Rogues, Revenge, & Sex

by Sandra_Taylor

Summary

What if DC characters exist in MCU, but keep to themselves? What if they agree with the Accords? And what if the batfam adopted Tony Stark after the fiasco that was Siberia? Unashamedly team Tony, team cap bashing. First rule of fanfiction apply - don't like, don't read.

Please, read the author's note. Especially if you're coming to this from the DC tags.

Notes

First of all - the only thing I know about DC is... well, I read one comic, saw the Nolan trilogy, and follow the DCEU. That's it, that's the extent of my knowledge of canon DC. But somehow I found the fanfics and fell in love with the Robins, so... here we are. I'm not even sorry, just figured you should know that most of this fic is bullshit and probably totally OOC.

I'm also still salty and angry about civil war (if you couldn't tell) and am not at all sorry for everything I'm gonna do to the Rogues. Like I said - if you don't like that, if you love team Steve, and if you think they were right and Tony is the one who was wrong, save us all the time and simply don't read it.

This fic is in no way to be taken (too) seriously. I'm currently very stressed IRL, so this fic
became a thing for me to relax with. Except I can't do anything half-assed, so it became this big thing that I'm really excited about. Just... don't expect some big thing from this, it's all written in a spirit of fun.
Tony Stark and Bruce Wayne know each other since their kids days. Obviously. Two sons and heirs of successful businessmen from two cities with a particular character. Of course they met each other by the time Bruce was seven and Tony was twelve and already set in a boarding school. His parents pulled him out of it for a weekend to get a photo op with the Waynes (Martha’s and Maria’s charities were working on something together and that was supposed to bring more attention to it. Bruce doesn’t really remember what it was, though) and the boy didn’t seem that excited about it. He didn’t seem too excited about his boarding school, either. But he was nice enough to amuse the kid when the parents were too busy figuring out the details of the deal between the two charities.

Tony was also there for the funeral for Martha and Thomas Wayne one year later. His parents didn’t make it, he was there representing Stark Industries. But his condolences were honest and quiet and he was there for the whole of it. Then, when it was over, he asked Alfred if there’s something he can do for them. Both of them.

Bruce didn’t think about that for years after, but that he remembered. His gestures weren’t just for show and he didn’t ask only for Bruce, but for Alfred, too. So, when Bruce was on the other end of the world when the Starks died and he couldn’t really free his time to make it to their funeral, he at least sent a card.

Not enough, it didn’t come close to the way Tony’s silent presence gave him strength during his parents’ funeral. But it was something.

And that was that.

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Except then he came home to deal with the crime in the city and nothing went as it should have. And then there was an actual alien. And an Atlantidian. And a literal half-goddess.

And then he had a kid. Adopted, sure, but still. Becoming a parent at the grand age of 25 to a twelve year old was really fucking complicated. Thank God for Alfred, really.

And then nothing really stopped and he became a part of a league of somewhat superhuman people trying to protect the world all the while trying to keep it a secret.

So, when he first heard about the Stark kidnapping it was already almost a month old news and most people gave up. Bruce meant to look into it (he still felt like he owed Stark something), but by then he already was in the process of adopting Jason. And of course just when he wanted to sit down and look into Stark’s kidnapping, Joker happened and he lost his Robin. He still doesn’t exactly remember the following few months and the next time he checked the news properly Tony Stark was back, sporting a hot rod red and gold metal suit and calling himself Iron Man.

Not Bruce’s style, but whatever.

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There’s an invasion in New York, but before the Justice League has the time to even get there it’s
dealt with. Iron Man saved the day. Along with another god (Diana watches all tapes Bruce was able to get from hacking SHIELD with a pinched look on her face for some reason), a super soldier who was assumed dead back in the 40’s, an army experiment gone wrong and two spies.

But the Avengers are not their problem. Bruce sets some programs to keep an eye on them, but the life goes on. He finds a small genius who’s almost more stubborn than Bruce himself and gets another Robin just before Jason comes back from death thanks to the fucking Lazarus pit. And that’s just Bruce. Everyone in the League has their own problems.

A few years later a big part of a whole city tries to play a meteorite and kill everything on earth and Bruce almost wants to go to the fucking Avengers tower and ask them what the fuck happened. But of course that’s when Talia shows up with a kid on her heels. A kid that has her eyes and leanness, but Bruce’s jaw and attitude. A kid that can kill as easily as Jason, his son that came back just a little bit different. Or maybe the ruthlessness was in him the whole time. Or maybe, a small part of Bruce whispers, that’s what he did to him. Not the pit, not his terrible childhood, but Bruce.

Trying to piece his family together came first then. Clark and Diana understood. And the rest of the League would never argue with all three of them united like that.

It was years later that he felt that finally, finally he could breathe freely. That if he turns his back to them his sons won’t kill each other. That Steph knows that whatever happens, she will always have a place in the Wayne manor. That Barbra knows that even though she and Dick are no longer a thing, she’s still welcome for their family dinners. That Cass maybe needs some time to figure out herself, but she stays in touch, texting once a week at least one person in the family.

And in that five minutes of peace in his life, the Avengers decided to set Europe on fire.

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Damian doesn’t really understand why they’re in Russia. It’s not like he or anyone else ever gets an explanation from Batman before anything happens. All he knows is that they packed a small bag of clothes including their costumes, so it’s not Wayne Enterprises business.

Of course, that’s obvious by Drake’s absence on this trip.

What is confusing is that they left their costumes in their hotel room and are on their way to... somewhere. Father hasn’t really said anything since they touched down.

Damian ignores the insistent buzzing of his phone in his pocket. He already let his family know that they made it to their hotel and all that buzzing is just his crazy family being out on the patrol instead of sleeping like normal human beings. They’re used to him ignoring them anyway.

Instead, he’s paying attention to where they’re going and looking for anything that could be dangerous to them. Which, of course, in a city where there’s a million people it’s kind of hard to keep track of everything, but that’s why they need to be careful.

Finally, their car stops in front of a hospital. Damian burrows his eyebrows at that.

Father thanks the taxi driver and hands him some cash that’s probably too much even for the overprized taxi. Damian quickly follows him out of the car.

“Hospital, father?” He wants to make a quip about him having another child he didn’t know about in this building, but his father isn’t even looking at him at that point.

“Keep a look out and don’t. Talk.”
It’s not a request and it’s easy to see that even though they’re in the formal suits instead of their night costumes, this is vigilante business.

Well, not anymore. Maybe. If the Accords father gave all of them three days ago have anything to say about it. Which, to be honest, it looks like they will. Now that 137 countries signed them. Justice League is definitely going to join the Accords. Problem is with the smaller people, like Nightwing or Robin or Batman during all the times he’s only in Gotham. Accords are international and almost every country that signed them is planning to do something like them on their own.

And that’s where the good news end. Because it looks like for the States general Ross is going to be in charge of their own accords. And from what Damian was able to find about him, that’s not good news.

Either way he falls in step just slightly behind his father. Like he always does. Sometimes he really understands why Todd is not allowed to do that anymore. Last time Batman wanted the Red Hood to have his back... well, to be fair, Todd did have his back. Until all the bad guys were all tied up. Then he kicked him right off the roof. Of course Batman survived it, but Todd is not allowed to assist him when it’s just the two of them anymore. To Todd’s undying glee.

They go up to third floor. Father doesn’t stop even for a moment and Damian doesn’t question it. He’ll get his answers sooner or later.

They’re going straight for one door, when suddenly a... being merges through the door and comes face to face with Damian’s father. He looks like a human, shape-like, but his... colors are all wrong. His face is red. Not Native American shitty-Europeans-came-up-with-that-nickname red, but truly red. There’s also a yellow stone in his forehead.

His father, as always, doesn’t seem surprised by that. In fact, he speaks up before the... being (alien? He looks nothing like the Kents, but then again they look impressively human) can even open his (?) Once again Damian assumes) mouth.

“Vision, I assume?” Oh, right. The android Stark made to fight Ultron. Damian remembers Drake telling everyone and anyone about that one. “Bruce Wayne. I met doctor Stark before he went to MIT. Ask him if I can come in, would you? According to the hospital’s record he woke up yesterday morning.”

The android frowns at them, before his face cleans up into a mask not unlike their own.

“And may I ask how you got that information, mister Wayne?”

Father raises his eyebrow along with one corner of his lips.

“I assume the same way doctor Stark gets his information. Please, me and my son don’t have that much time here and I’m afraid we don’t have the time for idle talking in the halls. If he says no we can just leave and clear our schedule that way.”

There’s no schedule. Father is just working the mask of businessman to its greatest potential.

The android just stares at them for a moment before taking few steps back and simply merging back through the door. Impressive, Damian can admit that much. Drake would probably freak out over it and already have ten theories about how it’s possible. Damian will have to remember to tell him about it at some appropriate time.

“You know Stark?” is what he asks his father instead. To his surprise, father smiles a little. That’s unusual. Usually only family gets a smile out of him.
“I met him, twice. I was eight the last time.” That’s all he says and the discreet gesture of his hand tells Damian to keep quiet. They stand there in silence for a moment, but then the door actually opens and the android gestures for them to come in.

The man in the bed looks nothing like the cocky billionaire Damian is used to seeing in the news. He’s pale and bruised and looks somewhat fragile with the blanket up high to his chin and with a tube up his nose that obviously helps him breathe. There’s a holo-screen next to the bed with another man, obviously also lying in the bed, looking almost as beaten as this one.

Father gestures and Damian stays standing right next to the door. Not that they expect any trouble, but still. It’s better to be prepared.

There’s recognition soon followed by resignation on the man’s face.

“Hey, Batty. Came to throw a punch, too?”

If father is surprised at the blatant reference to his night persona, he doesn’t let it show. Damian can read him pretty well, though, and he’s pretty sure that he’s not surprised. Huh. Damian adjusts his opinion on Stark. He’s not fool enough to believe everything media say about him (he’s pretty sure there’s an article circulating about Drake being father of at least three different babies that were born to Wayne Enterprise employees this year alone), but honestly, he just assumed Stark is the same idiot the rest of the so-called Avengers seem to be. Maybe not.

“Actually, I’m here as the League representative.”

Damian hopes his poker face is better than Stark’s in that moment. Father hasn’t mentioned that little detail. But it makes sense. Most of the League was in and out of the mansion in the last few days, with Kent and Diana staying there. In fact, Damian is pretty sure that Diana stayed to keep an eye on everyone.

Bruce opens the bag he has with him and takes out a bunch of papers that Damian recognizes as the accords. He hands them over to Vision.

“Obviously this isn’t for the UN, we have some questions for them before we sign the official version and we do have some things we wanna change in them. But considering the way your... team fucked you over, we figured you deserve some sign of confidence. The whole league signed the thing.”

Everyone looks surprised at that, even the man on the screen. Damian is positive that he’s much better at poker face than those three. He does make a mental note to ask Jon what he knows about that. And make Drake ask Connor. And probably Grayson ask Wonder Girl. And maybe Todd ask Roy? He’s not sure how much Roy knows about the League anymore.

Vision puts the papers down on the bed before Stark takes them, Damian notices. Then Stark quickly looks through the pages.

“Great, more things to work over with the politicians,” he snarks a little, but doesn’t seem actually bothered. Then he stops to look at the last page. “That’s... all of you, isn’t it? Everyone signed as their alter ego.”

“If the UN wants us to unmask and tell them, we need more security about our secret identities. There’s a reason why they’re secret. UN wants to have a list in case we go AWOL? Fine with me, God knows I have enough plans for those cases exactly. But that list needs to be secure, only few people and only in joined power having access to it. We can do a spectacle of signing it as our alter
egos if the UN wants that, but they want our real names there? That’s only gonna happen in a secure room with as few witnesses as possible.”

Stark flips the pages over to some part of the document, a part that has many notes on it, Damian notices, and nods tamely.

“That seems reasonable. Anything else?”

Bruce’s face relaxes minutely, which is basically Batman’s equivalent of a smile.

“There’s a few more points that various people have problems with, but we can go over the details when you’re back on the home ground. In the mean time – when I was looking for the information about your health I caught a spider doing the same. I’ve got her entertained for now. Would you like me to let her get that information?”

Now Stark’s face goes into a truly impressive poker face. The man on the screen on the other hand simply frowns.

“No. Make sure she’s caught by the proper authorities. Russians should have a special interest in her.”

Bruce looks at Damian and he quickly takes out his phone. This, at least, he knows about.

*Let her out of your web and let the Russians know about her*, he quickly sends a message to Drake.

Instantly he gets back a string of emojis, including a gun and a kissing face. He quickly puts the phone away again before Drake goes bubbling to Grayson about him being online for a moment. When he looks back towards them Stark is watching him with a small smile.

“Teenagers, right?”

“Right,” father answers with a low chuckle in his tone.

“I can probably upgrade that, you know?”

Damian gives him an unimpressed look.

“This is the newest Wayne Phone. Not out for public yet.”

“Still, StarkPhones are the best. Wait, is that from the new CEO of yours? Maybe not the best anymore, then. He seems brilliant. Why is he a CEO and not, I don’t know, a head of R&D or something like that?”

“Because Damian needs to finish his business degree before he can take over the CEO position and leave Tim to do what he wants.”

Now Damian is truly surprised. His father never tells anyone this much information. Sure, he didn’t introduce him, but...

Stark looks at him with a curious look.

“Damian, I assume?” Damian nods. “Nice to meet you. Can I see the phone?”

“No.”

“Don’t take it personally, doctor Stark. Like Damian said, he’s basically a beta tester and you are a
head of R&D for a concurrent company, so you will excuse that we don’t let you get your hands all over that.”

Stark sighs, all long-suffering, and lets his head fall back.

“My parents were murdered, Bruce. And Rogers knew.”

Bruce tenses and Damian is not sure what is happening. Bruce glances towards him, but he has no idea what he wants him to do.

“They will pay for what they did.”

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Oh shit. Damian knows that tone. Tony Stark is now part of the family. Drake is gonna freak out over that. Tony Stark has always been his idol of the technical world.

Chapter End Notes

That's it for the prologue. Let me know what you think about it, if you're interested in the story itself?
I have about 40k more words of this so far and plan to write even more, but I'm not sure how often I'll be able to post new chapters or where it's even headed, honestly. Hope you enjoyed it and hopefully I'll see you soon enough with the first chapter!
Wally West

Chapter Summary

First week at the compound - Rogues' comeback and their first meeting with Batman and Robin

Chapter Notes

Oh my god! Thank you all so much for your kind words!
I... think that this fic is not going in the direction that most of you anticipate. First of all I'd like to say that the relationship was supposed to be just... a little thing on the side, but that's not happening. Nothing too explicit yet, but it's coming, so you guys have been warned.
Also, as was said before, I don't really know anything about the DC characters and this is not team cap friendly fic, so it's probably mostly OOC. Again, you've been warned. As I said to someone in the comments - we're skipping two years.
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The news is not exactly a surprise. The American public is... let’s say gullible and there’s an election coming. Of course they’d bring the Rogues back.

Rogues. Funny name that. Damian liked ExVangers, but Rogues were what became popular and nowadays everyone calls them that.

Still, Damian’s suspecting that the mansion didn’t just attract everyone all at once all of a sudden but that father called each and every one of them.

Maybe not Jason. He’s been spending a little more time in there for a while now, but he and Bruce mostly ignore each other. He’s pretty sure that he simply heard that Richard will be there and he tagged along.

Not that Damian’s complaining. To his unending frustration he’s still small enough that he’s all wrapped even in Richard’s arms, but it’s still nice having the biggest of them here.

Either way, they’re all hanging out in the living room. Well, he says a living room, but it’s a parlor, really. But it has a TV, so it’s their living room. Plus, with so many people there it’s not like the room is too big for them.

There’s not only the four of them along with Pennyworth and father, but Steph and Barbra and Cass and even Duke, the new kid that father for some reason likes so much. And Roy and Kori too for some reason, but they’re not hogging Jason’s attention, so Damian is not gonna comment on that. Wally is there, too, and that’s a little bit more annoying with how he and Richard haven’t been separated yet. The Kents are here, too, and it’s nice seeing Jon. Honestly, it’s been too long since they hang out with the Kents. Even Connor is bearable after such a long time since he saw him last.
Donna is there too along with her mum and Damian is actually really glad to see them. It’s always a pleasure to train with them. Not so much with the rest of the League. Superman is there, obviously. So is Cyborg, who’s entertaining Timothy for the moment. Honestly, Damian can’t be annoyed by that. They spend most of their nights together, Cyborg can have him for now. Flash, on the other hand, is downright annoying with him skipping from one group of people to another, entering and leaving their various conversations at will. Damian is staying clear of Green Lantern and Green Arrow and anyone from his circle of associates. Just... to be safe.

All commotion eases up when Bruce steps up in front of the TV. Jason snickers practically into Damian’s shoulder, but Damian admires that. He’d like to command a room in such an easy manner some day, too.

“Thank you for coming in such a short notice.” Called it. “The Rogues are coming back. The pardon is finalized, president Elis somehow managed to talk the UN into letting them back without the rest of the world crucifying us. Of course, they won’t be able to join any missions outside of the US.”

“Do they know it?” asks Donna with a little smirk. It’s just the tiniest bit scary. Mostly because Damian has a healthy dose of respect for both Prince women. Bruce shrugs.

“Don’t know, don’t care. The point is – they’re gonna be staying in the Avengers compound.”

That raises few voices, most of them asking question around “why”.

“They’re not Avengers.”

“Why are we meeting about this? Shouldn’t Danvers take care of that?”

“Well, Danvers is off world getting more information about Thanos. Logan is back with Xavier. He’s obviously gonna help in combat, but he has other responsibilities right now and they lie there. The Defenders are, technically, not Avengers either and they can’t just up and leave their lives in NYC to go live in the compound.”

“Is that what this is about?” Kent is smiling softly, almost indulgently. Damian doesn’t understand how father tolerates that. “You called us all here to tell us you’re moving to the compound?”

There’s some grumbling and some laughter about that, but Jason doesn’t really react either way and when Damian looks towards Timothy and Richard, they both have their game faces on.

Tony is family. You don’t fuck with family.

Well, you do, but no one else fucks with family, because then they fuck with them.

Except the “fuck” in this case is rhetorical, not literal. Now that’s a whole can of worms Damian is not getting into. Not even mentally.

Bruce frowns at Kent and he immediately grows serious.

“Yes. As Bruce Wayne I can easily say that I’m in New York for business and since Tony still owns part of the compound, I can simply say I’m staying with a friend. Which means that the League will be without Batman for some unknown length of time. I know you’ve got this,” he says that while blatantly looking to Kent and Diana. Damian can agree with one of them ‘having this’, “but I figured all of you should know that the Rogues are back, considering there’s now a non-zero chance of you running into them in field.”
“Then why are we here?” asks Roy with a frown. “Not that I don’t appreciate the food. Thanks, man,” he nods towards Alfred. “Wait, there is a dinner happening, right?”

“Your friends are poor mannered Neanderthals, Todd,” he grumbles quiet enough that only Jason can hear him.

They’re not cuddling. Sure, they are hiding in a dark corner, but that’s for the tactical advantage and view of the whole room it gives them. Not because they’re both sitting in a chair barely wide enough to seat one of them, let alone both of them.

“They’re just plain, old-school poor, demon spawn,” Jason replies just as quietly. Damian would reply, but father is talking again.

“Because while I’m away, Batman is obviously away, too. I’m leaving this city in your hands. Namely, I’m leaving the city in the capable hands of Cass and Barbra.”

“Hey!” That’s Brown, protesting simply because it’s expected of her, all the while winking at Cass.

“I trust you two to know who is capable of doing which job and, if it’s necessary, calling Diana.”

“Not you?” Diana asks skeptically. Bruce shrugs.

