered and finally released him. "Now, let's get you fed."

Dick honestly felt like the luckiest person right now to have met Jason and his family. He smiled and gave a shy nod.

Jason came up from beside him and snaked his arms around his waist, leaned in close to peck his cheek. He didn't say a word and just peppered Dick with his warmth. Dick chuckled and leaned his head back to look at his boyfriend. "Thank you," he murmured and Jason just smiled at him.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dick paced around the room, restless as he dragged his feet back and forth. His mind was running a mile a minute; his heart beating in rhythm to his jittery nerves. He just couldn't calm down.

Dick was trying to mentally prepare himself for what he was about to do—for what might happen within the next few hours.

Okay. Who was he kidding? How could he even mentally prepare himself for this? For—for offering himself up to Jason? For telling Jason that he was ready, really ready to have sex with him when all he ever did was freeze up whenever they attempted. Hyperventilate when it got uncomfortable for him even though in his mind, he knew that it was Jason. That Jason was the one touching him and that the monsters from his past were gone.

They’ve been making good progress, creating their own version of therapy by easing into it. Taking it one step at a time and advancing to the next level when Dick was comfortable enough to move forward. It took some time, a lot of time actually, but Dick was able to do it. It did test Jason’s patience since Dick often squirmed and freaked out. Also left Jason hanging many times. It made Dick feel bad, but Jason would always brush it off and say he was fine. Though he’d find him relieving himself later in the bathroom or something.

Through all of that, he was able to adjust well, getting used to Jason's warm and rough hands on his bare skin. So much so that they were able to do the things that he was afraid of.

That he just could—that Dick could lay in bed naked with Jason while the man ravaged him with his eyes. Turquoise eyes that were full of passion, making it hard for Dick to look away, to concentrate on anything else but Jason.

And they did a lot, experimented a lot. And Dick was sure, okay, he was 80% sure that he could do it now. The 20% was more of his own self-doubt that he could perform well.

Dick knew that he didn't have to. That Jason wouldn't care either way because he'd told him many times that he wasn't going to force him. That his goal wasn't to just sleep with him—it was so much more. And yet, Dick wanted it. He wanted to give himself to Jason even though he was scared. A part of him wanted to know what it would be like to do it with someone that loved him. And maybe—just maybe, the nightmares may finally go away. That his nightmares would be replaced with memories of Jason.

He wasn’t going to lie, he was scared as hell that he would mess up. That midway through, he'd falter and it would ruin their mood. There were too many things that could go wrong and Dick didn't want any of that. He had debated on waiting but he was impatient. He wanted to get better and be over his trauma and he'd been trying, really hard, but it was difficult. There were times he would relapse back to his old days. Flinch from a simple touch and he hated it. Loathed the look Jason gave him—one so full of hurt yet understanding. Like a puppy who'd been rejected by their own. It was like a slap to his face but even then, Jason was always just so damn understanding.

Dick loved Jason and he hated seeing that expression on his face since he was clearly the one who made him react that way. But time and time again, Jason would reassure him that he was fine and told him to just be himself
Sex to him wasn't just to have it be done and over it. It wasn't just, "let's do it so you won't leave me." It was so much more than that and the meaning itself meant a lot to Dick, even to Jason as well.

That's why Dick wanted it. Besides, the things they've done until now felt magical. It was warm and pleasing and it made Dick blush. He'd get so embarrassed he'd hide from Jason the next day after.

Dick could feel heat rushing up his neck and filling his face at the thought of Jason inside of him. "Ugh, no I can't," he muttered aloud finally having come to a halt. He stood there in the middle of the room and tapped his foot as he battled with himself, with his decision of whether he should do it or not.

And he decided that he should. That he could do this. He just had to believe in himself.

"You can do this Grayson," he whispered aloud and gently slapped his cheeks as a way of giving himself a push.

Dick took in a few deep breaths, exhaling and inhaling calmly so he could drive his heart beat back to normal. Once he was relaxed, no longer feeling the tenseness in his shoulders, he left his room and went straight for Jason's.

He stood before his door, hand at the ready to knock on the wood, but suddenly he felt the nerves return, hitting him hard once more. His stomach churned and he could feel knots forming.

