Bringing My Brother Home

by Beathas

Summary

Tim has been Robin for a year when a mysterious man begins stalking and threatening Batman and Robin. Is this the deceased Robin, Jason Todd? As Tim struggles to find a way to bring Jason home sane, his own less than stellar parents become more demanding of his future.

Notes

The Batman family unfortunately belongs to DC Comics. Maybe someday I'll be rich enough to purchase them and fix the current mess that is the Bat-family.

See the end of the work for more notes.
PART ONE: JASON

Chapter one

They moved in tandem without speaking, back to back as they punched, kicked, leapt and danced around the thugs who were daring to fight back. Batman and Robin. Partners. Dark capes that added to their mystique flew and fluttered with their graceful, powerful movements. One by one the goons fell before the Batman's fist, or the Robin's boot.

It took only a few minutes and then they were binding the hands of the eleven men they had just taken down in preparation to deliver them to the coming police. Robin tightened the zip tie on the last man and turned to his mentor in wordless observation. Batman was studying the phone he had lifted off one of the men, leaving his young squire to begin the careful analyzing of the crates around them.

Tim Drake had been Robin for almost a year now. He knew what his mentor wanted and began to take pictures of the evidence that would help them trace the source of the weapons dealing. As always he kept an ear and an eye on Batman, watching for any sign or command from the man. They never spoke much when on patrol, except for the terse commands that Batman would issue and expect to be instantly obeyed.

Bruce glanced up to make sure his wishes were being followed, since this Robin would disobey if he thought it was in Batman's best interest. Tim didn't mind the anger from his mentor. He had become Robin to save Batman, because Batman needed to be saved. But he had not anticipated the fondness he would come to have for Bruce, Dick and Alfred. Nor had he expected to have them like him.

However, both events had happened. He loved his mentor and the others who helped Batman in his war. And they, they had accepted the awkward boy with the intelligent mind and the will to become a hero, to save them. This precious acceptance to a boy whose closest friend was a stray cat that hung around his parents yard had, though they did not know it, made him utterly loyal to them.

Robin had finished his photos and had carefully took a few samples of the dirt on the nearby van. He returned to his mentor's side as the police swarmed into the building. Detective Montoya took one look at the warehouse and immediately lowered her gun. She scowled at the heroes, but had learned to accept their presence.

"There are two crates missing," Robin spoke first. "The manifest showed ten and there are only eight here."

"So some of these are going to make it onto the street," Montoya sighed, looking down at the automatic guns that lay in the nearest crate.

"They're not on the streets yet," Batman answered. "The Iceberg Lounge is the meeting point. One of the numbers in this phone belong to a long time employee there." He tossed the phone, now in an evidence bag Robin had lifted from one of the police, to Montoya.

"We'll never tie Cobblepot to it," Montoya said. "But it will break the arms dealing up and no doubt you'll lean on him again." She turned to yell for one of the CSI people to take the phone. When she turned to ask what the Batman and his sidekick meant to do they were gone.

"Well done," Batman said to Robin as they slipped into the waiting car. Tim smiled and nodded. As
he buckled up he glanced back at the store where they had busted the arms dealer. A dark figure stood at the corner of the building, facing them. Robin could not make any of his features out. He blinked as the car started forward.

The figure disappeared.

This puzzled Robin and he set his mind to unravel the mystery as Batman raced through the alleys towards the Iceberg Lounge. Clearly the person had been watching them. Batman gave no indication that he had seen the person in shadow. There was no noticeable threat. The shadow seemed to be at guard, rather than at attack. But not a policeman. That, Robin was sure of.

It was not uncommon for people to try to get pictures or videos of Batman, but the only person besides an occasional intrepid reporter who had ever done so was Tim himself. And Tim had managed it only because he hadn't been a threat and so Batman's subconscious had never alerted him as it did for a reporter. (Unless Batman wanted to remind Gotham of his presence the reporters would lose their video or photos.)

But this figure had his hands down, his silhouette had been of someone standing in military precision attention. A soldier. But not a policeman, not one of the thugs, not a fan, not a reporter, something else. Something closer. Something darker. Something that made Tim's heart ache. Batman had not seen it and showed no inclination that he felt in any danger. This was not reassuring, because Tim knew Bruce could hide his concerns. He also knew that sometimes Bruce ignored dangers to himself. That was why Tim was Robin. To keep Bruce safe.

Because Gotham needed Batman and Batman needed Robin.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"You know I'm under age," Robin quipped as he got out of the car and headed for the back door of the Iceberg Lounge. His mentor snorted. This supposed concern for the legality of a minor entering the adult bar did not seem to stop the youth from hacking his way into the keypad and getting the door to unlock. The two shadows entered into the well-lit back room. However no one was watching the door. Quickly Robin scrambled up into the ware house's metal ceiling beams.

Bruce began a methodical search of the warehouse for the missing crates as his young sidekick watched for employees, thugs or Cobblepot. Since Cobblepot ran a 'legal' business much of the crates held the items actually required and allowed by the business. But this wasn't the first time Iceberg Lounge had been used in this manner. While there was not positive evidence that would incriminate Cobblepot, this was possibly the closest they had come.

The door from the office opened and the stout figure of Oswald Cobblepot emerged, escorting no less than crime boss White Harry. A dozen body guards from both men followed, armed to the teeth. Robin signaled Batman and watched as Cobblepot spoke of business deals and the like. Then he called for one of his men and told him to show Mr. Blanche the wares, while he returned to his guests.

Although Robin had recorded this conversation it could not be used in court, because he was Robin. However, it would help the police know where to focus their attentions for this particular arms dealing. Batman joined Robin in the ceiling. They watched as the criminals sought out two normal looking crates set among the crates of fancy champagnes.

White Harry took one of the weapons and carefully examined it. There was a tense five minutes while everyone waited for someone else to blow the deal, either with an accusation that would lead to a gun fight, or a simple bullet to start. Neither scene happened, for this was Iceberg Lounge.
However illegal the deals were, Cobblepot was a business man. He did not sell bad goods.

Batman tensed and Robin glanced around to be sure no one else had entered the warehouse. He was in time to see the back door open and a person in dark clothes and a ski mask, enter. The figure looked towards the ceiling and Robin went to touch his mentor's arm, to alert him to the presence and their discovery. Bruce glanced towards the figure, but the person was standing by the wall, in that rigid military position that Robin had seen on the mysterious figure across town.

Below the vigilantes the deal was being sealed. It was time to move. Batman leapt down to seize White Harry. Robin called Montoya as the fight began, his eyes on the secret person at the back wall. He grew frustrated as he tried to divide his attention between the mystery person and the fight below him. Bruce was currently fine, but he was dodging bullets, and one misstep could see him injured.

Two hundred and seven seconds into the fight and the misstep came. Robin saw the bullet skim Bruce's arm. It was a straight shot. It had to have cut his mentor. How badly Robin wasn't sure yet. Bruce continued to fight, but his arm was definitely weak.

For a brief, breathless minute Robin perched above the fight, eyes darting between his injured partner and the mysterious figure at the wall. Then he dove into the fight, in time to guard Batman's back.

They fought with the synchronized grace of before. Only this time, they were more tired and Bruce's blood loss was becoming noticeable. The fight turned hand to hand and the synchronization broke. Robin was driven away from his mentor. He was fully capable of keeping himself from harm, but he needed to protect Batman as well.

Batman tripped, fell. Robin lunged forward and scarcely missed a knife in his side. He was not fast enough. One of the thugs raised a weapon. Bruce was unconscious.

Then a figure in dark clothes dove into the fight, knocked the gun out of the Batman's would be murderer's hands. Robin flinched, but took advantage of the shock of the thugs to knock out the two trying to kill him. With the mystery man's help Robin cleaned up the rest of the thugs.


Not a friend.

"Idiot," The man hissed at Robin. "You are not good enough to be out here."

Robin blinked, surprised by this criticism from someone he'd never seen before. Someone whose words were full of a personal venom. But not uncalled for. The boy behind Robin knew that he wasn't more than a replacement, a body to hold a position that belonged to another. He would never be Bruce Wayne's Son. He would never be more than a soldier to Batman.

"Thank you," Robin replied stiffly. He knelt by his mentor, checking the wound, and angry to see he had missed a second more severe wound that explained Bruce's further blood loss.

A rough hand seized him from behind, and Robin barely had time to duck his head to avoid a blow. The mystery person was more livid than ever. "Why are you out here? Why do you help him? He needs someone," Robin snapped back, breaking the hold on his shoulders and backing out of the man's reach. "Do you want to fight? Let me take him to safety and then I will fight."

"You're not good enough to beat me," The mystery man snorted. "Get out of here."
Robin lifted his mentor up. He half carried half dragged Bruce towards the exit, aware that the mystery person was watching him. Under the white lenses of the mask Robin was watching him as well, watching and recording. For there was a mystery here that Robin would figure out
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter two

While Gotham believed her heroes to be supernatural and not capable of harm, the superhero community wondered how the Bats healed so easily. It was rare to see one of them actually injured with more than bruises and small cuts. For the initiated into the secrets of the Batman and his soldiers, the reason they appeared almost indestructible was simple. Between continuous training, the watchful eyes of their partners and the supernatural fear they inspired they did not get hurt as often as the superhero community thought they must.

However they were not strangers to injuries. Alfred already had the medical bay of the vast network of rooms which made up the Bat-cave ready when the partners returned home. Between him and Robin they carried the unconscious Batman to the bay and soon had him on a blood transfusion, an IV and Alfred had removed the bullet from the wound Robin had missed and stitched Bruce's wounds closed.

It would require at least a week of rest before Bruce would be back on the streets, so Robin was already in contact with Oracle to cover Patrols and preparing for a week on his own, only watched over by the Birds of Prey and likely Catwoman as well. He was trying to work out how to let Nightwing know without the older hero feeling like he had to come back to Gotham to watch out for Robin, when Bruce finally came to.

After Alfred had verified that a concussion was added to Bruce's injuries the Bat called his squire to his side.

"Good job on getting us out of there. Are you hurt?" He demanded.

"No," Tim replied, finally removing Robin's mask to let his mentor see the mask of Tim Drake beneath.

"What happened with our uninvited guest?" Bruce asked.

"He saved you. I don't know where he went. He found the tracer I planted on him very quickly."

Robin listed what little he knew of the man. "I think he was watching us earlier too," He finished.

"Interesting. An amateur," Bruce mused.

"He was good," Tim replied. "He's been trained in at least seven different martial arts that I recognized. He also carried a semi-automatic .357, but did not use it."

"We shall have to look into him."

"You are not doing anything but going to bed, sir," Alfred said in his inexorable way. "Master Timothy should likely get home if he wants to give at least the pretense of sleeping in his bed."

Both knew that Alfred would brook no refusal. Alfred bore his master away to put him to bed and Timothy snuck home.
Alfred was not quite right. Tim managed to sleep for two hours before his alarm woke him for the school day. Usually he managed five hours a night, but he had not wanted to leave until he knew Bruce would be alright so it had been much later than normal. He got up and went about his careful morning routine to remove the evidence of a near sleepless night. He was very good at playing the part he had wrote for himself.

As he came downstairs he heard Jack Drake in the study, yelling at someone. He knew it wasn't Mom. When Janet got yelled at, she yelled back. Since there was no other voice Tim figured he must be on the phone.

"MUST I do everything myself?" The fury in his dad's voice was unrestrained. He had a temper, which he never bothered to reign in.

Tim passed the open door of the study as he turned into the hall that ran from the study down to the kitchen, where good smells promised the housekeeper was making breakfast.

"IDIOT!" Jack screamed, and a moment later something hard struck Tim in the back, knocking the air from his lungs. He almost dropped the book he was carrying, surprised by the blow. Jack had been on the phone.

He caught his breath and turned around to look at the floor where the object that had been thrown at him lay in several pieces on the floor. Jack's phone. Carefully he knelt to pick the pieces up and put the battery back in and then the cover, before he looked cautiously towards the study where Jack stood watching him with a snarl on his face.

"Well? Bring it back," The man demanded. Tim obeyed. As he handed the phone into his Dad's hand Jack reached out and laid a hand on his shoulder, bending his head to look down at his son. As Jack himself had been, Tim was a late bloomer. "How old are you now?" Jack asked.

"I'll be fifteen in three months," Tim said, his shoulders straightening proudly at this coming age.

"Fifteen. Right," Jack nodded. "How are your grades?"

Tim, who had brought home the quarterly report only last week, paused. "I think they're pretty good, sir," He answered.


"I'm, uh, reading this for a project," Tim replied. He frowned a little. Once, four years ago, he'd tried to read those books on archeology, trying to understand his parents' hobbies. Jack had been furious that he'd touched them without asking. He'd whipped Tim's hands until they bled for doing so.


Tim obeyed this command eagerly. He was starving after his long night. Mrs. Mac made good food. Jack followed him to the kitchen to get his own breakfast. The two Drake's sat in silence, one with coffee and an egg burrito in front of him, the other with orange juice and a stack of five pancakes. Janet entered the room, and sat next to Jack, signaling for coffee and her own breakfast.
"What were you yelling about this time?" She teased her husband.

"Oh, Prinz is causing trouble again. He's an idiot. I'm not sure how he ever made CFO."

"Probably because he's the only one willing to work with you while you're in a bad mood," Janet laughed. Then she frowned. "Does this mean we're going to have to put off our trip to Libya?"

"I'm afraid so," Jack scowled. "I'm going to have to go clean up the mess he's made of the Canton Merger."

"Well, then," Janet huffed.

"We need someone we can trust to do our bidding," Jack complained. "Prinz gets high minded ideas and forgets his orders."

Tim finished his pancakes and his orange juice and excused himself from the table.

"Tim, wear something else to school," Janet frowned as he headed for the door in jeans and a shirt with the Captain America Shield on it. "You look like a normal kid. You're better than that. Only the Wayne and Kane families have more influence than ours. Use that."

"For what?" Tim asked.

Both his parents sighed. "For power. Cultivate your friends. They'll come in useful to you."

"Right," Tim turned and headed to his bedroom, deciding he didn't want to battle for his clothes. He was already an outsider at school and appearing in the crisp slacks and button down shirt his mother usually insisted on would not make his image any worse. Drake influence. That was funny.

After school Tim skipped going home. His parents would be at Drake Industries, cleaning up whatever his Dad's CFO had determined to do that made Jack upset. Jack was president and CEO (and owner) of Drake Industries, but since he and Janet had a time-consuming hobby, Neal Prinz ran the company for the most part. That did not mean they didn't keep tabs on it, sweeping in to implement new procedures at will, or suddenly determining a new product to create.

They were intelligent innovators with little grasp on the business world. Neal Prinz would smooth out their waves after they were done and they would head off around the world. Tim would also be able to smooth any changes in his own life and his parents would forget any rules they had given him. He was smart enough to take care of himself. And his dual night-life made him confident in his intelligence, and his growing physical abilities.

With Bruce on forced bed rest by Alfred, all the work must be done by Tim. Of course Oracle and Batgirl would be helping and Spoiler would likely appear on his patrol, but in the Bat cave he would run the tests, search the vast database they had complied and organize the arms dealing case. In a day or two Alfred would led Bruce back into the cave to at least work on the more mental aspects of the affair.

That, of course, assuming Dick had not shown up in Gotham to take charge.

Tim both wished he would and that he wouldn't. He would never pass up an opportunity to be around his hero, but he also wanted a chance to prove himself going solo. Dick couldn't be there all the time and if Bruce trusted him to go off alone more there was more they could accomplish. He needed to know himself if he could do it.

"Ah, Master Timothy. I did not expect you until later," Alfred appeared with a tray in his hand.
"However, perhaps you may join me in insisting Master Bruce stays in bed. He's come up with a theory that White Harry was not the final buyer and is almost about to get out of bed."

Tim grinned and followed Alfred upstairs.

Bruce was not in bed, but in a chair with a computer tablet that he and Tim had designed the year before. He looked better, his color no longer the bloodless white from the night before. Tim restrained a sudden impulse to embrace the man. That was Dick's purview and Tim did not have the right of a son to do it. However, his joy expressed itself in another manner.

"Hello Bruce! Alfred is talking about you disobeying your grounding." He bounced onto the edge of the vast master bed.

"Tim, are you bouncing on my bed?" Bruce inquired gravely.

"I'm glad you're okay," Tim answered, a wide grin lighting up his face with boyish glee.

"I'll be up in a day or two. However, I think I'll come downstairs for an hour or two."

"Alfred said you think White Harry wasn't the final buyer," Tim lay stomach down on the bed, surprising a complaint from the growing bruise on his back. "You're thinking Black Mask sent him to inspect and even purchase the weapons?"

"Well done," Bruce glanced up with a look of admiration. "You've seen the link as well."

"Yes, sir," Tim said.

"Sir? Tim, we've talked about that. I don't want you to be my obedient soldier. I want you to be a partner."

"Sorry. I forgot. Dad likes it when I say Sir and they weren't too happy with my clothes this morning," He shrugged. "They want me to dress as if I had power in school."

"Are you in trouble at school?" Bruce caught the unsaid denial that Tim had any influence in school.

"No. I just don't fit in. I'm the youngest in my grade and well, it still is too easy for me. But I try to play it down. I don't want to go ahead any faster. It's just hard."

"Right. No bullies?" Bruce asked, remembering Dick's heroic attempt to let himself be bullied to conceal his position as Robin. Tim laughed.

"Oh, the normal ones, but I've got black material on them all. Teachers marvel at the lack of bullying in the school. I mean, I keep the worst of it away. To have none at all would be abnormal, so I keep an eye on it."

Bruce was satisfied. Tim usually found the smarter way to work around his dual life problems. Dick had tried to be sacrificially normal and Jason had used his status as a former street kid to cover any unusual things about himself. They had both been very noticed in school. Tim was not noticed.

For a moment Bruce frowned at the thought. No one really noticed Tim, and there were times when Bruce suspected that even the Tim who grew more boyish with Bruce and Dick was not the one who inhabited Tim's most private thoughts. He brushed the thought aside, for he knew he was the same way. Tim would be alright.

He handed the tablet over to his Robin when Tim held out his hand. The teenager rapidly took in the
information and no doubt had drawn his conclusions before he set the tablet on his lap. "I'll look into it Bruce. At least for tonight, will you rest? Alfred will feel so much better if you at least get a good night sleep."

"And you want a chance to prove yourself," Bruce laughed.

"You know I can do it," Tim said earnestly.

"Yes, Tim. Alright. But when you go on patrol make sure Oracle is on call."

"I will," Tim promised.

Chapter End Notes

As a writer I like to know that my work is enjoyed and what needs to be improved. Please review my Story!
Chapter three

Down in the cave Tim set the tablet aside and logged into his computer work station. He was alone, Alfred being upstairs both to make a meal for the lone hero and to make sure Bruce kept his promise to stick to bed. Tim had taken all of the possible electronics out of Bruce's room, but was fully aware that he was up against Batman. Bruce knew his ways now, knew how to hide from him. However he felt sure that Bruce would keep his promise and actually rest this night at least.

So Tim gave a little glance around himself to be sure no one was watching and then accessed the recording he had made the night before of the mysterious stranger. He was already aware of the Black Mask situation and since he would not go out on Patrol until after dinner he decided to work on that personalities identity. But he didn't want Bruce to be apart of this one. It must be his first, completely solo case.

Regrettably as Bruce's injuries were Tim knew this would allow him to open the case and continue it without interference. So he sat back and watched the tape, carefully focusing on the voice, running it through voice recognition software. Four partial matches came up. Tim leaned back, silent, grave. He focused on the features that could be made out through the ski mask, the eyes and part of the mouth. Through computer imaging he was able to get a possible idea of what the face looked like. Carefully he saved all his work and encrypted it, then filed it into his personal file in the database. After a full two hours of this work he stood up and left the room, heading to the memorial room.

He stood there for a long time in silence, until he heard Alfred calling him for supper. Starved after the poor school lunch he ran upstairs. Bruce wanted him to eat supper with him and they were going to watch part of the most recent BBC Sherlock.

Bruce had been moved back into his bed, but was propped up with pillows. He looked annoyed that he was not allowed out of bed and Tim flopped into the chair where Alfred was condescendingly setting up a TV table with the warning eyebrow raise that promised this was to be a rare occasion. Bruce turned on the TV, but neither of them really watched the show. They highly enjoyed it, sometimes laughing when Sherlock's exuberance reminded them of Dick, though Dick was by no means arrogant.

However, tonight Bruce was more weary than he wanted to let on and Tim had a lot to think about.

"So your parents are still home? I thought they had a trip planned," Bruce commented after a few minutes of silence beyond their enjoyable meal of potato soup and warm bread. Tim chewed his mouthful a bit longer than necessary to give him time to think of an appropriate answer.

"Dad is upset about something at Drake Industries. I think they are postponing the trip."

"Perhaps we should lessen your patrols, give you time to be with them," Bruce said. Tim considered the question, fully aware that Bruce was trying to determine if Tim would gain anything by his parents presence. With Dick and Jason it had been different, they had been his sons. He had much less affect in Tim's life, and had more than once agreed with Alfred's disapproval of the neglectful Drake parents.

"If they stay it might be nice to have a little more time. I think Dad wants to work at it a bit more,"
Tim answered, ignoring the bruise on his back. "He was asking about my reading this morning."

It was never put into plain words that his mentor and fellow soldiers believed his parents to be neglectful. Tim didn't know if he really believed they were right. Bruce and Dick's parents had been extraordinary. He thought they just believed all parents should be that way. Based on Tim's observations he believed his parents were more the norm.

After the delicious meal Tim saw his mentor agree to a bit of pain relief and then left him for the cave to suit up for the night. He returned to the computer to set up a few things for the night and headed for the car bay where he had his own motorcycle. This being one of the illegal things Robin did, since Tim was underage. Oracle checked in with him.

"Dick's busy on a Bludhaven case, but said he'll answer if you call. He also said Good Luck," She reported.

Tim blushed. "Thanks. I can do this."

"No one doubts that. Alright. Keep a channel free. I won't hover, I promise," Oracle replied. "Just remember, call back up if you need it."

"Yes ma'am," Tim signed off.

He put on his helmet and waved to Alfred who had come to see him off and issue a parting dictum to be careful. Master Bruce would likely not rest until Patrol was safely over with. Tim swore to use his not inconsiderable mind to the best of his ability. Then he raced up the incline to the secret exit far behind Wayne Manor.

Due to being on his own he had rearranged patrol to cover only the most needful parts, and had, without consulting Bruce, asked Spoiler and Batgirl to take a certain part. It was an unspoken rule that Robin was always the second in command, and that only Nightwing could usurp that place, or only Oracle could ignore that. The girls had enjoyed the thought of working together. Spoiler was eager to learn fighting skills from Batgirl, while Batgirl was hopeful to learn more words, of which the Spoiler had many.

The riffraff of Gotham was obliging enough to give him situations that he could easily handle, several muggings, a poorly thought out kidnapping, a domestic battery case in the park.

As Gotham settled into night however Tim finished the patrol and headed for Black Mask's territory to begin his investigation into a link to the arms dealing they had struck a major blow to the night before. He had planned to avoid confrontation, doing his work as a spy, planting bugs and generally being the fly on the wall. Black Mask was not unaware of Batman's methods and had more guards than a crime boss who did not know those methods for entering. However, where Batman might not fit, the slender, slightly underweight Robin could squeeze through. Air ducts being a ridiculous notion due to the noise they made, Robin crept in by ways of the garage underneath the supposed Kane Insurance building that Black Mask was utilizing.

So far no certain link had connected the Kane family to the Black Mask. Once past the perimeter with the help of the elevator shaft Tim's going was easier. This late at night it was suspicious for such a business to be open and so only interior rooms were used and lit. Robin had hacked into the security cameras and used that to help mask his way. Since Black Mask was present the motion sensors were turned off to avoid having the police accidentally summoned by a false alarm.