“If you then think I should know about it, feel free to inform me, but I’m not leaving Tony alone unless it’s the literal end of the world. I’m taking Robin with me. It would be good to have at least another one of you with us, but I understand that the rest of you can’t just up and leave your normal lives.”

There’s a somewhat awkward silence before Wally sighs and raises his hand.

“I’ll do it. I’ll go with you and wait there till someone else is available. Let’s be real here – you two having someone with you is just making sure one of the Rogues doesn’t end up dead in a suspicious circumstances.”

The laughter after that is generally a little nervous. Mostly because Bruce doesn’t smile even a little and most people don’t even see Damian’s stony face in the dark corner.

“I’ll try to see if I can throw some CEO responsibilities at Fox and spend a week or two in New York.”

“I’m due for a holiday anyway. Might take a few weeks, but I’ll take at least few days off.”

That’s Timothy and Richard immediately trying to find a way to go break havoc in the compound. But they’re not alone. Soon enough there are more people promising to look into their schedule and try to find some time they could spend in New York.

Damian allows himself a little smirk. The Rogues won’t know what hit them.

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The compound is actually a set of buildings. The biggest one is the one that has rooms and common rooms for everyone. And only one big kitchen for some reason. Damian suspects that it
remains there from the times where Tony hoped the Avengers would be his family. It’s also the last building that belongs solely to Tony. The rest of the complex UN at least co-owns in some capacity.

The private part of the building has its own driveway. The other part needs to park on the parking lot inside the complex. Not that you could say that by just looking at the building. It’s not obvious that there are two parts of it. But because everything is automated and FRIDAY controls the whole building, you have to have access to the various parts. And only Tony’s closest have access to the private part of the building.

The difference between the Avengers and Justice League is mostly in the degree of openness. Every Avenger’s identity is known to public and their structure is pretty close to the army, open for everyone to understand. Justice League is much more secretive. The Accords keep much closer eye on them thanks to that, but they’re more about trust and close relationship than simply army structure. The League is what Tony hoped he could have with the Avengers. The Avengers are what the world hoped they would be. Which one a person with abilities would apply to is entirely up to them and their preference of style and, if they see it fit, people.

Still, the Avengers compound is an enormous complex that impresses even someone living in a literal mansion. When they make it there they each have a room prepared for them in the private part of the building.

Wally looks actually anxious about that.

“I really can’t afford living like that, man. I know we’re not in the city, but we’re still in New York, right?”

Tony just rolls his eyes at him.

“Bruce hosted me for six months after I came back from Siberia and I’ve been visiting regularly. Seriously, you don’t need to worry about rent or some other dumb shit like that. Just don’t wreck everything every day and it’ll be fine.”

Their rooms are comfy and nice and there is a common room area right in the private part of the building. All somewhat personal, obviously used often and nicely lived-in. They meet Rhodey and Peter and Kamala in the common room. The Wasp is in LA, as she usually is, and doctor Strange is in Kamar-Taj, which is just as usual. That leaves only Thor and Hulk from the Avengers roster (other than the ones father talked about few days before, explaining why they’re not there to protect their own teammate) and neither one of them is allowed in the private part of the building.

They show them the rest of the compound. They make quite a spectacle like that – the three of them are not in their costumes, but with six of them it doesn’t really matter. Tony wants to show them everything because technically, he’s their host, and Peter and Kamala tag along because they almost always tag along with Tony. The only one not joining them is Rhodey. Damian takes it as the sign of trust it is.

When Tony first arrived to Wayne manor almost two years ago now Rhodey never let him go anywhere alone. He didn’t try to conceal his distrustful stares at all of them. He almost blew Jason’s head off once when Todd came for an unexpected visit. In the middle of the night. Through a window to a room that for that few months belonged to Tony. Tony wasn’t in the room at that time, but because Rhodey’s room was right next to it he heard noises.

Gaining Rhodey’s trust wasn’t nearly as easy as earning Tony’s trust, but then again, the genius trusts too easily. So, the fact that he let Tony give them all a tour without joining them? That was a
big thing for all of them.

The complex was big, but not that complicated. The not-private part of the building is meant for other Avengers on the roster, active and non-active alike. There’s another building for the support staff – not only cooks and janitors etc., but also everyone else who works from the compound, like the workers of the archives or the ones who prepare the planned missions. They are usually the ones who work with the Accords and countries that the Avengers need to go to. There’s a gym building. There’s even a building with an archive and a library containing records of all the missions the Avengers went on since the Accords and those before that were actual approved missions. The land all around those buildings is beautiful and guarded by wall and a doorman on the driveway to the parking lot of the complex. There are running tracks all around and some other small gyms out in the open, so that people can train outside. And, of course, a big building made for meetings on the second floor and a big cafeteria on the first floor.

That’s when Damian realizes that this truly is a big, populated complex. The sheer number of people there.

Nothing feels homey anywhere else than the privately-owned building, but that’s not surprising. Especially considering since while they go inside the gym building and the library and the cafeteria, they don’t have access to the other building where people live. They don’t want them coming to their building, the least they can do is not go into their building. Besides, those are properties of the UN after all. They don’t need homey. They need functioning. And that’s exactly what they got.

Technically, they could go to the cafeteria, but they have to pay for their own food.

“Or you can just cook your food in the kitchen.”

“No,” is Bruce’s immediate reply to Tony’s assurance. Then he turns to Wally. “You’re hungry, I give you money. You’re not cooking. Ever.”

“I’m not that bad!”

“That applies to both of you.”

As if Damian would want it any different. He’s quite content with letting other people cook for him.

All of that is on a big space that’s occupied mostly by buildings all around, but it turns out that behind that there’s much more space that still belongs to the compound. That space includes a hangar and a landing pad for various planes and quinjets and it’s big enough that even a space ship shouldn’t have a problem landing there. And beyond that there’s just trees and some tracks on which people can run or otherwise occupy their time.

“There are some benches all around the property. Damian, I hear that there are some gorgeous views from those benches. And of course, this is basically a forest. I know seeing squirrels isn’t that unusual out there.”

Damian nods at him, excited to go out there sometime and see if there’s something interesting to draw. Or maybe even paint. He does have some things to finish for his painting class. He took it on just because it seemed interesting and Pennyworth was bugging him about choosing something for fun.

That concludes their tour. They have two days to settle in before the Rogues arrive.
The day the Rogues arrive back is not really unusual in any way.

Damian and Rhodey conspire to keep Tony away from the welcoming committee. Reporters are let in only for two hours to witness their return and a member of Avengers and a member of the Justice League is required to be there, to show unity. Batman takes one for the League and Tony agonizes that it needs to be him for the Avengers. Damian and Rhodey don’t think so. So, Damian tricks Tony with a question about one of his actual classes for his business degree into a long discussion while Rhodey disappears to be part of that committee in Tony’s place.

When Bruce and Rhodey come back, Tony looks honestly surprised and somehow perplexed. So Rhodey tells FRIDAY to play the recording of the event.

***Steve’s POV***

It’s a great feeling, coming home. It’s been twenty-two months almost exactly since he last set his feet on the American soil and he can’t wait to do it again.

Their plane, piloted by one of the Dora Milaje, descents and he can see the compound. He can recognize the original building, but it grew much bigger in the last twenty-two months. Steve frowns when he sees that. It looks too big for just the Avengers. They don’t need that much. He’ll have to talk to Tony about unnecessary additions that he told them nothing about. It’s not Tony’s place to decide those things.

But then he notices the group of people close to the landing pad, waiting for them, and all worries disappear from his head. That’s right, the people came to welcome home their heroes.

The landing goes on without a hitch and soon enough they’re out of the plane. Steve is the first to step on the ground. He is the leader of the Avengers, after all. And it’s only right that he will be the first to shake Tony’s hand. Showing that while both of them made mistakes, they’re behind them now.

There’s no Tony. Instead of him there’s three people waiting for them close to the plane – Rhodey (and he’s glad seeing him on his feet, he really is), an older looking man in a suit and... another man. Except his... clothes are all black and he has a cape and a cowl covering most of his face. What kind of man hides like that?

(Tony, a small part of him whispers. Tony hides behind his iron mask.)

“Rogers,” Rhodey nods at him and before Steve knows what’s going on is gripping his hand too tight for a simple hand shake. “As a War Machine, I welcome you and the rest of the Rogues home.” Steve almost sneers. Rogues. He hates that name. They didn’t go rogue! They did what was needed! “This is mister Williams. I’m sure you know about him, he’ll be your liaison with the Accords.” The man’s face is impassive when he shakes Steve’s hand, but his shake is firm.

“Welcome back, mister Rogers.”
“And this, of course, is Batman. Representing the Justice League.”

The man in the weird costume doesn’t shake his hand. Instead he crosses his arms on his chest, widening his stance when he looks at Steve. It feels like he’s looking down on him and Steve bristles. Who does he think he is, treating Steve like that? Steve’s Captain America! And he heard about the so-called Justice league. A bunch of vigilantes moving in shadows. They’re nothing like the Avengers.

“Nice to meet you, gentlemen,” he says politely, because his mother raised him right and the ceremony is not over yet. He can see the reporters taking pictures and listening close by. This is no place for impoliteness. “These people behind me are sergeant Bucky Barnes, sergeant Sam Wilson, Natasha Romanoff, Clint Barton, Wanda Maximoff, and Scott Lang. We’re all glad to be back and serve our country again.”

“Your country?” Steve shudders a little when the so-called Batman speaks up. “So Maximoff is off to Sokovia and Romanoff back to mother Russia?”

Steve clenches his fists. Another calls-himself-a-hero playing word games. Isn’t Tony enough? Thankfully Natasha speaks up quickly.

“Excuse captain Rogers,” she smiles at the man and Steve can feel himself relax. Natasha’s got this. There’s no man that can resist her charms. “He’s so excited to serve his nation that he often forgets that not all of us were born here.”

“Captain Rogers,” drags the bat out slowly. “You lot are aware that the only person holding any type of military title anymore is Barnes, right? It was all over the news, after all, and I’m positive that Wakanda keeps its citizens informed about all important information now that they re-entered the world again.”

Steve just stares at the man for a moment. That can’t be true.

“Where’s Tony?” He can make everything right once again. Besides, he owes Bucky an apology. And he still has Steve’s shield. Steve’s gonna need it now that he’s back to being a hero.

“That’s doctor Stark for you,” says Rhodey coldly. “And he’s busy. You want to see him, make an appointment like everyone else. I’m sure FRIDAY will be happy to find a spot for you.”

There’s something almost acidic in his tone.

“Now, Rhodey...,” he starts, trying to appease the man. He knows he’s Tony’s best friend, but he was also military for most of his life. He should know better.

“And that’s colonel Rhodes for you.” Rhodey’s smile is surprisingly gleeful. “I was not dropped by the military for my terrorist charges. Now, smile and wave to the reporters while we shake hands with everyone.”

Everyone shakes hands with everyone. Even Batman shakes hands with the rest of Steve’s team. He still didn’t do so for Steve himself, though. He probably just didn’t realize. Wanda shudders when she shakes her hand with him, though, and Steve quickly moves next to her. That man has to be really nasty if this is how she reacts to just the casual feelings she can’t help but feel from people.

Then it’s time for the reporters to asks their questions. Steve feels better immediately. Finally, he gets the chance to tell the people what really happened.
But for some reason, all he gets is a robotic “are you happy to be back home” question everyone else on his team get before most of the reporters move to Batman.

“Batman, does your presence mean that Justice league and the Avengers are gonna work more closely together from now on?”

“No. This is Accords business. As another team operating from the US the League was asked to attend this event, too. Avengers and the League will continue to work as they did till now.”

“Some witnesses say that Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel used to train together rather regularly before Captain Marvel left for her space mission. Any comments on that?”

“Not from the Justice League. Personal relationships of its members are their business.”

“The Avengers agree with that assessment,” Rhodey adds with a small smile. “Though personally I expect the two of them to rule us all in the next five years.”

The reporters laugh, but Steve frowns. Global rule is not a thing to joke about. Especially not when talking about two entirely unknown entities. Last he heard Captain Marvel came to Earth from space, warning everyone about Thanos. And isn’t Wonder Woman supposed to be some kind of half-goddess? Of course, Steve doesn’t believe in all that nonsense, but she does seem powerful so it’s a nice figure of speech.

“It’s unusual to see you at those events, Batman. Are Wonder Woman and Superman injured?”

“Nothing like that. They’re both perfectly fine, just busy with life. I was available for this afternoon, so it’s me you have to deal with. Sorry about that.”

There’s an awkward silence after that, no one knowing what to do and suddenly, unexpectedly Steve feels like he and Batman are more alike than they thought. He’s also really awkward with press after all.

“Colonel Rhodes, where’s mister Stark?”

“Doctor Stark is currently otherwise occupied as is the rest of the Avengers. Considering I’m the current leader, now that my co-lead is off world, the responsibility of welcoming the Rogues came to me. We saw no reason to include any other members considering that most of them lead full lives outside of the Accords and no one was available to come to the compound in the middle of the week without much of a further notice.”

It seems like a lot of complicated things constructed to take the heat off of Tony. Steve calls bullshit. Tony always made time for them before. He’s not the CEO of SI anymore, he has more than enough free time to at least apologize to them.

The questions go on for few minutes, not a single one for Steve or his team. Steve’s getting frustrated. This is their coming home, their victorious comeback! Why do these people keep asking about next Avengers’ public events and someone named Robin? Who even is this Robin?

Batman nudges Rhodey behind their backs so no reporter sees it and Rhodey ostentatiously checks his watch.

“I’m sorry, everyone, but that’s all time we have. Please, leave the property as soon as possible. In thirty minutes, anyone who will be caught on property will be sued accordingly. Thank you for your time.”
Rhodey, Batman and the Williams guy step away from the reporters, far enough that they won’t be overheard by them. Steve glances back to his team and sees the thunderous expression on Wanda’s and Clint’s faces and pursed lips on Natasha’s face. Those are the faces he expected and ones that exactly convey how he feels. Bucky’s face is impassive and it saddens him. Princess Shuri swears that it’s only Bucky in his head now, but he’s still mostly passive, not doing anything. Steve sometimes questions if there’s any Bucky left in him. Sam and Scott on the other hand seem deep in thoughts. Weird.

“Mister Williams, is there something else we can do for you right now?”

“No, thank you, colonel Rhodes. I’ll be happy to report to the Accords that both the Avengers and the League sent their representatives and that those were highly professional. Have a nice day, gentlemen.”

***End of Steve’s POV***

Damian watches as both Rhodey and father turn their backs to the Rogues and leave.

“He’s still alive. Father, explain.”

“There were reporters and Batman needs to stay out of prison.”

Damian frowns, but nods. That’s acceptable. He does notice that neither Rhodey nor Tony even react to his unique sense of justice and smiles a little inside.

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Even though he hasn’t even met them, Tony becomes anxious. Everyone tries to keep him distracted, but that leaves only Vision, Rhodey, Wally, Damian, and his father. And Peter and Kamala, but they usually are around only on weekends and no one really wants them around the Rogues. Not that the Rogues are able to go to the private part of the building, but they still share a building with them, which makes everyone at least a little bit anxious.

The easiest way to distract Tony is for either Damian to ask him something about business or for Peter to ask him something tech related. The second usually ends up in a big video conference with Peter and Tony calling Harley in Tennessee and Shuri in Wakanda (for now, she’s supposed to come to the states to continue her ambassador work soon enough) and if he has the time, Timothy in Gotham. Damian tried to be there for that call once, just to spend some time with Timothy (he’s not missing him, no matter Tony and Rhodey’s teasing and the fact that they’re used to seeing each other daily. No chance), but even though Timothy beamed when he first saw him, he soon enough forgot all about him for whatever project they all were working on that day.

Wally didn’t really know Tony that well before coming there, so it took him a while to find a way to distract Tony. Then once he made a comment about how libraries are awesome because you can go online there and do your homework when you don’t have access to the internet and Tony almost had a heart attack about kids who want to learn but don’t have access to “basic human necessities”. Wally then told him about kids who don’t have access to food and then the rest of them were
seriously worried that he died on the spot, because Tony became so still that he didn’t even blink for two solid minutes. Then he launched into almost forty minutes long rant about what he can do about that.

They all thought it was amusing before Pepper called Rhodey at 2AM to yell at him to make Tony go to bed or at least stop calling her in the middle of the night preparing all those plans to actually make them happen so no kid (in New York, to start) has to go hungry or without an access to the internet. Turns out he works on those really hard. But hey, it distracted him from the Rogues.

Three days after they arrived Rhodey called the three of them to his office. It’s surprising, cause his office is in the building with the cafeteria and they never really went there after the first day. Turns out they didn’t need to worry about food, because Bruce and Tony were competing over who could order better food to be delivered to the compound. So far Bruce is winning for paying a thousand dollars to the little hole-in-wall bar in Gotham to deliver their burgers. Tony swears he’s very close to having a Milano restaurant deliver. Even Damian thinks that’s a little too extra.

“What’s going on?” Bruce asks the moment they step into the office. Rhodey groans and hands him a paper.

“Williams was nice enough to deliver it in hand and apologize. Rogers wants to start working more closely with other people to ensure smooth merging with the two teams.” Rhodey’s voice is full of venom when he says that. “No matter that technically, they are not to be forged with the Avengers considering that they’re not cleared for international fighting. Never mind that,” he shakes his head quickly. “Not only are Tony and Vision the only Avengers available for that, neither of them is in any way fit to face the Rogues again. I already asked their therapists for their assessment and they agreed with me, so the Accords won’t be able to say anything to them about it. But Rogers is right that we need them to train with other people. Kid Flash is, technically, on the League roster. So is, obviously, Batman. They’re great candidates to train with the newly installed Avengers. Robin, of course, will need a permission, but I see no reason why it shouldn’t be approved considering he signed the US Accords.”

Damian smirks at that and is only a bit surprised when he turns and Wally has almost the same expression on his face.

“Should be fun, don’t you think?”

“Play nice, boys,” says Bruce in what for him counts as an amused tone. “We don’t want them to die too quickly.”

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Robin and Batman arrive to the appointed gym early, to check out the perimeter and see for themselves what they can work with. Thanks to that by the time the rest of them start to come in they’re perched on a niche close to the ceiling. It’s not only very high, but also dark, so people on the light floor probably won’t see them. They stay there and watch.

The Widow is first to arrive. Not even in her gear, just in leggings and a tank top. Damian frowns. Does she think so little of them? She walks to the armory and examines some knives and most of the guns. Interesting. If she noticed the missing katana she didn’t react to it.
Next one is the Falcon. He, at least, is in his gear and when they see him they take a step back, deeper into the niche. If he starts flying he could easily see them. He doesn’t, though, simply starts stretching. The Soldier comes soon after, in clothes that look very close to his gear from the HYDRA days. He goes right to the armory and ignores the Widow who smiles at him winningly. He doesn’t exactly react to the missing katana, but he does pause for a moment in his movement before going over the rest of it. So, he did notice.

Hawkeye and the Witch come in together. Hawkeye happily skips right to the part of the armory with the bow and arrows. The Witch’s clothes are the same as the Widow’s, but Damian guesses that for her it’s more understandable. She does have magic, after all. She doesn’t even start practicing with it, though, instead continues talking with Hawkeye and happily chatting with Widow when she joins them.

Lang isn’t there because he’s not yet cleared for training. He needs new agreement with Pym Tech to keep using their technology. It’s going to happen, everyone knows that, but Hank Pym is dragging it out to show his displeasement with Lang's behavior during the so-called Civil war.

Captain comes just few minutes before they’re meant to meet and beams happily at his team. No matter that the only ones preparing for training are the Falcon and the Soldier, he’s probably just happy that they’re all here and on time. He joins the chatting group. Even he’s only in a shirt and sweatpants.

