Growing Pains

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Summary

Damian is acting weird. Jon is worried. Steph shows up. Lois is confused. Clark is understanding.

Notes

this is not a damijon fic, you bastards

“Hey, Damian, are you okay in there? It’s been like, a while,” Jon asked in a hesitant tone as he lightly but incessantly knocked on the door. He was worried about his friend, but what his dad had taught him about respect and privacy was keeping him from using his x-ray vision to peek past the bathroom door. The worry grew when he got no answer at first. “Hello? If you’re sick I can get my dad or something.”

“I’m not sick, Kent. And you most definitely do not need to get your dad,” he eventually replied, his voice sounding more angry than usual. More silence followed.

Jon had known Damian long enough to not be discouraged by a short response like that. “But, I mean, we were playing a game and you just... left. Something’s wrong, obviously.” That time, Damian only responded with a grunt. Before he could say anything else, he heard his mom open the front door down the hall.
“Oh, Stephanie? Is everything okay? Damian is here, if you’re looking for him. I think he and Jon are playing video games in the living room.”

“Oh, well, Damian texted me, and… I’ll explain in a few, or maybe I won’t, but where’s your bathroom?” Jon made his way towards his mom and immediately saw the confusion on her face, matching what he had been feeling for the past twenty minutes. The blonde was playing with the strap of the grey bag slung over her shoulder, looking somewhat out of place in the Kent dining room.

“Oh, hey, Steph,” he began. “The bathroom is down that way. Damian’s in there but I guess you know that already. Is he okay?” She smiled faintly.

Moving her eyes between Jon and the still silent Lois, she said “Yep. He’s fine. Just, okay, like don’t take this the wrong way, but could you butt out for a sec? It’s cute that you’re worried, but I’m sure Dames will talk to you when, uh… when he’s ready. I’ll be right back.”

As she disappeared down the hall, Jon was tempted to use his super-hearing, but, his dad’s speeches about integrity and respect came flooding back to his brain. If it was something that Damian didn’t want to tell him, he’d have to live with that, no matter how torturous it was.

Lois was the one to break the silence that Jon hadn’t even realized had fallen upon them. “So, is Damian sick or something? Do you have any idea why he called Steph instead of asking me or Clark for help?” Jon shrugged, mostly lost in contemplation.

“He said he wasn’t, but I don’t know. And D hates asking for help, so Steph showing up isn’t totally unusual. I guess. I just don’t get why he won’t tell me what’s wrong,” he thought out loud. He was again interrupted from his thoughts when Clark walked in, coming from the direction of his home office. The man smiled at the sight of his wife and son.

“Hey, why the long faces?” he asked. Lois huffed quietly and crossed her arms.

“Dear, why don’t you ever use your super-hearing at helpful times? Damian has been in the bathroom for what I assume is quite a bit of time and Stephanie Brown of all people just showed up and went in there,” she said, confusion yet again apparent in her voice. The expression on Clark’s face changed significantly and he nodded to himself, which did not go unnoticed by his companions.

“Honey, he’s gonna be fine,” he said after a moment. Lois wrinkled her brow but it was Jon who spoke next.

“How do you know that?” he asked, clearly speaking for the both of them. The two looked at Clark expectantly but he seemed to be having trouble finding the right words.

“Well, Bruce and I have conversations every once in a while. It’s honestly not my place to say, if my suspicions are right, but I’m pretty sure you don’t need to worry. Steph seems to have things under control.”

As if waiting for her cue, the teenage girl stepped out of the bathroom and shut the door behind her. Damian was still nowhere to be seen. She smiled again at the Kent family and waved at Clark when she reached them.

“Look, I’m sorry for dropping by out of nowhere but-”

Clark cut her off. “No need to apologize, Stephanie. I’m sure Damian appreciates it very much.”

“Yeah, about that, you’re probably, like, confused but I think that you should wait for him to explain
to you. He’s kind of a little upset-ish right now but just, don’t worry or anything. Please. Thanks.”