It took Tim an hour to bug the rooms he had determined belonged to the individuals who might have something to do with the arms dealing and to go through what papers he could find. He downloaded
information from those computers. Having wrapped his prey up in a web of listening devices Robin departed the way he had entered, none being the wiser for it.

None except for the masked man waiting by Robin's well hidden bike.

"Alone tonight, little brat?" The man mocked.

Tonight the man had changed his black ski mask for a red one. His leather gloves had also changed to red. This evolution to the color of blood alarmed Tim. His own suit was red and black, but the black hid the red. Here the red was flaunted. And there were now two guns holstered at his side, as well as any number of knives.

"You've followed me most of the night. I think I don't need to answer that question," Tim answered, as he wondered how much to ask, how much he suspected could be real.

"I thought you never saw me."

"Well, I figured you had your reasons, that had nothing to do with Black Mask. No doubt you used my control of the cameras to do your own reconnaissance," Robin answered, stepping up the bike as if to get on, but more to put it between himself and his stalker.

"So you think I'm one of you?" The red hooded man laughed. Robin did not answer, looking at the man's build. Too much of him was concealed to give Robin much knowledge. Tim did not know how much this stalker knew, but the fact that he was being so bold made him wonder if the man knew much about Tim. He could not know, for instance, that Tim had figured out Batman's identity on his own. Because if he had known that he would have approached the boy more cautiously.

So unless he was trying to make Tim suspicious, he wouldn't be acting this way. So Brash, and Angry, and so Hurt.

"You don't have anything to say?" The man asked.

"I think," Robin began and then hesitated, "I think you don't know yet if you want to be one of us."

The man took a step back, surprise and fury in his mien. "What little you know."

"You don't know me," Tim answered. "I'm smarter than you apparently think. I've drawn my conclusions. But I will promise you this much. Until I am convinced in my own mind, my theory remains with me. Not even Batman will know."

"And how, bird boy, are you supposed to prove your theories? Your little tracer is at the bottom of the river," The man drew closer, menacingly.

Robin decided the conversation had gone on long enough. He got on the bike.

"That is my affair, unless you would like to take that mask off and tell me the truth," Robin answered. Seeing his interlocutors fists clench he sighed. "No? Well then, I will see you again, I'm sure." He shot off, in time to miss the furious lunge from the mystery man.

"I trust the night was uneventful, Master Timothy," Alfred said, watching Tim put away his boots and gauntlets in their rightful spot and remembering how Dick had always forgotten to do so. A soft smile at the memories of the mischievous Robin crossed Alfred's face. "No injuries to report?"

"None at all. I only crossed fists with a couple of thugs and they were untrained and unskilled," Tim answered. Alfred nodded, noting in his mind, not for the first time, that this newest Robin treated the
position as a soldier might. It had been a war and a thrill for Dick, an outlet for Jason and for Bruce it was a crusade. For this Robin, it was a responsibility.

Not for the first time Alfred hated the Batman and his need of innocence to keep him grounded, to remind him what he fought for.

"Is Bruce still awake?"

"Yes. Report to him and set his mind at rest. Then go home to bed. Did you need anything more to eat or drink?"
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

I enjoy sharing the shenanigans that come out of my head. If you enjoy reading them or have a constructive opinion, please review!

Chapter four

Tim frowned as he watched the clock hand crawling for the half hour. He had completed the test fifteen minutes ago, but did not draw attention to this fact, for the simple reason that he didn't want anyone to know how easy it was for him. As he returned to pretending to fill in answers he reviewed his theories on the mystery man. The more he grew certain of the man's identity, however impossible, the more he grew concerned about the reason the man would not be open.

"Dressed to the nine's today, Tim?" The teacher asked with a tired smile as he took Tim's paper from his hand.

"Yeah. Supposed to look like a business man already," Tim answered.

"Oh. You are planning to be a business man?"

"I don't have any plans. My parents do," Tim grinned.

A crease formed between the teacher's eyes, but Tim moved on.

In the cafeteria he was confronted by a couple of boys a whole head taller than him, who were inclined to mock his clothes.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"How ridiculous it is that even in high school clothes make the man," Tim told Bruce as he suited up. Batman had been allowed to leave his room and was working the logistics of the case that night.

"It does help when we need disguises," Bruce pointed out.

"Yeah, but these boys were deliberately ragged. Looked like they were almost homeless with their cut up jeans and ripped shirts. And they aren't poor at all. They walk around like this," Tim strutted out of the dressing room in boots and pants only, waving his undershirt about like a flag as he displayed the ridiculous strut of his earlier confronters. As with most of his disguises he was able to recreate it so that Bruce had to laugh at the thought of the two ridiculous boys trying to intimidate the boy who spent his nights as Robin.

Tim turned to go back into the dressing room to finish suiting up. Batman's face immediately grew grave.

"Tim, you told me you weren't hurt yesterday," He said in an awful tone.

"I wasn't," Robin turned to his mentor in surprise.
"You've got a bruise on your back," Batman replied.

Tim blinked and tried to glance over his shoulder. He had forgotten about the bruise. Since the nearest mirror was the clean glass of one of the memorial suits he went to use that to get a look at his back. Sure enough there was a dark, almost rectangular bruise below his right shoulder. "Oh, Wow. I never even noticed," He said.

Bruce was glowering. "Did Alfred check you over when you returned?"

"I did not sir. He was not injured as far as I could tell," Alfred answered for them.

"Do you know how you got that?" Bruce demanded.

"No, sir," Tim answered in his crisp, soldier's way that bothered Bruce. "I can't think of any time I got hit there during patrol at all."

"It looks no more than a bruise. Does it hurt?" Alfred examined it closer.

"It didn't until you pointed it out. Now it aches a bit."

"Will it affect your patrol?" Bruce asked, softening his tone, believing Tim.

"No. It's nothing," Tim laughed.

"Alright. But I want you to let Alfred look you over on return. If you can't remember where you are getting bruises from we need to take more care."

"Aye, Aye," Tim saluted and headed back into the dressing room.

As he pulled on the armored shirt he heard Bruce sigh and speak in Alfred to a low tone. "It still surprises him that even something so small could be worth noticing. Do you think he'll take care of himself out there?"

"Not for himself no. I think he will for your sake though. He knows you cannot lose him."

Tim nodded his head in agreement. Bruce would not lose Robin.

He bounded out the dressing room to show himself full of energy and unaffected by the bruise, which really was nothing.

"Tim, promise to be careful," Bruce said earnestly.

"I'm always careful," Tim said with a smile that was reminiscent of the first Robin. He tried to emulate Dick much of the time, though he thought so differently.

"Alright. Get off with you. Let's see how you handle yourself on your own," Bruce laughed. He watched the boy lope away with a fond smile. "Alfred, I can't believe that I feel safer letting him go out on his own in Gotham than I ever did in letting Dick patrol with Clark on occasion."

"Well sir, as Mr. Kent sometimes forgets that you are all mortal, that makes sense to me. Master Timothy knows he is important to you."

Patrol went smooth. Tim returned unhurt, and without having seen the mysterious stalker. He unsuited, Alfred made sure he was unharmed, and the boy went home.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK
Sleep did not come. The more Tim considered what he suspected, the more he realized that he could not go to Bruce, not until he knew for sure, not until he had proof. He had once figured out the greatest secret identity in the world with a cheap camera and the simple fact that he wasn't noticeable. Because of that knowledge it was his responsibility to find the truth in this matter as well.

He got up with this purpose in mind, performed his morning routine of stretches and absently dressed in his favored jeans and t-shirt. As he approached the kitchen he heard his parents talking in low voices. They fell silent when he walked in the door and both immediately stared at him with frowns on their faces. He glanced down at his clothes.

"Oh. I forgot," He said.

"Really Tim," Janet said. "Is it so hard to listen to us in this one thing?"

"Mom, no one else dresses like that. Its public school."

"A public school where the society leaders children go," She replied.

"And when I dress like I'm going to a prep school I stand out," He said.

"Timothy, standing out is good. You will be a leader," Jack replied.

"Are you serious?" Tim asked, reaching for a cereal bowl, since it was Mrs. Mac's day off.

"We are only wanting this for your own good," Janet said, taking the bowl out of his hands. "If you cannot act mature, perhaps you should be punished. You can skip breakfast. Go change."

Tim stared at her, shocked. He glanced towards his Dad, but saw there was no help there. Shaken by the punishment he left. It wasn't something they'd done to him before. He wasn't in denial. He knew very well that sometimes they hurt him too much for it to be anything more than abuse. But they'd never refused to feed him.

"Are we doing the right thing, grooming him for this?" Janet's voice followed him out into the hallway.

Jack's answer was too low to be intelligible. Tim climbed the stairs, considering his options. He didn't doubt that Bruce would help him if he asked. But he didn't want to do that. He wanted to make things right with his parents, he wanted them to be a family. So if he dressed as they wanted surely that would be fine. It wasn't like he wasn't going to get picked on at school anyway. And he wasn't completely alone in the more dressed up area, since most of the teachers and a couple of the more serious minded students, did dress up. It would be alright if he did this. Maybe they might give him some attention then and learn about him, let him talk about his hobbies, maybe this was a good step.

When he got home from school he discovered his parents were gone. So he headed for Wayne Manor in silence, pushing aside the abnormal interest in his person that his parents had and turning to the mysterious stranger. He knew very well that the next step was to get proof. The best way would be to get some DNA from him. The easiest way to do this well, the only way to do this that Tim could think of, barring the stalker giving it to him freely, was to fight him. Since Tim had witnessed his skill and knew the man to be at least five years older than him, which meant that he was stronger, not to mention taller, he could not win the fight. But he didn't need to win. He needed to bloody him and then escape.

For a moment Tim considered calling Dick and enlisting him. But since his proof was circumstantial and Dick did not fully know Tim's abilities he might laugh at him, or worse think he was crazy. Besides, he was like Bruce in this matter. Too close to it. No, it was Tim's responsibility.
He went through his exercises, wondering why he felt so tired. Bruce came downstairs, walking much easier than the day before, but forced to rely on a cane still.

"Tim, you're shaking a bit. Did you forget to eat or drink enough today?" Bruce commented.

Tim was startled by the question and then realized that that was why he didn't feel right. He had considered the loss of one meal as no big deal, but had, in his distraction with his knowledge, forgotten that he worked much harder than the average teen. "Oh, right, I think I didn't get breakfast."

"Tim\," Bruce shook his head. "What is going on?"

"Oh, I just had an interesting conversation with Mom and Dad. They're kind of focusing on my future a lot all of a sudden. We were talking so much I didn't eat."

"Have more care in the future," Bruce scolded, fetching a sports drink from the well-stocked fridge. He tossed it at Tim. As the boy began to drink Batman walked to the intercom.

"Alfred, could you please bring Tim a sandwich? He seems to have neglected eating enough today."

"Of course Master Bruce. I hope he hasn't made himself sick."

"No I think we caught it in time," Bruce said.

Ten minutes later Tim sat at his computer console typing away as he ate. As he searched his bugs in Black Mask's offices for leads he glanced across the room at Bruce. The Bat was deep in consultation with a couple of the Justice League. Finishing the sandwich off the boy pulled up Bruce's personal files, and opened one. Keeping his senses primed for any sign that Alfred or Bruce were too close and would see what he was looking at, he scanned the information as quickly as he could. He had known the story before, but not all the particulars. Piecing together the timeline he found several open times were his suspicions could have taken place.

Just as he closed the file his computer let out a small ring and Dick's smiling, masked face popped up on the screen. Tim barely kept from betraying his relief. "Hey Baby bird, I heard you had patrol by yourself the last couple nights and did a great job."

"Thanks," Tim said, grinning eagerly.

"Dick?" Bruce's attention was snagged by the voice of his adopted son. He waved away Flash and Wonder Woman and headed over for Tim's station. "You've not checked in for three days!"

"Sorry boss. You were hurt and Babs knew what I was up to."

"Well, I hope you've been taking better care of yourself than Tim has. He's gotten rather careless, missing an injury and then forgetting to eat," Bruce said, but he laid a hand on Tim's shoulder. "Of course he might just be excited of how good a job he's done."

"Really?" Tim looked up. He was glad to see Bruce pass off the little indiscretions in front of Dick. He found it harder to lie to Dick than to Bruce.

"High praise from the master, Robin. Well done. And to own, if I hadn't had a very pressing case, I might have come down. Well, I see that I would just be in the way, so I'll stay her," Nightwing tried to pull a sad face.

"Well, you could just come for a visit," Tim heroically offered. "Besides, you can help keep Bruce
grounded long enough for him to heal."

"Keep your eyes peeled kiddo. I'll be there in a day or two. What is this mystery stalker Oracle told me about?"

"I had not had time to ask you about that, Tim. Have you learned anything more?"

"No. He was following me for a little bit around Black Mask, but I think he was actually looking for you and not me," Tim answered. "However, I've asked a couple street contacts to watch for him. I'll find him."

"So you want to take this one on by yourself?" Bruce and Dick grinned at each other.

Tim, who had feared having to share this case, looked up with more relief than delight. If they let him take charge of this then it would be far easier to conceal his suspicions. Both his mentors laughed at his look of hope.

"Well Robin, I think you can handle it," Bruce answered. "There doesn't seem to be a lot to go on, but what we've noticed seems to indicate someone trying to be a vigilante."

"What about the Black Mask and the arms dealing? Anything new on that end?" Dick inquired.

"Oh, I've just finished going through the tracers I planted there. Nothing important, except what seems to be code that I'll have to break," Tim replied.

"Send that to me. I'll work on that, since I am still 'grounded'," Bruce answered. "It's probably time you suit up, anyway."

"Right," Tim quickly transferred his files to Bruce's station. "I can't wait to see you Dick."

Mind full of the possibilities that lay before him, Tim dashed off to become the youthful knight in training, Robin.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Wow. This one was fun to write. I love Tim. Tell me how I did!

Chapter five

When Tim came downstairs the next morning he had dressed as expected by his parents. They were waiting for him in the dining room, and when they saw him they smiled. "See Tim? You look so much better like this."

He smiled and nodded, and sat down to a full breakfast. As soon as they saw he had done as they wanted his parents ignored him, turning to their papers and talking about a possible expansion of the Drake Medical Research Department. Tim ate in silence, planning out his later patrol in hopes of meeting the mystery stalker again. Once he was finished eating he immediately left for school.

It was not to be an uneventful day. Besides getting called a few names for his change in wardrobe a rather tiring conversation was started by Mr. Bennett, his math teacher. Tim, hoping to have time to use his phone to check for any news from his street contacts, had entered the classroom early.

"Tim, I'm glad you're early. I wanted to talk to you about something."

"Yes, sir?" Tim said politely, sticking his phone back in his bag.

"The other day you said your parents had planned for you to be a businessman, but you didn't have any plans," Mr. Bennett sat down on the desk chair opposite Tim.

"Yeah," Tim shrugged.

"Tim, I think you and your parents should speak with the school's career counselor. I think you should find what you want to do."

"I don't mind being a business man."

"Perhaps, but will you like it? You are an extremely intelligent boy Tim. I think you hide just how intelligent. You could do anything that you wanted. You can choose what you like. I love my job, thankless as it sometimes seems. Its students like you, who want the knowledge, who want to understand that make me enjoy it. I'd like to see you in a job you enjoy as well."

"Oh. Thanks Mr. Bennett. Mom and Dad are kinda set and I don't know what I want to be, it's easier to go along with their plans since I don't know what I want to do," Tim answered.

"Well, think about what I've said. I'm going to talk to Ms. Dost about setting up a time to talk with you and your parents. Alright?"

"Sure." Tim shrugged.

With the class suddenly filling up the conversation ended and Tim had no time to look at his contacts.
"We've got a break in the Black Mask case. He's definitely a buyer, and there's another shipment coming in next week," Bruce greeted his squire. Tim slung his backpack to the ground and plopped down in the nearest chair. "Long day at school?"

"I had a teacher wanting me to decide my career. Mom and Dad are also trying to decide my future. It's like no one notices that I'm not really an adult yet," Tim snorted. "And Mom and Dad are kinda weird about it."

"How so?" Bruce asked.

Tim shrugged. "I think they've got every step mapped out."

"Well. That sounds very planned," Bruce spoke in a cautious tone.

"Oh, they'll forget all about it when they go on their next trip," Tim laughed. He caught the grave look on Bruce's face. "It's ok, Bruce. I mean, at least I've got parents. I know they aren't like yours or Dicks, but they are my parents."

"Of course," Bruce said.

However, as Tim began to exercise, Bruce also entered the training room. Despite Tim and Alfred's protests he did some light stretches. Tim caught his mentor looking at him several times and blushed hotly, wanting to point out to Bruce that if he'd had parents that were really into knowing him, he couldn't be Robin. This would not have made Bruce any happier, for he already felt guilty that Tim's presence helped him going down a very dark path.

It was a great relief for Tim to head out on patrol. Patrol offered him a strenuous outlet tonight. Friday night seemed to bring out the worst in Gotham's criminals. Tim and Batman's other Gotham allies were kept very busy. Muggings, robberies, and worse needed to be stopped all over the city.

About halfway through patrol Tim caught sight of the stalker again. Bruce had just switched channels to follow Batgirl's progress with some shady happenings on the dock. Carefully switching to the channel he had set up ahead of time to record his meeting with this person, Tim promptly headed for a wide open, and quiet roof top. There he stood, waiting for the approach of the stalker.

"Well, here we are again, little bird," The man said. Today his ski mask was black and his jacket was red. "The big Bat was really knocked out of it, wasn't he?"

"Oh, he's on his feet. Batman isn't very easy to keep down," Robin answered. "So what does red stand for to you?"

"You are a sharp little boy. Red is blood. Red is vengeance."

"On Batman?" Robin asked in a colorless tone.

"Eventually. There's a couple others in line before him. And maybe he'll see reason before I'm done with those," The man snorted. He looked up and down the smaller boy. "You look tense. Are we to fight tonight? I'd really like that. You don't know how much I'd like that." He licked his lips, eyeing Robin's stance.

"Why?"

The question made the Red man laugh. "Oh, little Robin, you don't know anything. You are just a
naive boy in the wrong place. I'm surprised Daddy bats or Night boy aren't freaking out that you're here."

"You wouldn't be the first to underestimate me," Tim replied, hand slipping to his belt. "Batman and Nightwing underestimated me. Now I'm Robin. That should tell you something."

"It tells me that they've trapped you in their lies. And, little Robin, you'll pay for the lies."

Both of them moved at once, as this was the signal they had each waited for. Tim ducked and rolled as the larger man swung his foot towards where Tim's head would have been. As Robin came out of his roll he spun around with the bow staff expanding to six feet long. The man in the red jacket threw back his head and laughed.

"You and wing boy and your sticks."

Then they were at each other again. Had there been a bystander to this fight, it would have looked like a violent dance. Between Tim's agile smaller body and the sheer power of the older man they each had an advantage of some kind. Robin could duck the immensely powerful blows, but if he took a hit it would be damaging. As he expected the man in the red jacket was very skilled, even more so that Tim. It was taking every ounce of concentration Robin had to keep from being badly hurt. And his sole goal was to bloody his foe. He needed to get blood and then run, for all he was worth. However, this was proving to be a monumental task.

"Oh, are you getting tired?" His combatant asked as they broke apart. Tim's nose was bleeding and he knew at least one muscle in his back had been strained. So far he had avoided broken bones.

"First blood, second blood and third blood go to me," The man laughed as he caught Tim in the arm and flung the Robin to the hard rooftop. Robin did not get up, nor move. "Wow that was quick. I would have thought you would have been harder, being Robin and...Argh!"

As he knelt by the seemingly inert boy Robin jabbed his staff upwards into the man's face. At last he drew blood and a blood curdling holler. He leapt to his feet and grabbed the man's face as he fell backwards, trying to rip aside the mask. If only he could see beneath it. But the man shoved him away viscously. However as Tim scrambled back to his feet he saw that he had gotten his goal. Some of the man's blood was on Tim's gloves. The furious man was gaining his breath and cursing Robin.

"I think that's all," Tim said and ran for the rooftop's side.

"What..." The man began and then started spewing curses out again. He gave pursuit. Every hope, every desire Tim had relied on him getting away from this man. So he flew across the rooftop tops, leaping as gracefully as Dick had taught him, seeking a way to lose his pursuer. But, as might be expected of someone this good, the man knew his way all too well. His weight was a factor against him, but he was older. His stamina was better.

Tim was also more bruised by the fight.

"ROBIN!" A furious, frantic voice cut into his earpiece. He had forgotten to change the channel back. He must have pressed the button on accident "ROBIN, what are you doing?"

"Found... stalker," Robin answered. "Running..."

"He's that good?" Bruce's voice was growing calmer now that he'd heard Tim on the other end. "Why was your earpiece off?"

"Got jostled?" Robin offered, and sprang across an alley way for a fire escape.
"Alright. Keep running. I've got an eye on you now. Alfred!"

"Master Bruce, Master Dick is in the city and much closer. You are still hurt and would take time to suit up," Alfred's calm voice came over the line. Robin scrambled up the fire escape. It shook with the force of his pursuer landing on it.

"Robin, get onto 103rd street. Nightwing is coming down 84/80," Bruce commanded. "Your bike? I see it. Too far. Can you last?"

"'course."

"Brave boy. Alright. We'll talk about entering fights without proper back up later."

Tim entered a long stretch to run in without any jumps. He took advantage to pluck his gloves from his hands and shove them into the pouch he kept open for evidence. He had just gotten it snapped shut when he reached the end of the roof he was on. There was too wide a gap to jump. He scrambled down the fire escape. It was only a second or two later that he felt the stairs jostle as a second body joined him. His pursuer had caught up. Tim continued to run, but could imagine a bullet aimed for his head. The man in the jacket had guns. Why didn't he use them?

Tim was still ahead. He took off down the street, eyes peeled for Nightwing.

"Where to?" Dick's voice, calm, but with an edge to it, asked. Robin couldn't talk and run, so he was glad when Bruce, whose voice held the same edge, answered.

"He's crossing Van Deer Mot Ave."

"Alright. Coming down behind you Robin. I think I see your pursuer. Big fellow. Whatever made you decide to fight him?"

Since Robin had been racing for almost seven minutes, at speeds that should not be sustained for so long, he did not answer. However he heard the motorcycle behind them and knew Dick had made it. A pair of gloved hands skimmed the back of his neck, there was a nice yelp as a bat-r-rang sliced into the gloves at least, and then the pursuer turned and ran the other way, clearly figuring on Nightwing getting to Robin.

Tim staggered to a stop and dropped to the ground, breathing heavily. "Are you mad, taking him on your own?" Nightwing hollered. "Who is he working for?"

Seeing that Robin was beyond answering, the handsome man sighed and produced a sports drink. "Foolish boy. Alfred, I'm thinking he's going to need oxygen."

"Is he badly hurt?" Bruce asked.

"No, he's lost his gloves and his nose is bleeding."

"'m alright," Tim told them, but made no effort to move.

"Of course you are. Come on. We better get you back to the cave."

"Got to finish Patrol," Tim informed Nightwing.

"After that mad race? You're going nowhere but home, to get oxygen and some hot/cold baths. Why did you fight him alone?"

"He won't tell me who he is. Needed DNA," Robin answered, glad when Nightwing scooped him
up off the ground. "He wanted to fight something. Gave him an option."

There were a number of exasperated sighs, and one or two comments, to this, but Robin was happy in the knowledge that he had succeeded and would take the scolding he was sure to get from everyone in good grace. After all, he had done it in secret for them. He was a little alarmed by the fury the stalker had fought with, and the words they had spoken. But he would consider all the ramifications when he was certain.

He was surprised by how tired he was after his race.