Right on time the door opens again and War Machine comes in. He looks around and when he doesn’t see them down there looks up. They lean a little bit over the edge so he does see them. Rhodey is the man, because he doesn’t react to that fact and simply looks back to the Rogues. Then he frowns.

“Are you all ready to start now that we’re all here?”

“All here? None of you guys bothered to show up!”

And in that moment Damian smirks as they fire the rope to slide down and do just that. Most of the Rogues look stunned by that, with the honorable exception of the Soldier. Interesting, but Damian doesn’t dwell on that. He still almost killed Tony and left him behind to die.

“Where are your uniforms?”

Father’s Batman voice doesn’t bother him anymore, but it’s nice to see that most of the Rogues flinch when they hear it. Rogers, on the other hand, just juts his chin up.

“It’s just a training, we don’t need it.” Damian expects his father to start the whole “we’re training for a life-or-death situations, every variables need to be covered, you want your uniform on when you train for it so you know what to expect from it” speech he’s perfected over the last few years, but before that can happen Rogers continues. “And isn’t there supposed to be three of you?”

As if he was just waiting for that to happen, suddenly there’s a light close to a lightning bolt and Kid Flash stands next to Batman from the other side.

“Sorry about that, I overslept.”

It’s three PM. The sad thing is, Damian is sure the idiot is telling the true.

“Fastest man alive, late all the time,” he draws out instead. He notices that the Witch went white for some reason and even Widow and Hawkeye stilled.
“I’m not the Flash,” argues the speedster for the umpteenth time.

“Last time you raced you beat both him and Superman.” And that’s Batman, not even looking at Kid Flash. Trying to see the Rogue’s reaction, then.

“Enough chit-chat,” says War Machine gleefully. It’s clear he’s enjoying the incredulous looks the Rogues are sporting. “I’m sure you all remember Batman. The man who’s late,” Rhodey glares a little at him, “is Kid Flash. The other one is Robin.”

“Robin?” snorts Barton. “Bullshit. That kid looks too young to be Robin. There were reports of a Robin fighting alongside Batman in Gotham some... twenty years ago? I’m sure a baby didn’t fight back then.”

“A Robin is a mask,” Robin answers in a bored tone. “Batman’s right hand.”

“Sidekick,” snickers Kid Flash. Robin sends him a nasty stare.

“Right hand. Doesn’t matter who’s behind the mask. Batman needs Robin.”

“And don’t you forget it,” growls Batman lowly. Robin rolls his eyes, grateful that no one can really see it behind his domino mask.

“Rogers,” Rhodey interrupts their banter, “you wanted this training. What were you thinking? Team against team? One on one? Come on, I might be the one in charge, but you came up with the idea.”

Rogers grits his teeth just as Robin realizes that Rhodey is taunting him in such a way that Rogers can’t really complain to the authorities. Maybe that man also has something for Damian to learn about the politics side of the business.

“I wanted this to help us work better together. So no, no team against team. Maybe one on one...?”

Batman’s lips twitch minutely and Damian stands up just a tiniest bit straighter, so he can better feel the pressure of the katana on his back. His cape is perfect for concealing that. Rhodey’s smile isn’t as subtle but then again he’s not nearly as emotionally stunned as Batman and his family.

Yeah, they’re cold assholes. Damian is aware, thank you very much.

“Kid Flash, wanna go first?”

Kid Flash rolls his eyes, not bothering to mask that in any way. They’re both aware that that’s not really a question. Instead of answering he simply moves so he’s standing in the middle of the gym, not near the door as the rest of them.

“Great. Scarlett Witch, you’re against him.”

Rhodey’s order is followed by Barton and Roger’s protests. Robin frowns a little, once again scanning everyone and their reaction. The Witch is still weirdly pale and Romanoff is watching everyone with an intense look, not unlike Robin himself, calculating. Wilson looks a little confused and there’s nothing Robin can read from the Soldier’s face. Still, Barton in particular seems to be particularly angry at them for some reason.

“You can’t do that to her!”

“She wants to be a hero, she needs to work with all kinds of people. Kid Flash is one of them. Of
course, she can just leave."

Barton and Rogers seem distrustful at that. So, they do have some brain cells left.

“What happens if she does leave?”

“Not sure,” Rhodey shrugs. “Of course, I’ll have to write that fact into the report. What happens after that is up to the Accords council.”

Clint frowns and Roger’s face darkens.

The Rogues have been clashing with the Accords council ever since they came back. Rhodey kept in touch with the Williams guy, so they know that they didn’t really read what they signed before coming back and now have problem with almost everything. Robin wouldn’t be surprised if this is the first time they heard about reports from training. They haven’t been there even a week and the standard time for a report to write before they go after you is a week.

Of course for the family it’s actually an improvement. Batman wants a report to be done each night right after anything happens.

“What report? You can’t keep sabotaging us.”

Rhodey frowns right then.

“I know for a fact that reports are covered in section 36 of the deal you signed before coming back to the states. A brief report needs to be filled after every use of the gym. Usually it’s just a line or two about who was there and what equipment was used. It’s also used to keep track on training regimes of each member of the force, as is outlined in section 14.”

Robin would call bullshit on such a quick recall of specific sections of a deal, but he knows for a fact that the moment Rhodey was told he needs to train with the Rogues he researched that exactly. Looks like Batman lost the bet they had and owes Rhodey a batarang now. He didn’t think anyone would be so stupid to sign something they didn’t read.

“Scarlett Witch. Are you going to go fight with Kid Flash or are you leaving? We don’t have all afternoon, this gym is blocked for only two hours.”

The Witch is still sickly white, but she nods towards Rhodey and slowly makes her way to the middle of the room. She still keeps her distance from Kid Flash, though.

Suddenly, Robin remembers the file he read on her and her brother. Her speedster brother that died to protect Hawkeye and a child from Ultron.

Her brother, who was also part of HYDRA, who killed for them as much as the Witch herself did, who didn’t question it when Wanda messed with Tony’s head and then let him take the specter that contained the program HYDRA was working on. The program that led to Ultron.

Robin doesn’t feel sorry for her. Mostly, he’s curious to see how she handles herself fighting against the powers she was so used to fighting with.

“Non-lethal use of your powers, both of you. You don’t know how to handle yourself, you tap out. Ready?” Kid Flash leans in a little, nodding his understanding, face set in determination. It’s weird to see him like that. Robin is used to see him mostly goofing around, especially when he’s with Richard. Which, admittedly, is how he sees him most often. But Kid Flash also read the Witches’ files. He knows what she did not only to Tony, but many other people. The Witch nods a little
more shakily, but she clenches her fists and raises them just a little bit. Her face doesn’t exactly speak about determination, though. She’s almost ashen now. “Then fight.”

The moment Rhodey says that Kid Flash disappears in a show of light. The Witch startles just a little at that and looks around widely with something close to panic in her eyes.

The fight, if you can call it that, doesn’t last long at all. Kid Flash emerges from the speed force just in time so that his punch doesn’t kill her, just knocks her off her feet. She then reacts instinctively, pushing her magic to protect her. Before the red mist reaches Kid Flash, however, he disappears once again. The Witch’s magic is just not quick enough to catch the Kid Flash.

That happens three or four more times before the Witch starts raging and yelling at the light the Kid Flash usually leaves behind, shaking all the while. Then, suddenly, she bursts into tears.

At that moment Kid Flash shows up next to Batman. The Witch doesn’t seem to notice.

“I’m all for a fight, but this seems cruel.”

Robin doesn’t disagree per se, but he also firmly believes that the Witch deserves it. He doesn’t say so, though. Instead, Batman speaks up.

“How can you allow her into field when she can’t handle her emotions for even ten minutes of training?”

“That’s not her fault,” Roger’s jaw is set stubbornly and he’s giving them his disappointed stare Tony talked about so much. Robin assumes that it could work on someone who’s not used to Batman’s intense stare no matter if he’s disappointed or angry or proud, but it leaves Robin completely unimpressed. “You set her up for failure. Speedsters are really hurtful for her, of course she can’t fight against them. She hasn’t faced anything like this before, she’s too young for that.”

Now Robin is truly unimpressed.

“She’s twenty-six. That makes her only about two years younger than you. Biologically and by the years you actually lived, not sleeping in an iceberg.” Rhodey snorts at that, trying to hide that as a sneeze in his arm. “What was it you were doing two years ago again?”

While they were talking Barton went over to the Witch and now holds her close while she sobs to his chest, both of them sitting on the floor. Maximoff is basically on Barton’s lap and he’s rubbing her back and whispering something to her while she curls into him. Robin watches all of that, not sure what to make of that picture. By the reaction of the rest of the Rogues, it’s not exactly an unusual sight. Yet still something about that picture bothers him and he’s not sure what it is.

It’s not like he cares if the two of them are together romantically. He and his unusual relationship can’t exactly blame other people for their unusual relationships. But still, something about the two of them doesn’t sit right with him.

“It’s not how old she is,” starts Rogers almost gently, yet with the same stubborn expression as always. “She doesn’t have the life experience.”

“Life experience.” Robin can’t help himself in that moment. Maybe he does have a temper. “You mean that the three years she tortured people on HYDRA’s orders is not enough of a life experience?”

“Robin.”
“I’m not judging.” He really doesn’t have the right, does he? “I’m just saying. You wanna talk life experience? He’s the least experienced in the room. Only two weeks of boot camp and if we don’t count the whole tour thing, which doesn’t really count as a combat experience, he served on the front for only about five months before diving his plane into the iceberg. So that’s about six months of experience before he woke up in 2012, which was what, four years ago, when they gave him the commanding post right off the hook. Am I missing something?” he turns towards Batman.

“No, that’s pretty spot on. So, let’s say four and a half years of experience. Wilson, how long have you served before they even considered you for the Falcon program?”

“Ten years.” By Wilson’s face he himself is surprised by the automatic response he gave instantly.

“Right. Barnes’ is obvious, Romanoff and Barton are long-term spies. And we already established that Maximoff was with HYDRA for three years before the Avengers, that makes her combat experience six years long. Once again longer than yours. So please, mister Rogers. Explain how she doesn’t have life experience.”

Rogers’ face turned red somewhere in the middle of Batman’s speech and now he’s just glaring at him. When they wait for a moment and Rogers doesn’t say anything, just stares at them, Batman simply turns towards War Machine.

“Next fight?”

“Right. Barton, Maximoff, clean the space. You want to leave, it’s understandable, please do so.” Then Rhoddy looks first at the Rogues before looking towards Batman, Kid Flash and Robin.

“Romanoff and Robin. You’re up next.”

Robin smirks. He hopes this will be more fun than the last fight.

He’s not surprised that she underestimates him. It’s not really her fault, he muses in amusement. He didn’t even look at the armory, simply went to the space freed by Barton and Maximoff just a moment before. She simply follows him with a smile after that. Of course she doesn’t expect him to be already armed. Gotham and the League know about their utility belts, but she probably doesn’t expect it to be much more than a little gadget that makes their suits better looking.

He likes the first part. The one where they just fight, no weapons. He needs to be careful about the katana, to not injure himself with it. He’s not going to cut himself, but if she flips him over and he lands on his back it’s going to leave a nasty bruise. So that makes the physical fight interesting.

Soon it becomes clear that Robin won’t beat her like that. He’s good, trained by the League of Assassins and all, but she’s better and she’s more experienced. So, he introduces weapons.

Just some knives and maybe a batarang at first. Romanoff gets some cuts for her trouble, but it’s no more than the bruises they gave each other before. Robin will have to step up his game. Time for his katana.

Thanks to the cape it takes some clever moves to get it free, but he does it and smirks when he hears Kid Flash shriek just a little bit. So, he’s infamous for his katana skills. Especially among his lovers’ friends. Sue him.

The Widow seems mostly amused by the motion of a katana and seems to dismiss it as unimportant. In the next five seconds she lies on the floor with a pool of blood surrounding her. It’s not a deep cut, Robin knows better than to cut too deeply to the thigh. An inch to the left, just a tiniest bit deeper and she would be dead already. That way? It’s gonna be a painful recovery, but
she should fully make it.

He stops in a half-crouch with his legs wide apart and both hands on the handle, standing right above the Widow. She moves on instinct, trying to protect herself with her hands. The katana stops just an air away from her forearm.

“You’re dead,” he says simply when she finally looks back up again with wide eyes. He steps back and straightens up again, katana in his left hand. “Don’t ever underestimate a katana,” he adds easily. “One cut with it can end you easily.”

He then turns towards the Rogues. Most of them take a step back immediately, he notices with satisfaction. The Soldier looks at him in approval and Robin ignores it. He doesn’t care what the Soldier thinks of him. (Even though sergeant Barnes had impressive record even before HYDRA took him, let alone after that. Not that he cares, he’s not one for guns. Jason was impressed and it’s not exactly easy to impress Jason.) Rogers, on the other hand, looks completely bewildered.

“But... you’re just a kid!”

“So’s the HYDRA killer, according to you,” shrugs Robin. “Better get her to the infirmary. If the wound is not dealt with soon enough it can leave lingering problems even after it heals.”

“You guys are nuts,” says Barton with a clear fear in his eyes.

“Awww. You haven’t even seen Batman yet. Or Red Hood.”

“You’re spending too much time with Nightwing, Kid Flash.” Robin smirks a little, hearing the amusement in Batman’s voice. Kid Flash just gives Batman a quick assessing look, showing that the only people who actually hear the little nuance’s in Batman’s voice are his family. “Someone, take Romanoff to the infirmary. Rogers, our turn.”

That fight, turns out, is unusually boring. Robin is used to seeing Batman fight with Superman. For some reason, the two of them like to train like that. Superman says that Batman challenges him enough that he can’t depend only on his superpower, while Batman simply likes fighting someone who, for all logical reason, should win every fight against him. He likes fighting the odds with strategy and knowledge.

But this fight is laughingly one-sided next to the ones Batman is used to having with Superman. Rogers entirely relies on his superpower. Batman tries to make him see that and change his tactics, which is honestly more than the man deserves in Robin’s opinion. But when five minutes pass and Rogers doesn’t react to those gentle nudges, Batman changes his tactics, starts using Rogers’ strength against him and soon enough Rogers’ laying on the floor with both his hands pinned down with batarangs.

“You know what? I agree with Clint.” That’s Wilson, looking a little bit green. “You lot are insane.”

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The training brightens Damian’s day. But that’s mostly all the amusement he gets for the first week of the Rogue’s being back in the compound.
He doesn’t sleep well. And it’s not until that night when he can’t fall asleep at all, when he thinks back to his childhood, back when he was with Talia and Ra’s, back to the days when all he knew was training, back to all the people that he killed, back to all those people whose life he destroyed...

It’s not until that night that he realizes that those thoughts – they’re not his. The memories, yeah, sure. But the thoughts?

It’s not like he never feels guilty about that. He knows that he killed innocents and that wasn’t right. But this all-consuming guilt? He knows his own mind. It’s part of the training, after all, to know yourself so well that you master yourself, that you’re in full control of both your body and mind.

His trainers would be so disappointed in him that it took him three days to realize that his trouble with sleep isn’t entirely his own.

In his defense, he didn’t sleep that well even before the Rogues came back. In his own room, in the isolation of his own mind he can admit that that’s because he’s not used to sleeping in an empty bed anymore. It took some getting used to other people sleeping in the same bed as him, but now he finds comfort in it.

He gets up and starts walking towards the kitchen, before stopping himself. Kitchen is the only thing they need to go out of the private part of the building for. If he goes there he risks running into someone from the Rogues. He doesn’t want to risk that. So, he goes to his bathroom to take a drink before he quietly goes out, looking if someone else has the same problem.

He finds Wally playing some game in the common room. He looks just a tiniest bit manic, but that’s not that unusual look on the speedster’s face.

“Can’t sleep?”

Wally yelps and jumps a little before disappearing and reappearing on the other end of the common room, the handle of the playstation falling to the floor.

“For fucks sake, Wayne! Can’t you make some kind of noise?!”

Damian just smirks before flipping down on the couch.

“You didn’t answer my question.”

“Obviously can’t sleep,” Wally grumbles, but doesn’t say anything and simply takes another handle. “Not that unusual for me. Brain’s too busy. I usually simply collapse every once in a while.”

“That’s not good for you.”

“Like you care. What about you? Dick says that you usually sleep the best out of the four of you.”

Damian shrugs. Richard doesn’t really know anything. When he’s around Jason usually comes around, which means that there’s all four of them in the bed and that are the moments when Damian sleeps the best. Of course with the four of them you have a chronic insomniac who loves coffee too much, a traumatized jerk who sometimes feels like sleeping is too much like death, and a guy who still at least once a month dreams about his parents’ death, so “sleeps best out of the four of them” is not really that big of a title.

“New place,” he says without thinking, but then he actually stops to think about it. Wally is his
best ally right now. And he kinda needs another opinion. “But... that’s not it. Not really.” They play for a moment without a word. Damian is grateful that Wally seems consumed by the game, so he doesn’t push him. “There are some memories I tend not to think about too much usually. For the last three nights I wasn’t able to push them away, though. There are also those... thoughts, that don’t really sound like they belong to me, you know?”

Now it’s Wally’s time to be quiet, but Damian doesn’t mind. They have time. Especially if they can’t sleep.

“Now that you mention it... that does seem right. You’re suspecting the Witch?”

“I’m not sure. It’s not weird that you’re awake.”

“Want me to check the others?”

Damian frowns a little. He doesn’t want to worry them for nothing, especially not wake them up for nothing. But Wally can be there and gone again in a second without anyone really knowing about it.

“Can you just check if anyone else is awake? If not, there’s no reason to wake them up.”

Wally nods and then there’s no more of him. Damian remembers being annoyed by that, but now he’s just glad that it allows them to assess the situation without alarming anyone.

After full thirty seconds go by without Wally coming back Damian assumes at least someone else is also awake. But then again with Tony it’s nothing unusual. Damian swears that all geniuses are insomniacs obsessed with coffee. At least all the ones he knows are.

Wally comes back soon enough.

“They’re all on their way. Turns out Vision doesn’t actually need to sleep. Neat, huh?”

Well, that’s just useful. If he really doesn’t need to sleep. He might not really know how well sleepless nights go for Tony, but he knows how it goes for Timothy. First night he’s usually very productive, but by the second day he’s a little bit off and by the fortieth hour he’s slowly getting maniacal. After that he might think he’s more productive without sleep, but the opposite is true.

Before they figured themselves out it was almost impossible to make the stubborn man sleep when he didn’t want to. Nowadays they have their ways to make him lie down in a bed for at least a minute. Sleep usually comes easily after that.

Father, of course, is first to come. He frowns a little when he sees Damian and scans him with his intense stare but doesn’t really say anything. Vision comes right after him, simply moving to the window and looking out of it. Damian suspects that he’s gathering more information about whatever topic it is he’s interested in right now. Rhodey is next, looking tired. There are bags under his eyes that Damian now realizes were there during the afternoon, too. He just looked much more alive then. He grumbles something and collapses on the second couch, the one that’s unoccupied. Damian would almost think that he fell asleep, but he moves every few minutes, sometimes even grumbling something about stress. Finally, Tony comes in with a familiar maniacal expression.

“Sorry about that, I was in the middle of something and honestly, couldn’t just leave in the middle of that. But hey, I’m pretty sure that I just managed to lower the price of most of our prosthetics so that hopefully most people will be able to afford them... hey, did you guys woke Sourpatch just to drag him here to sleep on the couch?”
“I’m awake.” Rhodey’s voice is rough and annoyed. “Can’t fall asleep. And I have a morning meeting. Fuck my life.”

Damian raises his eyebrows in surprise and looks towards father. Rhodey has to be really tired if he’s cursing in front of him.

Not that he cares. Rhodey was the one to say that if you’re not 21, you’re not adult yet and so he wouldn’t curse in front of you.

Bruce frowns a little and fully turns towards Damian. Report time.