Dick almost wanted to turn back but he firmed his feet flat on the ground and refused. "I can do this," he murmured and without hesitation, he knocked on the door and received a loud 'come in!' With speed, he opened the door and poked his head in, caught Jason in the act as he was about to slip his shirt on.

"Oh—" Dick muttered and felt suddenly embarrassed. "Hey?"

"Hey," Jason answered nonchalantly and slipped his shirt on while Dick stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

It's not as if he'd never seen Jason naked before because he had, plenty of times, but for some odd reason, he just felt a little strange about it.

"You coming in?" Jason asked and arched a brow curiously at him.

"I'm in?" Dick answered.

"I mean," Jason cleared his throat and elaborated on his question. "Are you just going to stand at the door?"

"Oh—" Dick muttered and fluttered his eyes to the ground, too embarrassed to stare Jason straight in the eyes. "Sure." And he took a step forward, slowly inching his way towards his boyfriend. Way to make it awkward Grayson.

"Sit?" Jason prompted sounding slightly amused and Dick nodded his head as he turned around and plopped his butt onto the bed. Jason sat down right beside him and Dick could just feel his gaze on him. "So, what do you want to do tonight? We can watch that one movie we talked about last time," he said and fumbled around on his bed for the remote as it was lost in his sheets.

"You know, I was thinking something else," Dick spoke clearly and was quite surprised to find
how stable his voice was. He finally lifted his head to meet Jason's gaze and found the man

gawking at him questioningly.

"Oh?"

"Yeah, um—" Now was the time. He had to gather all of his courage and just go with what he
planned. "We can uh—do the thing."

Which okay, was not clear enough because Jason blinked at him, confused. "The thing?"

"You know. Like—" Now he was tongue tied, couldn't find the right words to say it to Jason. It
was so simple and all it took was just one word and yet, it just wouldn't roll off the tip of his
tongue.

Jason waited patiently, staring at him intensely, attempting to extract whatever ideas was going
through Dick's mind.

Damn it. Where did all of his confidence from earlier go to? Now he was shying away, about to
just give up on the idea and go with the movie watching instead. But no—he told himself now
and pinched his own hands. Just out with it.

Dick sucked in a deep breath and exhaled, "I want to have sex with you," all in one breath.

Jason leaned away slightly, screwed his face into one of shock. "You what?"

Dick groaned aloud, didn't want to repeat himself but he supposed he had to. “I. Want. To. Have.
Sex. With. You.”

A moment of silence passed between them as neither said a word and just sat there in
awkwardness. Dick found himself glancing between Jason and his hands, wanting to see his
reaction, but also afraid of what he would find. As he held his breath in anticipation, he received an
answer in the form of a laughter. Jason burst out, chuckling loudly and grabbed Dick's attention.
Bright blue eyes stared at his boyfriend who was grinning, wide and happy.

“Dick—you—I can’t believe you—“ Jason was still giggling and couldn’t quite hold back his
amusement. “Sorry.” He took a deep breath and schooled those jittery feelings back to a calm.
“Okay.” Excited eyes were fixated on his boyfriend and he gave him a small smile. “Dick. I love
you and hell yes I want to have sex with you but are you serious or are you forcing yourself?”

“I—what? Why would I be forcing myself?” Jason was far too keen and knew Dick all too well.

Jason sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose, slightly exasperated. “Because you’re shaking,”
he said and reached over to place his hand on top of Dick's “See?”

"I—" Dick paused briefly and glanced down at his trembling hands. "I'm not forcing myself," he
murmured and returned his attention back to Jason. He may be nervous, but it wasn't because he
was afraid.

Jason stared at him in disbelief and narrowed his eyes. "Really?"

Dick nibbled on his lower lips, debating on whether he should admit to it or not and then groaned
loudly. "Okay. I am. Just a little. I'm just nervous."

"Dick," Jason said and lifted his hands to press a kiss to his knuckles. "I don't want you to force
yourself. I told you this isn't all I want from you. Besides, we've made good progress and one day
we'll get there."

"I know. I just—Jason. I want to do it. I do. I really—I want to know how it feels. How it feels to do it with someone I love. I know that I have issues and it still affects me. It even affects you. And yes, part of me is still afraid, if only just a little. But even then, I want this," Dick explained and exhaled loudly, having said that all in one breath.