Ten minutes later he was being carried by Nightwing into the medical bay, where Alfred and Bruce anxiously waited for them. Tim was surprised by this, since he wasn't badly hurt, only tired. However, he was soon breathing in fresh oxygen and watching Alfred reassuring both Bruce and Dick that Robin's bloody nose and a few nasty bruises were the extent of his injuries.

Relief, not unnaturally, gave way to scolding and the boy listened in fake repentance to a list of his faults and what would be done about them.

Since this ended in a group hug Tim was rather confused about if he was to be punished or not.

After a hot shower, and carefully stowing his evidence to take care of when not surrounded, he emerged to find Dick and Bruce had finally changed the subject and were talking about the Black Mask case. They looked at him with fond relief as he headed for them. He grinned sheepishly.

"Am I grounded?"

"No. But you are not to go on patrol without Dick. It was a smart idea, but not handled in an intelligent way. Next time, let's work out the logistics a little better."

"Yes, sir."

"Bruce, Tim, Bruce," Batman said in exasperation and then seized the surprised boy into a warm embrace.

"Bruce, I don't think I was in much danger. I mean, he had guns but didn't use them, and unless he's a bad shot I had to have given him several good opportunities to shoot," Tim said. "I think he's confused about who he is."

"Well, I'll let you keep the case if you promise to take much more care in your attempts to gather evidence," Bruce said.

"Softy," Dick punched his adopted father. "Come on Tim. I think you better get to bed early."
Chapter six

The next day being Saturday, Tim had fully planned to sleep in as much as possible. There being nothing for him to do until evening as Robin, he hadn't expected his plans to be thwarted. However, at 8 am, he was shaken awake by his parents, both of whom were dressed in business clothes. He rolled over to blink blearily at them.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, Tim. It is time we had a talk," Janet said.

"Right now?" Tim moaned.

"You seem to find all of our ideas distasteful," Jack snapped. He grabbed Tim's arm and yanked him off the bed. The boy agilely twisted and landed on his knees. "Now that you're out of bed, get dressed and come downstairs. You've got five minutes."

After the door shut on them Tim sighed, rubbed his red wrist and got up. He was ready for his parents to go on another trip. They were acting strangely this time and while this meant he actually was being seen by them, he seemed unable to please them. They did not understand him, and he was a little afraid they didn't want to understand him, but mold him into their idea. He shuffled down the stairs, but did not dare delay too much. He really didn't want to lose his parents. And if they got too mad and hurt him, Bruce might notice. It wasn't that Tim was an idiot. He knew that it was abuse. But it had never been more than a blow or a rough pull. It was impossible to hide their neglect, but that was not enough to get him pulled from his family.

Besides, if he ended up in a foster system, he couldn't be Robin, and he needed to be Robin, now more than ever. Beyond that, he kept hoping that one day his parents would change. He hoped one day they would take an interest in him, just because he was their son. It was a balancing act, to keep his parents from realizing where he went every night, or to keep Bruce from realizing that sometimes the bruises weren't from a fight as Robin.

In the dining room his parents were waiting with breakfast. He sat down, took his plate in silence and waited for them to tell him what was going on.

"Well Tim, I got a call from the career counselor at your school. Ms. Dost is a very nice person and she would like to get together with us to discuss your future. We've planned a meeting after school Monday," Janet began.

"Ok," Tim nodded, wondering why they couldn't have told him this and let him go back to sleep.

"So Tim, we've been thinking that we should plan for you taking over Drake Industries in the future," Jack said. "I've taken a look at your grades and you seem intelligent. We should think about what stuff you should learn. I see that you like to read. I've got some books you should look at."

As his parents began to talk over each other, telling him what he should need for their grand plan, Tim sat staring stupidly at his breakfast, waiting for a break.

Finally his parents went to get up, still talking. Tim glanced up.

"Is this, I mean, do I have to do this?" He asked.
Instantly the full force of both his parents' glares fell on him.

"This is what you're here for," Jack snapped. "Our heir."

"So my future is all planned out, and I have no say in it," Tim laughed darkly. "Why now? Why do you all of the sudden care?"

"This is what is right for all of us," Janet answered coldly.

**LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK**

"Hey Tim!" Dick called as he hung from the trapeze and swung back and forth. Tim glanced up at him and grinned. Dick could always make him smile. The acrobat reached the peak of his swing and let go, somersaulting into the net below. "Thought you weren't coming over until this evening."

"I figured I'd get some extra work in," Tim answered.

"Work? You didn't come to hang with me?" Dick laughed.

"Can I do my stuff and then come play?" Tim replied. "I've just got a test to run."

"Alright. But I expect you up here soon," Dick called, climbing up to the trapeze again.

Bruce was not in the cave and Tim fetched the blood he had taken from his gloves the night before. He set up the various machines to run a number of tests on the blood and send them to his secured computer. After setting the computers to their tasks he hurried to change into his exercise clothes and join Dick on the trapeze set.

The afternoon was spent in flying around, sparring and eventually a hotly contested game of chess which ended when Dick's exuberance sent the board flying. After this game they hit the showers to prepare for dinner. Dick headed upstairs to see if Bruce had returned from Wayne enterprises while Tim went to check his evidence. The younger hero carefully removed the slides of blood from the computer, placed it in an evidence locker and headed for his computer.

He pulled up the results.

And there, on the computer, was a 99% match to the deceased Robin, Jason Todd.

It took Tim several minutes to be able to breathe again. He had already suspected this identity, but this confirmation shocked him. He was grateful that he was alone in the cave. Dick must have been distracted for he did not return to see Tim's pale, shocked face.

Jason Todd. His death was the entire reason that Tim had even become Robin. Why hadn't he revealed himself and claimed the position of Robin again? Bruce needed his son. Tim was an ill replacement. He could never be the son Bruce needed. He was a mere stand in. The position belonged to Jason. When he came back what would Tim do? Could he make his own position? Would Bruce and Dick even want Tim around anymore? Would he be stuck in the life his parents had planned out for him, separated even from his heroes?

His confidence all the more shaken Tim almost didn't look at the rest of the information. He was actually on his feet before he remember he had subjected the blood to a myriad of tests. To give himself time to compose his features, since he was not ready to share his findings with Bruce, he sat back down and took a look at the rest of the tests.

Almost instantly he was on his feet again with a cry that echoed in the cave, thankfully heard only by
the sleeping bats in the darker crevices.

The substance labeled LZ-15 was found in the blood. This was the highly addictive chemical that gave the terrifying Lazarus pits created and used by the terrorist Ra's Al Ghul and his League of Assassins their power. Used on a stable mind it created delusions, hallucinations and violent tendencies. On an unstable mind... Tim shuddered. Jason could not have been stable when dipped in the pit. He had been betrayed by his biological mother, beaten by his mentor's arch enemy, blown up, he was supposed to be dead. But he could not have been dead if he was dipped in the pit. Although the pit could extend life and heal injuries, with the terrible mental side effects, it could not bring back the dead. There had to be a bit of life left, even the smallest bit, for the chemicals to work.

Bruce had long been looking for something to combat the mental side effects. Tim pulled up his research to see if a pair of fresh eyes could find a solution. They would need a solution if they were to save Jason from himself.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"Tim, did you hurt your wrist on the floor tonight?" Dick asked. "Did I catch you too hard?"

"No," Tim glanced at his slightly swollen wrist and was grateful that there were no bruises from where his father had yanked on for fear that they would have been in the shape of fingers. "Oh."

"This isn't from last night," Dick examined his wrist. "Tim, you should have said something."

"It doesn't hurt, Dick. I barely realized. I don't think it's bad," Tim laughed.

"Well, nonetheless, I will handle patrol tonight. You stay here. Besides, you look tired. Stay in. Bruce, tell him I'll handle it. Last night wore him out I think."

Bruce glanced over his shoulder. "Tim, he's right. You can give me a hand with last night's recordings from Black Mask."

Dick laughed, throwing an arm around his frowning younger partner. "Bruce is rather lonely here I think, Tim. Keep him company. Monday night we'll patrol together," He promised.
Chapter seven

The weekend passed quickly. Monday dawned grey, which matched Tim Drakes mood perfectly. He did not want to meet his teacher and his parents to discuss a future that he clearly had no say in. Whatever bugged Jack about Drake Industries was clearly taking a long time to get set in order. The boy dressed neatly, aware that his parents would insist.

His parents were in the middle of a discussion about the merits of a carbon dating system and he slipped into the dining room unnoticed. He ate quickly, wondering if they would notice if he left. Maybe they had forgotten about the meeting set up with the career counselor. However as he got up Janet looked up and caught his eye.

"We're leaving in fifteen minutes Tim. Don't go anywhere," She said.

"Okay," He agreed. He went upstairs and sat down at his bedroom desk. He considered what he had learned about Jason Todd. How could he still be alive? Bruce did not make mistakes like that. Something had to have happened. Tim would have to look at the information they had on Jason's death. It was ill recorded in Bruce's computers.

Should he tell Bruce or Dick?

What if Tim was the one who had made the mistake? No, he could not raise their hopes or face their anger if they did not believe him. He would have to bring Jason home on his own. Maybe, maybe they would still want Tim to work with them. Bruce had said more than once that Tim's skills as detection were excellent. He had to be worth something, even if it was just as a soldier. He wanted to work with Batman, rather than in the cutthroat business world for which his parents were preparing him.

"Tim! Let's GO!" Jack hollered up the stairs.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"Tim is very intelligent," Ms. Dost told his parents with a charming smile. "He could excel in whatever field he wants to enter."

"Tim will be entering Drake Industries as soon as he's ready," Jack answered, with a blinding smile of his own. Tim wanted to hide under the table. He had forgotten how easily his parents adapted to their surroundings, manipulating the people around them to their own ends. Ms. Dost's smile grew.

"So you mean to follow your parents' footsteps, Tim?" She asked.

The teenager was aghast and looked at his parents. The career counselor frowned. "Do you not want to enter the business world?" She asked.

"Nonsense," Jack said.

Tim shrugged. "I don't have anything I want to do," He said.

"Well, perhaps you would like to explore a few options. You still have time left in which you can make your choice."
"His choice is made, Ms. Dost. All he has ever meant to do is become a business man. I would like to get him on the fast track. Our purpose in this meeting is to determine what school he may need," Janet laughed. "Tim, what is wrong with you today?"

"Nothing. Business is fine," He glanced hopefully at Ms. Dost. She had a small frown between her eyes.

"Mr. Drake, Mrs. Drake, I will be very happy to help Tim prepare for his future, however my concern is that Tim may find business does not suit him. Perhaps he may want to be a lawyer, a doctor, or something unique," She said. "If Tim wants to we can work on getting some classes to prepare him for the business world, but I want to be sure this is the path he should take."

"Business if fine. I don't have anything else I want to do," Tim offered.

Ms. Dost smiled. "Perhaps you just want to be a kid for a while longer," She said. "Alright. I will prepare a list of classes Tim should take and a list of colleges he could attend. I should mention that Tim's intelligence means he could graduate a year earlier if he should wish. Keep that in mind. A decision does not need to be made today."

"Thank you, Ms. Dost," Jack said. "That will be most helpful."

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Tim slid out of the car, wondering if he had time to get to the Cave to work on his Lazarus Pit cure before Bruce came in from Wayne Enterprises. Dick would probably be asleep, preparing for patrol that night. It would be fun to go with Dick. Bruce was probably well enough to go on patrol, but he was going to stay in, let the boys have fun. Deep in thought, Tim held the door open for his Mom to pass through. His Dad was a mere step behind her and Tim waited until they were both inside to go in himself. He hung up his coat, counting out a list of possible medicines to contradict the chemically induced madness of the Pit. His parents were still in the foyer and he began to walk around them.

Jack grabbed him by both arms and shoved him back against the door frame of the unused parlor off the foyer. "What do you think you're doing?" He hollered.

Since Tim was busy catching his breath he was unable to answer, and was rewarded by being banged against the door frame a second time.

"What did I do?" Tim asked, surprised by the anger.

"Acting like a sullen, spoiled plebian teenager. We are giving you the best shot at life we can! The least you can do is appreciate it."

Tim neatly twisted out of the painful grip on his arms and stood out of his father's reach, staring at him openmouthed.
"I said I'd do it! I'm going to do the studies you want me to. Why is this such a big deal?"

"Because you don't appreciate what we're doing for you! You are going to be handed a great position on a platter and you won't even make an effort to prepare for it!"

"So I'm supposed to pretend that I really want to do it?" Tim snorted.

Janet slapped him. "You ungrateful brat! We're giving you everything and you won't accept it!"

Tim ducked a second slap and backed up to the stairs. "What is up with you two?" He snapped.

"You suddenly stay home for months at a time, trying to choose my life, and acting like I'm the crazy one? I'm going to be fifteen! I think I can start planning out my own future. You never cared about it before. You never are home for birthdays, or Holidays. What changed?"

"I think you can go to your room without dinner tonight," Janet said coldly, raising a slender hand to stop her husband from rushing the insolent child.

"This is crazy," Tim told them, but went upstairs gratefully.

It was rather late when Tim got to the cave. He had to wait until his parents had decided to go out, probably to avoid being in the same house with him. Dick was already suited up and was working through his warm up routine. "Timmy! What's up?" Dick called from his head's position near the floor, as he walked around on his hands.

"Oh, just running late. Guess Mom and Dad really want to get me started on a career," Tim laughed.

Bruce was seated at his computer bank and he turned to look at Tim thoughtfully. "Should you be here tonight?" He asked.

"Oh, they went out to some fancy dress restaurant," Tim answered quickly and with a grin. "I'll get suited up."

Bruce nodded, accepting the jovial statement, and Dick sprang from his hands to his feet to begin a real exercise. Neither followed Tim into the changing rooms. Since the fierce grip on his arms had left quickly growing bruises Tim was glad. He hoped nothing would happen tonight that would mean he would be checked over. He tested his range of motion, and though it hurt to move his arms, it was a dull ache that would not slow him down. He shoved the pain aside and changed into Robin. The chilly early spring evenings meant he was wearing long sleeves, and did not need to fear Dick or Bruce seeing the bruises. With a lighter heart than he'd had all day, he headed out to start his warm up routing, while Dick and Bruce consulted on the route the boys would take.

Being with Dick always made the world seem better. Dick was fun to be with, and he didn't treat Tim like a little kid. Not only that, but he could talk on Tim's level. Most of Tim's life he had been ignored, or spoke down to. The occasional friend he'd made in school would always grow distant after they learned how smart Tim was, so that Tim was an outcast for opposite reasons. Dick could understand what Tim meant when he talked about higher science and math, and knew more languages than Tim.

Patrol was quiet and Bruce accepted Tim's promise that he had not been injured. With no examination revealing the bruises, and a couple days off from being Robin, Tim escaped the watchful eyes of his mentor and pretend older brother. Due to Tim's parents, Bruce said he should stay home and work whatever was bugging him out.

It surprised Tim that it hurt to realize how little Dick and Bruce realized about his home life. After all, the youngest of the trio had made every effort to conceal the escalating violence in his home. For the
briefest moment after that pronouncement he had considered telling them. That idea was as quickly shot down as it rose up. If he told them he would get taken away, and either Bruce would take him in out of obligation, or he would get sent to a foster home where he couldn't sneak out to be Robin.

Besides, Bruce and Dick had to believe there was something in his parents to encourage him to work with them. Maybe Tim just needed to make an effort to talk to them, to understand what was going on. Maybe this was just how his parents communicated, and it was their way of giving him the attention he had craved all his life. Thus, Tim went home, believing he could meet his parents halfway.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

The point became moot when Tim got up the next morning. He headed downstairs to find the housekeeper making him breakfast and his parents nowhere in sight.

"Some old box was dug up last night and your parents had to go see it," Mrs. Mac said, kindly setting her consolation breakfast of pancakes, bacon and eggs before the teenager boy.

Her old eyes missed the way Tim suddenly looked brighter. He enjoyed the meal with all the gusto of a hungry boy, his heart greatly lightened. His parents would not be home for weeks no doubt, and they would have forgotten all about their controlling demands on his life. It was over.

Tim's parents are somewhat difficult to write. I think they are deeply selfish rather than intentionally cruel, but I am not sure this comes across well. Let me know what you think!
Chapter 8

Chapter Eight

It was Tim's custom to stay with the Wayne's were out of town. Since Bruce had offered a standing invitation the first time he had known Tim's parents weren't around the Drake's expected Tim to show up at Bruce's door without warning. Mrs. Mac knew she was not expected except once a week to keep things dusted and so when Tim came home he had the house to himself. Bruce believed Tim was spending time with his parents. Now was the perfect time to do so much needed examining of the scene of Jason Todd's death. Tim had copied the files to his private tablet, which he kept hidden in his home. He began his search in earnest.

There was a number of images from Bruce's Cowl Camera that Tim examined in detail. Every shadow, smudge and flame, every blood spot on Jason's body was examined. The Timeline was formed. It was not like Bruce to make a mistake like this, and from his point of view, it had every appearance that Jason was dead. So why was he alive, running around Gotham with the blood of the cruel Lazarus pit in his veins?

There was only one person who could be behind the Pit. Ra's Al Ghul.

Tim had only seen him once, soon after his first appearance as Robin. The Assassin Head had come to Gotham for the sole purpose of testing the new Robin's mettle. For some reason he had been impressed. In a dramatic face off he had suggested Tim's mind would suit his organization better, while Bruce had warned him out of Gotham. When Tim had taken Robin's place at Batman's side the Death Mogul had laughed and promised to be a worthy adversary.

"He's much greater than that last street rat you took in, Detective," Ra's had said in parting shot at Batman. "That street rat is a bull headed mongrel."

Had he really said is? It had made no difference in the time. Perhaps Ra's was trying to stick it to Bruce, perhaps he had not known of the death, since it was kept very quiet. Now? Now it was a wide open hint at knowledge that Bruce had not had.

But how had it happened?

Carefully Tim reviewed all the facts again. Jason's discovery that his birth mom was alive. His race to find her. Her betrayal to the Joker. The Joker had beaten Robin and then left Jason and his mother to be blown up. Why had the Insane Clown left? This would have been the Joker's crowning moment in his twisted world. So why had he left without staying to watch Bruce find his son dead, and rubbing it in his face?

Since the Joker was impossible to categorize his behavior did not appear abnormal for him, not until put in the face of new evidence. Why had he not waited to make sure he had succeeded? And why would Jason's Mom be working for the Joker? She had been sane and intelligent. The Joker did not hold people to ransom with fear. His fear was too great. You could only run in the face of his garish mien and insane person. Even if you tried to give him what he said he wanted the chances of death were certain. But what if there was an intelligence, a sane hand behind that Clown?

Jason's memory was so hallowed, so devastating to Bruce that Tim could not take his speculations to his mentor. He would have to save Jason on his own. Bruce had made Jason a taboo subject early on, though he had not taken extra precautions to protect the information from Tim. No doubt that was his way of letting Tim know what had happened, without having to relive it.
"Tim, I've got to meet Jose Mendolez as Matches Malone," Bruce said as his Robin entered the cave, missing only the mask that concealed the boy's identity. "Dick is out of town. I want you to go on Patrol yourself. Keep an open Com to Oracle at all times."

"Yes, sir," Tim answered, walking to the trophy cases that held the tattered suit of Jason Todd's Robin, and the abandoned suit of the first Batgirl. He stared at these in intense speculation. Bruce was completing his disguise as Matches and merely shot his protégé an irritated glance at the soldierly response. However the break in the case distracted him from seeing the look on Tim's face.

"Be careful," Matches said in Bruce's best fatherly voice. Tim grinned and gave his mentor a playful salute.

"Aye, aye, Sir."

Tim placed on his mask.

"Wonder boy, I see that you've got your com open," Oracle's computerized voice said.

"Yes ma'am. I know better than to shut it off," He answered.

"Alright. All you have to do is yell and I'll get someone to your side. Keep out of fights you can't handle."

"Promise," Robin said.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

He kept the promise until just after midnight.

Naturally he had kept his eyes open for Jason, and had been glad to see the man start following him nearly a quarter of the way through patrol. Noting this to Oracle, she had suggested he join Batgirl, but soon reversed that suggestion when Bruce called for Batgirl as back up. After Robin informed her that the hooded stalker was not getting anywhere close, she let the situation go. Until Robin was not followed he couldn't return to any base, and currently the threat seemed minimal. Robin went through several twists and turns, trying to lose the stalker. Bruce would be furious if he shut the com off and he wasn't going to have that conversation for Oracle to hear. He would need to find Jason on his own time, without Bruce realizing it. This was not as impossible as it sounded, not for the easily forgotten Tim Drake.

Jason stuck with him.

Bruce's meeting with Jose Mendolez, White Harry's right hand man, had gone downhill. Batman had been forced to make an appearance and most of Gotham's heroes were congregating to help stop a rapidly escalating gang war. Oracle was grown greatly distracted.

"Robin, open a com with Nightwing. Batman won't want you to be without back up and Nightwing can easily get a hold of Superman. I have to shut this com off."

"Alright," Robin agreed, hearing the click and then signaling Dick. He was standing on a roof top, certain that there was nothing that needed his attention in the surround block. He turned to see where the stalker was as he waited for Dick to pick up. Jason was approaching quickly, too quickly for Tim to try to escape without means of back up.

"Babybird, I need a moment," Dick growled out and a second click followed.
"Big Bird ain't too eager to hear you," Jason spat out in a gravelly voice. Tim shuddered. "Now little bird, what is wrong?"

"How did you get into the coms?"

"Easy enough. I know a few secrets," The red hooded man laughed.

"I know who you are," Tim said.

"I don't think you do. I am the last person you would suspect."

"I had your blood on my gloves," Robin replied. There was a sudden, tense silence. Jason drew within a few feet of the masked squire. "I ran it through the computer."

"Then why isn't the Bat here as well?"

"He doesn't know, Jason," Tim tried the name out. The big man flinched. "He thinks you're dead. The true events only make sense when you know that you're alive. I couldn't risk telling him until I knew the truth. I wanted to bring you Home."

Dick's signal sounded in Tim's ear. Jason heard it as well, and lunged the few feet between them to yank the com out of Tim's ear and grind it under his feet. He grabbed his successor by the throat.

"You took my place in 'home';" He spat into the boy's face. Then he flung the smaller body to the hard roof top, leaping on top of Tim before he had recovered his breath. He rained punches and kicks down.

The younger boy tried to escape, tried to fight back, but Jason was too big and too strong. Tim had never gotten his bow staff out and his sole hope to escape was from his agility. When thick fingers closed around his throat again he guessed Jason was going to kill him. He was sorry for it. If Jason went through with a murder there might be no way to get him back. Tim needed to bring him back. Suddenly he flew through the air again, crumpling painfully to the roof again when gravity asserted itself. Barely able to breathe through his bruised throat he lifted his hand to his shoulder.

Jason was so close and Tim had a tracer in his hand. He reached out towards the big man weakly. Jason kicked his arm away and the gloved hand bounced onto the roof. The boy slowly turned to look at his hand as Jason, with cruel slowness, lifted his heavy boot and then slammed it onto the hand. Tim heard several cracks but there was no fresh infusion of pain. His thumb was free, he could move it, and so he pushed the small tracer up into the sole of Jason's boot. If he didn't get out of this then his files would be opened by his mentor and the truth would come out.

There would be the anomalous tracer signal that would show every path Jason took from this point on. Even if Tim didn't survive this, he'd given Bruce a way to find Jason again. Bruce and Dick would know how to save the lost Robin.

"No more fight, replacement?" Jason sneered. Robin did not speak, staring up at the furious man through the white lenses, wondering how Jason would kill him. He was sorry Jason was so angry. He had really tried to be a good successor and Tim had thought he had managed to keep Batman sane. But now Jason was back and Bruce would be alright. Tim would not be required anymore. Since he had only become Robin to save Bruce, to keep Batman sane, he wasn't sure why that made him sad.