“My memories are keeping me up. But also some thoughts that... aren’t mine.” He knows that father will understand him. He’s not sure about the rest of them, but with all the training his father had, he knows what he means. “It’s been keeping me up since the Rogues came back.”

Father nods and looks away, obviously in his own thoughts for a moment. To Damian’s surprise Tony is the next to speak up, worry along with puzzlement in his expression.

“What do you mean, not your own thoughts? You can sense that they’re not your own?”

Damian shrugs.

“I spent years mastering myself. That includes meditation, getting to know my own mind, what it can do, how it functions. Those thoughts... they don’t belong to me. They’re nothing like me.”

“The Witch,” father finally says. “It has to be her.”

There’s a heavy silence after that. It’s not like Damian didn’t guess already, but he’s suspecting that Rhodey and Tony are only now thinking about the last three, four nights.

“Can we report her to the Accords?” asks Wally, obviously unsure.

“Not without evidence. And right now we don’t have any.”

“Can the wizard of yours check it out?”

“Strange?” Tony snorts. “I’m not sure. He said something about checking the possibilities in regard to Thanos. We’re not supposed to contact him unless it’s the end of the world emergency. He couldn’t tell us when he’ll be available again.”

“Is there anyone else who could check it?”

“Not for the Accords.” Tony hesitates for a moment. “There’s Loki. He’s staying with Thor and Bruce and the Asgardians most of the time and considering his upcoming trial for New York back in 2012, he’s not allowed to leave their ship. From what I hear Strange is part of some order or something. But only Strange signed Accords, so only his professional opinion would make a difference for them.”

“So, in other words we’re left to figure it out ourselves,” Damian drags out. “As usual.”

“Shouldn’t be so hard. Damian, start meditating again. At your level you should be able to block her if you meditate right before bed so you should be able to sleep the normal amount of time. Rhodey, Tony I will teach you meditation. Wally, you too, if you want.”

“It might help with your normal overworking brain, too,” Damian adds to Wally. He thinks about it for a while before nodding.
“Fine, I’ll try it. When do we start?”

“How about right now? Damian, I’m sure you don’t need to hear the introduction to meditation. And for everything’s that holy, reply to the boys’ texts. They bombarded my phone today.”

Damian simply nods and gets up to leave. He finds his phone on the table in his room, discharged and useless. He puts it on charge, sits down on the floor so he gets to lean back against the bed and closes his eyes. He focuses on his breathing and in about a minute his mind is calm and clean... and then there are those thoughts again.

Like that it’s easy to see that they’re not his. He lets them come and analyzes every one of them. His guilt, his self-hatred. He has some issues, but those are generally not them. His are issues of abandonment and the fear of not belonging. The fear of never being good enough and, to a lesser degree nowadays, a question of who he is. He knows his sense of justice is skewed, but thanks to that he rarely feels guilty. He knows self-hatred from other people. His father and Jason both have some great issues with that. But he himself never really felt this way about himself.

So why now? There’s no reason for him to pick those feelings right now.

It’s hard to logically argue with feelings, but that’s what he spent years learning. When he opens his eyes again he knows he didn’t win that fight yet, but he’s exhausted and knows that now he won’t have problems falling asleep. He’ll see about staying that way, but if it comes down to it he can just meditate again.

He crawls back to bed and turns on his phone. He’s immediately assaulted by too many new messages to go through them all. Most of them are from the two group chats. He ignores the whole “family” monstrosity Timothy dragged him in and Richard refuses to let him leave. Every single vigilante from Gotham is there, or so it feels like most of the time. He does check the personal messages, though. There are some new photos of his animals from Cass and he smiles and looks at every single one of them, before sending her a gif of gratitude. Brown took a selfie with his katana back home and he sends a gif threatening her life. Business as usual. Barbra sent a message every time she fed an animal in the manor, as usual. Damian didn’t bother to answer that. She’s used to him not answering her. But he does make a note on the phone to buy a gift basket of the Swiss chocolate she loves. Then he finally opens the thing he turned the phone on for.

He wrote to Richard, Jason, and Timothy that him and father were off to kick some Rogue asses, but he didn’t write anything after. The guys cheered him on and few hours later had an argument about Jason’s jeans that were missing. He smiles at that. He’s pretty sure those jeans are in his room in the manor. Timothy affirms that after about seven full pages of argument, when he finally decided to go check Damian’s room.

Few hours after that they start asking about how the training went and when he doesn’t answer they seem to panic and start mobilizing. Damian rolls his eyes. They know that he’s not that good about keeping his eye on his phone. He often forgets it somewhere and doesn’t respond for hours.

But then again, he thinks, that’s when he sees at least one of them in person and they can keep him in loops that way. Since they left Gotham he didn’t really let go of his phone. But he was busy today, so he forgot.

He doesn’t really feel like saying anything, so he snatches a quick picture of himself in bed and sends it in the chat.

*LittleWing: he lives!*
BoyWonder: and looks adorable!

BabyBird: you alright, Dami?

Damian groans a little. He didn’t mean to worry them, but he still doesn’t feel like talking.

So, he sends a thumbs up.

BoyWonder: oh no

BoyWonder: nonverbal stage?

Finger guns gif.

LittleWing: did something happen or are you just tired?

Damian hesitates for a moment, but... better to talk about the whole Witch issue face to face.

Peace sign emoji.

BoyWonder: alright, we won’t bother you then

BabyBird: good night, Dami

BabyBird: tell us everything in the morning

Jason simply sends a quick video of him sending a kiss. Damian smiles at that. And outright laughs when Richard also sends a video of him sending a kiss and winking at camera. He quickly sets the phone down. Those two idiots will be at it for some time and all the videos and photos and Timothy’s witty commentary will be there for him in the morning.

Chapter End Notes

And that's it for the first chapter and for Wally's stay at the compound. Can you guess who will come next time?

What do you think about this fic now that you probably finally get a better picture of it? And is anyone against such a long chapters? The next one probably isn't gonna be so long, but if you’d prefer it I can do shorter chapters in the future in general.

I look forward to hear what you think about it now that you have clearer picture of what I'm doing here
**Chapter Summary**

Wally's gone and Diana is here - this time, Damian's contact with the Rogues is kept strictly civil... or better word - civilian.

**Chapter Notes**

See the end of the chapter for notes

Wally leaves a week after they came there right after Diana comes to switch with him. He collapsed two days earlier and slept for twenty hours straight, so he doesn’t look that tired. And he did learn the basics of meditation.

The moment Bruce sees Diana he frowns a little and Diana laughs at him, assuring him that Gotham is alright.

“Barbra and Cass were the right choices, they have it covered. Jason turned out to be a great right hand to them.” She says it gently and Bruce’s face softens just a little bit. “I’m not needed there and I won’t lie, I’d like to meet the Rogues. Where is Tony, by the way?”

He’s in the lab and Damian doesn’t go there with them, doesn’t want to crowd him in the lab. It’s a big space, but Tony has a lot of projects there and usually doesn’t like people going there that much. Even having access to the lab is a sign of great trust.

Besides, he’s busy. Working on his school work and following an argument Jason and Richard have over something that happened during patrol last night. It’s amusing mostly because they’re having an online argument while cuddling on Timothy’s bed and Timothy is regularly sending him photos of them cuddling.

Damian stays up late that night (he might not be able to go to patrol but Brown always snaps during patrol which usually leads to other people using snapchat and then it’s a thing and he was never taken off the list of those people so he can still see it and send them picture of himself lying in bed when they’re out in the rain) and after midnight goes to the common room to check if Diana is still up.

She is, reading a book with a glass of wine close to her. Damian is positive he didn’t make any sound, yet she still looks up and smiles at him.

“Hello, Damian. Trouble sleeping?”

“Since the Rogues came back. Father told you about our theory?”

“Yes. I came to agree with you,” she says while rubbing her temple gently. “Bruce said meditation helps?”

“Some,” he shrugs. “More naps during the day are really helpful right now. You reading something interesting?”

They take some time talking about interesting books they’ve read lately. It’s not the first time they
talk like this. Diana is usually the one to talk to him when father takes him to the Justice League meetings.

“I think I’m gonna go try if meditation is really helpful before trying to sleep. Did you want something else?”

He goes to shake his head, but then stops himself, frowning.

“I have a project for school. We’re supposed to paint a landscape and Tony said that there are some views out in the compound ground. I’d appreciate some company if you’re free tomorrow afternoon.”

“That sounds lovely, Damian. Did you have any concrete time in mind?”

“After lunch? I think it’s father’s turn to order some.”

“Why don’t I cook something for you? From what I understand Rhodey is too busy to cook and the rest of you boys are hopeless in it, so I assume you survived on take out alone the last week. I can cook something.”

“That would be great. Can I help you with that?”

“I heard you’re really good at cutting things. I can use that.”

Sadly, they have to use the kitchen to actually cook. Which means the Rogues.

Damian’s not worried. Everyone and their grandmother knows that Bruce and Damian Wayne are staying with their friend Tony Stark while taking care of something in New York. Father started going out to New York to keep that cover and some reporters caught him there and because they didn’t really bother to hide their presence in the compound, soon the story made front news in a surprising number of magazines. And Diana can take care of herself.

They’re doing some chicken with potatoes and grilled vegetables for lunch. Damian’s job is to cut the vegetables while Diana prepares everything else. She tells him about how the girls are dealing with looking after his animals. Damian is positive that Pennyworth is having the time of his life, considering it’s usually his job to look after the animals. But the girls took it into their heads that it’s Damian’s job and so when he’s not there, they need to do it instead. Damian will have to ask Pennyworth about the evidence he no doubt has.

Diana is just starting to grill the meat when someone comes in. Damian doesn’t bother to look who it is, but he does tense. Considering that Vision doesn’t need to eat, father and Tony are once again in New York, and Rhodey actually has work to do, it’s probably one of the Rogues.

“How are you?” comes the lightly aggressive question. Rogers, then. Diana turns and gives him her bright, fake smile she uses on men that disrespect her in one way or another. Damian snickers quietly. This should be fun.

“Oh, hello, you must be mister Rogers. I’m Diana, Tony’s friend.” She doesn’t offer her hand to shake, a grave insult coming from Diana. There’s a tense silence for a moment, before...

“And who is this?”

Only then Damian turns towards Rogers. His clothes are basically the same he wore to the training and Damian scrunches his nose just a little before looking him right in his eyes.
“Damian Wayne. My father is looking into the New York branch of Wayne Enterprises, so Tony graciously offered his place for us to stay in the meantime.”

He’s not one to call others by their first name out loud, even when he starts thinking about them like that. But Tony insisted. The whole “mister Stark was my father” thing, but with something sharp in his eyes. So, Damian went digging and found the worst father he's ever seen. His father at least tries to be good for them. Howard didn’t. That makes Damian throw his usual habits out of the window and do as Tony asked.

Rogers’ eyes scan his clothes and his lips move in judgement. Yes, Damian is cutting vegetables in suit trousers and a white shirt with its sleeves rolled up to his elbows. But it’s comfortable and he has a company (not to mention family) to represent. He can’t just go around in old tracksuit trousers and a shirt two sizes too small for him.

“You can’t be here. This is the Avengers building.”

“Really?” Diana widens her eyes just the tiniest bit. “I thought this was Tony’s property, rent out by the UN through their Accords.” She looks genuinely confused and if Damian didn’t know her he would fall for her confused-woman-who-doesn’t-know-better act. But he does know her and the fact that she’s able to easily defeat Superman, let alone this would-be-hero.

Rogers’ face softens just a bit and Damian has to quickly look away or he’ll give the game away with his face.

Well, probably not, but it’s safer this way.

“Avengers are part of the Accords, ma’am. And Tony doesn’t have the power to just decide who can come barging in. Especially in this building, where our private rooms are.”

“I’m sorry, mister Rogers,” and Damian is sure that Rogers didn’t notice the slight jab at the fact that while Diana knows exactly who he is, he doesn’t have a clue who she is, “but according to the contract between the UN and Stark Industries that I read on the Accords page the UN rents only four of the five buildings. Plus hangar. And the outside places are not rented, because the complex was too big and the UN wasn’t able to afford it. So, this building and all that you see around belongs to... well, technically, it belongs to Stark Industries, not Tony himself.”

She gives Rogers a winning smile before checking the potatoes and quickly turning the slice of meat on the pan. Rogers frowns at that.

“Either way, ma’am, this is Avengers property-”

Diana has to be losing her patience because she actually interrupts him.

“I am sorry, did I misspeake? I read the contract. There’s no mention of the Avengers in it and the names on the dotted lines are of Tony Stark, Virginia Potts as CEO of Stark Industries, and two representatives of the UN, one for the UN in general and one for the Accords. Neither of them bear the name Steve Rogers, though. So, please, explain to me how is this Avengers’ building and how you have any right to decide who does and does not belong here.”

Her voice grows with authority the same way Rogers’ face slowly turns red with fury.

“What contract?”

Damian simply turns his head towards the door where most of Rogers’ team stands. Romanoff is leaning into Barton who has his arm around Maximoff. Once again the sense of something wrong
right wrong screams inside Damian and by Diana’s pursed lips she senses it too. Weird. He knows for sure that Diana knows about his relationship with his... brothers. And she never once looked at them that way.

“The one anyone can read on the official Accords website, as I already said.” Her patience is growing thin. Damian would be surprised, except he knows that she’s truly patient only with those she cares about. Rogues are not one of them. “All the contracts are there for anyone to view. Including the one you signed. Isn’t that part of every contract with the Accords?” she turns towards Damian then and he’s more than happy to play that game.

“The international and the US both,” he nods. “The Gotham vigilantes signed a version that’s very close to the one the Rogues signed.”

“Vigilantes,” Diana looks at him and smirks. “You mean heroes.”

“You don’t know Gotham, Diana.” He almost said her surname. Sure, it shouldn’t matter that much, Diana’s identity is as secret as the rest of the League’s, but every detail matters. And it wouldn’t do to underestimate the Widow. “We don’t have heroes.”

“Tell that to the kid Robin rescued from the fire last month. Or all the kids in the neighborhood that are free to run around without the pimps targeting them thanks to Red Hood beating up anyone who would even think of touching a child in that way. To any woman the Catwoman walked home at night so if someone dared to catcall them, Catwoman would teach them a lesson. To the kid that got lost during the festival that Spoiler stayed with until they found their parents. Besides,” she adds a little more teasingly, “didn’t those vigilantes of yours help the League sometimes? Nightwing and Red Robin come to mind.”

“Another bunch of vigilantes,” he shrugs with a small smirk. Diana laughs at that, but before she can reply, the Rogues speak up again.

“What do you mean?” the Witch demands, nothing like when she was sobbing because they dared to let her fight with a speedster. “Can anyone just read what we signed?”

“Of course. That’s what the accords are for, isn’t it?” shrugs Damian. “Transparency.” The Widow pales when he says that and even Barton seems to be taken aback. “That way everything is out in the open and everyone knows what to expect from the other side.” Damian honestly prefers it that way. Not that he expects people to adhere to what they said they would do, but this way everyone knows what those terms were and if someone double crosses, miscommunications across allies are easier to deal with. “But that information is included in the contracts themselves,” he adds, just to add fuel to the fire. It’s fun watching the Rogues silently panic. Mostly because the Witch and Rogers have no poker faces what so ever and even Barton struggles to maintain his. Romanoff is the only one who has a working poker face, but even she can’t control the little tells. “You know, just so if you break your word again, the whole world knows what you did.”

He doesn’t spare them another glance. Simply moves to move the vegetable he cut on its own pan. Soon enough their lunch is ready and he and Diana both take their plates and leave, going right to the private part of the building. He can feel Rogers’ eyes on them as the door to it opens for them when it doesn’t open for the Rogues. He doesn’t feel sorry for them at all.
They find a perfect little spot for their painting/drawing sessions. It’s about two miles to the east from the buildings of the compound with no civilization in sight except for the track they came there by. The bench faces away from the track, which means that all they see are the trees and the way the light and shadows play with them.

He smiles when he sees it and when he looks at Diana she’s looking at him with the same smile on her face.

“It’s two o’clock.”

Damian nods and sets to prepare his canvas. Father bought him everything he might need, including a stand for the canvas and palette for his colors. It’s paying off right at that moment.

Diana sits down, but Damian stays standing. He hardly ever glances at her when he starts preparing the painting. First, of course, he sketches the trees with a pencil, light enough that it won’t be seen through the paint, just to know how he wants it to look. Then he prepares the colors to start painting the trees.

Next thing he knows, he looks up and the light is almost gone, leaving light blue hue in its wake. He blinks in surprise.

“Five o’clock. Good three hours of work you got there,” Diana smiles at him with a slight amusement. “Remember the place and we can come again tomorrow.”

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Diana raises his eyebrows at her.

“You planning to waste three hours a day watching me paint?”

“I happen to enjoy our time together, little bat,” she teases with the nickname and Damian can feel his cheeks growing red. It’s not quite the nickname his lovers like to call him, but it’s close enough. “Besides,” she adds, showing him her sketches, “it’s been a long time since I had time for my own art. If I’m to treat this as a holiday, spending three hours a day with a talented artist while working on my own art is a great way to do it.”

Damian’s glad to have an artist to spend some time with, too.

***

Diana betrayed him.

He has no idea where she got a number for his lovers.

Okay, no, that’s not true. Richard worked for the Justice League few times in the past and he has numbers for all three of the main League members. Not that it’s that hard when everyone in their family has a direct line to Batman.

But back to Diana’s betrayal.

She somehow got a photo of him painting in the woods to Richard and he sent it into the group chat all four of them have.

Damian opens the chat to all of them proclaiming him adorable. Even Jason. He thought he had an
ally in Jason, but no. At least he also commented about his ass, but he agreed that Damian’s cute.

He’s going to kill them as soon as they’re in the same state again.

Next day he takes his phone and his earphones with him. He talks with Diana on their way there, but when they arrive, he sees that Diana had the same idea. He just smiles a little and nods at her, before selecting Mozart on his phone and concentrating on his painting. When he glances up just to see that the light is gone, he made a big progress. If he’s lucky he’ll be able to finish it the next day, the day after that at the latest.

He hopes his teacher will be satisfied, because he’s starting to really like this.

The next day the routines goes on, except that this time someone grasps his shoulder. He moves on instinct, crouching down just the tiniest bit and turning his body just a little, so that when he flips that someone over his shoulder they don’t land on his painting.

Next thing he knows Rogers is blinking at him in surprise and he can faintly hear someone yelling over the music in his ears. He quickly takes out the earphones and looks around to see a slightly pale Wilson and Diana, who has problems concealing her wide smile.

“Don’t touch me,” he says simply and frowns at the palette that’s lying on the ground, colors facing down. Great, he needs to clean that up and before he makes it back to his room, cleans it and makes it back here the light will be gone.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“With me?” he turns to Wilson in disbelief. “He was the one to touch me when I was not expecting it. Is it normal for you to do that, touching strangers when they aren’t expecting it?”

“To be fair, I warned you.” Diana tried to sound stern, but amusement leaked in her voice. “Don’t touch the little prince when you don’t want to deal with the consequences.”

“Fuck you, too, Diana,” he grumbles. This time, she hit exactly the nickname his lovers like to call him when they can’t use the bat-themed one. Rogers, already back on his feet, frowns down at him. He raises his eyebrow at him. What, he can’t curse now? “Just... don’t touch me.”

Honestly, he feels embarrassed that Rogers caught him unaware. Except... he didn’t. Not exactly. That is in part why he took Diana with him. So, he turns his stare towards Diana. She just smirks at him. Damn her and her twisted sense of humor. She’s barely better than Damian’s family.

“Sorry,” says Rogers, not sounding sorry at all. “I just wanted to talk to you about your painting. Diana mentioned that it’s for your class...? You studying art? What college are you studying?” Rogers looks excited about his questions. Damian frowns a little more.