"Are you sure?" Jason asked, voice firm as his eyes searched for any signs of wavering. Any signs that he was indeed forcing himself more than he was comfortable with. He just wanted an answer, a confirmation.

"Yeah," Dick said without any hesitation and that brought a smile to Jason's face.

"Okay. Uh—yeah, okay. Let's—let's do it." That might have come out just a bit awkward and Dick was sure the man was blushing but he didn't mind it so much.

Jason drew in a deep breath before he slipped an arm slyly around Dick's waist and tugged him close for a kiss. He could feel Jason smiling silly as they kissed, as he slowly moved his mouth against his own, easing him into the mood. The kisses started off small, just tiny pecks until Jason pressed in harder, more bruising as he kissed with passion. Using his teeth to graze against his pink lips teasingly, nibbling and biting before he gained entrance into his mouth when Dick gasped for breath. Jason deepened the kiss and ran his tongue all around Dick's moist cavern, tasting him whole.

Haze gradually filled his mind as he concentrated on the kiss, concentrated on feeling Jason and felt himself being lowered down onto the bed. His back fell flush against the silken sheets, sinking into the comfortable mattress. Jason never broke their kiss as he proceeded to climb on top of him, had his legs placed on either side of Dick's waist as he hovered above.

As if a thought entered his mind, Jason abruptly pulled back and breathed heavily as he stared down at Dick. "Is this fine?" He questioned and Dick could only chuckle. They'd already discussed their positions before, about whether Dick was okay with being on the bottom or if he preferred to be on top, Jason was fine with it. He knew that Dick didn't particularly like it when he was closed off because it made him feel trapped.

"I already told you I'm fine with this."

"I know. I just want to make sure. You don't want to switch or anything?"

Dick shook his head to the side. "I'm fine with this. I want you to do it."

Jason huffed a breath and scrunched his nose briefly before he agreed. "Okay." Without further ado, he moved forth and grabbed the hem of Dick's shirt as he slowly slid it up and tugged it off and over his head to expose his boyfriend's naked torso. "Dick, whenever you feel uncomfortable, remember to use the word."

"I know Jay."

It was Jason's idea to establish a safe word, a word that Dick would use when he wanted Jason to stop. They implemented it right at the beginning when things started becoming intimate. The word was really simple and meant a lot to Dick. It was Robin, a nickname that his mother had given him. It was a simple tale really, one he'd told to Jason. His mother always called him her little Robin and it was near and dear to his heart. He'd forgotten about it for some time until the thought popped back into his mind.
Jason recaptured Dick's lips once again and fumbled with the band of his sweatpants, undoing the strings before he started pulling them down and over his hips. Jason planted wet kisses along his jawline and followed the trail down to his chest, gradually making it down to his navel.

Dick whined, felt cool air brushing his legs once Jason had completely stripped him naked. "Take off your clothes too," he said, feeling slightly embarrassed that he was the only one.

"Don't worry, I'll join you in a second," Jason winked, grinning widely. He jumped off the bed and jolted towards the door, locking it before he returned and swiftly undressed and tossed his clothes to the ground.

Dick watched his every move and he was blown breathless. No matter how many times he'd seen Jason naked, he could never get enough of it. His body was gorgeous, had the physique of a sports model. His muscles were fine and firm, just the right amount of bulkiness without being too large. He could just see every beautiful curve throughout his body and ugh—he just wanted to run his hands all over.

He was also slightly jealous since Dick was lean. At least he was slowly gaining muscle as Jason had been getting him to work out to build on his strength and energy. Dick enjoyed the exercises. It's not like he was weak either, but he was definitely nowhere near as strong as Jason was.

Bright blue eyes stared intensely, burning in the image of his body before his attention fell on Jason's cock. It was hard and Dick flushed, realizing how turned on Jason actually was.

Jason climbed back onto the bed and positioned himself right in between Dick's legs. Rough fingers curled around his calves and he carefully bent them back, widening his legs so he could get easier access to Dick's own cock.

He presented a bottle of lube and smeared a bit onto his hands before he moved to rub his palm gently against his half-hardened member, stimulating it before he wrapped it in his palm, stroking it as it grew. Dick gasped aloud and bit his lip, felt an electrifying current travel through his body. Could feel heat filling him and it—fuck, it felt so good.