He closed his eyes.
Dick arrived first. He had called Clark in the middle of a date to demand an instant ride to Gotham. Only five minutes passed between the time that he had tried to call the little brother he had cut off, only to have the signal disappear completely, and the time that he was set down on the roof where the crumpled black and red form of said little brother lay. Oracle was on the com again.

Superman went to end the gang war so that Batman could get to his squire, while Dick checked that Tim was still breathing. There were red marks on the boy's throat from a thick, cruel hand, and it appeared Tim had not had time to defend himself. He was wheezing through the injured throat. There were no other apparent injuries until Dick took off Tim's gloves and found that his right hand had been stomped on and two fingers had another joint.

By the time Dick had moved on to checking the boy's torso, after straightening his limbs, Clark had brought Bruce back.

Batman and Nightwing desperately searched their younger partner for life threatening injuries. It was evident he had been beaten and besides the broken fingers and hand he had a cracked rib and there was a knot at the back of his head. Once assured that he could be moved without danger Superman took the slender teen in his arms to get him to Alfred as fast as possible. Bruce and Dick were left alone on the roof top.

"Bruce I cut him off," Dick said. He didn't need to look at his mentor's face to know that he already knew that. "I was in the middle of sneaking through a warehouse above some goons heads when he called. I never even gave him time to tell me anything."

"We'll talk about it later," Bruce said stiffly.

When the dynamic duo arrived at the cave they found Alfred had already gotten Tim out of costume and into the sick bay. The boy was regaining consciousness, but it was immediately evident that he had a severe concussion. "Alf'd? Inawded?"

"It will be alright, Master Timothy," Alfred promised. "You're quite safe now. Can you tell me how bad the pain is?"

Tim wrinkled his nose, then pointed at his throat and held up his good hand with all digits extended. "A five? Is that the worst?"

A short nod assured them it was.

"Good boy," Bruce said, gently resting a fond hand on Tim's shoulder. The boy, having realized he was inarticulate, gave a sigh of relief and was ready to go back to the veil of unconsciousness. Alfred and Bruce both shook him gently. "Not yet Tim. Just give us another few moments."

Robin pulled a face, and glanced around the cave. Dick hovered at the door, face white.

Tim really didn't know why Dick looked like that. He hadn't expected to be alive. He wasn't sure why Jason had left him alive. And nothing really hurt now that Alfred had added a pain reliever to the IV. Besides based on the notes Alfred was typing into the computer next to the med bed the worst of Tim's injuries were broken ribs and those would heal. Tim wished the words in his head would come out in a way that made sense but between the concussion and the bruised throat he could not communicate.
Besides his eyes were sliding shut and Bruce was letting them this time, satisfied it was the painkiller and not the concussion pulling him under. He saw Cass appear at Dick's shoulder, resting her head trustingly on their big brother's arm. Dick wrapped his arms about the slender girl, and Tim, before the last veil fell over his eyesight, was certain a sob shook the older hero.

I had to do it. Tim's challenge to Jason made the older man fixate on the little bird.

Anyway, tell me what you think by using the awesome review feature!
Chapter 9

Chapter nine

Bruce watched as Alfred gently smoothed away Tim's hair from his forehead so that he could begin cleaning the boy's grimy face.

"He'll be alright Master Bruce," Alfred assured his charge.

"Why is this man going after Tim?" Bruce questioned the cave. Alfred, used to his former wards sudden bursts of questions when particularly upset, knew the question was not for him. The question rid Bruce of the momentary lethargy caused by the sight of his partner beaten. He straightened, brushed a brief hand over Tim's face and headed upstairs. Barbara, Cass and Dick waited him in his study, faces pale with fear and horror. Tim was the least skilled of the field agents physically. But he was still far superior to any common street thug. For him to have been so soundly beaten the stalker must truly be as well trained as any bat.

"Bruce-" Dick began but Bruce turned away from him to Barbara.

"It was my fault," She forestalled him before any storm could break. "I knew he was being followed and I still did not make sure he reached Dick before cutting off the line."

"He was left alone to face this man who seems to have fixated on him," Bruce said in a cold, hollow voice that could not accuse the two who had failed their little brother any more than their own internal voices already were. "I gave explicit instructions to keep him on the com at all times!"

"Bruce you can say nothing to us that we haven't already told ourselves a hundred times," Barbara replied. "We left him alone and there is nothing we can say to that."

"He shouldn't be out there," Bruce said, sinking to a seat.

"Yes he should." Cass yelled in her halting voice. "Tim good."

They all turned to look in shock at the girl. She rarely spoke, still struggling to find words that had never been granted to her by her father. For her to speak up to put into their language what she felt was a sure sign that she felt this was important.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Dick wished that he had the precious bundle that Bruce carried up the stairs ahead of him, but knew that he didn't deserve to hold his little brother after his failure that night. Bruce had chewed them out for nearly an hour after promising not to take Robin away from Tim. Perhaps Bruce felt guilty too. Tim was good, and had taken on cases himself, without asking of course, but they had already known that the mysterious stalker was interested in Tim. He should not have been left alone until that situation was resolved.

It was really early in the morning now, and Alfred had finished patching Tim up. Except for the cracked rib and fingers the rest of Tim's injuries were bruises. He would heal quickly. However Dick wasn't sure how they were going to let Tim go back out as Robin, knowing that this stalker had fixated on him. The man had been nowhere in sight, long gone, even though only five minutes had passed between Dick's realization that Tim was in trouble, and his getting to his little brother. He could have killed Tim easily.
They had prepared one of the bedrooms on the main level, not the one Tim usually stayed in. Barbara had gone home, taking Cass with her. As they settled Tim into the room the boy blinked awake and gave a little mewl of pain.

"It's alright Tim," Bruce promised, watching Dick hang the IV fluid bags on the stand Alfred had placed in the room. Alfred had grabbed a pen light and Tim's face grimaced when it got near him.

The boy fell straight back asleep once the tests were done.

Dick remained by his bedside, while Bruce went to clean himself up. When Bruce came upstairs, he took over.

**LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK**

It was well into the morning when Alfred answered the phone and had Tim's school on the other line. They were asking to speak Bruce. Bruce was seated next to his slumbering partner. Tim was sleeping and not passed out, and despite the repeated awakenings due to the concussion, he had rested well.

"Master Bruce, Master Timothy's school is on the telephone," Alfred informed the watching Bat.

A look of horror crossed Bruce's face. They had forgotten all about Tim's school, and his parents. They had not even come up with a cover story for the severe injuries as of yet.

However he was Batman and Batman thought on his feet. He left Alfred with Tim, and went to the hallway to take the phone call.

"Bruce Wayne," He informed the caller.

"Mr. Wayne, this is Cindy from Gotham East High School. We have you listed as the contact for Timothy Drake when his parents are out of town. He did not come in today."

Tim's parents were out of town?

"Oh, I am sorry, with what happened I forgot all about school. Tim was mugged last night."

"Oh, I am so sorry! Who did it?"

"We don't know. He's pretty out of it."

"Are his parents back yet?"

"We can't get a hold of them, do you have a number for them?"

She rattled off the number for the Drakes, which Bruce knew would not contact them. Maybe Tim had their contact information. It would only make sense for them to come back when their son was hurt. Dick, who had fallen into an exhausted sleep after the terror of finding his little brother beaten, had been woken by Bruce's voice in the hall. He poked a head out of his room, tussled and slightly nervous. Perhaps he expected Bruce's anger again. But at the moment all Bruce could feel was exhaustion. Tim's parents were out of town and Tim hadn't told them.

"What's wrong Bruce?" Dick grew panicky at the sight of Bruce's uncharacteristic frustration.

"Tim's parents are out of town."

"Oh," Dick's mouth and eyes widened as he also realized they forgot about the Drakes, and how bad
that could have been if the Drakes had found their son missing. "But Tim hasn't been staying here."

"No. He didn't tell us," Bruce sighed and watched the frustration now cross Dick's face. But Tim was resting and hurt. For the moment they could do nothing about their Robin's reluctance to take anything from them.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Despite several calls to every number Bruce could find, the Drakes were out of contact. He was frustrated by this and by the fact that Tim seemed unsurprised when they told him. Since Tim couldn't talk and explain, Bruce heroically refrained from chewing him out for not staying with them. Dick spent half his time blaming himself for failing to pick up the com line, and the other half in Tim's room.

Fortunately, this only lasted a day. Tim woke able to talk the second morning, and minutes later the Drakes finally returned Bruce's call. After ascertaining Tim would recover Janet told Bruce to make sure their son used his down time to study and that they would be back in a month. Batman was literally speechless when the phone call ended. Tim wasn't even his son and he would have rushed to Gotham on hearing Tim was mugged.

Tim was surprised only by Bruce's gentleness in telling him.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Boys who were used to activity made very bad patients. Tim was sitting up with a laptop in front of him, scowling. Dick, who had been staying at the manor since Tim's beating, entered carrying lunch for two and laughed at the frustrated look on the bedridden boy. Tim looked up with delight, the smell of Alfred's homemade chicken noodle soup and French bread making his stomach growl.

"Food!" Tim exclaimed.

Dick set the tray over Tim's lap after removing the lap top that Tim had been typing away on with just his left hand. As he sat down with his own bowl he saw what Tim had been working on and laughed. "You should be taking a break from crime fighting Tim. Even Bruce would be alright if you weren't brushing up on obscure knowledge for a few days. Or is Ras Al Ghul a present threat?"

"Well," Tim said around a mouthful of food, "I was thinking about the side effects of using the Lazarus pits and wondering if there was any way to remove the pit blood without killing the person. Maybe that would improve their sanity."

"Ra's problem is his morality, not his sanity."

"He is a megalomaniac who keeps trying to take over the world, but I know what you mean. But what about others it is used on as a brainwashing technique, or who comes out with all the worst parts of them increased a hundred fold? The price of the healing seems to be a mad mind," Tim pointed out.

"Well, what have you uncovered?"

"I've run just a couple simulations so far. I thought maybe antidepressants would work, but the pit blood just eats them up. Maybe in a living being it would give them a brief moment of sanity, but it would never work long term."

For a few minutes the two were silent as Tim ate and Dick read, and ate. The younger boy was glad he was alive. Bruce and Dick and Alfred, and even Oracle and Batgirl, had been so comfortable and
caring. They were furious with the stalker and Bruce had opened Tim's file on the stalker. Fortunately Tim had created two files, one for his knowledge and one to show Bruce that he was working. If he had died the real file would have gone to Bruce eventually. Tim was a little afraid now. He didn't think that the fact that Jason had hurt Tim would affect Bruce, but it seemed that everyone was determined to keep Tim away from the stalker now.

But surely once Bruce knew the truth everything would be alright. Jason was simply mad with grief and the blood of the pit. But until they could fix Jason they should not know. The pain of seeing him so raw and mad should be brief.

"You've got a good grasp of the subject," Dick said thoughtfully.

"Well, I spent the whole morning reading up on it," Tim laughed.

"So you want to remove the pit blood from the victim. Huh," The handsome, lithe young man shook his head. "Victims because they were saved from death."

"They go insane. They lose empathy, remorse..." Tim began and then doubted himself, because after all, Jason had left Tim alive.

"I know. It's just sometimes things aren't as black and white as they should be," Dick muttered, leaning his head into his hands as if it had just gotten too heavy for his neck.

What did you think? Please review and let me know.
Chapter ten

Tim graduated to sitting in a chair the next day. By now he knew he was out of the field for at least a month. With his right hand out of commission he was limited on the things he could do. The ring and pinkie fingers were broken and the swelling from the bruises had just started to go down, so it would be a few days before he got to use the hand at all. Dick seemed happy to wait on him, but Tim was not used to having to be still except when study required it.

Well, he'd needed to catch up on some reports and logs and soon he would be able to perform some experiments with the blood of the pit. He had come up with several promising cocktails, but until he could partially use his right hand he would not be able to perform the needed tests. Dick would probably help, but Tim was concerned he might spark more than the passing interest in Dick, especially if the older boy realized how focused the sidelined Robin was on this matter.

Yes. This looked promising.

A large hand shut the laptop and Tim blinked up at Bruce Wayne in surprise. "I was working!" He protested.

"Yes, but I would like you to take a break. It's okay to rest, Tim. None of us think of you as weak. What happened was not your fault," Bruce said. Tim had to hide a grin at the sight of the biggest workaholic among them saying this.

"It's not bad," The dark haired boy protested. "I like to learn things."

The laptop was set aside. "Alfred says you are well enough to go out for a little bit. I was thinking Dick and I would take you to a movie."

Tim didn't know this part of Bruce. He knew the Bat, he knew Brucie, he knew the oft but rarely shown amused Bruce, the business man Wayne, the dark little boy who hid from the world in the shadows, the grieving father (for Jason), the exasperated father (because of Dick), the sullenly obedient son (for Alfred), but he did not know who sat in front of him. Going to a movie as a get well gesture was out of character. But it sounded so normal. Tim hadn't gone to see a movie with anyone since he was six, the last time a friend had invited him to go with their parents, before Tim was suddenly so much smarter than everyone.

Dick had had movie nights with him while he trained to be Robin, but Bruce had never joined them. What did this mean? The last time his parents had taken him anywhere had been the circus. After the events of that night Tim had never dared ask to go anywhere again. So what did it mean when his mentor wanted to go to a movie with him and his pretend brother?

"Tim, you look like your trying to solve a mystery," Bruce said.

"I don't understand why," The reply was simple, but Bruce did not understand. Tim knew his mentor's moods but this one. He had become the protégé for Bruce's sake. So he had never thought it was supposed to be mutual, that Bruce would want to help him through the hard parts too.

"Why?"

"The movie. Why? Did I do something?"
For a moment Bruce was silent. He looked, not furiously sad as he was when he thought of Jason, but sad with a bit of delight. As if he saw something wrong, but knew how to fix it.

"What would have you done?"

"Well, I got hurt, so maybe you want me to not be Robin, because I couldn't fight that guy and win. Or maybe Dick is going home and this is a sort of good bye consolation gift. Or maybe Alfred is making you," Tim was shocked that he could say the last.

His mentor was unsurprised. "This was my idea," He said quietly.

"Ok. But why?"

"Because you're working hard when you should be resting and sometimes a break is needed. You don't seem to realize that you never take a break yourself." Bruce said. "We could go somewhere else if you'd like. A lecture, a museum, a tour."

"The movie sounds fine. Only, Dick can't choose it."

"Agreed," Bruce said, and as if he heard his name Dick entered, carrying a tray with cookies and hot water and the choice of tea or cocoa.

"Alfred said we should have a snack before we go. Where are we going?"

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

The movie was entertaining although both Bruce and Tim decried several impossibilities as they headed for a restaurant for dinner, much to Dick's annoyance.

"You're supposed to suspend belief for these movies!" Dick informed them, but was met with two pairs of skeptical eyes. "Tim! You've corrupted Bruce! He used to watch movies just fine without picking everything apart!"

"Are you sure he just didn't tell you because you'd find fault with him?" Tim replied.

"Oh," Dick grabbed his chest. "Little brother, you wound me." He continued in the same vein, pointing out that this was supposed to be entertainment, but Tim simply watched him for a long time, passing by the entertainment that made him wonder how dumb the creators thought their viewers were. Bruce was cheerfully arguing his and Tim's point of view as if glad to have someone on his side. (Alfred probably agreed with Dick.) Where did Jason fit in?

When Tim had found a way to rescue Jason, would he still be little brother? It was unlikely. Tim had managed to take Jason's place and rebuild the family that had fallen apart on his death, but it wasn't Tim's place. Why did that hurt Tim? He had never felt this way about his parents' choice of his place in the family and he had no right to the place in this family. He had usurped it because the empty hole was tearing Batman to pieces.

"What mystery have you found now?" Bruce interrupted Tim's thoughts.

"Mystery?" Tim asked as Dick took the lead into the restaurant with Tim sandwiched behind, Bruce's hands guiding Tim through the crowd to keep him from being accidentally injured by the celebrity watchers and the rich who haunted this uppity restaurant. "I was just thinking, wondering if this is really what it's like to have a family- I mean a brother."

He could not see Bruce or Dick's faces and he was grateful, for his own flushed hot at his slip of the
tongue. He had really been thinking brother, but then the protective touch of his mentor had added to his thoughts. Did they know that? However they took it he had caused them all to be silent until seated at a private table, away from the crowd.

"My friend Garth has brothers and sisters, but their family dynamic is not to be used as an average family," Dick commented as the waiter left then with water and dinner rolls. Tim grinned. Atlanteans could not be held up as an average family.

"I don't think it matters how a normal family acts," Bruce spoke up. "I think it's how your family acts that matters. And our family maybe unique, but we've chosen each other."

Our family. He said it as if it included Tim. Did it? And what about when Jason came back?

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Tim lay in his bed in the manor. Dick and Bruce had created a room that was strictly for his use and it surprised him. They kept it for him even when he wasn't staying at the manor. He was waiting until he knew Alfred would be in the cave, preparing for Dick and Bruce to return from patrol. Once assured Alfred would not appear for an hour or two he would get out his laptop. He was quite full after the amazing meal out. Full of food and affection and love.

Jason needed this. Tim had to save him, not just for Bruce and Dick, but for Jason too.

Tim just had to hope that he still had a place in this family, even if it wasn't the same place.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

The slender boy stood watching the computer with bated breath, praying that this was the cocktail of drugs that took away the blood of the pit. Nightwing sat perched on the cave wall, watching Tim work, biting his lip and comparing his notes to the computer screen. Tim was barely aware of him, because this was lasting the longest against the blood.

"Tim," Bruce entered the cave's lab. "Tim, your parents are here."

"What?" Tim looked up in surprise.

"Apparently they lost my phone number," Bruce said quietly. "You better get up there. What are you working on?"

"Oh, when I was on bed rest I was organizing files and I thought there might be a way to cure the blood of the Lazarus pit. I think this one might hold the key. What is it?" Tim noticed the look of amusement and awe on Bruce's face.

"Well, you appear to be right, but I don't think injecting Ra's will cure him of his world domination plans," Bruce grinned.

"Oh, I know. But he's used it on others, and maybe they need to be saved," Tim pointed out. "And what if he ever tried to use it as a brainwashing technique, bringing someone to the point of death over and over again, can you imagine what that would do to them?"

"A plan for everything. Reminds of someone, but for the life of me I can't figure out who," Dick sang above their heads. "Maybe he's really your clone Bruce. Superman has a clone, why not you?"

"Because I'm not stupid enough to donate a lock of hair to a museum," Bruce answered.
"Well, in his defense, he didn't realize that there was a way to harvest Kryptonian DNA from a piece of hair," Dick pointed out.

"Kon is not a true clone," Tim announced, eyes on the computer screen still. "He's his own person, and he's smarter than Superman in some ways because he has a human side."

"And he's got you teaching him," Dick laughed.

"Well, this looks promising Tim. Let's leave it run while we get you upstairs to your parents before they decide we've kidnapped you."

Tim laughed and followed Bruce from the room as Dick scampered towards the locker room to change into the handsome, odd young man called Dick Grayson.

Upstairs Alfred was serving Jack and Janet Drake some refreshments. As Tim and Bruce drew near the door and heard Janet's imperious tone dismiss the butler, the boy straightened his shoulders, lifted his head and changed before his mentor's eyes, pulling on a mask that had faded in the last month the boy had spent in his mentor's care. Tim became the quiet, serious child who knew his parents will. Bruce flinched at the thought that he wasn't too different from the boy's parents, trying to force his ways on his proteges, and never fully understanding his partners' minds.

"Well, you don't have any marks on your face," was the first thing Janet Drake said to Tim in reference to his 'mugging', obvious relief in her voice. "We don't need you scarred."

Bruce glanced at her in a vacant way that usually concealed his annoyance at Societies inanities. Tim wasn't sure why he was giving Janet that look. Dick chose that moment to dash in.

"Oh, good. I wanted to see Timmy again before he left," Dick gave an air of intrusion that made Tim want to laugh. Neither of his parents really liked Dick. He was too cheery, too unfettered and too wild. But Tim was glad to have him throw a warm arm around Tim's shoulders giving him a hug and ruffling a hand through his hair.

"We always love to have Timmy stay with us," Bruce informed the Drakes in his most vacant voice. "He's very good at chess, and gives Dick a run for his money when they play."

"Well, I heard you discovered Gotham's dark side, Tim," Jack said. "I hope you've learned your lesson and won't go wandering dark alleys at night anymore."

Bruce, Dick and Tim's mouths twitched in amusement. Only the night before Tim had returned to the field as Robin. Dark alleys had been his territory.

"I hope you used your down time well," Janet said.

"I read a lot," Tim offered.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Dick's eyes were serious as he pushed his food around on his plate. Bruce calmly ate his own meal, perfectly aware of his son's dark mood and the reason for it, but refusing to bring it up. Dick had been in Bludhaven most of Tim's Robin Career and he had not seen Tim's family life before.

"So why haven't you done anything about it yet?" Dick finally spoke up.

"Tim refuses to acknowledge the problem. I think he hopes they might change," Bruce answered.
"Bruce, they aren't abusive, are they?"

"No. Tim would come to us if they were. He's aware of the signs."

"Right," Dick looked relieved. "I still wish we could keep him. He needs us as much as we need him."

"Maybe," Bruce said softly. "Sometimes I'm afraid that we take too much from him, that maybe he can't get the family he wants in his parents because he's too invested in us."

"No. His parents neglected him first. He was so used to being insignificant that he turned it into a shield, one he can use even against you," Dick said. "I think we've given him a purpose."

**Oh, Bruce, you are so blind. Tim is terrified to show weakness to you.**

**What did you think?**
Chapter 11

I am excited to share this chapter.

Chapter eleven

The pieces were falling together. Tim had several possible ways to cure Jason of the Pit's blood, the tracker he had managed to get on Jason revealed three locations where the former Robin went a lot, and he WAS the bait that could draw Jason out. He sat at his bedroom desk over his tablet, drawing up plans to bring Jason out in the open, to get a sedative in him, to get him to Bruce and show him their options to fit the Pit. It was probably time to bring someone else into the plan since it was clear that Jason retained all of his knowledge. Tim could not beat him, not while Jason was so focused on him.

"Dinner time Tim," Mrs. Mac called up the stairs. The boy set aside the tablet and went downstairs.

Janet had gone to some society party and so it was just Tim and his Dad. Jack seemed fixated on his phone so they ate in silence the first half of the meal, Tim turning his own fixation on running through the best ally. He wasn't sure Bruce could keep an open mind where it came to Jason. Dick too might have a problem with objectivity. Bringing in someone outside the Bat family would cause Bruce to be furious.

That left Batgirl, or maybe even Catwoman. But Tim was afraid he couldn't explain himself to Batgirl. She might read his intentions in his body language, but that didn't mean she could understand him. And Catwoman liked to make Robin squirm.

"What are you studying upstairs?" Jack broke into his thoughts

"Oh, actually I've done my homework. I was just reading up on chess strategy," Tim answered. Well not chess, but bat strategy. Jack would probably fall over if he knew what Tim knew and what Tim did.

"Good. I've got something to show you after dinner," Jack returned to his phone and Tim scowled at his plate. He highly doubted that Jack's something would be something he really liked. Jack and Janet did not understand their son. They didn't know anything about his likes, dislikes and hobbies.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"This," Jack set a box that held a DVD set, thick books on business, financial strategies and the like in front of his son, "is Foster's Guide to Business management."

"Oh," Tim said woodenly. He was surprised. So his parents remembered they had wanted him to go into business. The time they had thought to put him in baseball, or the time they planned to teach him to ride a bike, and the time they had meant to show him to his new school all had been forgotten as soon as they went on a trip to their beloved artifacts and dusty history. Tim, who had an eidetic memory, could not remember a time when they had actually come back with the same idea that they had left with. He was understandably confused.