“GSU. And I’m not studying art, I just took a painting class because Pennyworth insisted.”

“GSU?” Rogers frowns. “I’ve never heard about it.”

“And that’s surprising how exactly?” snarks Damian back, finally picking up his palette. There’s nothing he can do today, except wait for the paint on the painting to dry. When he straightens up again and Rogers is frowning at him and Wilson has a disapproving look on his face, he rolls his eyes. “Gotham State University. Business major.”

“Aren’t you up for daddy’s job already?” snorts Wilson. Damian raises an unimpressed eyebrow at him.
“Technically, yes. If I finish my major I’ll be the next CEO so that Drake can focus on the engineering side of his degrees. If I don’t, though, the position will stay with Drake.” Not to say that father really isn’t that old yet and could probably stay in that position for years to come.

Wilson, for some reason, looks surprised at that. Then suspicious.

“How come you’re here now, then? It’s May, shouldn’t you be in school?”

Damian shrugs. Never really gave a fuck about should or ought to.

“As long as I finish all my assignments and pass my tests I’m good. I’ll probably be gone for about a week in June, but other than that everything can be done online.” Thanks to father’s money, he has no doubt, but he’s not going to tell that to someone he doesn’t even know and who obviously hates him just because he knows and is friendly with Tony.

Rogers is still staring at his painting.

“This is too good for someone just taking a class.”

Damian rolls his eyes and sits down next to Diana.

“I draw. I don’t really paint, but I still got an eye for dimensions and shading.”

Rogers turns his eyes to him, suddenly looking worried. That worries Damian more than his disappointed or angry face.

“You do know that you don’t have to follow in your father’s footsteps, right? With a talent like that, you don’t have to be dependent on him, you can go study art.”

He sounds like he’s talking to a child and Damian bristles at that.

“And what if I want to follow in his footsteps? Will you judge me as quickly as you did my father? Or better, Tony?”

“Now, son-”

“I’m not your son.”

Rogers bristles at Damian’s tone of voice, but Damian is not even the tiniest bit sorry. That man holds no respect for at least two people he himself holds deep respect for, he has no reason to be polite to him. He’s sure even Richard would agree with him in this instance.

“Look, kid-”

“Better, but still not there yet.”

Honestly, he’s having fun now. Especially because Wilson frowns, but then visibly stops himself and thinks about why he’s so disappointed in a young man not taking any shit from the soldier.

“How should I call you, then?” now Rogers is angry. “Master?”

“Sorry, but you’re not my type.” Damian smirks just the tiniest bit when both Wilson and Rogers are obviously surprised and a little embarrassed by what Damian’s implicating. “Mister Wayne will do just fine, mister Rogers.”

“Mister Wayne,” he grits through his teeth and Damian quickly glances towards Diana. She’s not
even looking at him, simply snickering into her hand. “You don’t know anything about my relationship with Tony.”

“Well, considering that I spent close to three months going through every record FRIDAY and before her JARVIS had on your interaction, I’d say I know about your relationship with Tony. Including how you lied to him for two years. Don’t kid yourself, mister Rogers,” he adds quickly when Rogers opens his mouth, “lie by omission is still a lie. But that’s not really important now. There is something I wanted to ask for almost two years now. On the helicarrier, the first time you saw each other. Well, second, technically, since the first time he saved your ass.” And wasn’t that something he wanted to rub in Rogers’ face for the last two years. “You said that you saw the footage. But you never really said what footage. So, mister Rogers, tell me – what footage you saw that made you comfortable judging a man you know nothing about?”

Now Rogers’ face is truly dark, but when he glances to Diana she’s no longer snickering or even smiling. She’s watching Rogers with a single-minded focus, which makes Damian comfortable looking towards Wilson. He looks confused and Damian hopes this little talk will make him look everything up. Maybe then he’ll get his head out of Rogers’ ass.

“Now, ki-mister Wayne.” Rogers growls in frustration but corrects himself in time. What a shame. “SHIELD has resources.”

“SHIELD, then. Alright. Was it the video of his senate hearing, that was full of HYDRA agents, or was it the one from his 42nd birthday, when he was dying and your darling spider only made it worse? Or was it the one they compiled from his pre-Afghanistan days when he played the same role father is playing at those annoying functions? Or, wait, the conference where he refused to be under the thumb of a shady organization and instead told the whole world who he is, so they’ll be able to keep an eye on him and stop him if he gets out of control in a way that SHIELD would never do?”

“Now see, kid? Tony already got to you and you’re seeing those videos how he wants you to see them.”

“Oh, please. Tony doesn’t even know I know about those videos,” he snorts. “Maybe it’s you who sees the videos the way people who played them to you want you to see them?” He’s smirking now and he’s not even sorry. “Or maybe you’re so prejudiced that the moment you heard the word billionaire you decided to hate him and it didn’t matter who he really is or that most of his money goes to charities all across the world. Or maybe he’s looking too much like his father and just looking at him was too painful for you, so it was easier not to see him. Either way, why not look and see what the people truly think? After all, since you let all the SHIELD files on the internet that particular fold made it to youtube and... well, it’s youtube. You’ll find lots of arguments from all sides. Can we go now?” he turns towards Diana. “This was amusing, but I’m bored now.”

Chapter End Notes

Shorter chapter today, I know. Hope you still enjoyed it, though!
Jason Todd

Chapter Summary

Jason comes to the compound and suddenly, Damian's focus is turned away from the Rogues.

Chapter Notes

Not gonna lie - this chapter is the reason why the fic is rated Explicit. What I'm saying is - the sex part of the title is here, people.
So yeah, this week's chapter is less about the Rogues bashing and more about Damian's relationship.
Also, I just did the math and Damian got together with his brothers when he was still 17. It's my personal belief that it took them few months to actually get to the sexual part of the relationship and that whole thing is off screen for this fic. But if you're still uncomfortable with it, you should probably stop reading now. Also, I'm not sure how the underage tag works (honestly, where I'm from, you need to be under 15 for it to count as "underage", so...), so if you think I should include it in the tags, let me know and I'll do it.

Also, it's probably self-explanatory with this fic, but I'm gonna ignore Endgame in here. I actually loved the movie (and if you haven't seen it yet, I really recommend it), but it doesn't really fit with this fic, so I'm kinda ignoring it here =D

That said, enjoy this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Damian wakes up abruptly and all at once, but without the hammering heart and crippling feeling of anxiety he got used to in the last two weeks. Not the Witch’s doing, then. He’s calm and he immediately hears the sound of the door closing softly behind an intruder. His training woke him up.

He grips the dagger that’s right next to his hand under the pillow and in a quick movement jumps out of the bed, right in front of the intruder, aiming the dagger so it’s resting under their chin, right against their neck.

“This shouldn’t be as hot as it is.”

The voice that says it is rough and makes Damian shiver. He relaxes and quickly lowers the dagger.

“I could have killed you, Todd.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time I died. Hey, is that Dick’s?” he smirks while tugging the loose tank top Damian’s been sleeping in. “Also, I don’t remember you owning leggings. Seems more Tim’s style.”
“Shut up,” growls Damian, but while his voice doesn’t betray anything, he can feel his cheeks heating up. Jason’s excited grin shows that he noticed that, too.

“Awww, babybat, now I feel neglected. Where’s my sign of ownership?”

Now Damian is really glad that he felt too hot in the hoodie during his evening meditation and so he ditched it before crawling to bed.

“How did you get here?” he asks instead. “We weren’t expecting you till the afternoon.”

“Patrol was boring, so I got Oracle to let me go early, stopped by my flat for my stuff and drove straight here. Probably broke every traffic law there is, but hey, I didn’t get caught, so that’s something. As for the whole private wing thing – FRIDAY let me in.”

Of course she did.

Jason tugs him close and kisses him, lazy and deep, and Damian lets him for a moment before pushing him away.

“You reek, Todd. Go take a shower.”

“Wanna join me?” Jason wiggles his eyebrows and seriously, why does Damian let him fuck him so often?

“No.”

Jason tries to change his mind for a little longer, but when he goes to bed and refuses to let Jason in, Jason gives up and goes to the bathroom. Damian sighs and lies down.

The next thing he knows, he’s warm, almost too hot, and wrapped in strong arms. There are lips tracing first his shoulder and then his neck and he arches into the touches. Jason’s low chuckle sounds right next to his ear.

“How come that I can’t sneak in on you when you sleep, but then you don’t even hear the shower?”

Because when the shower started he already knew it was Jason. And Jason is safe.

He doesn’t say so out loud and instead moves so his ass presses to Jason’s groin. His very naked groin. Damian bits down on the moan that wants to escape him and moves his head so Jason has easier access to his neck. He can feel himself getting hard. It’s never that complicated to get him hard in the morning and it’s been two weeks since he saw any action so it’s almost laughably easy. It would be more embarrassing if he couldn’t feel Jason growing hard against his ass.

He wants his clothes off yesterday and expects Jason to get rid of them quickly, but Jason simply moves one of his hands under the tank top, on his stomach, while rutting gently on his ass.

“Tim and Dick miss you.”

Damian smiles a little. Jason is worse than him when it comes to feelings. Mentioning just his other lovers, Damian can easily hear what he means to say.

*I missed you.*

He turns his head and Jason doesn’t tease anymore. The kiss is deep and hungry, promise for what’s to come. Jason’s hand on his stomach moves just a little lower, to where the little hair he
has there disappears below the leggings, and his other hand moves to Damian’s neck. Not restricting, just moving his head how he wants him. For a moment, Damian fights it, fights Jason for dominance. But then Jason tightens his hold at the same time he bites Damian’s lower lip and Damian melts, opening his mouth and letting Jason fuck his mouth with his tongue.

It’s very quick from then. Jason’s hand moves and strips him of his leggings. Then he moves both his hands to his thighs.

“Fuck, babybat,” he breathes out harshly, right against Damian’s still open mouth. “I missed those thighs. And that ass,” he adds as he squeezes one of Damian’s cheeks.

“Yeah?” Damian’s also breathing hard. “Grayson and Drake’s asses not enough for you?”

“Brat,” Jason snorts. “Don’t fish for compliments. No one has better ass than the boy wonder.”

Damian would like to protest some more, even if only for the sake of the argument. But Jason does have a point, so instead he arches so that his ass rubs against Jason’s already hard cock. Fuck, he wants it in himself yesterday.

But Jason moves back and steadies Damian’s hips with one hand.

“Now, babybat. You know I’ll give you whatever you want, but you have to ask for it first.”

Damian curses quietly, pressing his face to the pillow. Damn Jason and his dirty mouth. Damian doesn’t have problems with it with Richard or with Timothy, but Jason’s rough touch tends to reduce him to speechless puddle.

“Fuck me,” he demands with eyes kept resolutely shut. Jason chuckles, moving one finger up Damian’s spine and making him shiver.

“Now now, babybat. Ask nicely.”

Damian groans but knows better than to move right then. Jason really only has two moods for sex – so rough it’s painful or so slow it’s torture. Actually, he’s rough in both moods, but Damian knows which one he prefers. Maybe that’s why Jason’s usually adamant to go as slow with him as is possible. The bastard.

“Please, Todd-”

“Nuh-uh. I said, nicely.”

He moves away from Damian completely, taking his hands and with them their touch, leaving Damian cold yet strangely hot inside. It’s his favorite strategy for Damian. He craves their touches any time he can get them.

“Please, Jason,” he whines, embarrassed that he’s already reduced to this whiny, needy version of himself. But fuck, it’s been two weeks and he’s not exactly a fan of masturbation. “Please, fuck me.”

“Get on your knees and ask me nicely, brat.”

Damian trembles just a bit as he moves to his stomach and then his knees under himself, so that his ass is in the air, but his face is still buried in the pillow. Jason is the one to moan then and Damian smirks, before moving his face just enough to be able to speak.
“Pretty please, Jason, fuck me.”

Once upon a time he hated how needy and downright submissive he sounds when he gets like that. But then he got to see his lovers’ reaction to that side of him and it was one of the hottest things he’s ever seen. Jason’s low cursing just confirms how much he loves him like that.

Soon enough Jason once again surrounds him, his chest to Damian’s back, his hard cock nestled right against Damian’s hole and his hands on his chest and stomach. Damian’s tank top rolls down up to his shoulders, revealing the skin of his back. Jason breathes in loudly before pressing a wet kiss just to the left of Damian’s spine, to the place where Damian knows a scar is, white line easily visible on his dark skin.

“You’re so pretty like that, babybat,” Jason murmurs lowly, right against his skin. Damian shivers. “All that dark skin littered with white scars... You have no idea what that does to me, Damian.”

Damian arches and moans out loud. Jason almost never calls them by their names, preferring the nicknames. That combined with the low, intimate voice of his makes something deep inside Damian sing.

“Get on with it, Todd.”

Jason moves his hand to spank Damian’s ass. Just once, but it still makes Damian’s breath catch in his throat.

“Patience, babybat. Where’s your lube?”

“What do you mean, my lube? Didn’t you bring some?”

“Left in a rush, remember? Be glad I remembered the condoms, so we don’t traumatize the staff in here.”

Damian grumbles a little. He knows he brought lube (honestly, in the last year and a half he learned not to leave the manor without at least a small tube of it), but he’s not sure where he put it.

“Some help you are, demon brat,” Jason snorts before moving from the bed and going for a search of something he could use as a lube. Damian gets up on his knees and takes off the tank top before lowering himself back so his ass is in the air.

Jason is back in a minute, a pack of condoms and a tube of lube in his hand.

“You didn’t remember that you put it in the drawer with your underwear?”

“Excuse me for not thinking clearly right now, Todd.” Damian glares at him over his shoulder. Jason snorts, but leans down to kiss him, deep and quick.

“Brace yourself, baby brat.”

Damian snorts at the nickname, but in the next moment Jason inserts two fingers all at once in him and he forgets about everything else.

Even though Jason used a lot of lube to ease his way in, it’s still two fingers all at once and it burns in that delightful, almost painful way Damian doesn’t really get with anyone else. The pleasure mixes with pain and when Jason finds his sensitive spot he loses track of everything but his pleasure.
Damian doesn’t even register when Jason adds another finger, but he does register when he pulls his fingers out. His inhibitions are lowered and before he registers it he’s whining, pitiful and low in his throat. Jason’s mouth is on his shoulder and his hands squeeze his hips. Only then Damian registers that Jason’s been muttering words to his skin.

“... so pretty like that, babybat, all opened up for me.”

Damian moans and arches his ass against Jason.

“Fuck, give me a moment, pretty boy.”

Jason needs to untangle himself from him to put on the condom and Damian whines just a little bit.

“Come here, babybat. Let me make you feel amazing.”

Jason’s dick drives into Damian slowly and Damian feels every inch of that movement, loving every second of it.

Jason lets him bottom out, but that’s the only mercy he gets from him and he knows it. The first thrust back into him is hard and unforgiving and Damian loves it. Jason is no longer all over him, only his hands on his hips keeping him steady and no doubt bruising him while Jason fucks him hard and rough, but not really fast. Enjoying every thrust, every second of it.

After a while Damian lets himself fall back face-first into the pillow, moving his hand to his cock. But before he can properly wrap his hand around his cock, Jason’s chest is back to his back and he takes Damian’s hand away from it, pressing the hand into the pillow.

“No,” he growls, low and dangerous. Damian just knows that Jason himself is on the edge, far too gone for any rational thought. “You will come on my cock alone.”

Damian moans and arches, moving his head to the side so his neck is bare and hopefully luring Jason in. Jason drives in, hard and quick, before his mouth is on Damian’s shoulder, biting hard enough to leave bruises. Damian moans even louder, moving one of his hands to his hips, wrapping it around Jason’s hand there and flushing even harder when he feels Jason entwining their fingers together.

“So beautiful like that,” Jason murmurs, voice low and breathy, teeth scratching Damian’s skin. “So needy and sweet, just for me, aren’t you, little prince? Will you come for me like that? I know you can, you’re so sensitive, babybat. Come for me, Damian.”

And Damian does, coming all over the sheets and his own belly. And as he tightens around Jason he can feel even him stilling like that, coming in him.

Damian collapses on the bed, making a face when he realizes that he fell down in the puddle of his own come. Jason falls next to him just a moment later and Damian moves, away from the puddle, climbing on top of Jason. Jason simply wraps his arm around Damian’s waist and his other hand to his hair.

“Should have remembered to put the condom on me, too,” he says softly, to the skin of Jason’s neck. Jason chuckles and kisses Damian’s hair.

“Go back to sleep, babybat. We’ll deal with that in the morning.”
Mornings at the compound are quiet and peaceful. In those moments it actually feels like it did when it was just the Avengers in here, the way it should be.

Steve likes going running in the morning, just before the sun raises. He runs around the ground that are behind the compound. There are more tracks in there than just the one. Generally speaking, they run in a circle to get you back to the buildings and there are different lengths of the tracks, so everyone can run just as long or as much as they choose. Steve likes the longest track. It runs all around the grounds that Tony owns and at one point the woods open up and the track has a great view to close suburbs. It’s a great sight and Steve likes to stop there and just watch as the people there start their days. This is why he’s fighting, after all. So the people in the suburbs can live their lives in peace.

By the time he makes it back to the compound that day it’s mid-morning already and he’s starving. He heads right to the kitchen. The shower can wait, but he needs to eat. He really should learn to eat before his morning run if he’s going to spend hours outside.

He hears noises coming from the kitchen and smiles, hurrying his steps. With any luck Natasha, Wanda, and Clint are there cooking already. It’s a little early for lunch, but if Wanda decides to do something Sokovian for lunch she likes to take her time. Or maybe they got up late and are just making breakfast. He’d also like to see Sam and Scott, but the two men have been avoiding them ever since their training with Batman for some reason. Steve needs to talk to them about it. They didn’t get to train then, but he’s sure he can talk Rhodey into more shared trainings, give them an opportunity to train.

But when he makes it to the kitchen it’s not his teammates who greet him. Actually, he’s not really greeted by anyone. The kid that’s staying with Tony is there, the one who has a talent in painting but is determined to follow in his father footsteps. It’s not really that surprising, Steve muses, rich kids are all the same. But there’s another kid in there, the one who’s actually cooking while the other one is sitting by the bar, sipping something from a cup in front of him.

Before Steve can say anything (or turn around and leave) there’s a knife flying just an inch next to his face. He freezes, looking at the stranger in surprise. The stranger frowns and storms around him for his knife that’s stuck in the wall.

“Did no one tell you not to sneak on people?” he sneers at Steve on his way back to the stove. He moves quickly to get the eggs from one of the pans to the plates that already have toasts and some sliced tomatoes before moving to the other pan that has bacon to do just the same. “Why did you let me leave my gun in the room?”

Steve blinks in confusion, not sure what the man means, but luckily, it’s Damian that answers him.

“Knives.” It’s only one word, said in a clipped voice. The stranger furrows his brows, before he shrugs and flips the bacon into the plates. He grabs them in one hand and takes a pot full of tea in the other.

“Eat up,” he says with a smirk when he puts one of the plates in front of Damian. “You’re gonna need your strength,” he winks at him while pouring more tea to Damian’s mug.

Steve blanches just a bit at that remark. The stranger then puts the other plate in front of the seat next to Damian’s and pours the tea into his own mug, before sitting down and putting one hand to
Steve knew that homosexuality is no longer forbidden. He’s still not sure how he feels about that aspect of this century. Or its stance on sexuality in general. Not only are there more options now than he ever thought possible, but people are more open about their sexuality. Especially women. Wanda is a good kid, but sometimes her outfits are a little too... revealing. He knows Natasha has to wear skimpy clothes for her work every once in a while, but Wanda is a kid and really shouldn’t wear those clothes. But when he tried to talk to her about it she never really understood what he meant. Damn this century and its corrupting culture.