Jason hooked an arm under Dick's knee and bent it further back as he leaned forward to kiss him. Kissed him hard and rough as he stroked his cock until it was rock hard. Pumped him until there was a bit of pre-cum leaking from the tip, dripping down onto his stomach.

Soft murmurs and pants trickled into the atmosphere, all coming from Dick. He was so hot, felt so good and he wanted more. Jason's touch was tender and it just made him feel so much. He could feel the care and love coming through, nothing like he'd ever experience and it made his mind go blank. He couldn't think of anything else but Jason.

Dick was so lost in thought, just feeling everything that was Jason, focusing on his large hand touching his cock when suddenly, his body seized up when he felt a finger brush his hole.

Immediately, Jason stopped what he was doing. "Dick?" he called and leaned back slightly to check his boyfriend's current mood.

"—Fine. I'm fine. I was just surprised."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. Continue."

Jason checked his expression for any signs that he could be lying but when he found nothing, he
nodded and continued his advances. He brought a hand to cup Dick's ass, squeezing and groping while he teased his hole by drawing circles with the tip of his finger.

This was his least favorite part because Dick could just feel all the attention focused on him and it made him self-conscious. So he turned his head to the side and buried his face into the pillow, staring off to at the wall rather than watching whatever Jason was doing.

He could already feel it. He didn't need to watch it. Couldn't watch it because it was too embarrassing.

There was the sound of a bottle being opened and Dick hissed when something cool touched his body. It was lube and even though he knew that, it always caught him by surprise.

Jason said nothing and did his thing. With care, he pressed a finger against his twitching hole and began working him, stretching him nice and gently. It was always a strange feeling, foreign whenever they did this, but it didn't hurt. It did at first, but gradually Dick adjusted to it. Though he knew it would be completely different once Jason was inside him.

Dick drew in a rickety breath at that thought. It was a little overwhelming.

"Good?" Jason asked, checking in on his lover. Dick muttered a quiet yes and Jason pressed another finger in, carefully stretching him out. Dick reflexively squeezed down on it and felt a hand tenderly brush his thigh as Jason start massaging him to soothe away his nervousness while murmuring words like, 'relax' or 'you're doing good.' Showering him with compliments and making him feel at ease as he worked him open.

And Dick did just that, focused on his voice and just placing his trust in Jason. When his lover was sure that Dick was prepared enough for him, he removed his fingers and aligned himself against Dick's hole, pressing the tip of his cock at the base.

"You good? We can still stop you know?"

Dick rolled his head and turned to look up at Jason, capturing his gaze in a mesmerizing stare. "I'm good. Don't worry."

There was a bit of unease lurking beneath his calm composure and it was only natural that he would feel that way given the circumstances they were in. But Dick was feeling fine, actually better than ever and he was definitely ready. He extended an arm towards Jason and gave him a soft smile, gesturing at him. Jason parted his lips and sighed softly before he linked their fingers together into a tight grasp. Immediately, the tightness around his eyes were gone and his shoulders slumped.

"Ready?"

"Ready."

Jason sucked in a long breath and gripped onto Dick's legs, spreading them apart so he could settle comfortably in between. Slowly and with care, he pressed inside of Dick, entering a few centimeters at a time. Dick tensed for a moment at the thickness of his cock, it felt so full and big yet somewhat fulfilling. Different than having his fingers inside.

"I'm in."

Dick breathed, his chest falling dramatically. "Okay."
"I'm going to move," Jason murmured and moved his hands to grab his waist, squeezing down firmly as he slid out and slowly pushed back in.

It felt weird. Not bad but not really good. Just odd unlike before where Jason was making him wreath with just his fingers inside. Maybe he just had to get used to it first.

Jason set a pace, starting off slowly as he rocked inside of Dick with precision and gradually quickened his pace. The feeling of having Jason inside of him didn't feel as strange now that he'd adjusted. It was surprisingly good and he was moaning now, sweet murmurs escaping from his lips.

He could hear the sounds of skin slapping against skin, could feel Jason's pelvis hitting him hard against his ass. Could feel pleasure ripple through his body as he convulsed, a loud moan slipping into the air. So loud that he was surprised himself and swiftly threw his hands to cover his mouth.

What was that? That was something Dick hadn't felt before. It—god, it made him feel crazy good.

