One Step Forward, Three Steps Back
by RichardGraysonPercyJackson

Summary

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In Slade’s personal opinion, Dick was getting better. He didn’t constantly mention death or killing himself anymore. He was finally speaking to Wintergreen in his sessions.

He was well enough that Slade trusted him alone in the bathroom and alone in his own room.

It had been five months. Dick got angry on occasion but never enough to trigger Pit Madness. At least, in Slade’s opinion. Midnighter and Apollo had noticed a change too. Dick seemed to be happier, more willing to talk about things and more open to the schedule he’d been kept to for so long.

Everything was getting better.

But everything crumbles at some point. As the saying goes, one step forward, three steps back.

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It was three AM. Slade was still awake when he heard movement in the kitchen. He assumed, at first, that it was just Dick getting up and getting a drink. Until the sounds lasted far too long and he never heard running water.

Frowning, Slade quietly got out of bed and slipped into the living room. The apartment was dark. Dick clearly hadn’t bothered to turn any lights on. Which meant whatever he was doing, it wasn’t something Slade was going to approve of.
“Kid?” Slade called tentatively, stepping into the kitchen and reaching for the light switch.

If the mercenary had been expecting to find anything in the kitchen, it wasn’t Dick Grayson covered in his own blood, a variety of open wounds on both of his wrists and a knife in hand, staring blankly at the blood that dripped off the blade.

Slade wasn’t fazed. “You always were a good actor,” he said calmly, crossing his arms over his chest and ignoring how red and teary Dick’s eyes were as he heaved for breath. “Put the knife down.”

“No.”

Slade had been expecting that. “Put it down, kid.”

Dick shook his head adamantly, a few tears slipping down his face as he repositioned the knife point right up against his bare chest, over his heart.

Slade heaved a bored sigh. “Are you really going to do this?” he asked, disinterest in his eye. “Now?”

“Yes,” Dick said. When Slade made no move to step forward, Dick said with more force. “Yes.”

“I heard you,” Slade said calmly.

Dick’s bottom lip trembled a little bit. “Then what are you waiting for?”

“I could ask you the same thing,” Slade replied.

Dick’s eyes flashing green was Slade’s only warning. “Why are you just standing there?!” the acrobat screamed, pushing the tip of the blade into his chest hard enough to break skin and draw blood. “Stop me!”

Slade nodded towards the knife. “Well go on,” he pressed, placing his hands on his hips. “Kill yourself.”

Dick sobbed, hand shaking as he desperately, wildly, shook his head. “You’re supposed to stop me!” he sobbed. “You’re not supposed to just stand there and watch!”

Dick had always been emotional which was why it was so easy for Slade to detach himself from the current moment. That and his military training and general disinterest in anything that had to do with Dick’s over exaggeration of things.

“Let me take a guess at something,” Slade said calmly. “And tell me if I’m wrong. But you don’t really want to die, do you?”

Dick’s breath was stuttering in his lungs, shaking as his chest heaved. “What?” he demanded.

Slade kept a neutral expression of disinterest, though his voice became a bit softer. “You never wanted to die, did you? All this time, you’ve just been desperate for someone to notice how much you’re hurting. You just want someone to give you the help you’re so desperate yet too afraid to ask for.”

Dick sobbed and the hand holding the knife dipped slightly. He shook as he cried and Slade calmly rounded the table, placing a hand on Dick’s wrist.

“Give me the knife,” he murmured.
Dick covered his face with a hand, sobbing loudly as he released the knife handle and let it drop into Slade’s hand. The mercenary calmly set the bloodied blade on the table before placing a large warm hand on Dick’s lower back and guiding the acrobat out of the kitchen and into the bathroom.

Dick dropped down on the closed toilet lid, still shaking as tears coursed down his cheeks while Slade moved around the bathroom to grab the first aid, pulling out bandages and antiseptic.

After fifteen minutes of cleaning Dick’s self inflicted wounds and making sure they were properly bandaged, Slade guided Dick back into the living room and pushed him down onto the couch.

“Stay,” he ordered. “I’m calling Wintergreen.”

Dick didn’t argue, merely curling in on himself and ducking his head, refusing to look at Slade. The mercenary didn’t care and slipped out of the room.

Despite the late - or early - hour, Wintergreen answered after two rings.

“Slade-”

“I’m bringing the kid to you,” Slade said, cutting him off. “He needs to talk.”

On the other side of the line, he heard Wintergreen getting out of bed followed by the sound of a door opening and drawers moving.

“Is he alright?”

“We’ll be there in fifteen,” was Slade’s only reply.

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“I’m sorry,” Dick whispered, holding up his bandaged wrists for Wintergreen to see. “I-I don’t know what happened!”

“You relapsed,” Wintergreen said gently.

“I’m sorry-”

Wintergreen placed a gentle hand on Dick’s knee. “It’s alright,” he said quietly. “It happens to everyone.”

“But I was getting better,” Dick said, lip wobbling. “I-I thought I was.”

“Like I said,” Wintergreen soothed. “Everyone thinks they’re getting better.”

“I held a knife to my chest,” Dick whispered. “I told Slade I was going to kill myself.”

“Were you?”

“He didn’t stop me.”

“That’s not what I asked,” Wintergreen said. “I asked if you were going to kill yourself.”

Dick opened and closed his eyes for a long time before a look of confusion fell over his eyes.
“I don’t…” he swallowed thickly, shaking his head. “I don’t know.”

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Slade looked up from his phone where he was seated in Wintergreen’s living room.

“We good to leave?” he asked, standing.

“Actually, we need to talk,” Wintergreen replied. “This is the only time I’m going to break confidentiality.”

Slade raised an eyebrow, glancing over Wintergreen’s shoulder to make sure Dick wasn’t in sight and listening since that wouldn’t end well for anyone.

“Alright.”

“I’m not enough, Slade,” Wintergreen said quietly. “He needs someone who is licensed to help. I also think he needs to be admitted to a hospital.”

“Unfortunately, those options are out of the question,” Slade said, crossing his arms over his chest. “The kid is legally dead.”

“His family are professionals when it comes to lying, aren’t they?”

“His corpse was found by police,” Slade replied. “They know he’s dead and they know how he died. No lie his family can come up with can get him out of this without serious investigation.”

Wintergreen sighed. “Then-”

“You said you wouldn’t tell him.”

Wintergreen and Slade turned to find Dick standing in the doorway of the office, hands balled into fists at his side and eyes burning green.

“Richard-” Wintergreen tried to soothe.

“You said it was confidential!” Dick screamed. “I trusted you!”

He ran towards them, rage shining in his lazarus green eyes.

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