Another small smile punctuated her mini-speech as if it was an instinct she had.

Lois briefly looked at her husband then turned to Stephanie. “Sure, honey.” Jon, however, was more baffled than ever, but kept it to himself for the time being. “Would you like to stay for some lunch?” his mom asked.

“Oh, no, thank you,” said Steph. “I was on my way to that new mall downtown, I’ll eat there.”

Only seconds after she had given Lois a quick hug goodbye, ruffled Jon’s hair, and left through the front door, Damian finally stepped out of the bathroom. The house was filled with a slightly awkward silence.

“Damian, honey are you okay?” said Lois in a very motherly, very caring tone.

“I am perfectly fine.” Damian turned to Jon. “It would seem an explanation is in order. But, I would prefer if we talk in private,” he said, more quiet than normal. Jon quickly nodded.

“Let’s, uh, go to my room then?” Damian responded with a single nod. Jon looked at his mom, who, despite her confusion, smiled and waved them off.

The silence remained when they got to Jon’s bedroom. Damian sat cross-legged on the bed, folded his hand, put them in his lap, and started at them. Jon sat in a bean-bag chair on the ground and patiently waited. Damian was clearly having a difficult time with whatever problem he had, and as curious as Jon was, he didn’t want to push. He waited until Damian spoke first.

“How much sex education have you gotten from school and from you parents?” he asked. This line of questioning threw Jon off. He was ten, not stupid. He knew some stuff.

“I know… some stuff,” he said, now much more confused than he had previously been, which was saying something. Damian took a deep breath in and glanced around the room briefly for returning his gaze to his hands.

“Kent, are you familiar with the concept of menstruation?” he said in such a low tone that Jon wouldn’t have been able to hear him without his helpful Kryptonian hearing powers.

Jon’s brow furrowed. “Um, yea? I like, have a mom, I know what a period is.” Damian stayed silent but finally looked Jon in the eyes. It was only for a moment, but it conveyed a message that suddenly cleared up all the haze and confusion that had been plaguing Jon for quite a while now. There was still some, but he also felt immensely guilty for behaving in a way that Damian thought was annoying and disrespectful.

“So you’re… you…”

“Don’t say I’m a girl. Because I’m not. But, I am, transgender, yes,” he said, confidence returning a bit, like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. Somewhat surprisingly, Jon just smiled softly.

“Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me, Damian. I’m sorry if I made you uncomfortable or anything. I was just worried, ‘cause you’re my friend and all.”

Damian took a deep breath and looked up again. “I’m glad you’re understanding. Pretty smart for your age.”

Jon rolled his eyes, but on the inside he was glad Damian was acting mostly normal. Or, at least normal for Damian. “I’m pretty sure my dad knows, by the way,” he said as he remembered his earlier conversation with Clark. Damian huffed in response.
“Well, I assume Father has told him a great deal of personal things about all of us. They are pretty close, after all, and I seem to have gathered that sharing things is a characteristic of close friendships. I guess it’s… my own thing to tell people, but if I had to pick someone for Father to confide in, it’d be your dad.”

That also made Jon smile. Damian wasn’t one to open up, yet he had, to him. It was a somewhat unprecedented thing in their friendship and Jon could tell Damian didn’t want to make a big deal of it, but to Jon, it was. Not that Damian was trans, but that he had trusted him enough to tell him.

“Oh, by the way,” Jon began. “My mom has… stuff in the bathroom, ya know. You didn’t have to call Steph.”

Damian sighed again. “As long as we’re being completely honest, I... panicked. And as annoying as Brown can be, she’s a trustworthy confidant.”

“She seems cool.”

“She can be, I suppose.”

Jon stood up. “Okay, I think that we’ve done enough confessing or deep conversation, or whatever. My parents have ice cream in the freezer, and we were kind of in the middle of a game so…” Damian got off the bed and showed his support for the idea with a single not. “Cool,” said Jon. “Let’s go.”

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