Jason paused for a moment and blinked down at Dick before his eyes widen and a smirk fell upon his lips. He looked mischievous, like a revelation had just hit him. They gazed at one another for a few seconds, Jason's eyes locked onto his as he moved again. And fuck—there it was, that pleasure coursing through him, electrifying as he gasped aloud.

Dick's body twitched and he trembled uncontrollably, arching his back into the curve of a crescent moon. "W-What?" he murmured, voice slightly hoarse.

"Think I found your sweet spot," Jason hummed, pleased as he pushed in once more, sending another wave of pleasure through Dick's body.

Oh god—fuck. That was incredible.

Jason slammed into Dick and the man groaned loudly, tossed his arms to the side to clutch on tightly to the sheets.

"Fuck. You're feeling it," Jason grinned, sounding happy. "I'm going to make you feel so good you'll be screaming non-stop." And he squeezed down roughly onto his waist and rammed back inside of Dick, abusing his prostate as he thrust inside with speed and strength.

Dick was high on ecstasy, was moaning loudly and freely. His stomach tightened and his cock twitched in pleasure as a pool of cum formed on his stomach. He wanted to touch himself, oh god, yes he did and before he was able to, Jason beat him to the punch. He fisted him, stroking up and down with his skillful hands while at the same down pounding into Dick.

Fuck—he was so close. So close.

"Jason, I'm going to—" he murmured under his breath.

"Me too. Let's come together."

Jason quickened his pace in urgency as he pushed Dick further and further into the mattress, bringing him to a high and with one last stroke, Dick came, splattering all over his stomach. Jason slammed inside of him, held his lover in place as his nails dug deeply into his sides and released inside of Dick.

Dick could feel Jason filling him, could feel his cock twitch inside of him as he rolled his hips against Dick, emptying himself. Jason pulled out of Dick with a loud pop and slipped off the
mattress while Dick just laid there, tired and out of breath. He was breathing heavily, trying to come down from his high. His mind was clouded and he couldn't focus on anything else besides the fact that it felt so damn good.

When Jason returned, he had a towel in hand and started wiping Dick clean. Dick tried to lift his limbs to help, but he was too exhausted to do anything and just watched Jason.

He was so good to him. Just so good and suddenly he felt a wave of emotion hit him, tears filling his eyes as he sobbed. "Jay," he cried.

"Whoa!" Shocked, Jason stopped what he was doing and looked at his boyfriend in concern. "What's wrong?"

Dick's breath hitched as he tried to speak but he found his words caught in his throat. It wasn't anything important anyways. It was just—he felt accomplished, at least to himself. For someone who had a lot of trauma and had gone through so much to be able to come out on top, he just—he felt like he'd conquered his past. And it just felt so relieving and overwhelmed him.

"I'm just happy," he muttered through his cries as tears rolled down his cheeks.

Jason relaxed upon hearing that, probably worried he'd hurt Dick and then chuckled softly. "You worried me there for a second. Fuck, Dick," Jason said and leaned down to kiss his forehead.

"Sorry," he mumbled and wiped away his tears. "Thank you."

Ugh, he knew he was being a sap but it was something he wanted to say, something he wanted to let Jason know.

"I love you," Jason said, eyes also getting a bit glassy as he gathered Dick in his arms, holding him close as he caressed his hair.

"Me too."

This wasn't something that Dick had ever dreamed off. Never thought that he'd ever get the chance to be happy in life. Never expected that he'd be blessed with someone like Jason, someone who would love him with all his flaws.

And it was only a chance meeting, something he did out of good will. Who knew that it would have turned out this way? Not after everything they've been through. Not after the many times he'd tried to push Jason away.

Dick was just so thankful for everything. So thankful that Jason wasn't deterred from his stubbornness, from his negativity and fought for him.

He was thankful for everything good that Jason brought to him and he couldn't ask for anything more.

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Time passed and Dick slowly, but surely, was able to adjust to his new lifestyle. It took a lot of effort because he wasn't used to the glamorous life. Was also reserved even though the family had told him it was his home as much as it was theirs. That he could do what he wanted. Dick took that into consideration but never capitalized on it. That was until Jason eased him into it. Got him to do things, loosened him up so he wasn't always so reserved. Damian and Tim helped as well. It was pleasant and now he felt much more relaxed rather than tense, like he needed to tip toe around the
manor. Like he’d done in his previous foster homes.