Either way, this is not what he expected from the young heir and looking back, he doesn’t really understand why. If the women-hopping Tony prefers is nowadays considered a norm, wouldn’t a spoiled billionaire child want to find something even more scandalous?

“I’m ridiculous?” He had to dose off, because the stranger is clearly reacting to something. “You’re the one who wears suit trousers and pressed shirt to a breakfast.”

“I have a company to represent, Todd,” answers Damian with a slight sneer. “It would do you some good to dress appropriately, too.”

“Don’t pretend, baby, that you don’t like what I’m wearing right now,” snorts the stranger, flexing his muscles in his tank top that seems a little too tight for him.

“Shouldn’t you save that for the bedroom?” Steve can’t help himself but ask. They both slowly turn towards him.

“You’re still here?” draws out the stranger, clearly displeased. “Thought the knife would be enough to drive you away.”

“Your aim is terrible.”

“If I actually hurt him like that, B would freak,” he shrugs.

“I’d pay good money to see B freak,” comes an amused voice from the door to the private part of the building. “Hello, Jason.”

“Lady Diana,” he drags out, saluting to her lazily before throwing his free arm over Damian’s shoulder. “Barbs said you need to go back to Paris soon.”

“They do pay me a lot to travel the world. I should at least show my face every once in a while. Late breakfast, Damian?”

“You do know that if you said a word father would finance your travels, right?”

“Not the point, Dami,” she smiles at him softly. “We can’t all be dependent on your father.”

Steve couldn’t agree more. Staying dependent on your parent even though they can afford it seems just lazy. Everyone should earn their living in some way.

But he’s quickly loosing his footing in this setting, which seems to be a norm with those people around, and he doesn’t like it.

“Who are you? This is private property.”

Damian and Diana both give him an unimpressed look.
“Didn’t we have this talk already? I’m Diana, Tony’s friend. This is Damian Wayne, his father and Tony are old friends.”

“I know that!” Are they making fun of him?

“And,” Diana continues as if he said nothing, “this is not your property to claim. It’s Tony’s. And I know for a fact that Tony knows about Jason’s visit and has no problem with it.”

“Does he also know about the... two of you?” Steve gestures towards the two of them vaguely.

“What of us? Fucking?” Jason grins devilishly. “Pretty sure he does. Little D?”

“Yeah,” he shrugs, not really looking up from his plate. The kid seems hungry, Steve thinks absently before resolutely not thinking about why that would be. “We’re not exactly hiding it.”

Jason winces at that for some reason before turning to Diana.

“Sorry, Diana, we assumed you already ate.”

“I did,” she waves it away. “I actually just came to say bye. I need to get going soon to catch my plane and I’d rather catch you in the kitchen than come knocking,” she smirks at them. “Have fun, boys, and look after Tony and your father for me, would you?”

“Pretty sure they can take care of themselves,” mutters Jason lowly, but doesn’t actually complain about the suggestion. Diana just smiles and ruffles their hair before growing serious and turning towards Steve.

“Goodbye, mister Rogers. I really hope you research everything we talked about.”

Before Steve can react she disappears in the private part of the building. Jason’s arm untangles from around Damian’s shoulders and his hand is back on Damian’s thigh in a lightning speed.

Steve turns around and leaves. He recognizes when he’s not welcome somewhere and has no need to force his presence on a bunch of spoiled kids.

He’ll shower and then come back for his food. His appetite is gone anyway.

***End Steve’s POV***

Jason takes his time. If Damian thought that he was too slow in the night, it’s torture right now. Jason opens him agonizingly slow, starting with just one finger, muttering low encouragements into Damian’s skin.

By the third time Jason wraps his fingers around Damian’s cock and squeezes, stopping him from coming on the spot, Damian is an incoherent mess. Jason has three fingers deep inside him, massaging his prostate, his every movement slow, slow, so agonizing slow.

It’s thanks to that that it takes a moment for Damian to realize that Jason is taking a photo of him with his one free hand. He groans and turns his head away from the phone.

“You better not send that to anyone.” It takes him too long to get that sentence out and it’s all breathless when it does. Before Jason can react his phone starts ringing. Damian gives out a noise
that’s close to meowling and tries to bury his head in the pillow, but this time around he’s on his back so it’s not that easy.

“Fuck, little D,” comes breathlessly from the phone. “You look so beautiful like that.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be in work?”

“Fuck you, you asshole. How come you can make him come undone and still sound totally unbothered?”

“Oh, trust me, Dickie.” Jason’s voice isn’t breathless, but it does sound dark and low. “I’m so hard it takes everything in me not to burst. But we wouldn’t want that, babybat, would we?” Damian whines. “No, you want my dick in you so you can finally come, don’t you?”

“Shit, little wing, I can’t see anything.”

“Don’t whine, boy wonder. I sent you a nice photo, didn’t I?”

“You fucking tease. Come on, Dami,” he practically coos. Damian sneers, but it’s interrupted by another moan. “Don’t you wanna tell me how good you feel?”

“Fuck. You. Asshole.” Damian is panting with every word, holding onto the sheets so tight he’d be surprised if they weren’t torn by the end of it. “Let me come, Todd.”

“Not yet, babybat.”

And with that Jason adds another finger. Damian arches off the bed, tears spilling on his cheeks.

“Is he... is he crying?” Richard’s voice is full of wonder and Damian feels his cheeks growing ever hotter.

They all have different relationships with each other and while they’re all there together. It’s easier to concentrate or another person when there’s four of them. But like that, when Jason makes him concentrate only on himself, on his own pleasure, he gets overwhelmed. Richard has never seen him like that and he doesn’t exactly like that he’s seeing him now, even though it’s from a phone screen from a bad angel.

“I know. Isn’t he the prettiest thing you’ve ever seen, Dick? Spread out like that, opening up for four of my fingers, eating them up like he was made to do just that. Flushed to his chest, mouth open, all but begging to be fucked.”

“You’re gonna be the death of me.”

“The replacement will be pissed that we excluded him.”

“You sent the photo to the chat. His problem he can’t check it until after the meeting he has today.” Damian hardly notices any of that, too lost in the waves of pleasure, too focused on the way every muscle in his body feels, tense and ready for release. “I’ll make it up to him.”

“Let me watch then, will you?” teases Jason lightly. “What do you think, babybat? You ready for me yet?”

It takes a while to register the question, but then Damian moans louder than before, nodding enthusiastically.

“Sorry, boy wonder, gotta run.”
“Jason!”

But Jason ends the call and turns off the phone for good measure before slowly pulling his fingers out of Damian. Damian whines and spreads his legs a little bit more. Jason throws the phone away and lays himself chest-to-chest to Damian, letting him take most of his weight.

“Don’t worry, babybat,” he murmurs lowly close to his lips. So close, in fact, that Damian can feel him speak against them, but when he moves to kiss him, Jason moves with him. “I won’t let him know that you can get nonverbal from pleasure. That could actually decimate his ego, don’t you think?”

Damian would love to reply to that. Something sarcastic, biting if possible. But Jason is right – words are too hard right now.

Jason slowly rides into him and Damian outright sobs. Whoever said that Jason doesn’t have self-control has never watch him fuck anyone. Or maybe it’s just them, Damian thinks somewhat incoherently. Jason can be quick and rough and almost pain inflicting when he fucks, after all. But sometimes he doesn’t want to. And in those times Damian ends up ruined.

Once Jason’s fully settled, he kisses Damian. Deep and long, it’s the kind of kiss that would make Damian’s knees feel weak if they weren’t already shaking before that.

“You can come whenever you want,” Jason offers him quietly. “As long as it’s on my cock alone.”

Damian whines and comes on the spot. Jason looks down and chuckles softly.

“Well, I guess that counts, too.”

He lowers his mouth to Damian’s neck and Damian is shaking and it has little to do with his orgasm. His cock is still hard and he feels too sensitive when Jason starts moving.

Jason keeps the stream of soft praises coming as he slowly moves. It’s an assault on Damian’s senses and he moves his hands from the sheets to Jason’s back and clings. He’s not really aware of the noises that keep leaving him, his world shrunk to Jason and Jason alone, his cock, his back, his praises. Soon enough he’s on the edge again.

He makes himself tighten around Jason and finally, Jason’s words fade as he groans and fastens his thrusts.

It takes an eternity and just a minute all at once before Damian’s coming again, Jason taking only few more thrusts after that.

Damian comes to himself all at once few minutes later. His entire body aches pleasantly and he’s still a little breathless, but Jason next to him is breathing just as hard and a soft blanket of afterglow sets in his skin. He feels amazing.

“Did you seriously send that photo to the groupchat?”

“Are you kidding me?” laughs Jason. “Of course I did. It’s a glorious photo. I’m making it my screen saver.”

***
Damian is aware that Jason is trying to keep away from his father, but he refuses to hide in his room for the whole week Jason is spending there. It’s only partly because it takes him hours after that second sex before he’s able to properly move again.

He drags Jason for a run on their second day, early enough that Jason is grumpy and pissy and Damian fully expects to be fucked into the shower wall as soon as they get back from the run.

They take the longest track, the one Damian’s never really took the time to go to, because it’s easier and more clever to keep close to the buildings when you run on your own.

They’re about twenty minutes in when Rogers passes them. He doesn’t say a word to them, doesn’t even nod to them in acknowledgment. Just passes them with a speed that seems impossible, yet he doesn’t look like he’s even sweating. Jason frowns at that and Damian can see on him that he wants to run after him.

He quickly takes his arm and tugs him back.

“No.”

“But-”

“He’s super-soldier. He’s literally biologically programmed to be faster than you. You can’t outrun him, no matter how stubborn you are.”

Jason frowns and pulls away from Damian. Damian lets him. They don’t start running again, instead just walk for a moment.

“This is the second time I met Rogers and he’s still unharmed.”

Damian smirks a little.

“Rogers met Jason Todd, a civilian who’s no match for him, twice now. Wait until he meets the Red Hood.”

Jason just stares at him for a moment, before taking his face in his hands and kissing him. Damian lets him for a moment before pulling away and jogging ahead, still facing Jason.

“Race you!”

With that he turns and runs as quickly as he can, smiling a little when he hears Jason’s curses behind himself.

They keep chasing each other for a while, Jason striping Damian off of his shirt at one moment and Damian running after him to get it back. He doesn’t have a problem with nudity in front of his lovers, but he doesn’t like being so vulnerable out in the open. Jason just laughs.

Suddenly, the woods disappear and there’s a view to suburbs nearby. Rogers for some reason stands there and stares, smile on his lips. Damian blanches just a little when he sees it and Jason, positioning himself between Rogers and him, doesn’t really help with that.

But still, Rogers has to see something in the suburbs that he likes. So Damian turns his eyes towards the houses underneath them.

He doesn’t see anything special. People rushing through their mornings, pulling out of the
driveways and heading to the city. He sees that every day in Gotham, it’s something that’s universal all around the world he assumes. He doesn’t see anything that would explain the self-satisfied smile on Rogers’ face.

“Hi. Good morning,” Rogers smiles at them, as if he just only noticed them. “You’re up early today.”

“Well, someone blacked out yesterday evening because he has no stamina,” says Jason in a sultry voice. Damian can feel himself growing hot in the cheeks. There’s a dozen replies he’d have for Jason in every other situation, but he does not appreciate having their personal life out in the open in front of Rogers of all people. The flush red of embarrassment on Rogers’ cheeks is almost worth it, though.

“It’s a beautiful sigh, isn’t it?”

Damian looks towards Jason and sees the same bemusement in him as he feels.

“Not really,” Jason shrugs. “Wayne manor has much better view.”

“Of course it does,” snorts Damian. It overlooks the whole Gotham, not just a suburb close to it. It’s not as nice view during the day, Gotham isn’t exactly a pretty city like that. But during the night, when you’re out there looking at the light up city? It’s beautiful. “I really hope Stark tower has better view than that.”

“Daddy dearest didn’t take you yet?”

Damian just shrugs. It’s not father’s place to invite him there and they’re all aware of that, Jason included. He just likes being an ass.

“What is it your father is doing in New York once again?” Rogers asks, trying to sound innocent but suspicion is clear in his voice. Damian sneers, but stops himself from a quick, scratchy reply. He needs to get more diplomatic if he wants to be CEO one day soon. And of course they have a cover story.

“Wayne Airlines actually have the main headquarters in New York City. That, and some of the Stark Industries medical experts work closely with the Thomas Wayne Foundation. From what I could tell, father is inspecting the headquarters and making sure that the deals the foundation has with SI are adhered to.”

Which, okay, is less a cover story and more a pleasant side effect of father keeping an eye on Tony. Rogers frowns once again. Damian is starting to think that it’s a permanent situation when he’s around anyone who actually likes Tony.

“I’ve never heard about Thomas Wayne Foundation.”

Damian kind of wants to bash his head against a hard surface right then. A tree might be good for that, he muses. Jason must have seen him glance at a nearby tree and at least guesses his thoughts because he takes him by his hand and tugs him close to himself, hip to hip, and squeezes his hip strong enough to keep him right there.

“It’s a Gotham thing, mostly,” Jason replies, his usual sneer still present and this time it’s Damian who hooks his thumb under Jason’s trousers to keep him in place.

“What does it do?”
Damian and Jason exchange a look, before letting go of each other and passing Rogers.

“Google it,” Damian throws over his shoulder before he starts running again. He has no time for idle chatter with delusional narcissist.

***

Dinner became a thing since they came to the compound. Sure, Sunday dinners are kind of a thing for the family at the manor, but ever since they came to the compound they took to eating dinner in their little circle every night. Take out the first week, then Diana cooked and yesterday... well, honestly, they didn’t make it to dinner yesterday.

And now it’s an awkward affaire. Jason is still mostly trying to avoid Bruce, so when Damian makes him come he’s huffy and rude to everyone. Luckily, Tony doesn’t mind that attitude and Jason’s snark actually makes him laugh more than once. And while they’re not exactly hiding their relationship, they’re also cautious about father’s reaction. They don’t see each other as brothers, but they know father sees every one of them as his sons and they’re not sure how he’s going to react to their relationship. What’s worse, they weren’t really subtle about it yet father hasn’t said anything about it so far and they’re not sure what it means. There’s no way he doesn’t know.

Tony and Rhodey seem aware of that fact and the teasing they had to endure while father was missing suddenly stopped once he made it to dinner. Damian didn’t mind that and Jason was thriving with all the innuendos thrown his way. And honestly, Damian doesn’t mind Jason sharing the little details of their night with their friends as much as he did when he shared them with Rogers of all people.

Vision doesn’t really eat, but he joins them for the sake of companionship. It’s usually that time of the day when he gets to share everything new he discovered – from mind-boggling scientific discoveries to the newest meme circulating the internet, it somehow always sparks a round of discussion. Damian is glad that for that night Vision chose the newest meme making fun of JK Rowling. Turns out Vision doesn’t know who that is which leaves Tony gaping and Jason going into a fifteen minutes long lecture about the importance of Harry Potter for today’s culture. Bad news is that that fact turns Damian all hot and bothered. He doesn’t really see Jason be all knowledgeable that often and it’s hot.

But still, that night he can’t fall asleep. He doesn’t really move that much. Even when he can’t fall asleep, even when he’s nervous or anxious, the nervous movement was trained out of him early on.

But Jason, of course, knows that he’s not sleeping.

“You’re thinking too hard, demon spawn,” he grumbles, annoyance clear in his voice, but he hugs Damian closer for a moment, before letting him go. “Let’s put on some clothes and look at the view now, okay?”

Damian sighs and burries his face in Jason’s neck for a moment before getting up and looking for something to wear.

Of course Jason knows what’s been keeping him up. He might not like Rogers, but Rogers is an artist and if he saw something in that miserable suburb, then there was something to see. Something that Damian didn’t see and it frustrates him to no end.
He grabs his sketchbook and a pencil with him. They don’t run this time around, just walk slowly, peaceful silence settling over them. It takes a little longer to get to the point where the view is seen, but the moment the trees part Damian stops in his tracks.

The uniformity isn’t as evident in the darkness. The light of the city is seen on the horizon, but the suburbs themselves are only sparsely lit by streetlamps that put it into a soft yellow light. Some windows also shine, but it’s not the same as in the city and certainly not in every house.

Somehow in the combination of the woods around him and that gentle light it creates almost... magical atmosphere.

“We’re spending some time here, aren’t we?”

Jason doesn’t sound frustrated or even really resigned. Mostly just amused. Damian still feels guilty. Technically it was Jason who dragged Damian here, not the other way around, but still.

“We don’t have to.”

“Just shut up and make yourself comfortable, little D. Do I need to be a little portable lamp for you?”

“If you insist on being here, it would certainly help.”

Jason drags him to sit with him on the ground. Jason’s back is to a tree trunk so that Damian can lean against him and draw comfortably. Jason holds his phone in an angle so that its light shines exactly where Damian needs it while Jason himself does something on the phone.

They spend about two hours like that. By that time Damian is dozing on Jason’s chest and he’s pretty sure Jason himself is almost asleep. He makes himself get up and that wakes Jason enough so they can make their way back towards the compound.

***

During dinner Jason made a joke about the Hamilton musical. So of course the next day, when they finally make it out of the room, Tony has two tickets ready for them, along with reservation to one of the most prestigious restaurants in New York.

“You’re crazy,” says Jason when he’s finally able to talk again. “And I’m used to Batman crazy, but you... you’re just crazy.”

“Just say thank you and buy him socks for Christmas,” snickers Rhodey. “That’s what I’ve been doing the last twenty years.”

“Your tuxes should be in your room by two,” adds Bruce as if it’s a normal thing to say. Damian smirks into his cup of tea when he sees the unguarded look of awe that Jason directs at him for a moment before scowling again.

Jason’s been gushing about the musical every since it became a thing, so there’s no question whether they’re going or not. The only question remains regarding the restaurant. Jason is not as well known as the rest of them, but he’s still officially one of the sons of Bruce Wayne. It was almost funny how easily Gotham accepted that a son of a well-known public figure was assumed
dead for two years wrongly and was actually just missing. But then again in Star City basically the same thing actually happened, so what would you know. Still, having dinner together in a well-established, fancy restaurant would draw the wrong kind of attention to them. They can’t afford that.

Tony assures them that the restaurant is very private and used to guests that don’t want their presence to be known. And Damian kind of wants to take Jason out. Out of the four of them Jason is the one who gets the least opportunities to enjoy the luxuries of rich life and he deserves to experience it every once in a while. No matter that Jason would be the first one to protest that.

So they go and Damian realizes that this is the first time he’s out on something that could be called a date with Jason. There’s a lot of WE functions he has to attend with Timothy that feel close enough to date that they usually find at least five minutes for themselves to pretend. And he and Richard often go out together, just the two of them. But he and Jason never really took the time. It’s exciting, but a little intimidating, too.

It’s a little weird at first, Jason closed off and Damian feeling more awkward than ever. But then Jason makes an effort and confesses that Broadway musical has been his dream for years and somehow that vulnerability prompts more vulnerability from both of them. It’s strange when Damian thinks about it, but for all the different ways Jason can unmake him in bed, he never allowed the same outside of it. Actually speaking about themselves and their lives is different. It’s worth it, though. Suddenly, in the strangeness that is New York City to Damian, he feels closer to Jason than he ever did in Gotham.

Damian likes the musical just fine, but the uncensored joy on Jason’s face is mesmerizing.

Happy drove them to the city, to the restaurant and to the theater, so he’s also the one to drive them back to the compound. While the limousine has the partition, Happy doesn’t raise it on their way home, so he has front seat to Jason’s ramblings about the historical accuracy and the clever use of hip hop and everything else along with Damian. But Damian catches his amusement in the mirror, so he doesn’t comment on it. Besides, he knows Happy is one of Tony’s closest friends. He will not make out with Jason in his presence, but he trusts him enough not to raise the partition.