"I've decided you should go through this. You are expected to spend an hour each afternoon studying. You will meet a tutor who you will answer too next week. Since you're done with homework you can start tonight."
"Um, I was going to go out with some friends from school tonight," Tim volunteered. "Can I start tomorrow?"

"No. You can cancel your plans. This is your Future, Tim," Jack said, absently examining one of the books. "I'll check on you in a bit."

Tim groaned, but reached for his phone. He called Bruce to let him know that Jack had something for him to do. Bruce sounded distracted as he told Tim to do his best to get out as soon as possible. The boy sat down to go through stuff he understood already. For once in his life he was glaring at the books he was supposed to read. Finally he picked up one of the books, tossed himself on the couch and began to read. (Or act like he was reading as he actually went over his plans in his head).

Gradually he became aware that Jack had the TV on his study, right next door to the living room where Tim was working through his extra homework. The name Arkham caught his attention. He tossed the book aside and ran to the study. Jack wasn't there. But the TV was, the images showing an air view of the gothic, dark building with numerous high fences around it. Arkham House for the Criminally Insane.

" - Where tonight the serial killer known only as The Joker disappeared from his cell without a trace. The public is warned to take extra precautions. The police force has already set up perimeters and the famous Bat Signal is on, calling for Gotham's protectors. Commissioner Gordon has asked for Gotham's help."

Gordon appeared on the screen, rumpled and tired looking, giving the familiar litany of ways to try to keep oneself safe. "At this point we are questioning several persons of interest and-"  

Lightning fast clarity fell upon Tim. For once this wasn't the Joker, except in the fact that he had taken Jason's life. This was Jason, the insane, supposedly dead Robin. He had made his own plans. What would he do, where would he bring the Joker? Bruce, he was going to reveal himself to Bruce tonight.

Tim ran for his room.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

He snuck into the Cave, already fully Robin, because he needed a sedative and supplies to take Jason's blood so he could see what the blood of the pit was doing. Of the three places Jason had been hanging around the most Tim knew very well which he would be at. One was a run down, bare apartment where Jason slept and ate. Another was a base of sorts, where he worked out of, scaring the local drug dealers with increasing violence. The last was the abandoned theater in Crime Alley, the place where Batman began, where Bruce had found Jason stealing tires, and now where Jason determined to make Bruce choose, he had said he hoped Bruce saw reason before he was done with the others.

Tim didn't know what Jason was going to do, but he knew where to go. Everyone else was busy searching for the Joker and were not answering their coms. So Robin set out to save Jason on his own.

Ten minutes later Robin was slipping among the silent shadows of Crime Alley. He stood in the center of the abandoned street, dark cape closing around his slender, youthful body turning him into one of the shadows. And he listened. And he watched. The dusk closed in around the alley. An air of doom hung over the potholed street, a gray wind rushing through the refuse that lined the cracked, grass grown sidewalks. Of the eight street laps that dangled over the street with its abandoned theater and other shops only two cast forth a yellow light, creating small circles of weak light. Robin's cape
flickered at the edge of one of these circles, watching a few motorcycles race through the alley. Probably kids from Tim's own school riding through the Den of Crime on a dare.

However dangerous their joyride was, they caused Tim's quarry to show himself. A light flickered in one of the windows above Tim's head as a gloved hand moved the blackout material to look outside. Without hesitation Robin swung to the top of the building. The old theater administration rooms were his target, but he could not use a window. A maintenance door, locked from the inside, was Robin's entrance. It took him ten seconds to pick the lock. The rusted hinges had promised to squeal so he quickly lubricated them.

His booted feet made no more noise than a cat as he slipped into the dark void of the hallway. Here he could suddenly hear noise, laughter that made him shudder. The Joker was laughing. Afraid that the Joker had gotten the drop on Jason, Robin dashed as quickly as he could, taking time to do the briefest examination he could of his surroundings. He burst into the hall where he thought Jason might be. A door on either side of the hall was open, one leading into the room where Tim had seen the brief glimmer of light. The other led into the room where the lighting for the stage below had been handled.

The laughter came from the latter room.

There was no noise of a scuffle so Tim paused. He used the computer hidden in his belt to transmit all his detection and research to Oracle. He had not yet managed to escape Jason unscathed without help. Now he needed to draw Batman, Nightwing, and every other member of the family to this location. He removed a transmitter, keyed it in to Oracle's Network and set it on the floor in the darkest shadow.

Then he flitted to the doorway.

Flat against the wall he peered into the room. Joker was bound hand and foot to a chair that was precariously perched over the dusty, broken audience chairs in the auditorium below. Jason was nowhere to be seen, but the blood staining Joker's jumpsuit and standing garishly out on his white face spoke of the older Robin's handiwork.

A trap.

"Rob-" Bruce's voice started across the channel. Tim cut it out and entered the room.

The trap sprung. His dark cape was the first thing Jason saw, causing the red hooded man to leap from his hiding place before he realized that the wrong member of the dynamic duo had entered the ambush. Tim had determined the most likely location for Jason to be lurking. It was fortunate he was right because he moved away from that location before he saw Jason and the red gloves merely brushed the flap of Robin's cape. As Robin spun around he saw that the red ski mask had been exchanged for a red helmet. Except for the black fatigue pants that Jason wore the jacket, gloves and boots were red.

Jason screamed curses at Robin, who merely stood waiting for the angry man to choose action. With a calmness that belied the racing heart below the red armor Robin catalogued the place of fighting. He stood between Jason and the giggling Joker, who appeared to have gotten a dose of his own gas. Red Hood's foul stream ceased and he drew himself up to his full height.

"I thought I had taken care of you," Hood screamed.

"Don't do this Jason. Batman- your dad will be here soon," Robin pleaded. "Please let us help you."
"I don't need help! I need Bruce to kill that monster!" Jason screamed, lunging around Robin to shove the chair out of the broken window. Tim tackled him a fraction of a second too late, but he had already seen that Jason had fastened cords to the chair. It fell five feet and jerked to a stop. Joker's head hit the wall and the giggling finally fell silent.

"You need help! You were dipped in the Lazarus pit. The blood of the pit is affecting you," Tim barely avoided getting tackled.

"I am going to kill you," Jason spat. "I am fine!"

"Then why are you doing this? As Robin you would never have killed."

"And look where that got me! Bruce should have avenged me. Instead he replaced me."

"That's not true! I am not a replacement. It is everything I can do to keep him straight. He nearly killed people after you died. He tried to get himself killed! He needed someone to remind him of what he was fighting for, because he had lost his way when he lost you."

As they spoke they danced around the room in the brutal, violent form of martial arts that Bruce had created using every art he had learned in his travels. Jason knew each move, and some of his own. The only reason Tim was not already down for the count was because of Lady Shiva's teaching. Tim had a few of his own moves that Jason did not know. The bow staff was Tim's only other advantage. Dick had once said he had never seen anyone use a staff the way Tim did. The boy hadn't believed him, but as he fought now he realized that the staff had become the extension of him his masters had spoken off. He was able to use it to keep out of Jason's arms, as a pole to help him leap over his adversary's head, and as an offensive weapon.

Tim's com was continually sounding in his ear. He needed to let Bruce know to hurry.

Jason's arm grabbed Tim's free hand and yanked. The same moment Tim's staff swung into the back of Jason's knees. They collapsed together, Tim's shoulder dislocating on impact, and Jason's elbow cracking against the metal chair lying in a heap on the floor. Quickly they rolled apart, Tim taking the moment to tap his com. He had only one hand now, but Jason was in the same boat.

They eyed each other across the room. Bruce was screaming at Tim through the com, demanding to know what he was doing in the field without letting anyone know and what Oracle was babbling about Jason. Tim yanked the com out of his ear, raising the volume so that Jason could hear and tossing the com to the floor between them.

"Batman. I'm fine. The stalkers is Jason Todd. Ra's Al Ghul tricked you with a false body and dipped Jason into the Lazarus Pit. He's alive."

"Robin." Batman uttered in an awful tone.

"Shut up Bruce," Jason spat. "You're little replacement is right. I hope you get here soon because he's not going to live much longer."

There was silence from the com. Tim had gotten his useless arm tucked into his belt and now swung the staff from side to side. "Bruce he's got the Joker. He wants you to kill-"

Jason attacked before Tim could finish.

**LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK**

Batman ignored the query from Nightwing over the comms as he landed on the roof of the theater.
He could not answer the question from his eldest anyway. Oracle kept issuing a new statement as she raced through the information Tim had collected. This could not be real.

The com was dead. It had been destroyed as Tim tried to give Bruce more information. Batman's emotions were divided between fury that Tim was doing this to him and fear that he might find the youngest Robin dead. The door Robin had entered ten minutes before was still unlocked. Batgirl and Spoiler, however she had heard the information, appeared on the roof. Nightwing was still fifteen minutes out, racing home to Gotham from Bludhaven.

Huntress and the Birds of Prey were continuing the search for Joker.

Bruce raced to the hallway where the beacon was transmitting. The building was silent. No collisions, no voices, no horrible laughter. The fight between Tim and J- the stalker had ended. Deja vu slugged Bruce in the gut as he raced to the closest door.

The sight within made even him freeze.

Of the two bodies within he saw the larger one first, lying sprawled on its back, the red helmet cracked in half to show a face that Bruce could not be sure was Jason or not. The second, smaller body was propped against the wall, Tim's staff lying on his lap. Robin was just barely conscious. He held up a syringe to Bruce as Batman hurried forward.

"Need to keep him under. He went berserk€¦ and forgot that I'm shorter than him."

Bruce took the syringe in a shaking hand. Cassandra immediately took it and went to do the deed, to keep unconscious whoever this Red Hood was.

"You took him down?" Any fury Bruce had towards the boy faded when he saw the stalker so clearly.

"He attacked high. I got him low in the gut, got him to knock his head on the chair." For the first time Bruce saw that the Red Hood's head lay on a collapsed metal chair. It was likely what had split the helmet's fissure. "Gotta, gotta take some blood. You need to see," Tim suddenly smiled. "Bruce, Bruce, it's gonna be okay now. You're gonna be okay now."

He struggled to stand and Bruce, once more, was confused by this child. But Tim limped over to the man he had taken down and peeled away the rest of the helmet and then the eye mask below. The face was as close to Jason's face, a couple years older, as some of Bruce's programs designed to show him what his son would have looked like were. Batgirl had given him the sedative and now stood waiting for orders. Spoiler flitted back and forth and was the one to discover that Joker was dangling in a chair from the window facing the stage. Tim laughed slightly. "I think he got a dose of Joker gas."

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Dick wanted to knock his little brother in the head. What was the idiot thinking going after the Red Hood himself? And how had he known where Red Hood would be and that brute had taken Joker? Oracle was babbling about Jason of all people and then Bruce was yelling and then... Jason and Tim were speaking from Tim's com.

Dick was ready to move back to Gotham just to keep Robin safe, because Bruce was doing a horrible job of it. He was still a few minutes away when Oracle kindly informed him that Robin and the Red Hood were both alive and were both on their way to the Cave. Dick could not wrap his mind around what it meant that Tim's research showed Red Hood was Jason. By the time he got to
the Cave Alfred had corrected Tim's shoulder and Robin was talking a mile a minute as he explained
the options he had uncovered for counteracting the effects of the Pit's Blood.

The Red Hood was under sedation and strapped to the bed.

"TIMOTHY DRAKE!" Dick yelled.

Robin twisted around in surprise but before he could ask what was wrong, which his face
proclaimed he was about to do and before Dick could lambast him with his idiocy the computer
issued a signal to let them know the tests were done.

"Tests?" Dick asked.

"Computer, relay information."

"Blood 99% match with Jason Todd, Robin, deceased. Foreign contaminant detected - matches LZ-
15."

Silence filled the cave as the members, except for Tim, struggled to wrap their minds around this
affirmation. Jason Todd was alive!

End of Part One

Still a seven more chapters to go! Coming up: We get to see the world through Jason's eyes!
PART TWO: TIM

Chapter twelve

Different. Jason decided that was the best word to use. He felt warm, he felt safe. No nightmare tonight then. No terrors of the Joker and Batman hunting him down, and really, he had never liked the mattress he had in his apartment so he wasn't sure why it was so awesome right now. Actually, maybe that was all a dream because he felt like it was Saturday morning at home and that Alfred would come in any minute to inquire if 'Master Jason' planned on getting up for lunch at least.

"Master Jason, I know that everyone is waiting for you to wake up. Master Timothy's antidote is working. So please, my boy, please wake up. My children need you."

WHAT?

Jason's eyes shot open. Alfred? Was it really all a dream?

"Alfred!" Jason screamed.

"Master Bruce!" Alfred actually yelled.

"Alfred, please tell me it was just a dream," Jason pleaded, breaking down into tears.

"Oh, my poor boy," Alfred's kind hands offered Jason a sip of something cool. The water helped clear away the last of the cobwebs. Everything rushed back in the same moment Jason found that although he was in his bedroom at Wayne Manor he was restrained to the bed with leather straps.

"Jason," Bruce's voice wasn't supposed to sound so, so fragile! He wasn't supposed to look older!

"Dad, Dad, please tell me it was just a dream," Jason wept. He could not stop the tears.

"Is he alright?" Dick was here too, his hair shorter. Apparently someone had convinced a mullet was not the way to go. Jason giggled and then burst into a fresh stream of tears.

"Master Timothy suggested he may need to purge the dead pit blood. This could be one way."

"Do you think Tim should have a look at the antidote again?" Dick suggested worriedly.

Jason hiccupped and wanted to ask who they were talking about, but he could not stop the tears.

"I think we got him in enough trouble with his Dad. He gave Alfred clear instructions. If anything looks wrong we can contact him."

"Yeah. Bruce, that kid is something else."

"Perhaps you should continue outside the room. Master Jason needs to rest."

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"-broke up. So much has changed. You know, I am going to have to tell you everything all over again when you wake up."
"Dick?" Jason opened his eyes. Why did this stupid antidote have to be so hard? Crying, vomiting and a few other distasteful ways of purging the Pit's blood. Thanks Ra's. Not to mention the exhaustion. Huh. For the first time Jason felt, though tired, almost normal. Not crazy normal, but like he had before the Joker.

"Jason! How are you feeling?"

"Like I got hit with a truck. Are my ribs broken?"

"Nah. You got a nice bruise on your stomach though. The knot on your head is more interesting. You look like you got a second face trying to protrude."

"Shut up, Dick. My head is just fine," Jason glared at his brother. "So, did I go all manic again?"

"No. You threw up for almost an hour straight and then slept for two days this time. You look like you don't need to throw up."

"Yeah and I don't need to cry or anything else either," Jason added. "Anything else I should know?"

"Well, your elbow has a hairline fracture."

"Probably deserved it. Everything is a little fuzzy," Jason yawned and then suddenly he remembered. "DICK! The kid, the new Robin... Is he alright? I really whaled on him."

"His shoulder is a bit sore I think, but except for some bruises on his face and a couple nastier cuts he escaped relatively unscathed. He's going to try to get here to look at your charts today. This may be the only time Bruce condones sneaking out."

"Sneaking out?"

"Tim doesn't live in the manor, he's our neighbor. Normally his parents are off on trips, but this time they were home and he was supposed to be doing extra homework when he went to rescue you. By the way you cost Gotham a million dollars by springing Joker from Arkham. Anyway, Tim is grounded and his parents are keeping a close eye on him, for once."

"So he ain't, well, our brother?"

"Not like adopted, no," Dick said. "He's Robin though, so..."

"Yeah. I guess that's closer than any adoption," Jason agreed.

The door opened and both Bruce and Alfred entered.

"Lunch!" Dick called. Bruce walked to Jason's other side and unlocked the first cuff.

"Bruce, does this mean I'm sane again?" Jason asked.

"We hope there will be no more manic episodes, Master Jason. We cannot seem to rid your blood of the Pit's refuse completely, but enough that with some medications that Master Timothy has come up with, you should be able to control it," Alfred said. Jason sat up, muscles complaining as much as they had when he had first started training to be Robin. He rubbed his wrists, and stared in some dismay at the heap of food. Dick and Bruce each had their own trays and both were eating already. Jason, after nearly two weeks on his back ill, insane, and crying did not think he could eat all of this. He did justice to it, suddenly realizing that of all the things he missed the past couple years as Talia tried to brainwash him and then he traveled the world to become stronger than the bat, Alfred's food
was the best. He could not finish it all, but he ate enough that Alfred was satisfied and took the trays away. Bruce sat down and stared at Jason, but did not talk, while Dick chattered away about the changes in the Bat cave and more, but little was said about their friends. Jason did not question it. There would be time. He did wonder why Barbara hadn't come to see him. Dick said she knew.

A quiet knock at the door made them look up. A boy of fourteen or fifteen, a bit on the small side, but moving with the grace of someone who knew their strength, dark hair, keen blue eyes, and a hesitant smile on his face stood there. Dick lunged for him and gave him a hug, ruffling his hair. "Still grounded kiddo?"

"Yeah. Dad's pretty upset still," The boy shrugged. "But they flew to Metropolis for an interview with Mr. Kent. Kon thinks they're criminals I need out of the way, but he asked Mr. Kent to take care of it for me."

"You should just call Clark straight out."

"Oh, it was Kon's idea. I mentioned that I needed to get someone out of the way. He wanted to tell Superman that he could think too."

"Clark knows who they are. He came to see me last night wondering what was up," Bruce said. "Your eye looks better."

The kid touched the skin under his left eye. Jason frowned. He could not remember getting a blow to the kid's face, though considering his purging, the memories weren't crystal clear. Something was off about the way the comment suddenly made the boy self-conscious. But Jason was too tired to figure it out.

"It's fine."

"Well, hey! Jason this is Tim. I know you've sort of met him before, but we need to do it proper," Dick said. The kid's eyes fell on Jason, thoughtfully. Jason met his glance. He had taken the kid's measure on the roof tops, but the fury that had flooded him then had abated. He would need to reevaluate.

"Hi Jason. I'm glad you're feeling better. I'm sorry I couldn't come up with a less painful way to rid your system of the pit's blood," Tim said.

"No problem. Tim, Timothy?"

"Yeah. But Tim's okay."

"I prefer Timmy," Dick interjected. Tim gave Dick an evil eye, which was reminiscent of a Bat-glare. Clearly this one learned fast. "Whoa. That was almost as good as Bruce's. Unfortunately I'm immune."

"Dude, you are still as annoying as ever," Jason said. "Thanks Tim, for uh, this." He waved his hands, trying to convey what Tim had done for him. A shy smile crept across the boy's face. His eyes remained guarded but he knew very well what he had done for them. He had given everything in that last fight.

"I'm glad I was able to do it. Alfred showed me your stats today. I think we've beat the Pit Blood. Um, you do have to take some medication weekly to help it keep from building up again, because I can't determine how to completely purge it. I'll keep working on that."

Jason eyed him. "Are you a workaholic?"
"My team thinks I am," Tim blushed.

"Speaking of your team," Bruce stood up. "Impulse was in the Hall of Justice yesterday asking after you."

"Who is Impulse and tell me he's not a good guy," Jason groaned.

"Bart Allen. He's Barry Allen's grandson from the future. He's learning. I'll take care of it, Bruce."

"Tim," Bruce approached the boy. He reached for the boy's shoulders. "I can't thank you enough for what you did." Bruce actually hugged Tim. Tim was as shocked by this as Jason and Dick and did not move at first. Then his arms clung to Bruce and for a long moment it looked like Bruce and Tim would hug until it grew awkward. Then Tim straightened and Bruce let him go.

Jason thought there was a tear in Tim's eyes.

**LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK**

Jason was up and shuffling about the Manor the next day. He had lost a bit of weight and strength during the purging. It was so amazing to have a good bed, good food and a family to watch over him. He had not realized how much he missed this. There were moments when all the hurt came flooding back, seeing that the Joker lived, that there was a new Robin. Yet Jason felt safe at last, maybe for the first time in his life he felt that he had a real FAMILY.

He made his way to the bat cave when evening came. Bruce was at the computer bank, Alfred was working on something in the work room and Dick was sparring with a young woman of Middle Eastern origin. Tim was also there, talking on the coms with his team Young Justice, and face palmimg once every few minutes. Jason watched the spar, wishing he had the strength to spar. The girl was amazing to watch. She moved even more lightly and gracefully than Dick.

"Done, She announced and with a swift movement Dick was on his butt. "Who?"

"Uh, Cass, this is Jason Todd. Tim told you about him."

"He the one who hurt Tim?" A dark light came to her eyes.

"Tim told you why," Dick said gently.

Jason felt his measure taken by the wisp of a girl. She was very hostile, but he supposed she had reason. Bruce was watching Jason out of the corner of his eye. Dick, even Alfred, had a look of caution about them. Tim, especially, had his eyes on Jason. Jason was not cleared yet and he had hurt their Robin. The kid had gained a good place in the bat family.


"We have an adopted sister?" Jason blurted to Dick. "And you didn't think to tell me that?"

"I did tell you! You were just unconscious," Dick protested. Tim may have snorted. Whether at Dick or at the kid Impulse, whose name issued in warning tones every few minutes from Robin.

"Hi Cass. Good to meet you. Never had a sister before. What do I do?"

Cass stood frowning, understanding the question.

"Hugs are usually good ways for family to say hi," Dick offered. Two matching glares hit him and
he held up his hands. "Tim, I need a hug."

Tim was in the middle of face palming again.

"BART! Focus."

"Impulse has attention deficit disorder," Dick informed Jason. "And he's a speedster."

"Impulse is going to drive me to an early grave," Tim muttered after signing off the com. "He spent
the whole meeting guessing my identity," He stepped onto the mat. Dick immediately dragged him
into a hug that Tim stood in for a second before responding to hug Dick back. "Kon was egging him
on, too."

"Tell 'em," Jason offered.

"Bruce doesn't want that. He doesn't trust Impulse or Superboy."

"There's a Superboy now? When did Clark have a kid?"

"Clone," Bruce barked.

"Kon is as real as Mr. Kent," Tim barked back in what was clearly a long standing back and forth.
Jason was really starting to respect this kid. He had no fear of Bruce.

"So I thought you were grounded," Jason said.

"My parents decided they wanted to stay in Metropolis for the week," Tim said.

"That happen often?"

Tim blinked a coupled times as he processed the question. "They like to travel. They are
archeologists. They go places quickly all the time when they have too."

Dick dragged Tim backwards into another hug. Cass was the only one who didn't look like she
understood Jason's surprise. Jason had a lot to catch up on.

Bruce had to be caught up as well Jason decided when Tim and Dick had headed out to cover patrol.
After two weeks of watching Jason purge himself of the Lazarus Pit the father was loathe to leave his
son now that Jason was no longer screaming obscenities, cursing Bruce and the Joker, or losing
weight by vomiting and crying. Jason has already snuck a glance at the security recording of his first
nights in the cave after Tim had taken him down. It had not been a pretty sight.

However the pain behind his madness still existed.

"Bruce, I need to know why the Joker is alive," Jason said, pulling a chair as close to his adopted
(only) father as he could. Bruce flinched away, but Jason had intentionally rolled the wheels of his
chair into Bruce's wheels, and the father could not back up. He stilled and his face dropped into the
emotionless mask of Batman.

"I need to know. He killed me. Literally. I was really dead when Ras switched my body and left the
fake for you to find. I was dead for ten whole minutes and then I was in a coma and then I was in the
Pit.

"When I was coherent enough to understand Talia told me how you let Superman stop you from
killing the Joker. We both know he couldn't stop you if you really tried," Tears were pouring down
Jason's face. "Why did you let the Joker live?" He asked, rubbing his aching head.
Bruce looked shocked, grieve and angry. "I tried to kill him right after your funeral, but Clark stopped me. Dick and I were so angry and we tried twice more, but got stopped each time by Green Arrow and Superman. I was furious and I was grieving, I wanted to die. I became reckless. Dick cut himself off and lived with the titans and Barbara was still in a physical rehabilitation at this point. I was alone."