Dick was also going to school, at least part-time. He mainly took online classes and Jason tutored him. He wasn’t comfortable enough to go to a physical classroom—what not with the bad memories—at least yet. In the future? He was sure he’d be able to handle it.

Work was work—he was still a part-timer at the hair salon and got along well with Donna. Dick had learned a lot and enjoyed his time there. Everyone was helpful and kind to him which he appreciated. They also sort of spoiled him as well and tended to treat him to lunch and the like.

The family, well, the family loved Dick. Bruce generally made time in his schedule to check up on Dick and even went as far as to make it an effort to spend time with Dick. Either by himself or with his sons. He kind of felt like a doting father, something Dick used to have before his parents died so this was—it was weird at first but it grew on him and he always looked forward to having quality time with Bruce. It was a bit extreme since Damian was getting a little jealous. Jealous that his father put more effort with Dick over him but also because he wanted to spend time with Dick too.

It was endearing seeing how much attention he received from the family and god, he was not used to that. Damian and Tim always wanted to hang out with him and that irritated Jason because his little brothers were attempting to steal his alone time. It's not like he didn't get any because he got plenty.

Dick always made sure he spent enough time with each member of the family, never ignoring them or prioritizing one over the other. Unless it was Jason but he typically didn't ditch plans just to satisfy Jason's whims. That would be rude after all they'd done for him. The family fawned over him and he kind of honestly enjoyed the bit of attention. It made him feel loved and wanted. He especially loved tea time with Alfred, it was the most pleasing and relaxing time of his day and the butler was a blast to have a conversation with.

And his trauma? It had gotten significantly better. The nightmares were less frequent and he was learning how to handle his triggers. The boys still didn't know, well just Tim and Damian but one day when they were older, Dick would be sure to tell them. For now, he wanted it to stay locked away.

His powers were still there and there was nothing he could do much about them anyways. Besides, he’d gotten a better handle of it now with Jason's help so he wasn't so awkward whenever he had those vibes. Dick still did try to help those he were in danger, not that the people listened to him, but he at least tried. Unfortunately to Dick, the family found out about his powers since they'd witnessed it a few times and found it odd. He was worried about their reaction but they took it well and actually found it cool.

In terms of people's treatment towards him, well, that was better. A lot better. He supposed it was because of his appearance, which he had to learn to like. Jason often complimented his looks, telling him he had a pretty face and beautiful vivid blue eyes. That people were just blind and he was also the nicest man ever. Except for his taste in fashion since Dick just didn't seem to have a knack for that so he was often dressed by the family.

But all in all, everything was smooth sailing for the most part and Dick was grateful for everything. He hoped that it’ll continue to stay this way for a long long time.

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Bright blue eyes rolled from side to side as he burned the image of words into his mind, letting it
process and register. Once he reached the last word, he turned to the next page and continued on
with the story. Dick was peacefully reading in the manor's library, having found a fantastic fantasy
adventure novel to read, recommended to him by Tim.

He had the evening to himself with no plans scheduled and decided to spend a cozy time reading.
Dick had grabbed the book and plopped himself in his most favorite seat, a very comfortable large
arm chair with soft cushions which he claimed as his seat. He’d prop pillows and blankets and
Alfred even brought him a tray of tea and cookies.

Dick was so relaxed and immersed in his reading that he hadn't even heard the announcement that
someone else was in the library besides him until his name was called.

"Dick?"

Startled, Dick jumped and jerked his head upwards to see who his intruder was.

"Oh, Jason," Dick breathed a sigh and quickly marked the page before closing the book shut.
"Hey."

"Hey," Jason said with an awkward smile. He seemed a little unusual, almost jittery with the way
he was rolling back on his heels.

"I'm just reading," Dick commented and arched a brow, wasn't sure if he should question his
strange behavior or not.

"I see that. Is it—uh—good?" Jason asked and took a step forward, closing the distance between
them until he was at his side.

"Yeah, I like it so far. The characters are fun and intriguing," Dick answered.

"That's good," Jason said, uninterested. It was like his mind was elsewhere though he clearly
sought him out for something. What though, Dick wasn't exactly sure. He suppose he'd find out
soon enough. "So—" Jason sighed heavily and screwed his face, troubled. "I have something for
you."