It’s the first time he falls asleep in Jason’s arms without sex preceding. Still he has a warm feeling about that inside himself, feeling weirdly peaceful. The same peaceful he feels when he’s with Richard. The same peaceful he feels in the mornings, when he gives Timothy his first mug of coffee and the genius smiles at him all sweet and grateful.

It’s been eighteen months since he got himself into this mess and he still hasn’t said those three words. But that’s the first moment when he’s absolutely certain he feels them about all three of his lovers.

***

Jason has been nagging Rhodey about letting Red Hood train with the Rogues ever since he came to the compound. On his fifth day there Rhodey informs them that Rogers requested another training and they’re wanted in the gym the next afternoon at two. Damian is more than happy to show Jason the gym and the shooting range underneath it. He might not shoot guns, not really, but Jason does so beautifully.
The next day they come in fully ready five minutes before the set time, ready for a fight, all three of them in their suits. The only ones already there are the Soldier, Falcon, and Ant-man. The soldier simply nods at them and then turns back to his weapons, while Falcon and Ant-man offer awkward smiles. Robin turns his back to them.

They don’t talk. Mostly because if they did, their banter would be easily recognizable and no one wants the Rogues to figure out who they are. Although, Robin muses, if he and Batman keep turning up while the Waynes stay with Tony they are eventually going to figure it out. No one is that stupid.

The Widow turns up in her usual costume this time around. Red Hood looks her up and down and Robin tenses for a moment before he realizes that the suit is impossible for hiding weapons. He can see three knives only from where he’s staying and he’s not exactly scanning her. There’s no way there’s a gun on her. Unless she hides it in her boobs, he supposes. He’s seen women do that before. Seriously, it’s another reason why to fear most of them. She’s limping and Damian is pretty sure that’s an act. Hawkeye is right behind her and the Witch closes their little group, bringing the feeling of creepiness to Damian for some reason once again. If he cared a little bit more he’d be determined to figure it out, but as long as they’re far away from him he doesn’t care what’s going on with them. Either way Barton is wearing much more practical gear. Robin is willing to bet that he actually has weapons on him right now, including the bow and arrows on his back. Like that he looks a little closer to the superhero he was supposed to be. While the Witch has a suit not unlike the one Widow is wearing, although her looks even less useful for fight. He can understand skin-tight suits for fighting, his family wears something very similar to it after all. But the cleavage and the blood-red coat seem just useless. Not to sound dangerous. Chest area is a pretty vulnerable one – shouldn’t you want to cover it instead? He knows girls in his family always prefer coverage. Unless it’s part of the mission to seduce someone, of course, but that’s hardly the case on battlefield or during practice for battle.

Either way, that tactic didn’t work on them the last time and Robin has no idea why they thought it would today.

That doesn’t really matter, though, because the next one in the door is Rogers and Red Hood’s hands immediately move to his hips where his guns are. Robin moves to step on his feet. He doesn’t care if Rogers lives or dies, let alone if he bleeds a little. But he cares that Red Hood is already flagged by the council as someone who killed two villains in questionable circumstances – meaning that the council wasn’t able to determine if it truly was inevitable self-defense without which he would be the one dying or if it was excessive use of gunpower. If he shot Rogers outside of training, he would be off duty and in a psychologist’s care for months at least. And nobody wants that.

Rogers looks surprised when he sees them standing there. He isn’t in his suit, Robin notices, but he is wearing what regular accords agents wear to missions this time around.

“Batman, Robin,” he nods towards them. “I’m afraid I don’t know our new guest.” He waits a beat, but if he expects them to introduce him, he’s disappointed. If Red Hood wants to say his name to Rogers, he will do so. If not, they’re sure War Machine will do it for him. “Are we to fight again, Batman?” He juts his chin out unattractively, sounding almost nervous.

“Did you learn your lesson yet?”

Robin smirks. He knows that voice. It’s the voice Batman uses for Green Lantern. Annoyed and tired, but still trying to teach lessons. Once he grew up from his resentment, he realized that his father has always been a dad. It’s in the way he treats not only his children, but all people around
him.

Rogers frowns.

“This is training, not lessons.”

Robin looks to Red Hood only for Red Hood to be staring right at him. Robin’s domino mask covers most of his tells and he can’t see anything through the mask, but he’s pretty sure they both have the same deadpan expression.

Seriously?

“Trainings are lessons in disguise,” they both parrot at the same time with Batman. He shoots them a glare, obviously not appreciating their deadpan tone. “At least the Batman’s ones, anyway,” Red Hood adds, slight malice evident in his voice.

Robin has never been more grateful for Rhodey’s timing.

War Machine takes one look at them all and Robin can see the urge to sigh, but he resists.

“Great, you’re all here. You all know Batman and Robin already. The other one is Red Hood. He’s... I have no idea what his deal with the council is, but he’s approved and that’s all you really need to worry about. Red Hood, those are Captain America, Black Widow, Scarlett Witch, Hawkeye, Falcon, Ant-man, and the Winter Soldier.” War Machine gestures towards each of them as he introduces them. “Because mister Rogers complained, we’ll start with Falcon fighting me.”

Robin notices that as War Machine says that, Falcon whitens. Robin smirks and takes a step back, careful not to stand too close to Red Hood. Thankfully, Red Hood understands the importance of keeping a secret identity around here and also steps back, but on the other side of Batman.

The fight is interesting. War Machine is sturdier, but Falcon is better equipped to smaller spaces and is quicker. Robin knows that if it came down to a real fight, if War Machine would only want to survive and let go of his principles, he would win every day. But War Machine is firm on his principles and even when battling with real enemies usually tries to subdue them, not kill them. Which, yes, is something Robin is still working on and Red Hood almost never gives a fuck about. To Batman’s despair.

But even Falcon seems to keep back for some reason. War Machine has to see that because the fight takes only few minutes before he aims his repulsors to the wings and blasts one of them off completely, before catching Falcon in the fight and lowering him to the ground.

“You’re too used to Tony’s tech being undefeatable. But if he can come with ways to destroy it, so can other people.”

“Rhodey-”

“It’s War Machine or Colonel Rhodes to you.”

With that Rhodey leaves him behind and goes over to the rest of them.

“Ant-man, you’re the second on the Cap’s bucket list. Batman, Robin, what do you think?”

Robin doesn’t react. He’s pretty sure father is capable of handling him himself, if he had a warning beforehand.
“We’ll take him.”

Robin smiles. Not in a mean way this time. He’s actually excited to try his hand against Ant-man. He’s not so sure he can take him. Those powers are strange and don’t really make sense.

That fight hurts. Ant-man is clever enough not to grow big in the restricted space and it’s hard fighting someone you don’t see. Especially since Robin is not sure that if he puts a tracking bug on him with a few perks and he then shrinks and Robin will electrocute him like that that he won’t stay small. If he stays small and unconscious not only will they not know about it, but no one would be able to help him like that.

Of course, the solution stares him in the face but it’s Batman who actually does it. All you have to do after bugging him is wait for him to grow to his usual size to punch someone before activating the electric part of the bug.

Ant-man is down in about seven minutes and Robin glares at the floor, pissed at himself.

“Get away from there, Ant-man. If you need medical attention, infirmary is open to you. Rogers, your turn.” War Machine looks actually a little pained when he adds: “Red Hood, he’s all yours.”

Red Hood moves and Damian has to control himself. He hates that he’s still so strongly controlled by his hormones around his lovers. He hopes that this whole “puberty” thing will fade away soon.

“And... fight.”

The moment he says it there’s a gun in Red Hood’s hand and Rogers is laying on the floor, clutching his thigh. Red Hood stands above him, his gun still aimed towards him and his head cocked to one side.

“Hello, mister Rogers. I’m Red Hood. Welcome to Jackass.”

And he fires again. Shoulder, this time. The sound of the fire sounds through the gym and Robin notices that Ant-man and Falcon flinch, but they’re the only ones to do so. Interesting.

“Okay, that’s enough. Red Hood wins!”

Even though War Machine’s loud exclamation is clearly meant to end it all, Red Hood simply moves his face even closer to Roger’s.

“Touch Iron Man, Robin, or anyone else they associate with ever again and I won’t settle for a wound. Understood?”

“You can’t do that!” Rogers’ voice is all bravado, but his eyes are wide with fear. “The Accords won’t allow that.”

“Oh, honey,” he puts his hand on Rogers’ shoulder, right above his wound, digging his thumb in. “You’re acting as if I give a shit what they do to me.”

And shit, but Damian really shouldn’t be that turned on by the casual display of cruelty.
Damian expected father to be angry. And he does reprimand Jason, but there’s no real feeling behind that.

Rhodey, on the other hand. Well, he was not expecting him.

“What the hell were you thinking?” he storms into the common room about twenty minutes after the three of them made it back from their rooms where they changed their clothes. “If it weren’t for the serum he’d be crippled for life!”

“Shame he has the serum,” mutters Jason moodily. Rhodey punches the table in front of him.

“That’s not funny!”

“It’s not supposed to be!” Jason yells back now and Damian smirks at the surprised look on Rhodey’s face. “He hurt Tony, Rhodey! What was I supposed to do, just stand there and wait for him to come at me?”

“No, of course not.” Now Rhodey looks mostly tired. “But physical fight is not the way to go. We’re gonna get them, but we’re gonna get them legally.”

“Well, before we get them legally they’re free to roam the states. And if they hurt someone else before we’re able to get them legally, that’s on us. And that’s not happening. Not on my watch.”

They stare at each other for a moment, but Rhodey is the one to look away first. He looks down and pinches the bridge of his nose.

“You know I have to write you up, right?”

Jason shrugs.

“As I said to Rogers – I don’t give a fuck. There’s nothing they can do to me that I’m afraid of.”

“What about benching you so you won’t be able to come to your brothers’ help if something happens?”

“That assumes that I’d listen to that. Come on, Rhodey, Accords and the council and all that shit is your thing. You believe in them, that’s why you and Tony are the main faces of them to public. Us? We’ll do it, because it’s the right thing to do and we’ll abide by them as long as their interests align with ours. As soon as their rules start restraining us, we’re ditching it, doing our own thing. Especially if they’d try to stop us from protecting what’s ours.”

“And what if they hurt Damian, not Robin?”

Jason tenses and sets his jaw.

“They can’t talk if they’re dead.”

Rhodey stares at him for a moment before closing his eyes and letting his head fall back.

“I’m gonna pretend that I haven’t heard that. And I’m gonna get you some paperwork to fill and you better fill it today. The infirmary has to inform the council either way and we all know Rogers is gonna try to spin this his way. Let’s at least try to get ahead of that and tell our part of the story, whatever that might be.”

Jason scowls and Damian smiles.
“Is there any form Jason can fill for that?” he asks. “FRIDAY?”

“Printing it right now, little prince.” Jason snorts and Damian scowls at him. It’s not entirely Jason’s fault, to be honest. Damian is certain that’s it’s only about 20% Jason’s and 10% Tony’s fault. He’s not afraid to blame full 70% on Timothy. He knows it was him who convinced the AI to call him that ridiculous nickname.

“Just for that you’re filling it out yourself.”

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think and I’ll (hopefully) see you next week!
Clark Kent

Chapter Summary

It's been a while since Rogues came back and yet noone gave them the opportunity to give their side of the story. Luckily, there is one reporter who wants to hear it.

Chapter Notes

Last chapter was really relationship heavy with just a bit of Rogues. This chapter let's turn it around, shall we?

It starts with Natasha's POV, which I'm sure you'd be able to tell on your own, but this is still your warning =D

Thank you all so much for your kind words in the comments! I don't really have the time or energy to reply (I'm finishing my thesis this week and also should start preparing for my graduation exams), but know that each time I open my inbox to find a comment I'm ecstatic. Thank you so very much!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Natasha was starting to think that the world truly lost interest in them by the time the offer of interview came. Not that it would be that much of a problem for her, she knows how to navigate the shadows and has no problem doing so. But for the rest of her team it was increasingly becoming a problem.

They like to think about themselves as heroes. Not that they’re not. Natasha truly believes that they are. But the rest of the world doesn’t always agree with her. And for some reason what the rest of the world thinks matters to her teammates.

That’s why the offer is a good thing. The moment they get their points out there the public will change its mind once again, as it always does. Natasha is sure that Steve’s charisma, Wanda’s charm, and her own mastery of manipulating what is said and what is understood will make it easy. Besides, she researched the reporter that’s coming to do the interview with them.

Clark Kent is a simple man. Farm boy who moved to the city to follow his dream of becoming a reporter but moved right out of it after marrying a fellow reporter and starting a family. Nowadays he seems like a regular Joe, except he sometimes travels for the newspaper, but nothing too exciting.

Plus, he wrote a biting piece about Batman few years back, before the whole Accords nonsense. He criticized Batman’s method and showed that next to other heroes (like Captain America, Natasha notes approvingly) he’s left wanting, an immoral vigilante next to a true hero.

In just few minutes of online research she found everything she needed about the man. That interview will be a walk in a park.
The interview is set to take place in their common room. Natasha warns them all to wear nice clothes beforehand and is pleasantly surprised to see Clint in suit trousers and a dark purple shirt. Wanda next to him is wearing a dark purple dress, its loose skirt hardly reaching her knees, a white collar against her neck completing the look of a schoolgirl. Natasha smiles at her warmly. Wanda is a quick study in the art of manipulating men and Natasha only needs to give her few tips every now and then. Between the two of them they usually have covered all the basics so if a man can resist one, he can’t resist the other.

Like right now – Wanda with her modest dress, let down hair, and almost no noticeable make-up looks very girly and almost innocent. Next to her Natasha in skin-tight high-waisted jeans and short shirt that firmly hugs her boobs and leaves her midrift naked looks downright sinful. A farm boy can get off on either of those and with little luck he will be at least distracted by one of them.

She compliments Wanda’s dress and then they talk a little about online shopping. It’s frustrating that they can’t leave the compound, but the number of online shops nowadays makes it bearable. Sam and Scott soon join them in the room, dressed similarly to Clint, but keep some space between the two groups. Natasha doesn’t really care about Scott, but she worries about the space between them and Sam. They used to be really close, especially when it was just her, Sam, and Steve. She didn’t have to think about his loyalty back then, she knew it was with Steve. But lately she started to doubt it.

Barnes comes in in jeans and a sweater. He doesn’t look at either group, simply sits down in an armchair close to the window and looks out of it. He’s been doing that a lot lately, frustrating Steve to no end.

Steve comes in just minutes before the reporter is supposed to come. He’s in jeans and a flannel shirt. A little too old-school for Natasha, but it should work on a farm boy just fine.

When he notices Barnes his face brightens before it falls again when he notices that his friend isn’t paying attention to any of them. Steve still looks at Barnes hoping to see Bucky.

They gradually move to two couches near the armchair Barnes sits in. Natasha, Steve, Wanda, and Clint take over the bigger couch. It’s still a tight fit, but Natasha doesn’t mind. Not with these people. Sam and Scott settle on the smaller couch opposite to them, not joining their conversation and not looking at them. That leaves the second armchair open for the reporter. That way he gets a good view of them while Natasha is free to carefully watch his every reaction. Perfect.

Just as the clock strikes two o’clock the door opens and in comes mister Williams along with Clark Kent. He’s taller than Natasha anticipated, but he seems just a touch awkward and entirely too gentle. He’s wearing jeans and pale blue button down that’s bringing out his icy blue eyes from behind sturdy looking glasses with solid black frames. He’s carrying a bag over one shoulder. Natasha notices that the bag is only keeping together from the force of will, too full for how big it is.

“Great, you’re all here.” Williams never was one to put up a smile just for their sake and this time is no exception. “This is mister Kent, reporter of Daily Planet who agreed to meet with you for an interview. Mister Kent, those are the Rogues.” Steve tenses and Natasha puts he hand on his thigh. There’s no point in fighting the name. They just have to prove how untrue it is. Williams then
takes the time to introduce each of them, their civilian and hero identities both. “If that will be all, I’ll leave you to do your job, mister Kent.”

“Thank you, mister Williams,” Kent smiles at the man and shakes his hand. “If it wasn’t for you, I’d still be stuck at the gate.”

“That’s just my job, mister Kent.”

“No, matter, thank you for the brief tour. I know you can’t really tell me much, but even the little is appreciated.”

That man truly is like Steve, muses Natasha. Never letting go of his ideals.

“Please, mister Kent,” Natasha smiles at him brightly. She thinks about getting up and offering her hand, but then decides against it. “Come and join us. Do you want us to get you something to drink?” She curls her lips just slightly so it’s flirtatious instead of simply friendly.

“No thank you, miss Romanoff,” he smiles at her in that shy way that tells her exactly how unused he is to flirting. “But I have a lot of questions, so if you want to get drinks for yourself, I can prepare my things in the meantime.”

Natasha tenses just a little when she hears that.

“Things?” Thankfully, she doesn’t have to speak up, because Steve is quicker. Less tactful, his face is an open book and he looks displeased. “We were told this is a simple interview. No cameras or anything else involved.”

Kent blinks a few times, before he quickly moves to assure them that that’s not what he meant.

“See?” he moves something about. It’s almost as big as a brick and looks very old-school. “Recorder. We use them to record the interview, but don’t put it anywhere, no one but us and our editor and if he asks, boss hears it. It’s usual practice,” he assures them with easy smile. “There’s just so much I can make a note of during talking and this makes sure that I don’t forget anything. I’ve had this since my high school days. It’s un-hackable. I promise.”

Steve relaxes next to her and she makes herself smile. He’s right, of course. Recording is usual practice in media and has been for serious newspaper for decades already. She has no serious reason to refuse him, though. And the recorder does look ancient.

“So, will it be alright if I turn it on?”

It takes only a moment for Kent to set everything up. He has a notebook and a pen to write in along with the recorder and a number of papers with various information on it he sets on the table in front of himself. Then he sits down on an armchair, smiles at them, and starts the recorder.

“May sixteenth, twenty eighteen, just after two in the afternoon. I’m in the Avengers compound and with me are the Rogues, Steve Rogers as Captain America, Natasha Romanoff as Black Widow, Wanda Maximoff as Scarlett Witch, Clint Barton as Hawkeye, Sam Wilson as Falcon, Scott Lang as Ant-man and finally, sergeant James Barnes, previously known as Winter Soldier.” Barnes looks at him in surprise at the fact that he “introduced” him differently from the others.

“Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and answer my questions. Mister Rogers,” Steve grits his teeth and Natasha squeezes his thigh. They can’t afford for him to make a big deal out of army retreating his title. “It’s well known that you opposed the Accords on the grounds of them being too restricting, too controlling. You claimed that it was just a government trying to rule the Avengers. Yet now you’re back, the Accords signed. What made you change your mind?”
Steve goes rigid and Natasha narrows her eyes, but there’s nothing on the reporter's face betraying a malevolent intent. He’s just focusing on Steve, not really smiling, but relaxed, not expecting anything groundbreaking.

“Two years are a long time for change, mister Kent,” Steve smiles at the reporter softly. “The Accords we signed are not the same Accords that were put in front of us two years ago.”

“Right. That were the international Accords. You signed the US Accords.” The reporter ruffles through the paperwork he bought with him. Natasha smirks. That man doesn’t really know what he’s doing. “The main reason you cited two years ago for not signing the Accords were your worries about the government controlling the Avengers.” Steve nods, his smile brightening. “Yet you refused to sign for the UN who are not a government yet signed without hesitation for the US government. Any comments on that?”

Natasha frowns at that. He might not know what he’s doing, but he’s hitting all the wrong questions for Steve. But as she watches him, she’s sure it’s only by luck, he doesn’t look competent enough.

As she watches the reporter she doesn’t notice the look Sam and Scott exchange.

Steve, on the other hand, she notices. He grows just the tiniest bit red in the face and Natasha knows better than to let him talk.