"How could Arrow stop you?" Jason spat.

"Probably because I knew that if I killed him I would be wrong. Yes, he should die for what he did to you and to the hundreds of others, but he cannot die at Batman's hands."

"What about Bruce Wayne's hands?" Jason demanded.

"I cannot separate Bruce and Batman. Jason, I was going mad from guilt and vengeance."

"You are well. You were well when I came back!" Jason yelled.

"Because of Tim!" Bruce yelled back. "This tiny, lonely boy tried to put my family back together for me, because he believed in me and my family. I didn't chose him to become Robin. He didn't come to me to become Robin. He came to me to ask Dick and me to work together again, because we were both so dark without each other.

"Dick and I quarreled in front of him and it was only then that he took Robin and came to rescue us from our own stupidity. Alfred told me that I had better take Tim as my partner or I would be dead in a month and everything you had ever fought for would be stained with my grief."

Jason felt breathless. Bruce had ripped open the mask he had worn and let Jason see every emotion that his son's death had caused, had let him see the pain and the anger and the hatred. Jason didn't think he could doubt Bruce's love after that, even when Bruce also showed him the healing that had taken place. Knowing that Bruce loved him made Jason glad that Tim had come in the midst of all the pain, to bring that sliver of light back into Batman's dark world.

"I wish you had killed Joker," Jason said honestly. "I am so selfish to wish that you had, even when I know that it would have broken you."

Bruce's face crumpled. "Jason..."

"No, let me finish," Jason demanded. "I want the Joker to have been dead by now. But, you are my Dad, the only one I ever really had, and I want what is best for you. It hurts that you couldn't avenge me and that your crusade had to come first. I want you to kill the Joker and I want you to be Batman. I can't have both, can I?"

Bruce was silent.

"I get it," Jason murmured. "I want you to be Batman, more than I want the Joker dead. I want you to be my dad."

So how do you like seeing the world from Jason's point of view? I had that last part in a chapter further down the line, then realized that Jason would still feel all his hurt, it would just not be magnified beyond his ability to handle.
Chapter thirteen

Two weeks after Jason's recovery, a whole month after Tim's battle to save the wayward Robin, came Bruce's birthday, an event that anyone who was anyone in socialite Gotham must attend. It was an Event. After all both of Bruce's parents had come from the two founding families of the city. The social leaders of Gotham planned a huge party each year. This Event was to be Jason's official reintroduction to Gotham as a Wayne son. Although Bruce had held a press conference to reveal the fact that his son's death had been mistaken, Jason himself had not been present and no one had seen him yet. The young man was not looking forward to this, but Dick, Bruce and Alfred were insisting on it.

Dick came up with the bright idea to avoid the monkey suit. Both he and Jason went tie free. Jason wore a light blue suit with red converses while Dick wore a flamboyant yellow shirt under a bright blue sports jacket and dark jeans. Bruce raised an eyebrow at the sight of their attire, but Dick leaned over Jason's shoulder to point out the faintest hint of jealousy that they, in their insolent youth, could get away with this, while Bruce, with the stuffy line of ancestors, could not.

This Event was held at Gotham's largest hotels ballroom, a glittering room so full of men and women of all ages in various stages of fashionable attire that Jason stopped outside the door to glare at his father and brother. They ignored him and, with the hubris of the original dynamic duo, entered the battleground of Gotham's who's who. Bruce's stated elegance and charm, not to mention being the Guest of Honor, won him a round of applause. Dick's flamboyant smile and attire made all the girls smile, except Barbara Gordon, who frowned at him and shook her head.

Jason stepped across the threshold, aware of the breathless, infinitesimal silence as ALL eyes focused on the street boy turned Gotham's prince who was supposed to be dead, but wasn't. The social life of Gotham would never dare admit their fascination, but it was there. Lucius Fox came forward with an outstretched hand as greeted Jason as if he'd never left, as if he still shorter than Dick, still under eighteen.

A torrent of introductions followed and Jason was grateful for the amnesia story, because he honestly did not know most of the people who claimed they had met him at one time or another. Bruce was always nearby, and in the occasional moment that Jason felt like throwing in the towel and running away Dick always caused an outburst of laughter. Jason knew this façade was necessary. Batman's secrets needed their inanities, their eccentricities.

"Ah, Mr. Drake, Mrs. Drake, young Timmy!" Mrs. Prinz, the official hostess and currently Jason's guide through the attendance, said.

Timothy Drake and his parents were there. Jason ignored the parents for just a moment as he found himself needing to reevaluate the boy behind Robin again.

Tim did not appear to be the fool Bruce and Dick liked to play. He was dressed up to the nines, and looked much the miniature CEO. The shyness Jason had noted in Wayne manor was nonexistent. He greeted Jason and the hostess correctly and with such apparent respectful interest that Jason wondered if he was investigating something here. The fourteen year old was cooed over by the surrounding women and men. The Drakes did not look either proud or displeased. In fact they were sizing Jason up and ignoring the splash their son was making. Dick lunged into the circle around Tim. Jason barely caught the grateful look the younger boy sent to the flamboyant acrobat as the attention was drawn onto the handsome son of Bruce Wayne.
Dick maneuvered Tim away from the boy's parents and then got Jason out of the introductions. Jason's terror at what his brother had planned was relieved when he was pushed into a little corner. Cass, whose speech impediment made her dislike the party even more than the rest, Barbara Gordon and a young blond were already there. Cass and the blond were grinning triumphantly as they held a platter of treats. Jason felt thirteen again. It used to be just him Dick and Babs, so their numbers had doubled, but they had done this before.

"We're going to get in trouble for this," Tim, who was clearly the youngest of the group, suggested.

"Nonsense. Brucie is out there attracting all the attention," Dick pointed to their father/mentor. Jason eyed the blond suspiciously. Cass glared at him.

"Friend Stephanie," She said.

"What?" Dick turned around. "Oh, right. Stephanie, Jason, our brother. Jason, Stephanie, our..."

"I'm Tim's friend. We met on the roofs," Stephanie grinned. Tim blushed. Perhaps more than a friend.

"She hit him with a brick," Dick said. Now Stephanie blushed, but only slightly. She was clearly closer to Dick's side of the spectrum of Bats.

"Who are you?" Jason asked.

"I'm called Spoiler. Batman doesn't like me."

"Batman doesn't like anyone," Dick pointed out.

"He likes Tim," Babs, Cass and Stephanie said together. Surprise filled the eyes youngest member of the small group.

"That's because Tim is like a mini-bat," Dick said with a delicate shudder. He grinned as he spoke and wrapped an arm around Tim. "Tim can read his mind."

"I've noticed he gets away with back talking," Jason said.

"But I don't back talk!" Tim exclaimed, looking shocked. "I always have a reason for what I say."

"So that's how you do it! Logic!" Dick said, ruffling Tim's hair. Tim pulled away from the young man, looking put out. He glanced rather nervously out from behind the huge, decorative vases they were gathered behind as he tried to straighten his hair. His friends laughed at his desire to be slicked back.

Tim smiled faintly at their laughter, but it was clear he was not amused.

"So who do you belong to?" Jason asked Stephanie, searching the crowd to see if he could find her parents. The wide grins and little giggles from his family told him that his first surmise that she was not from the upper echelons of society was correct. The blond grinned.

"I'm a party crasher. But it's all Cass's fault. She invited me. So if we get caught I won't be the only one in trouble."

Cass, whose look had terrified all of her brothers on more than one occasion, looked unruffled by this declaration. She simply looked at Stephanie with a bit of curiosity in her normally placid face. A more opposite friend could not have been found if they had tried.
"I think it's been noticed that we aren't out there," Dick said. "Or at least that Tim isn't out there." He was watching the crowds with an interested eye. All of them leaned forward to peer out from behind the vases. Tim's parents were stalking through the crowds, looking for someone.

Tim scurried out of their group quickly, the mask of the future businessman perfectly in place.

"I suppose we better go mingle again," Dick said, taking Bab's wheelchair in hand.

"I want to go say Happy Birthday to Bruce," Stephanie whispered audibly to Cass. Dick looked delighted, Babs looked concerned, Cass seemed unmoved.

Jason let them go, but remained behind the vases himself. Yes. Just like old times, but with more people. This was a new dynamic, but he rather liked it. He'd never had siblings before Dick and apparently he'd gained two younger siblings and possibly a determined third.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

It was Jason's first time on the sparring mats since his rescue. Bruce was his sparring partner, but Dick, Cass, and Tim were there to watch. The two combatants bowed to each other and then began. It felt good. It felt right. Bruce was clearly easing up a little since Jason had lost weight and strength, though both were coming back. Jason had never been able to win against his mentor and he knew today would be no different, but it was so great to be back here.

Bruce let him spar for five minutes before ending it, more than enough time for them to see where Jason needed work. Particularly, his stamina. Of course he was technically just recovered from an illness, but he wanted to get back to form, to stand with his father and brothers as Gotham's guardians. "You had some new moves," Bruce commented.

"Yeah, much good they did me," Jason breathed heavily, sitting down. "It's going to take me months to get back in shape."

"Plenty of time to come up with a new name and uniform," Dick grinned.

"You are not helping with that," Jason said. "Disco wing! I had to survive your color blindness as Robin and I will be making my own identity up. The kid was smart enough to make the needed changes!"

"You aren't going to be Robin again?" Tim squeaked, looking as if his world had just been rocked.

"Of course not. You're Robin and Bruce would go crazy going back to me and my big mouth and attitude after he had you!" Jason and Dick both burst into laughter, but Tim looked both terrified and hopeful at the same time. Bruce frowned and the look shut his adopted sons up at once.

"What is wrong Tim?"

"You need him," Tim blurted. "You need him, not me. I love being Robin, but I only became Robin because Jason wasn't here to keep you sane!"

"It doesn't work that way Lil' Bro," Jason answered. "I'm my own man and you are a better Robin than I ever was."

The fourteen year old quivered a little, a blush briefly racing across his cheeks before concern replaced it. He turned back to Bruce and stared hard at his mentor, as if trying to read his mind. Bruce was quiet, watching him with the same frown that creased Dick's face. Jason took a long drink, using the tipping of the water bottle to conceal the fact that he too was watching Tim.
"You needed Jason," The boy said, raising his head, straightening his shoulders with a firm look on his face.

"Tim, Jason's death broke me. This façade, this crusade wasn't supposed to take more members of my family away," Bruce replied. Jason felt a suddenly warmth racing through his body. He wondered how he had doubted that Bruce had cared for him. Dick loped an arm around Jason's shoulders. Bruce laid big hands on the shoulders of the teenager questioning him. "I wanted Jason back to be my son. You reminded me that there were still innocents that I could protect. You reminded me that I could not fall to the level of those who had stolen my parents and my son."

"I don't understand," Tim answered.

"Tim, you are Robin now. Jason doesn't have the right to take that away from you," Bruce answered. "You are my partner. Jason is not going away. He will fight with us, but as his own person, like Dick. If you choose not to be Robin I will understand. It is your choice."

"Don't you want Jason to be Robin?"

Bruce had to pause to consider the question, looking at Jason with thoughtful eyes. Dick grinned and Jason cocked an eyebrow. "No. I think I learned my lesson with Dick. Jason is his own man and I'm a demanding task master. One day you will be your own man as well, I suspect."

Tim turned to Jason then. "Don't you want to be Robin, to be partners with Bruce again?" He asked.

"No," Jason answered bluntly. "Bruce is my dad, but he's still Bruce. We'd be at each other's throats before the first patrol was over. Besides I did just spend the last two years of my life working on becoming my own man."

Tim frowned, cocking his head to one side to study Jason as if he were some strange animal. He clearly wasn't sure they were telling the truth, but couldn't figure out why they would lie about something like this.

Finally, he nodded. "I will continue to be Robin as long as you want me," He said.

Jason wondered why the wording sounded so strange to him. But Dick dragged him over to hug their little brother and the stray thought died the normal death of such thoughts.

So Jason begins to settle in at home again, sane and loved. His reintroduction allows him to see the odd things about Tim that Bruce and Dick don't see from familiarity.
Chapter 14

Chapter fourteen

Jason sleepily looked up from the desk where he was manning the computers that evening, watching as Bruce and Tim exited the Batmobile. There was that upward lift to Bruce's lips that wouldn't be a grin on anyone else and Tim was smiling widely. Robin did three handsprings in a row across the floor towards the stairs leading to the computer bank.

"That good of a night?" Jason yawned. He had been dozing the last hour so he wasn't sure what made them smile.

"Only thing we saw was a cat. A real cat," Tim peeled Robin's mask off and set it in the proper bin. Jason glared at him good naturedly as the boy proceeded to do the same with gauntlets and boots.

"Do he and Selina still play roof top tag?" Jason inquired. The black cape with the golden lining slid off Tim's strong shoulders.

"Yeah. I got some good pictures of Bruce getting his butt handed to him by her whip the other night," Tim answered. The red breasted armor came off as the Bat stalked into the changing rooms with a little sniff that wasn't as annoyed as it would sound. Dressed only in the green armored pants and the sleeveless undershirt Tim grinned and pointed towards his computer station. "He's been trying to break my newest firewall for the past two days to delete the pictures."

"You haven't broken into mine yet either," Bruce called. Jason, who had never been the exceptional computer person Bruce and Babs were, raised an eyebrow. He hadn't realized that Tim was also a nerd.

"I did this morning. You were in bed still I assume," Tim answered, opening his locker to look for his change of clothes.

"You got past it?" Bruce emerged in a pair of blue sweatpants, dragging his robe around him. His face immediately grew grim. "Tim," The name was said in a low warning noise.

Tim straightened and turned to face his mentor, confused by the obvious rebuke. Jason glanced from one to the other, uncertain why Bruce had suddenly changed from surprised pride to frustration.

"What?" Tim asked uncertainly.

"Your shoulder," Bruce said, crossing his arms. "We've been over this."

Jason turned to see that a dark bruise covered Tim's right shoulder. He reviewed the early portion of the night when Batman and Robin had a few muggings and a break in to stop. Tim had never reported an injury.

Tim glanced at his shoulder and then ducked his head, his lips going thin. "It doesn't hurt. I forgot about it," He said in a quiet voice.

"How did you get it?"

"I don't know. It only hurt for a bit."

Bruce sighed. "Jason, take him to the medic room and look him over. Sometimes he 'forgets' he's been bruised."
Tim's face was white as he obediently headed for the medical bay. Jason, feeling that he was missing something, looked to where Bruce was standing by the computer, frustration evident in his face. The kid didn't seem like the kind to pass over injuries on bravado. But this had all the markings of a long evident occurrence.

"He's a bit overprotective," Jason offered as he began a careful examination of Tim's body to be sure no other injury was overlooked.

"He doesn't get looked at after every patrol and I know he's got to have a bruise or two himself after tonight," Tim said, his voice fighting to be light, but the tightness of his jaw betraying his anger. "He doesn't know..." Tim's voice trailed off.

After Jason had verified that Tim's shoulder was the only place really needed any care at all the boy skittered into the changing room. Bruce was seated at the computer, staring at the screen.

"He do that often?" Jason asked.

"I'm not sure. We catch it every once in a while. He has never concealed a major injury, but I don't want it to get to that point. He's not very good at taking care of himself," Bruce sighed.

Tim emerged, looking half ashamed and half defiant, dressed in his street clothes. "Tim, anything else I should know?" Bruce asked.

"Um. Well, my parents are going out of town in a couple days. I'm not really sure how long this time, but you don't need me around and I am old enough to stay at home by myself and you need time with Jason," Tim sighed.

"If that's you saying you want to stay with us but think Bruce and I spend our free time crying to each other, I think you don't know us very well," Jason laughed.

"Frankly Tim, you'd actually be more likely to get me alone time to talk to Jason. Dick would have someone else to latch onto. Even Alfred can only do so much," Bruce said. Tim looked surprised.

"Tim you have a place with us.

There was a moment of unmasked longing on the boy's face, before he smiled and nodded. "Alright. I'll be good and come over Friday when they leave."

He waved to them as he headed upstairs to sneak back to his house. Jason frowned, but waited until he was certain the boy had made it out of the cave. Bruce was focused on the computer, ignoring Jason.

"Bruce. How often are his parents gone?"

"Often," Bruce replied.

Upon hearing that Tim would be staying with the Wayne's Cass decided to come spend time with her adopted family, probably to Barbara's relief. Bruce had been mistaken in his thoughts that Tim wouldn't bring much change to the manor. Once the youngest member of the family was there Cass, Babs, and even Stephanie were in and out. Stephanie confided in Jason that the only time she really got to see Tim as Tim and not Robin was when he was with the Wayne's since his parents did not approve of the friendship/interest the two had in each other. Bruce, despite the fact that it was evident he didn't think Stephanie should be in this fight, grudgingly admitted that she did a lot for Cass and even that Tim always looked happier when she was around. Dick, who was half trying to keep
himself as a separate man from Bruce but who loved having younger siblings, was soon staying with them every night.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"Last day of school!" Stephanie crowed as the bat family - minus Bruce- gathered around the breakfast table. Tim was the only other bat in school and he grinned. Summer would be good. A break from school would give him more time to research a possible permanent solution to Jason's struggle with the Lazarus pit. He had been talking to Jason about it each evening. Not that Bruce and Dick and even Cass, Barbara and Stephanie weren't doing anything to help, but Tim had the firmest grasp on what was physically wrong with Jason.

In spite of the fact that Tim had replaced Jason, even if it was because Bruce had thought Jason was dead and even had a body to prove it, Jason felt both proud of his replacement and sometimes a little jealous. Tim had a great friendship with Dick, who had resented Jason, and with Bruce, who relied on Tim the most out of his partners. It was Tim who made Bruce go to the Justice League meetings, who convinced him to use less brute force and more deduction, and who could rebuke Bruce without gaining a glare. Jason was afraid that Bruce did not want him back in the field, even as his own man.

"My parents are coming back on Monday, so this will be my last weekend here," Tim spoke up.

"Until next time," Dick mumbled, louder than he intended. Tim stiffened slightly, but no one else made a comment. Their youngest family member was touchy about the subject of his parents. He refused to think of them as neglectful, though Jason had received an earful from Dick and Alfred on the subject, and concerns from Bruce and all three girls about it. Jason felt he probably had the clearest opinion on the matter, and he wasn't sure what he thought was happening.

Stephanie was neglected (Jason had heard her whole story and thought for being a b level villain's daughter she had turned out A plus okay.) Stephanie was thrilled with attention and begged for it, especially from Bruce, who she had latched onto as a replacement father figure. Bruce's disapproval hurt her, though she was determined to make him see her as equal any of the others. Stephanie's emotional tells were different and much less hidden than Tim's. Stephanie was needy. Tim was careful and quiet and only intrusive when he thought it was the best thing for a person. He was careful to show no needs and even stricter on giving up his wants.

Bruce entered the kitchen as the two school age kids headed out for school, Dick offering to drive them. Stephanie had crashed with them after a long night. Her mother was an alcoholic and never knew where her daughter was. Cass slipped away to work with Alfred on her speaking, leaving Bruce and Jason alone in the dining room.

"Do you want to get your high school diploma?" Bruce asked two cups of coffee later.

"Not really. I'd really stand out in school as the nineteen year old who died and came back to life."

"We could do an online course," Bruce suggested.

"Don't need it or want it. I've already beat the odds for a street kid," Jason muttered.

Bruce fell silent and looked cautiously at his son. Jason was surprised by the emotion welling up in his breast.

"Hey Dad, I'm really glad I'm back. You know that, right?"

The two rather emotionally stunted men stared at each other, both thinking they were really glad that Dick was gone or they might have had to hug and ruin their manly images. Bruce swallowed and
gave Jason a fatherly look before getting up and leaving the table, stopping only to slap Jason on the
shoulder. His son was home and every day he was getting mentally and emotionally healthier.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Since Sunday night was Tim's last night in the manor Bruce yielded to Dick's requests to let the
Birds of Prey patrol Gotham while the Bat family, consisting of Alfred, Bruce, Dick, Barbara, Jason,
Cass, Stephanie and Tim had a family night. Tim tried to protest, but when Dick had created a nest
of blankets and food in the theater room he asked if normal families did things like that. Bruce
refused to allow Tim to talk him into patrolling after that. Therefore, after an afternoon of playing tag,
football and eating ice-cream, and after a dinner made of Tim's favorite meal (the strange kid liked
chicken enchiladas with steamed vegetables), the family was ushered into the room where Dick had
everything set up for the movie.

Cass was being introduced to the wonderful world of Star Trek. Apparently they had rebooted the
original series with two new movies. Jason had always enjoyed thrillers like the Mission Impossible
series, and had not been a science fiction fan before. However, certain movies came too close to
reality nowadays, so escaping into the futuristic, cheesy world Tim liked suited everyone. Bruce and
Dick egged Tim on during the movies to tell everyone what was physically possible and what was
not.

Jason was crammed onto one of the three long couches. Everyone had wanted to sit on this couch,
despite the fact that it meant Cass ended up on Bruce's lap, while Stephanie and Tim shared Jason
and Dick's laps. Barbara and Alfred sat properly at the other end of the couch. Jason could get used
to this. He greatly wished Tim would stay. In the last month he had discovered that Dick had rubbed
off on him and he enjoyed being a big brother.

Tim belonged to the fake society leaders Jack and Janet Drake however and tomorrow would go
back to them.

For now Jason leaned his bulkier body on Dick's arm and kept one hand free to poke Tim in the ribs.

It was a good night.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

It was two am when Batman and Robin raced into the cave. Both were looking a bit on the worse for
wear side after a massive gang shootout triggered by a misunderstanding of language. Twenty three
gang members from three gangs were dead before Robin traced the reason for the shootouts.
Gotham's emergency personnel would be busy the rest of the night and well into the next day. Jason
had yet to go out into the field, although he was close to being back to his peak. He had been
working on his armor and trying to determine his name. He had assisted Oracle by keeping track of
Batman, Robin, Nightwing, and the girls so she could focus her attention on information.

"Jason, look Tim over," Bruce growled, painfully removing his cape and cowl. Neither had gotten
hit with a straight shot, but had enough bruises from ricochets and debris.

Tim didn't argue when Jason led him to the examination table and began removing his armor. Alfred
had appeared and was assisting Bruce. "So I think I'm gonna call myself Phoenix," Jason told Tim as
he eased the Kevlar shirt off the boy's torso. "Keep with the bird theme, and follow Dick's steps
about naming myself after a legend. And it makes sense."

"I like it," Tim agreed. "Will your armor be red and orange?"
"I like Dick's current Nightwing get up. I am gonna use the same idea, but with red and orange flames on my shoulders and arms and chest. I want a red bat on my chest, flying out of the flames."

Tim had a number of red marks on his back which would turn into bruises tomorrow. Strangely he already had two dark bruises on his shoulders, which had not been there Wednesday night when Jason had looked Tim over. Tim hadn't been out since Wednesday, two nights ago. Jason frowned and touched the bruises.

"These look like they are from earlier. How'd you get them?"

"Shoulders?" Tim asked. "I think I went into a stack of boxes backwards, early on in the night."

Jason went to call his bluff, when he saw the tension rising in Robin's back. He bit his tongue and pretended to take the explanation at face value. He knew the bruises were at least a day old. Which meant that Tim had not gotten them from being Robin. Which led Jason to a train of thought that he thought he better not board right then and there. He tended to Tim's aches and cuts while continuing to lay out his plans for Phoenix. Jason positioned Tim so that the watching cameras would clearly see the bruises for later evidence. When Tim was changed into street clothes Dick came racing in, looking like he had had the time of his life. He had fared better overall. Once the oldest bat boy knew everyone was ok, he gloated over his success.