"Oh?" Dick blinked in surprise. Not at the fact that he had a gift because Jason tended to do it out
of the blue but it was because he was being weird, nervous even.

"Yeah. It's nothing extravagant but—" Jason presented a box that he'd been hiding inside of his
jacket and handed it towards Dick. It was slightly big and in the size of a square but it fit perfectly
on Jason's palm. Dick glanced from the box to Jason, could see he was watching him in
anticipation.

Dick grabbed the box and settled it onto his lap. "What is it?"

"Open it and you'll see."

Without further ado, Dick popped the box open and revealed the gift hidden inside. Blue eyes
widened in confusion, unsure what this meant exactly. "A wristband?"

"Yeah. Do you like it?"

Dick kept his eyes on the gift and smiled tenderly once he saw the design etched onto the
wristband. "I do."
"There's a reason for it. It's not just random," Jason said and reached for his hand, holding it firmly before he slipped his old wristband off to reveal the lumpy scar tissues that Dick often hid. The man gingerly ran his fingers over the marks and lifted his wrist to press a warm kiss. "I told you I would protect you and I mean it. I want a future of us together."

Dick drew in a large breath and held it in place as he watched Jason pluck the wristband from the box. "This is a part of you. I know what they mean and I know you don't like looking at them but even then I love them," Jason said as he held his gaze, making sure that Dick was looking at him. "I don't want you to ever hurt yourself again or feel ashamed. I'm not asking you to embrace it. This is just a replacement for the one you have because I wanted it to mean something. So whenever you look at it, you don't remember just the bad memories, but also the good. And hopefully, the good will wash away the bad and it wouldn't be painful to look at your scars anymore."

Water filled his eyes and Dick exhaled shakily, could feel his emotions welling up from Jason's speech. He couldn't say a word and just gazed at the wristband pinched between Jason's long fingers. Now that he knew the meaning behind it, it was even more beautiful than ever.

"I made it with your family's colors and had a little Robin embroidered on it." And indeed, it was his family's colors. The wristband was weaved with bright yellows, greens and reds and in the middle laid a Robin bird sitting on a thin branch. "You can wear it whenever you want, but at least with me, I'd hope you won't have to hide them. I love everything about you and your scars. Your past, your 'baggage' and even your powers. Just—fuck Dick. I just love you a lot."

"Why—" he sobbed and tried to blink away the tears obscuring his vision. He could barely see Jason beneath his watery eyes. "Why do you always make me cry? I hate crying," he sniffled and dabbed away at his eyes with his blanket, turning into a bawling mess.

Jason chuckled, soft and heartwarming and glided his fingers gently through his hair. "Sorry. I guess you're just that emotional," he teased and tilted his head back to kiss him on the lips. "I promise I'll take care of you."

Dick grimaced at that remark even though deep inside, he was happy. "You're so lame," he mumbled but there was a smile on his lips.

"Yeah," Jason admitted, grinning to himself as he finally slipped the new wristband over Dick's wrist but paused briefly. "Wait," he said and then pulled it off to put on his other wrist. "Almost contradicted myself there," he said and curled his fingers around the one he'd almost placed it on. "I mean, okay, it was supposed to be your choice but just for right now, I want to feel them," he mumbled and started tracing along the bumps.

Dick just rolled his eyes and huffed a breath. "Thanks."

"You're welcome," Jason said and slipped an arm around his waist to pull him off of his seat so that he could sit down and cuddle Dick in his lap.

"You're literally the best thing to ever happen to me," Dick whispered softly and cupped his cheek.

"Ugh, you sap. I'm supposed to be the sap according to you."

"I know, but just let me have a moment."

Jason stared at him questioningly but smirked at his comment and closed in to press their lips together, kissing him tenderly.
There were many times in his life that Dick wanted to give up, so many that he couldn’t count them all on one hand. But through all his hardships, he was glad that he preserved. That he didn’t give up and his luck finally struck when he met Jason.

This wasn't the end of their journey. It was only just the beginning and they had so much more to look forward to.

Chapter End Notes

...The End.

Wow, this has been a long time coming and we've finally reached the end. Thank you all for following and sticking with this story until the end! Apologize for the long wait for the final chapter but life has been hectic and it took me a while to get this out.

I hope you all enjoyed this as much as I enjoyed writing it :D

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!