"Come on. Let's leave Big Bird to his desserts. I'll take you home. Faster on my bike," Jason wrapped an arm around Tim's neck. They got halfway towards the vehicle bay before Dick came running up.

"Hey Timmy. You have a birthday in a couple weeks! Jay and I are gonna take you out that night. If you don't already have plans," Dick laughed.

Tim blushed and looked so delighted at the thought that Jason didn't bother to point out that Dick hadn't asked Jay if he had any plans yet. He probably didn't and he'd move the couple things possibly scheduled on the kids birthday. Once he knew which day that was, of course. "Cass and Steph, and Babs will come too. We can go bowling, or we could head out of the city for some fun things, unless your parents have plans."

"Um, no. They have that charity function Ms. Grimbald is hosting, the one for the Children's Hospital."

"Yeah, Bruce has to go to that too. He's already jealous that we can get out of it and he can't," Dick laughed.

That was thirteen days out, on Friday June 19th. Jason had nothing going on. He'd keep it open for Tim.

Jason wanted to tell Bruce about what he had seen on Tim, but he wasn't sure how the bat would take it. So he kept quiet. After a day of wondering he thought of the medical records Bruce kept on each of them. During the day, while Bruce was at Wayne Enterprises, Dick was at college, and Alfred was busy doing Alfred things, Jason snuck down to the cave.

As he suspected Bruce's details included days that Tim had hidden bruises. It was a matter of three or four hours to discover that the boy's parents were home each time. He created a report of this fact, but did not send it to Bruce. He wasn't sure how Bruce couldn't know. Yet Bruce would never let Tim stay in that situation if he knew. Surely he wouldn't, even if it meant he would lose his Robin.

Besides, Bruce could be a foster parent. He could take Tim in.
Jason knows. Hurray! Jason will save you Timmy.
Chapter 15

Chapter Fifteen

"Why a red mask?" Dick asked as Jason put together the Phoenix armor for the first time.

"A reminder," Jason answered.

The black, form fitting armor looked good on Jason. His bulky form was almost as imposing as Bruce in the Bat armor (without the cape). The deep reds, oranges, and yellows that made the shoulder and arm flames seemed almost alive, while the rising blood red bat on his chest leapt out of the shadows. Dick's blue was cold and shadowy next to Jason. Bruce looked at Jason briefly, only the corners of his mouth hinting his approval.

Tim, working on the computer in Jason's mask, had a huge grin on his face. "It looks great. I just don't get why you guys don't want a cape."

Tim had made Robin's cape longer, as well as adding reinforcement to it. Jason grinned.

"Dick finds it impedes his balance. I don't need a cape to look scary. You on the other hand, You are kind of small."

Tim scowled, but his eyes twinkled. "I suppose so. The cape is good for more than that, though. It helps me hide in the shadows. It conceals what I am carrying. It makes criminals think I am just a child in dress up. The cape helps me deceive them as much as the mask does."

Now that made a lot of sense. Tim was the 'smart' one of the Robins. He had to work hard for the physical part of Robin, and his slender, lean genetics made it hard for him to bulk out, though he was very built for his age and body type. Dick was flashy, constantly moving and talking, distracting. Jason was big and rough, the muscle. Tim was the shadow in the background, constantly deceiving you.

"Nightwing works without a cape," Dick interjected. "Admittedly I carry off the no-cape better than Jason, eck."

Jason had his ridiculous older brother in a headlock before he could finish the sentence. The eel went limp and slid out of Jason's grasp before catching Jason's ankle and making him fall on his butt. Then they were rolling, grappling and making grand claims on whose armor was better, until Dick had managed to pin Jason by contorting his body in ways nobody should be able to stretch. The circus boy grinned out of Dick's face.

"Hey!" Jason saw Tim examining the belts he would wear as Phoenix. Sneaky kid.

"I need to make sure you've got everything. You were so busy putting all the cool toys in the belts," Tim was pulling out some of the flash bombs and putting in high tech. Jason finally rolled Dick over and left his older brother laughing on the ground while Tim ran away with the flash bombs. Jason gave chase.

Tim ran to the computer bay, where Bruce had retreated when the wrestling started.

"Not in here," Bruce said.

Tim gave Jason a cheeky grin, before escaping out the opposite end of the computer stuff.
"Be careful with him," Bruce told Jason as the much bigger hero lumbered through the bay after the flighty Robin.

"He'll live," Jason promised.

Tim really was a shadow. He had vanished into the vehicle bay. Dick was laughing as he followed his brothers, making it difficult for Jason to hear what little noise Tim might make. His laughter only grew when Jason glared at him. There! Jason lunged on seeing a hint of movement. He grabbed Bruce's cape. The sneaky kid had stolen it from Bruce without Jason (or Bruce apparently) noticing.

"Nice," Dick said, finally quieting. The two of them listened and looked. Tim almost got out the door before they saw him. Both gave chase and Tim ran. He had a straight run, which gave Jason and Dick time to catch him before he reached the stairs leading up to the manor. Pinning him between them Jason gave him a gentle (as gentle as a member of the bat family could be anyway) head rubbing, while Dick tickled him and they made him yell for help.

Bruce came out and actually smiled.

"Time to suit up," He said.

"Jason left your cape on the cars!" Tim hollered, then ran for the changing area.

"He stole it first!" Jason said under Batman's annoyed glance.

Dick grinned.

Tim had rearranged Jason's belts, so he had to restore some of the chaos that Tim had taken away. The mask, which Jason had let Tim take to work his magic on, was amazing. With night vision and access to Oracles Network so she could feed them information, as well as cameras and more, Jason was amazed. Tim had done most of the designing, with Bruce and Babs help.

"Jason, since this is your first night out, I want you to go with me. Tim can go with Dick tonight. Just for tonight, so that you can get the feel of the city again."

Jason nodded. The request was not unexpected. Perhaps he needed the first night to be with Bruce again anyway.

"Tim and I got the Bus Station?" Dick asked.

"Yes. Jason and I will take the Train station. Spoiler and Batgirl are at the airport," Bruce said.

"What is to keep our fugitives from escaping via highway?" Jason asked.

"Police have some good roadblocks up. Help to catch the Brauns will be needed at the other ways out of Gotham," Robin answered, attaching his cape.

"And by boats?"

"Birds of Prey," Robin answered.

"Frank shouldn't be hard to find," Dick commented. "It's hard to conceal a limp. Linda could be a bigger problem. A woman is so much easier to disguise."

"And they will probably split up. If we can't catch both and one of them gets to metropolis, the materials to make a dirty bomb will be out there," Bruce said. "Superman is on alert, but we have to find the Braun's before they leave Gotham."
"What was Lifeway Labs doing with a sample of Clench anyway?" Dick wondered.

"They were looking at ways to neutralize it," Robin replied.

"How do we know the Braun's won't hand it off to someone in Gotham?" Phoenix asked.

"Do you know how many of the underworld came out to talk once the Braun's target was known? Clench is bad for their business. The only ones in Gotham who would take it are one of the crazies, and the Braun's would never work with them. They are terrorists whose goal is to get aliens locked up or kicked off world. They aren't going to trust Two Face or Ivy, who are the only two out of Arkham at the moment," Nightwing swung his eskrima sticks around.


Phoenix and Batman took the Bat mobile, while Robin climbed onto Nightwing's bike.

"Com check," Oracles computerized voice sounded in their ears.

"Batman."

"Nightwing."

"Phoenix."

"Robin."

"Batgirl."

"Spoiler."

"Canary."

"Huntress."

"Catwoman."

"Batwoman."

"Vixen."

"Agent A."

"Oracle. Good. All are up and running. Field operatives please check that you have the antidote on hand."

A chorus of 'Checks' confirmed all of them were carrying the Clench antidote. They had each taken a preventative dose before suiting up.

"Justice League is on alert. Martian Manhunter is at Watchtower. Oh, and we are receiving a bunch of welcomes for Phoenix. Oooh, here is one from Troia."

"Oracle can we do this when there is not a sample of a plague out in the streets?" Batman growled.

Jason felt as if no time at all had passed as Gotham zipped by in a flash of lights, shadows, and jumbled noise.

"Nightwing and Robin on location. Robin going in. Nightwing has entrances. I don't like talking
about myself in third person."

"Thanks for the commentary short pants," Oracle answered.

"Spoiler and Batgirl on location. No activity so far. Batgirl says bad night to fly."

"Birds on location. Canary at far north side, Huntress at far south side. Batwoman in vantage point. Vixen and Cat are somewhere around here."

"Encouraging. Huntress can't keep track of her team," Vixen snorted.

"Not time for a cat fight," Nightwing said.

"Batman and Phoenix on location. Jeez, Bat, you couldn't wait to let me call it in?"

Jason glared at his father's back. Batman hated the com check ins. He would use them if he was alone, but if he had a partner with him he would leave that to the partner. Oracle had instigated the check-ins, which was the only reason Batman had been forced into doing it. The melodramatic bat liked to give off a lonely air. Too bad he had the largest family unit out of any masked hero in the world.

"Batman," Gordon was at the train station. Apparently this was considered the best route for the Braun's to try to escape. The uniforms were all staring at the Batman. Many had not seen him before. "You have a new partner? Is Robin ok?"

"Robin is well. He is with Nightwing," Phoenix spoke up. "I'm Phoenix."

"New to the role?"

"To the name, not the game," Phoenix answered. Gordon's eyebrows went up.

"Thought you were out for good," He commented.

"Would have been. Robin is a good brother."

Gordon smiled, clearly understanding and impressed by Robin as well. "Well, Welcome back."

"Thanks," Jason nodded and headed for the stairs as Bruce slipped into the back of the building.

"Suspicious character on dock 31," Huntress reported.


"Limp?" Robin asked.

"Not sure. Seems to be drunk."

"Update. Braun's contact in Metropolis has been spotted. Wildcat in pursuit," Oracle reported.

"Suspicious sighting. Woman with black hair, baby carrier on front of her. Baby is bundled and not giving off body heat," Robin spoke.

"On camera," Oracle reported.

They were all silent as Oracle fed them the video.

"Feed to Gordon," Batman ordered.
"Police are moving in," Nightwing reported what they could all see.

"Robin, status?"

"Watching."

A few more minutes, during which it was obvious that the woman was hiding something. Jason held his breath as he scanned the train station.

"Robin!" Nightwing hollered.

The boy wonder dove for the woman from the ceiling as her argument with the police escalated. A moment later there was a scuffle and suddenly Robin was yelling for an evacuation.

"Robin report," Batman's thunderous voice silenced all others.

"She's got a bomb on her now. I've got the detonator, but we need a bomb squad to deactivate it."

"Are you injured?"

"No," Robin said.

The police were clearing the bus station on the cameras. Robin and the woman were both on the ground, hands wrapped around a remote of some sort.

"Update: Flash on standby if needed," Oracle's voice was annoyingly bland in this moment of fear. "Update: Police breached possible safe house. Frank Braun locate."

A perimeter was being set up around Robin and his prey. Batman was already moving towards his car. Phoenix ran to catch up. "Ok, Bats?" Phoenix asked.

"He's good. He knows what he's doing."

"Robin. Status?" Oracle asked.

"Still good. Linda is out cold. Just don't want to take my hands off this until know for sure the bomb won't go off."

"Good job," Bruce's voice broke through Batman's growl.

"Update: Frank Braun is infected with Clench," Oracle's computerized voice actually shook.

"Bomb squad is here. Get Flash to City's edge," Batman ordered. "May need to get Robin out of blast zone."

"I've got it. Not letting go," Robin replied.

Phoenix and Batman were at the Bus Station now. They raced in, ignoring the sudden barrage of phones and cameras taking pictures. Good way to Jason's new role out in the streets. The Police parted without words. Robin was sitting now, hands still around the remote. The bomb squad was carefully examining the unconscious would be bomber's fake baby.

"Alright. Got the detonator out of the way. Alright kid, it's safe to let go," The bomb technician said, pulling a kitchen timer out of the fake baby. Robin gladly let go. Phoenix offered his right hand. Robin took it with his own right hand to get up. Phoenix frowned, wondering how rattled the kid had to be to do that. Batman was checking the air for Clench. Phoenix threw his arm around his little
brother to escort him out. Robin winced and his breath came out in a pained whistle.

Batman swung around. "You said you weren't hurt."

"Dislocated my shoulder in falling. We had other things to worry about," Robin answered.

Batman handed his scanner to the nearest police officer. "Use that to check for contamination," He barked, then picked his youngest partner up.

"It's my shoulder bats, not my legs," Robin complained.

**LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME**

Jason shut the recording off and stared at the med bay where Bruce and Dick were hovering around the injured Robin. He had listened to the recording of the evening's activities three time. Not once had he detected Robin's lie in his voice or actions until Robin was willing to let them know about his injuries. If the kid could use deception this well, where not even Bruce knew he was lying, then it was very likely Bruce did not know, perhaps did not even suspect that the Drake's were more than neglecting their son.

Jason had no real proof of that fact, except that Tim's unexplained bruises were all during times his parents were home. Even then, Jason knew how easily it was for boys to bruise themselves and not realize it. He couldn't be sure.

"How was your first night out?" Robin was suddenly in the main room, looking as well as could be. He kept his left arm pressed against his side, but would not wear a sling. He didn't want to think of a cover story for his parents.

"Heart stopping. My little brother dove onto a dirty bomb," Jason said. He ruffled the boy's hair, a smile crossing his face. He couldn't have asked for a better little brother.

"Hey, I had the antidote. Better me than an unprepared security officer," Tim pointed out.

"Yeah. I know. Just never realized what it was like to have someone in the field that I had to keep safe," Jason shrugged. "You're great kid and you were the hero of the evening."

Tim blushed. "Thanks."

Five minutes later he was heading home. Dick came and leaned on the back of Jason's chair. "What's wrong?"

"Have you realized just how good Tim is at lying?" Jason asked.

"Yeah. Legend among Young Justice is that he's boasted of lying to Batman, and getting away with it. Or so Flash, who talked to Impulse, has said," Dick grinned.

"Are you sure that's a good thing?" Jason said. Dick's face quieted and he sat down in front of Jason.

"What do you mean?"

"How do you know he's not lying? No one even realized he was hurt going for the bomb until after it was over."

"We have to trust he'll make the right decisions to tell us."

Jason took a deep breath and leaned forward. "What about making the right decision about his
parents?"

So was this chapter clear? I wanted to try writing mostly dialogue and see if I could get my story across.
This is the idea that started this story in the first place. I wanted to write a story where Jason saved Tim from his parents (and in the original comic story lines his parents were neglectful at best)

Chapter sixteen

Jason watched Dick go through his trapeze act for the fourth time. Eight days ago Jason had told and shown Dick his concerns about Tim. Since then both had watched him closely or followed his parents. Bruce had already once told Dick that he trusted Tim to tell them if his parents were abusive and neither Dick nor Jason were sure they could bring the concerns to their mentor, who sometimes, well most of the time, stuck with what he believed over everyone else. Dick landed on the pad. He took a long drink of water and then walked toward Jason.

"We are going to have to ask Tim," Dick said.

"What? He'll just lie to us. If he hasn't asked for help, why would he tell us now?" Jason answered.

"Maybe he doesn't realize that Bruce would take him in if his home life was bad," Dick sighed. "He's obviously been neglected since he was little. Bruce's small praise makes him beam for days and he is always excited when any of us give him attention. I mean when we give Tim attention. As Robin he will demand attention, for his work. But when it's a matter of taking him out to dinner on his birthday..."

"So sit him down, tell him he's got a real family and that he has to give up his horrible parents. Though I'm not sure it would work. Take it from someone who knows. My dad was always hitting me before he ran off. I never would have reported him before that, because I thought he'd one day be proud of me and turn out to like me as I was," Jason pointed out.

"So we keep stalking him in hopes that we see his parents hit him, or worse?" Dick demanded.

Jason kept silent. He wondered if anyone had ever give him that talk if he would have given up his dad for a good home.

"Horrible birthday present," Dick muttered, "but it's got to be done when we take him out tonight. Jason, we've got to try."

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Jason stepped out of the shower and was glad that Tim was turning fifteen. If it had been Dick's birthday they would have ended up in some two-bit comedy club. Tim had said he'd like to go skateboarding. He even belonged to some skateboard club. Jason foresaw a lot of tumbles in his future. Hopefully Dick, who admitted he had never done it either, would have the same problem.

As Jason dressed his phone buzzed to let him know he had a message waiting. He pulled his shirt on and picked up his phone while tossing his towel towards the corner with the laundry basket. The message was from Tim.

"Uh... hey Jason. Dick's voicemail is full so I thought I'd call you... Um, my parents, yeah my parents decided I should go with them to the Charity thing. Wanted to be together for my birthday and all... so... yeah."
Jason was pounding on Dick's bedroom door before his phone finished asking if he wanted to delete the message. "Dick!"

Dick came to the door in just his boxers. "What?"

"Listen."

Jason held up the phone between them and replayed the message. Dick went pale. "That isn't right. Jason, call Bruce. He's at that charity thing now."

Jason had forgotten all about that. He called Bruce. First time it went to voicemail. Dick was coming out when Jason's second call was picked up.

"What's wrong?" Bruce demanded.

"Are the Drakes there?" Jason yelled.

"Yes. Did something happen to Tim?"

"Bruce, is Tim there with them?"

Silence. Jason was trembling with anger and Dick pulled him down the stairs towards the garage. He could imagine Bruce scanning the room.

"No. Tell me."

"Think he's hurt. Bad enough that he left a halting, slurred message on my phone saying his parents wanted him to go to the shindig tonight. Bruce, I think his parents hurt him."

Dick pushed Jason into the car and ran around to the driver side.

"We are heading the Drake house now," Dick yelled so that Bruce could hear.

"Call me when you get there," Bruce hung up.

"I hope he goes Batman on them," Jason spat. Dick was already pulling into the Drake's driveway. The house was dark. Jason was out of the car before it stopped and ran up to the front door and pounded on it.

"He's not gonna answer it if you freak him out," Dick shoved Jason aside and picked the lock in ten seconds.

"TIM!" They both yelled as they burst into the house. Dick ran for the stairs. "His bedrooms up here."

A light was on in the kid's bedroom, but the door was shut. Dick knocked and called to Tim. They heard a small clatter and then vomiting. Dick crashed his shoulder against the door, ignoring the lock this time. Both young men rushed into the bedroom. Tim was in his bathroom, hunched over the toilet. He looked up at them, face pale, but blood leaking from the left side of his head, over his ear and down his neck. A second wave of vomiting assured them he had a concussion. Jason yanked his phone out.

"No!" Tim cried, wiping his mouth. "Please don't."

"You need a doctor," Jason yelled.
"If they think... they'll take me away and I can't be Robin if they take me away. Please Jason. Don't call them," Tim burst into tears, then returned to the toilet.

"Tim, did your Dad do this to you?" Dick knelt by their little brother as Jason wavered over hitting send on 911.

"He didn't mean to. I was talking back to him, he wanted to send me to boarding school for a better education and I didn't want to leave here," Tim rocked on his knees.

"Call Bruce," Dick mouthed at Jason. Right. Bruce would know what to do.

He stepped into the painfully neat bedroom and felt anger rise up in him again. Tim always had to have everything neat. Probably his parents demands.

"Jason," Bruce said.

"He's got a concussion. Jack did it," Jason spat.

"I'm on my way. Have you called the police?"

"He doesn't want me to. He says he can't be Robin if they take him away."

Jason thought he heard Bruce grit his teeth. Or maybe it was Jason's own teeth.

"Can Alfred take care of him?" Bruce asked.

"Yes, but you can't be serious!" Jason yelled.

"Jason. I'm not leaving this untouched. He needs to know we aren't going to give up on him, and if he was injured enough to tell a lie he got caught in, then he's not thinking clearly enough to understand that we want what's best for him. If we take care of him and come up with a plan with him, then," Bruce sighed.

"Then he'll know we really care," Jason finished wearily.

Dick carried Tim out of the bathroom. The boy's left arm was carefully nestled against his chest. Apparently Jack had injured more than the boy's head. Jason took a deep breath. "We'll take him to the manor."

Tim looked relieved at those words.

"Alright baby bird. Let's get you in some clean clothes. Jason grab that bag and throw some clothes in it," Dick took over. Jason left Bruce on the line so he could hear everything. "Hey buddy, can you look at me?"

Tim's pupils were dilated as he tried to look at Dick. "Concussion," The boy ground out.

"Anything you want me to bring? You aren't coming back here," Jason growled. Tim looked alarmed.

"You're coming home," Dick soothed when Tim tried to stand up. "You are coming home."

"I... don't..." Tim was turning green. Dick got him back into the bathroom barely in time.

Jason grabbed a couple changes of clothes and dug out a small box that was tightly and triple locked from under Tim's mattress. He threw that in the bag as well. Dick had soothed Tim and changed him
into clean clothes be the time Jason was done. Bruce was swearing at idiots on the road as Dick
carried Tim, with some plastic bags to throw up in, out to the car. Jason had an armful of Tim's stuff
that seemed most important to him and he had intentionally left Tim's bedroom a mess. Let the
Drake's do something about that.

Tim didn't throw up any more, though he heaved a little in the short drive back to the manor.

Jason tore inside, letting Dick carry Tim in, and raced to the Kitchen for Alfred. Alfred had been left
out of the loop but when he learned the reason Jason was yelling at the top of his lungs, the old butler
was shocked and angrier than Jason had ever seen Alfred before, including when Bruce was being a
melodramatic jerk. Within moments Tim was in the safe care of their butler/medic/grandfather. Dick
looked sick once he knew Tim was safe and had to leave the room to calm down. Jason had had his
temper tantrum and remained to help Alfred carefully clean the nasty, swollen head wound and
examine the boy's arm.

Jason knew the injuries to Tim's arm. Jack Drake had yanked the boys arm up behind his back. And
Tim had let him, though he could had defended himself, and won, at any time. Tim's shoulder had
been badly sprained again, after just being dislocated. Jason wanted to give Jack a beating or worse.

"Timmy, you gotta stay awake," Jason murmured as Alfred worked and the boy looked exhausted.
"Just for a little while."

"I know," Tim's words still sounded slurred. "Jay, I don't want to get taken away."

"You're gonna live with us. You are not going back to Jack and Janet," Jason swore.

Tim's brow furrowed as Alfred finished wrapping his shoulder. "Live here?" He asked, in obvious
surprise.

Jason couldn't answer, because there was a lump in his throat.

Bruce was suddenly in the room, still in a monkey suit with a black tie. He spoke gently to Tim,
telling him that he would be alright and that no one was going to take him from being Robin and that
Jack and Janet would not be allowed to hurt him again. Tim fell asleep to this gentle soothing and a
big, calloused hand softly stroking the uninjured side of his head. Bruce remained by Tim's side for a
quarter of an hour in silence. Jason sat on the floor by the door and felt limp as a wet noodle as his
anger gave way to horror and grief.

It was the kid's birthday.

And his dad had given him a concussion and a sprained arm.

Bruce got up and turned to Alfred. "I need to talk to Dick and Jason. Stay with Tim."

"OF course," Alfred answered, busy cleaning up his tools.

Jason followed Bruce into the hallway. Dick was sitting on the floor outside. He looked like he'd
been through the ringer.

"I called Babs. She's got the birds out tonight. They aren't getting the reason. That's staying in family.
Cass and Stephanie are on their way over. Babs was afraid Cass might go after the Drakes if
Stephanie didn't keep her straight." Dick mumbled.

Bruce and Jason sat down on the floor as well. The three men sat in silence for a few minutes. Then
Bruce sighed. "Jason, did you already suspect?"
"Yeah. I got a whole file on my suspicions," Jason answered.

"Bruce, how could we not see this?" Dick demanded.

Bruce was silent. He leaned his head back and stared stonily at the wall above Dick's head. Anger rose in Jason.

"I'd like to know the same thing. You've known this kid for more than two years and none of you saw this?"

"OF course not," Bruce snapped. "I didn't want him, not at first. I was busy trying to chase him away! He wouldn't have dared showed any weakness to me. Why do you think it has taken so long for him to settle into the Robin? I wanted him to leave. I tried to chase him out!"

It took Jason a moment to realize that Bruce was having a major moment of crisis.

"Bruce..." Dick tried to interject.

"Dick, I hit him in training. I tried to scare him off. How does that make me any better than his parents," Bruce snapped.

"Bruce, you were training him. You were harsher than with Jason and I, but he is the best Robin out of us three. You never hit him because he argued with you."

Bruce sighed. "I still didn't see the signs. I thought he was being careless, forgetting injuries, or just not realizing that he needed every injury checked out."

"The kid did dislocate his shoulder while stopping a bomb and lied to all of us so perfectly we didn't know he was hurt," Jason pointed out, still wondering why when it was so obvious that Bruce, Dick, Jason and the rest welcomed Tim. Even when Jason came back, Tim was still Robin.

**Hurray! They all know!**
This one is short, a sort of break between two climatic Chapters. I needed to separate this from Tim's rescue and the plan to keep him from his parents.

Chapter seventeen

Jason had taken the last watch of the night and was sitting with his feet propped up on Tim's bed, frowning at the tablet in his hand when Tim stirred and woke. He blinked and groaned, covering his eyes with his hand. Jason hurried to grab the painkillers and water off the night stand.

"Take these. It will help with the pain," He said. Tim obeyed. He lay back in his pillows and was quiet for a quarter of an hour, though he did not go back to sleep. Jason just sat and let him think. Tim had been hiding for so long that it had to be an unpleasant shock to have his secrets uncovered.

The painkiller kicked in and Tim turned to look at Jason. "Is Bruce mad?" He asked quietly.

"Yeah. Dick and he were talking about going to Jack's office today and ripping him a good one," Jason said. Tim shrank deeper into the pillows and Jason realized he had misinterpreted the question. "He's not mad at you. He's mad at himself, and probably Dick, for not seeing what your parents were doing."

"It wasn't anything major. I just freaked out last night when Dad said he wanted to send me to an out of town school. I didn't want to leave you guys," The boy closed his eyes. "It was supposed to be a birthday present."

"Crap," Jason said. "Dick and I will give you the best birthday ever when you are better."

"Yeah, I'm already going to be in so much trouble with Mom and Dad. I don't think they'll let me," Tim sighed and covered his eyes.

"You think we're letting you go back to them!?" Jason cried. He leaned into Tim's face. "Bruce left his gala thingy early, Dick and I freaked out when we got your voicemail and were at your house in five minutes! Stephanie and Cass didn't patrol last night, but hung out in the hallway all night. Do you seriously think your family is going to let you go back to the couple who hurt you?"

"I am not going to go to the police," Tim snapped. "Look, sometimes they hurt me, but it's nothing major just a bruise every now and then."

"You were throwing up from a concussion, with blood running down your neck. Alfred had to give you stitches."

Tim looked confused. "But what am I supposed to do? I really don't want to give up Robin."

"You are going to stay with us," Jason answered. "We're working on a plan right now, if it meets your approval of course."

Bruce poked his head in at that moment. Jason got up. "You talk to him, Bruce," He said and ran out to leave Bruce to have a difficult conversation with Tim.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

"Tim," Bruce sat down on the boy's bed. "I am not mad at you. I just need to understand why."
Tim was looking at his hands, twisting them over and over again. If there was ever a time that Bruce had to be gentle with the boy, it was now. When Tim had first come to him Bruce had been hard and angry; it was this precious child who had reminded him of why he was Batman. A child Bruce had attempted to scare away, had been cold and harsh too, and now had failed to protect. Yes, Tim was good at deceiving the world and wearing a mask, but Jason, the worst detective among them, had put the clues together.

Tim had become Bruce's son just as Dick and Jason had, even if his parents were still alive.

"I want to be Robin. You do need a Robin," Tim said earnestly. "My parents aren't around enough to really hurt me. I could handle the bruises. They never impeded me. I swear if they had I would have not gone out. I didn't put you or anyone in danger because of it."

"Tim," Bruce took the boy's hands into his own big hands. "I am not mad. I am upset because you were hurt, not because you did anything wrong. Your parents are the ones in the wrong. Why couldn't you trust me with what they were doing?"

Tim stared at Bruce, confusion in his eyes. Honest confusion. He really didn't know he could trust Bruce with this information.

"I thought I would lose Robin," The boy confessed. "Or if you did take me in, it would be because you thought you had too."

Bruce closed his eyes, pained by the confession. He loved this child as much as Dick, Jason, or Cass. Often he had wished for the boy to have better parents, he had wished to be Tim's Dad. "Tim, I would take you in even if you couldn't be Robin anymore. Son, you belong in my family."

Tim shrank back, eyes wide, emotions of fear, hope, and guilt racing across his face. "You said that as Bruce," He whispered. "Bruce wants Tim, not Robin?"

The confusing jumble of alter egos was shoved aside. "Yes. I Bruce have claimed Tim to my family."

"Oh," The little word hung in the air between them. "I thought... Tim wasn't enough."

Bruce held the fragile trust of Tim in his hands at that moment. He smiled. "Let me tell you about Tim. He's this smart kid who has a big heart. He believes in heroes, and is willing to stand for what he believes. He makes his brothers grin and laugh. He..."

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

As the Bat family gathered in their youngest member's room, they could all see that Tim was happy. Jason and Dick shoved each other to point it out to each other. Babs beamed at the gathered group. Stephanie and Cass talked, or bounced (Cass liked to bounce when excited), and Bruce sat by Tim, looking serene. Alfred had found Tim's Camera in the armful of things Jason had dragged over the night before. The butler snatched it up and got a candid moment of the family.

"Alright. Tim has agreed to hear our plan," Bruce said.

"Good. So far the Drake's haven't really seemed to notice Tim isn't home," Babs said.

"Lucius is working on the paperwork for the merger," Bruce said.

"Leslie has called Doctor Julip about getting the archeology appointments," Dick said. Tim brightened.
"So Mom and Dad will be happy if we make this happen," He said. Jason and Cass scowled at the thought of their little brother's tormentors being happy. "That's good."

Bruce laid out the exact terms of the merger, though he concealed one Ace in his sleeve. He meant to keep Drake Industries in Trust for Tim. If Lucius had management the company would grow again. It was likely it had a good hand at the helm, just the Drake's were rather useless businesspeople. Tim was probably the only other one who understood all the ins and outs, but the others attempted to look like they understood.

"It is very generous," Tim said, with a shy look of I-can't-believe-you-would-do-that-much-for-me.

"So we have your agreement?" Bruce asked.

"Yeah. I think Mom and Dad are gonna be angry at first, but they might eventually see the benefits."

Oh, I was so happy when Bruce decided to cooperate. Tim knows that Tim is important to the Bat family!
So we come to the last chapter. Enjoy.

Chapter Eighteen

Bruce carefully arranged his wardrobe to appear as a businessman. He was purposely socially dense and Lucius kept a firm hand on Wayne Enterprises, but it was not unknown that he had a hand in steering the widely successful WE. The Drakes would respect his power as a social elite (even if he seemed clueless) and as THE leading business of Gotham. Tim on the other hand was dressing down to appear smaller and frailer than normal. This would, hopefully, up the guilt factor.

Jason and Dick dressed as normal. They simply wore matching, dark scowls and would not leave Tim alone. Cass and Stephane retreated to the cave to watch the confrontation from the cave video feed. Alfred, blank faced, exuded an icy perfectionism designed to unsettle anyone with designs on the Wayne's. The Drakes were walking into an ambush without knowing it. Bruce took a seat in his office with the paperwork Lucius had sent over to lay out a draft of the merger. Lucius had to be taken into the confidence of the family regarding the reason for the need of the merger. He had suggested less generous terms towards the Drakes.

However Tim's guilt at the idea of causing his parents trouble made Lucius tone it down.

The whole house was painfully aware of the doorbell when it rang that afternoon. Alfred opened the door and looked down his long, British nose. "May I help you?" He said in his stuffiest voice.

"Jack Drake, Pennyworth. Bruce called us over," Jack said jovially. "Did he forget to tell you?"

"On the contrary, I failed to recognize you. My apologies," Alfred said. "Do you have cards to send in to Mister Wayne?"

"Cards?" Jack looked blank. Janet rolled her eyes.

"We didn't think to bring some to our neighbor's house," She said. "I'm sure if you talk to Bruce he'll be fine with it."

"Very well. Wait here, please," Alfred took a stroll to Bruce's study. Jason and Dick were outside the door. Tim had been stuffed into the next room, until Bruce had determined how the Drakes would react. Bruce carefully straightened the papers, laid his pen on them and stood up and walked to the window to look pensive. Jason and Dick retreated into the parlor with Tim and shut the door. An ear com to the cave allowed the boys to hear Stephanie and Cass mimicking Alfred's pretension dampening tones.

The Drakes were standing for five minutes before Alfred came back and Jack was looking upset.

"Mister Wayne is ready to see you. Please follow me," Alfred led the way towards the study.

"Should we expect a bodyguard?" Jack demanded. "He certainly stands on ceremony here."

Alfred offered only a derisive sniff in reply. He opened the study door and let the upset and confused couple into the room. "Jack and Janet Drake, Sir," He announced in stiff pomposity.

"Yes," Bruce turned to look at them with a wrinkle on his face. "Thank you Alfred. Um... try to keep the boys occupied elsewhere."
"Of course sir," Alfred turned and shut the two confused persons in the room.

"Hey Bruce. What is up? You don't look well," Jack tried to break the thick tension in the room.

"Well, Jack," Bruce said in a mild, somewhat disgusted tone. "I thought, well, isn't it obvious why you are here?"

"No, not to me. You called and said it was very important to talk. Since we are friends, I thought I had better come on over."

Bruce gave a befuddled frown. "Oh. I thought you would, see, well... Where's Tim?" He blurted.

"Tim?" Jack laughed. "The lazy boy was lying in bed all day. Really Wayne, I think the boy has no ambition. At least your boys are grateful for..."

Thunder had gathered onto Bruce's face as the callous father spoke and suddenly Jack trailed off, when Janet, feeling frightened, touched his hand. Bruce did not have to fake the tremor of anger that ran through his hands.

"Tim is here!" He yelled. "Yesterday was his birthday and my boys went to take him out, to do something fun, but they found him throwing up because you had hit his head so hard he had a concussion!"

The parents stepped back in shock. "Now Bruce. Yes I punished the boy, but a concussion? Really."

Bruce openly and actually gaped in astonishment. "He's been here all night and all morning and you didn't even know he was gone. Jack, how could you treat such a kind, smart boy like that?"

Jack opened his mouth to protest, but they were interrupted by Jason's shouts of anger and Tim's softer pleas to Jason to come back. Jason barged into the study and sneered at the startled parents.

"You uppity scum! I spent all night taking care of Tim because of you! He's terrified you are going to punish him because we made him come here. Well I have something to say!"

"Jason no!" Bruce's eyes softened. Tim stood in the doorway, head bandaged and looking pale and tired, while leaning on Dick. This dramatically time entrance actually made Janet pale and raise a shaking hand to her throat. Tim kept his eyes downcast, refusing to look at his parents. Jason turned and let his anger turn to immediate concern.

"Hey Kid. You should be in bed. Let Bruce deal with these scumbags."

"Come on Tim," Dick added, giving the Drakes a look of honest horror before the two brothers bore the youngest boy away.

"I didn't do that," Jack said weakly. "I didn't..."

"Jason has found bruises on Tim before," Bruce said. "Jack, this is Sick. Tim has been such a joy in my family. I couldn't believe you would do this. He's such an overachiever, already a year ahead in school, and so polite and kind. My boys think of him as their brother."

"No," Jack shook his head.

"Look," Janet said. "He's alright here, but at home he's rebellious and stubborn. We just want what's best for him."

"You made him skip meals because he put on the wrong clothes," Bruce answered. "You hit him
because he asked why he couldn't choose what he wanted to do when he was an adult. He is scared of you, but is so tired of being controlled. I won't let you hurt him anymore."

It took several moments for the last sentence to reach the Drakes. They turned from the doorway to glare at Bruce.

"What gives you the right to say?" Jack sneered. "I haven't hurt Tim. You are making all this up. I'll go to the police."

"Tim is fifteen. He's old enough that any police officer or social worker will believe him. He's a perfectionist. He struggles with OCD. He is surprised by attention. Any psychologist will see this in one session," Bruce snapped. "No. I will not let you put him through that as well."

"So what do you propose to do?" Janet asked, looking scared and uncertain.

"The Global Archeology Institute has a number of expeditions to eighteen separate countries over the next five years. I have some influence there and have already heard that there is interest in having you two speak at universities as real archeologists as well as go on these expeditions. You would be constantly moving around. No one would think anything of it if you left Tim to my care as you already have so many times.

"The public arrangement would be that Tim makes his home with me to give him stability. Our private arrangement will be that I have full custody of Tim."

Janet actually licked her lips at just the first part of Bruce's deal. Jack looked both interested and bull-headed.

"I have a company to run as well," He said.

"No. You are running your company into the ground. Your stocks are plummeting after two board members quit. Your CFO is looking for a new position. Frankly your company could be ruined by September," Bruce sneered. "You would sell out to me and Drake Industries would be a subsidiary of WE, held in trust for Tim to come of age. In the end you would still have the social status you want, the merger deal would see that you don't run out of money and you would be able to live the life you so clearly love while Tim would be free to grow up in a safe home and be allowed to decide his own path."

Janet looked even more intrigued. Jack's face grew dark. "So this is just to get Drake Industries," He sneered.

"Why would I want your company?" Bruce asked. "It is only going to cause my CEO headaches, trying to get everything you've messed up straightened out."

Jack gaped at him. "You!"

"Jack, I am serious about not letting you hurt Tim. Now I will give you very generous terms that allows you to keep everything, money, stature, prestige and your hobby. If you choose to fight me on this then I will force a hostile takeover and ruin you. Tim will be placed into the foster system and come here anyway. I would rather he not have to go through that. He hopes that you might turn out to be actual parents someday."

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Jason paced in Tim's room. Dick had shoved in the movie Frozen into the laptop and Tim was heroically trying to look like he was watching it and not listening to the conversation two floors and a
wing of the house away. Bruce and the Drake's had been closeted for three hours. Jack had exploded at the threats, though Janet had been eager to hear more. For about an hour however they had been discussing terms of a deal.

"Let's look this over," Janet spoke up suddenly. "Give us a few days. We want to go talk to the Institute. Tim will of course stay here while we look into this."

"This doesn't mean we're agreeing," Jack snapped. "We are just going to look into it."

"Of course. As long as Tim is here I will give you the time you need to consider your... options," Bruce answered.

"Before we leave I want to talk to Tim," Janet demanded. "No, Jack doesn't need to."

"What?" Jack's voice was rising. Tim flinched a little.

"I think I should talk to Tim, alone," Janet answered.

She won the ensuing argument and the boys scrambled to appear as if they had been watching television and were unaware.

Bruce knocked on the door and came in with Janet. "Tim, Janet would like to speak with you," He said.

"Alone," She added, glaring at the trolls singing on the television. "And shut that child's entertainment off. Really Tim, with your mind you shouldn't watch such vulgar entertainment."

Her scolding caused Jason to plop back onto the bed. "Look lady. If all you want to do is put Tim down, then you have nothing to say to him," He sneered.

"Hmph," she answered. "I need five minutes alone. Otherwise we will fight you tooth and nail."

"Jason," Bruce said softly. Jason glared at Janet all the way out the door. Tim knew that both Dick and Jason had hidden their coms in the room so they could hear the conversation. He looked up at his mother as the three Wayne men stepped out into the hallway, leaving the door cracked.

"Tell me what you want," Janet ordered. The listening men held their breaths as Tim took a deep breath and then sighed. Although all three men had their heads pressed against the crack Jason was on the only who could see Tim beyond Janet's fashionably clothed body.

"I want to have more time before I grow up. I want to explore knowledge and invent toys and date girls and not think about college. I want to have a family who wants me to find my niche in the world, not force a niche on me. I want my brothers," Tim said softly, earnestly.

Janet nodded. "I see. Frankly Tim, we only wanted a child to grow up and take our place in the world so we could travel. If you hadn't turned out so smart it would have been a lot harder to think our goals could be met. That said, what you and Bruce are asking of us is to give up our longest plans for the future," She paused. Her posture softened. The teenager sitting cross legged on his bed looked warily up at her. Jane gave a soft sigh.

"I think maybe we can chose what is best for you, this time," The mother said. She paused to look at the pale, wide-eyed face of her son and then sighed again. "You never were going to be what we wanted."

She turned and walked out, rolling her eyes at the gathered Wayne's. "I am willing to agree to the
deal. Let me work on Jack," She told them as she walked primly towards the stairs. "No doubt you can be a good parent to Tim. I never knew how."

Jason and Dick didn't bother to hear the rest of what she had to say, rushing to be sure Tim was alright after his mother's mingled relenting and cruel words.

**LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK**

Tim was the only one who doubted what his parents would do. It had been obvious to everyone that Janet had made her choice. Jack was upset about his territory being encroached, but he enjoyed his freedom too much. Bruce said he was enough of a business man to see how easily Bruce could instigate a hostile takeover and leave the Drakes penniless. The Drakes had been annoyed to find that Timothy was not their little clone as they had expected him to be. Perhaps there was even some parental feeling towards the son they had neglected and abused, and they could flatter themselves that they had given up their son to give him a better life.

However it came about, five days after Tim's birthday, Jack and Janet showed up at the Wayne Manor. The entire family (Barbara and Stephanie included) met them in the chosen parlor. Jack was jovial and Janet was happily distracted. This did not stop Dick and Jason from sandwiching their little brother between them, partially shielding him from even his parent's glances. They need not have worried. Janet smiled and told him he looked better. Jack ignored Tim's presence altogether.

"Well Bruce, we've decided to accept your offer," Jack said in a loud, satisfied tone. "The position suits everyone. We'll have amazing access to some Egyptian digs. Janet is already packing for our first trip. We leave next Monday!"

Bruce nodded, a half smile frozen on his face. Tim was the only person unsurprised by the utter lack of discretion on the part of his parents. They were giving their son away, with a few days of argument, lured away from the living by the long dead. His disgust must have come through as concern.

"Don't worry. Neal Prinz, our CFO, is already reaching out to Fox. The paperwork will be signed when we get back in three weeks. The guardianship permission for Tim will get signed over Friday before we leave."

Friday and Tim would be Bruce's to raise. He nodded, feeling relief and tension war within him. That was still a few days in which the Drakes might come to their senses and realize what they were doing. Cass had a serene look on her face, and clearly believed they would do what they were saying. Jason was glowering at the Drakes, but the other three were welcoming the selfishness of Tim's biological family. Bruce welcomed it to, but it still stung him to think that a child could lose living parents to their own selfish ambitions. He felt that Tim might be in a worse position that Bruce, Dick, or Jason had been with the death of their parents. He took a deep breath to test the waters.

"You will be much happier here anyway Tim," Janet apparently had a modicum of motherly instinct and tried to offer comfort or explanation to her quiet son. Neither Drake parent realized the soft light in Tim's eyes was happiness. He didn't smile or show any excitement, but his eyes had widened a little while the corners had small crinkles. The Drake's stayed to exult over their exciting trips for a few more minutes. Jack shook hands with Bruce and ignored Tim even on his way out. Janet patted Tim's shoulder and told him to be good. Then they were gone and the room let out a breath no one knew they were holding.

"Tim's ours!" Dick crowed, picking the lean teenager off the ground to give him a huge hug.

"Dick!" He complained, trying to escape the arms of his boisterous older brother.
A minute later he gave up as the rest of the family crowded around to celebrate their win.

LINE BREAK BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME LINE BREAK

Tim climbed out the window. Sometimes when Jason had a bad day he would go up the attic and climb out the window to it on the roof of the mansion. Today was not a bad day, but it might be an overwhelming day. Bruce would leave Jason alone and no one else knew Jason retreated here.

"What are you doing out here?" Jason demanded from his perch on one of the slanted window well roofs.

"I wanted to talk to you," Tim answered, taking up residence on another window roof. "This is the best place to catch you alone, and where Bruce hasn't bugged so can't hear."

"Yeah?" Jason said lazily.

"I know you probably need some time alone, so I'll just ask my question and go," Tim added, nervously picking at a string dangling from his t-shirt hem. "How did you know?"

"You lie too well," Jason answered.

Tim glared. "If I did then you wouldn't have figured it out," He pointed out.

Jason shook his head. "Bruce and Dick were too busy trying to figure themselves out when you first came, they didn't see it. I got dropped into your life when you had settled into your lies. I caught the inconsistency. What made me certain was your ability to lie so well that none of us knew you were hurt."

"Isn't that a good thing? It would have been a distraction," Tim pointed out.

"You are thinking along the lines of the mission. Look Babybird, you don't have to have a mask here with your family," Jason said.

"Right," Tim said, doubtfully.

Jason didn't bother to argue. Tim had spent all his life creating masks to protect himself to the ire of his parents, people who didn't understand him, and even from Bruce and Dick. It would take a lot of time and a lot of love for Tim to pull off his masks to show his real self. He had that time now and a place for them to begin showing him the love he needed.

They had no doubt of his love for them. He had stood up to them and for them again and again to bring Bruce and Dick and Jason out of the dark places Ras and Joker had sent them too. Now it was their turn to love him and teach him of his worth.

"Hey Jason?" Tim said as he stood at the open window.

"What?" Jason leaned against the roof and looked up at the stars.

"Thanks for bringing me home," Tim said softly.

Jason smiled and sat up. "Hey Tim!" He called. The boy stopped and turned to look at Jason curiously. "Thanks for bringing me home."

The End

Well that is the end of this tale. Please write and tell me what you think of my story. What
could I have done better? What did I do well? There is this awesome feature below to allow you to give me your thoughts on my story and help me hone my craft.
Announcing the Sequel

Bringing My Brother Home has a sequel! It is complete, and the editing is almost finished. I will be trying to post one chapter per day, both on Fanfiction and Archive of Our Own.

Once I have completed the editing on Bringing My Children Home, I may do a few edits on Bringing My Brother Home, to correct a few mistakes.

Bringing My Children Home

When Stephanie Brown's Father gets out of prison early, Bruce takes her in to protect her. Just when she has gained what she has wanted for so long, Talia al Ghul drops off a new family member. As Cluemaster and Ras al Ghul threaten the Bat Family, can they overcome the hurts of the past and the arrogance of Bruce Wayne's son?

Blurb 1:

"Bruce, was Stephanie out tonight? Cass doesn't know where she is," Oracle demanded.

"Yes, unfortunately. I sent her home."

"We need to tell her to keep away from her apartment. Arthur Brown made a plea deal with the DA, to get out of prison early in exchange for some information. Crystal Brown picked him up from Blackgate five hours ago. Stephanie's in danger!"

Bruce could not breathe. Had he sent the child into danger by refusing to work with her? Was his family about to have another member harmed by their own parent?

Blurb 2:

Tall, slender, beautiful Talia al Ghul stepped out. She wore a green cheongsam with a pale-gold cardigan to ward off the late spring morning’s chill. Her dark eyes glanced up the vast stairs leading to the main entrance to Wayne Manor. There was amusement on her face when she saw the entire group of residents gathered. Then she turned to the car.

A boy exited the limo. He was young, no more than eleven or twelve. He was well built and handsome, with the light olive skin of his mother. It was his other features that made Bruce freeze. His hair was the dark of Bruce's father, and his eyes were the blue of Bruce's mother.

"Holy son of batman," Jason said irreverently.

End Notes

Reviews make my day! Please tell me how I did!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!