“Not at the moment, no,” she smiles and him and crosses her legs. She hopes Wanda sees that and knows to do something soon, too. He nods, looking down, and she smirks just the tiniest bit.

“Very well. Miss Maximoff.” Natasha glances towards her and nods approvingly when she sees that she also has her legs crossed, her skirt riding up just a bit, showing a little more of her milky white thigh. “You raged against the idea of home imprisonment two years ago, saying that no one has the right to confine you to your home. Yet here you are now, on what comes down to a home arrest. Can you tell me something more about that?”

Wanda’s face darkens and Natasha tenses. Wanda is good, but she’s still too emotional about some things. Anything Tony related gets her too emotional to think straight.

But Wanda pouts a little and Natasha relaxes just a bit, quickly looking back to Kent.

“Stark tried to keep me prisoner in his compound,” Wanda lets her lower lip jut out a little more, looking just a bit more miserable. “He had no right to do that. Now it’s a requirement to be an Avenger. One I chose for myself. No one can make that decision for me.”

“True enough,” Kent smiles at her and Wanda stops pouting, looks down and smiles shyly. “But weren’t you in process of gaining a working visa when you flew with the rest of your team to Lagos, destroying the work doctor Stark’s lawyers did on your case?”

Natasha can see the fury in Wanda’s eyes and how she tries to battle it, tries to keep her face clean. Time for Natasha to step in.

“Tony’s job was to make sure we could do our work freely,” she leans in and smiles at him. “We all did our work to best of our abilities. And we were needed in Lagos.”

“You all just did your work to best of your abilities,” Kent says, nodding, while he’s writing notes for himself. Then he looks up and Natasha feels surprised. There’s no more warmth or smile from him anymore and suddenly she can’t read him at all. “Agent Hill, who was tasked with doing the ground work for your missions, is on quote saying that she wasn’t the one to send you to Lagos and
that she was the one who gave you your orders. Lagos and the US government also declined having you come there for help. On whose authority were you acting, then?"

She’s so surprised by the question that she’s not quick enough to speak before Steve.

“We were pardoned!” Steve practically yells, stubborn expression on his face. “Now, mister Kent, if you don’t have any relevant questions for us, I think the interview is over.”

Natasha could strangle Steve right then. Does he not understand that they need media on their side? This is the only newspaper that showed any kind of interest in them ever since they came back. They can’t afford to jeopardize that.

Kent blinks and suddenly he’s awkward again, unsure and apologetic.

“I’m sorry, I thought you wanted your version of the story out there in the open? And the Civil war essentially started with Lagos. I thought we could start at the beginning... no matter, I’m sorry, if this question somehow hurt you.” He crosses something out on his paper and moves to something else. “Should I pack my things or can we continue?”

“It’s alright, mister Kent,” Natasha smiles at him reassuringly. She’s sure that the blank face was just his try on a poker face. A try that crumbled soon enough. “Please, ask your question.”

“Thank you, miss Romanoff,” he smiles at her a little unsurely. “You didn’t agree with the Accords, yet only miss Romanoff showed up to the session in Vienna. We already established that miss Maximoff’s visa was in jeopardy, so she couldn’t leave the US. But that leaves the rest of you free to do so. If you opposed the Accords, why didn’t you show up there?”

Once again Natasha doesn’t notice the look Sam and Scott exchange, but Barnes does notice it. He makes a note to ask them about it later.

“I was retired,” grumbles Clint and Natasha smiles the tiniest bit when she notices that Wanda quickly moves her hand to Clint’s knee, to calm him down. “It didn’t matter what I thought about the Accords, they no longer were about me.”

“I had a personal business to attend.” Steve then hesitates and looks towards Natasha. She nods her head a little. Showing to the people that Steve is human and has human connections is only good for them. “Peggy Carter, my... friend died right before Vienna.” Steve’s voice wavers a little and Natasha controls herself not to smirk. Kent would have to be cold-hearted not to forgive that. “I knew her in the war, but by the time I woke up she... she was not fully there. Alzheimer, they said. The funeral was right before Vienna and after it, I was in no headspace to attend a serious meeting.”

“My condolences, mister Rogers,” mister Kent says softly and Steve smiles a little and nods at him. “However, Peggy Carter wasn’t a lost only to you. Yet Tony Stark still managed to attend the meeting.”

Steve’s face darkens again and Natasha buries her nails in his thigh. She’s starting to doubt that Kent is the right reporter for them.

“I’m sorry, but how is Tony linked to Peggy?”

Mister Kent blinks in surprise before going through his papers once again.

“Peggy Carter was Tony Stark’s godmother.” He passes few papers to Steve. “She was a constant in his life, there on his graduation and there for him when his parents died. She was the director of
SHIELD by then, so she wasn’t able to take over Stark’s care when his parents died and that created a distance between them, but Stark still paid for her housing once she left SHIELD and visited her up to the point when Alzheimer took her over too much. Coincidentally, that seems to be about the same time you started visiting her, mister Rogers.”

Steve whitens and Natasha grits her teeth. She knew Carter was Stark’s godmother. Of course she knew. She also knew that he paid for the home that took care of Carter once she became too ill to run SHIELD. But she had no idea that information is so easily obtained that a mediocre reporter can do so.

Kent waits a moment for some kind of reaction (what kind, Natasha has no idea. And that unsettles her. How can someone so... average do that to her?), but when he gets none he looks back down to his papers.

“Alright. We all heard from the trial by the younger agent Carter that you thought that sergeant Barnes was in grave danger from the UN, even though the UN has no authority to order a hit on anyone. You got your information from her, going to Bucharest just before the German squad was sent there, and under the false information of mortal danger you assaulted the officers and aided sergeant Barnes in his escape. Then you were apprehended by the War Machine and moved to Berlin. Correct?”

“I’m sorry, mister Kent,” Natasha speaks up before Steve has the opportunity, “but we were pardoned for all of these actions. What’s the point of that?”

“We heard mister Rogers’ explanation through agent Carter. Sergeant Barnes, however, you had no opportunity to tell us your side of the story. Would you be interested in telling me that now?”

Barnes moves his head towards Kent so quickly Natasha’s surprised he didn’t hurt himself. His eyes are cold and calculating and Natasha feels Steve next to her tense.

“My side of the story?” Barnes’ voice is rough, hardly ever used. Mister Kent smiles at him and nods. He’s looking intensely at Barnes so Natasha takes the opportunity to study him, but once again she doesn’t find anything wrong or aggressive towards them.

“Yes, sergeant Barnes. Like I said, we already got agent Carter’s part and War Machine’s part, but we never got your part. If you’re interested in telling it, that is.”

Barnes just stares at him for a moment and Natasha gets ready to tell Kent off, but then Barnes speaks up.

“I needed some quiet place to get a better understanding of myself. Steve hunting me all over the world wasn’t helping with that and, of course, HYDRA was after me.” Steve looks hurt by that and Natasha understands that, but they can’t afford to let the reporter be there when they fight between themselves. And whatever Steve might say, if he starts protesting, it will be viewed as a fight. “Bucharest was quiet enough for me to find myself, yet chaotic enough for no one to find me there. I was there for months by that time.” Barnes hesitates then. “I didn’t know about the Vienna bombing until after I saw my face in the newspaper. I... I panicked.” He looks down, to his lap, seemingly embarrassed. “I ran to the flat I had there. I took some small jobs, all paid in cash, and paid the landlady like that, from week to week,” he hurriedly explains, before looking back to his lap. “I didn’t have many things. So I packed and was ready to run. It... was not right.” He looks downright defeated. “I had dozens of witnesses that I’ve been in Bucharest for weeks, not leaving. If I went to the police station right then and gave them all the people I talked to on daily basis, they could just check it out and I’d be free in questions of days, if not hours. I see that now. But back then... I still had the trigger words. I didn’t know about them, but they... they made my brain do
weird things. Once princess Shuri got rid of them, suddenly my mind became... clearer. I’m still not right in the head, not for action,” he shakes his head a little, “but I’m... better.”

“What was your plan?”

“Didn’t have any,” Barnes shrugs. “Just run. If I could outrun HYDRA and Steve, I could outrun UN, too. Or so I thought. I... didn’t really understand what UN is,” he adds sheepishly. “Princess Shuri had to explain a lot of things to me.”

“Can you describe what happened after?”

“They locked me in a cage, basically, with my arms locked in place. Not exactly comfortable, but clever. They said a psychiatrist would come and give me questions I need to answer. I didn’t have a problem with that. But then he... he used the words.”

Steve clenches his hands into fists but doesn’t say anything.

“And after? We were led to believe by agent Carter that mister Rogers was able to snap you out of that.”

Barnes frowns a little.

“I... I’m not sure. I don’t really... I know it was me, I was conscious. But I don’t... remember much. I remember us in the plane, going to Siberia. I remember Iron Man coming to help us. I remember the video and thinking that whatever Stark will do to me, I deserve it. But he didn’t go after me, he went after Steve and... and next thing I remember is Wakandan lab.”

“Stark attacked us unprovoked!” And that’s Steve losing his temper. Barnes looks up and to him, frowning.

“Unprovoked? He just watched his parents be murdered. And then you told him you knew about that, probably for years. What did you expect from him? Pat my shoulder and go home?”

“It wasn’t you!”

“Like hell it wasn’t me!”

Natasha lost control of the situation and she knows it. She quickly stands up and when it doesn’t stop Steve from practically yelling at Barnes his answer, she quickly moves to Kent.

“I’m sorry, mister Kent, I’m afraid the interview is over. You will send it to us before printing it, right?”

“I,” he looks confused, almost scared, “I’m sorry, miss Romanoff, I don’t think I will be able to make a full interview out of this.”

“Well then, we’ll just have to let you know when you can come back.”

***

The thing about sex and Jason (and sex with Jason in particular) is that it leaves Damian’s brain melted. He ends up so relaxed that he’s asleep in minutes and happily sleeps the whole night.
The first night after Jason leaves Damian lies in the bed for at least two hours, not able to fall asleep. It takes his thoughts a surprisingly long way through his doubts about their relationship to his memories of his childhood to realize that it’s been ages since he meditated. He curses himself and quickly moves to do just that.

His days grow kind of boring. Father takes him to New York, to see the Wayne Airlines offices there, but that’s the most exciting thing to happen. He goes running and goes back to the view to the suburbs late in the evening so he can avoid Rogers and still see the gentle magic he saw in it that first night. He thinks about painting it for his class, too, but he can’t afford to get lost like that with no one to look after him. Not when the Rogues are out there, free to roam the compound.

His nights get restless once again and his lovers notice it.

BoyWonder: not that I’m complaining

BoyWonder: but what are you still doing up, little D?

BabyBird: thats right, dont u have, like, a normal person schedule rn?

Damian groans, palming his face tiredly. He knew being on tumblr at 2AM wasn’t his best decision, but meditation works only to a point and he already got good four hours of sleep and he did meditate before that. He figured he’d spend an hour or two on social media and then try meditation again.

But of course his lovers notice his social media activity, even though they’re supposed to be on patrol.

LittleD: Fuck. Off.

LittleWing: oooooh, he’s grumpy

LittleWing: what crawled up your ass and died?

Damian groans and closes his eyes.

The Witch’s magic is not something to tell them over the phone. He meant to tell Jason.

Well, no, that’s not completely true. Talking is not Damian’s strong suit. But he thought that when one of his lovers will stay at the compound, they will have the same problem and so Damian will be able to explain. But that didn’t happen. Because he and Jason weren’t able to keep their hands off of each other, which led to sex, which led to exhaustion and that led to dreamless sleep. Sleep that even the Witch couldn’t disturb.

When he doesn’t answer for a while Richard tells Jason off, but asks Damian what’s wrong in much gentler way.

LittleD: I’m fine

He frowns a little when there’s no response for a while.

BabyBird: THAT BITCH DOES WHAT?!?

Damian frowns, before quickly sitting up and moving his eyes towards the camera near his door.

“FRIDAY. Did you tell him?”
There’s a moment of silence, before...

“There’s a moment of silence, before...

“Mister Drake-Wayne asked to have access to the compound. Boss said your family is free to have it months ago, so I let him in. He found the rest on his own.”

By the time FRIDAY is done explaining Damian’s phone is buzzing like crazy. Damian sighs, tired.

“Is he still in the system?”

The silence is answer enough. Damian groans, falling back down on his bed.

“Just don’t let him kill them. Rhodey would be pissed. He’s playing the long game.”

“Certainly, little prince.”

He scowls at the nickname and opens the chat again. Timothy explained what’s happening and all three of them are on a warpath.

LittleD: Calm down, assholes, I’m fine.

BabyBird: bc we all know ur definition of “fine” is perfectly normal

Damian would like to protest that, but... yeah.

LittleD: It’s no stranger than yours.

There’s a private message from Jason, outside of the group chat.

Todd: why didn’t you tell me?

Damian sighs and curls into himself before answering.

Wayne: We were otherwise occupied at the time. I didn’t really have the same problem, did I?

Timothy is still bitching in the group chat and Richard is happily agreeing with him.

Todd: im gonna kill her

Wayne: Don’t. Rhodey has plans.

Todd: im gonna kill her after hes done with her

Damian smiles a little before switching back to the group.

LittleD: Don’t come here. Stay in Gotham. Me and father can take care of ourselves.

BoyWonder: that’s why you’re up at 2AM?

LittleD: Says the man with an actual day job where he isn’t the boss and needs to be on time.

LittleWing: touché

BabyBird: come back to gotham

BabyBird: we’ll figure something out here
LittleD: No.

LittleD: I'm not leaving father and Tony alone and Rhodey to deal with them on his own.

He hesitates for a moment, before adding:

LittleD: You come here and figure it out here.

BoyWonder: awwwww, do you see this, Jason?

BoyWonder: Dami actually misses Tim

Damian groans and puts away his phone. Time for meditation and then try to sleep again.

***

Kent comes to the compound and he comes to the dinner livid. Damian has never seen him so angry before.

“They actually think that just because they were pardoned everything is forgotten!”

“Could have told you that,” murmurs Tony who’s stuffing his mouth with home made pasta that Kent brought with him.

“Well, we did tell you they’re a bunch of entitled assholes,” shrugs Rhodey, who’s watching Tony with amusement. Kent sighs and looks to his plate.

“What’s going on with Barton and Maximoff?”

Damian straightens and looks around the table. Father doesn’t really react, but his eyes turn sharply to Kent and Damian knows in that moment that he also picked up whatever is happening between Barton, Maximoff, and Romanoff. Rhodey frowns, but Tony simply shrugs.

“He’s always been weirdly protective of her. He and Steve are coddling her. Steve always said that she’s just a kid.”

“Just a...” Kent sighs and shakes his head. “I wouldn’t notice if Romanoff didn’t do the same to Rogers – she laid her hand on his thigh, seemingly controlling him that way. Squeezing when she wanted him to shut up. And when Rogers wasn’t sure, he looked towards Romanoff who gave him the go-on sign. Maximoff and Barton... it wasn’t as visible, but it was the same. When he got angry and it looked like he would react violently, she put her hand on his knee, leaning into him, calming him down. It was just... weird. Kind of a... power imbalance?”

He doesn’t sound so sure, but Damian knows what he’s talking about. He looks towards his father again and when he’s already looking back, Damian nods just the tiniest bit.

Rhodey groans.

“Okay, bats, time to tell the rest of us what you two see.”

Damian purses his lips a bit.
“I’m not sure. It’s just a... feeling. About Barton, Maximoff and Romanoff. I can’t really explain it.”

He turns towards father, raising his eyebrow at him. Father frowns.

“Romanoff has been subtly manipulating him ever since she joined SHIELD and it only got worse since their handler was proclaimed dead. Maximoff seems to be right on track with that, too.”

The others, including father, look to Damian for some reason. He thinks about it, but it fits what he knows, so he nods. Tony frowns.

“Should we report this to the council or something?”

“If you two are willing to put your name under it and show me some evidence we can throw in, I can write up some report. You,” Rhodey adds, pointing at Tony with his fork, “worry about nothing. We got this.”

Tony rolls his eyes but smiles at them brightly.

“So, what about the interview?”

“I can’t do anything with the little I have,” Kent shrugs. “It’s not like anyone wanted that interview. I just wanted to see them for myself.”

“That won’t work for Romanoff,” Tony frowns once again. “Once she got the idea in her head, she will want that interview. And once they realize that you’re my guest,” he adds with a smirk, “they won’t want you again.”

Kent smiles smugly right then and honestly, it’s not very nice.

“Well, then I’ll have to leave it to the best reporter in our office then.”

Damian and father both chuckle and even Rhodey smiles darkly.

Damian will have to ask FRIDAY to see that interview. It should be fun.

***

Getting tired before bed so that the Witch can’t get to his head is a good idea. The only problem is, without the bat cave or the patrols he doesn’t really have a space to get tired in. Sure, there are gyms, but they’re public space. Which means that the Rogues can come in any minute.

Five days after Jason leaves he can’t take it anymore and goes to the gym. He asks FRIDAY to warn him if someone is on their way in and starts his routine as he was used to doing when he was with mother.

He’s all sweaty by the time FRIDAY speaks up again.

“Little spider on her way, little prince.”

Damian frowns and slowly stands up straight. He can go back to simple things like sit ups and squats.
“How come you hate her and so she’s little, but you like me and I’m still little.”

FRIDAY doesn’t reply, but a camera in the corner blinks out of existence for a moment, before coming back. Romanoff is too close for FRIDAY to reply, then.

“Oh. I’m sorry, I don’t believe I know you.” Damian turns towards her with his eyebrows raised. He’s pretty sure that she doesn’t know anyone from the support staff. Not that Damian is any different, but at least he’s not cornering anyone in the pretense that they’re the only ones he doesn’t know. “I’m Natasha Romanoff.”

“I know.”

He eyes her for a moment longer before turning his back towards her and starts doing squats. But Romanoff moves so she’s back in his line of view.

“You have me at a disadvantage,” she smiles flirtatiously at him and Damian just stares at her for a moment. Does she really want to flirt with a teenager?

Oh, right, he is dating a thirty year old. And Romanoff looks around the same age as Richard. Oh well.

“You know who I am, but I don’t know who you are.”

“Rogers didn’t mention me?” It takes all of his self-control not to sneer at her. Romanoff blinks as if in surprise, but there’s none in the rest of her face.

“Oh. You’re the young artist he told us about? He was really impressed with your painting.”

The longer she smiles at him in that way the creepier it is to Damian. So he just shrugs and looks away once again. But Romanoff steps back into his view. Her face is all relaxed, but her posture is tense and her eyes are studying him with worrying intensity.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t think Steve ever mentioned your name.”

She’s smiling at him, but her eyes are cold. He gives her a perfect mirror of that smile.

“Damian Wayne.” He doesn’t offer his hand and Romanoff doesn’t even seem to notice the offence. Damian’s opinion of her sinks even lower. It doesn’t help that her fake recognition is not at all believable.

“Right. Bruce Wayne is your father, right?” Damian gives her an unimpressed glare. It takes her a moment to realize that he’s not answering the question. “Why aren’t you visiting Wayne Enterprises with him, then?”

“Father doesn’t need a shadow.”

“What about your brothers?”

He tenses. Obviously, he knows what she’s trying to do – small talk, trying to seem friendly while getting new information from him. Problem is he’s kind of sensitive about his lovers. Especially when people mention that technically they’re brothers.

“They’re busy in Gotham.” And Bludhaven, technically. If Richard is there and not in Gotham. Romanoff seems surprised and Damian despairs for a moment. If this is the best spy in the United States they have a serious problem.
“I’m sorry. I saw the photos and I assumed that you get along.”

In that moment all lights go out. Except FRIDAY’s camera, that just blinks. Damian looks towards it and nods subtly. The lights go on right then, showing a surprised Romanoff. She schools her expression so quickly that if Damian didn’t know what to look for he wouldn’t notice, but it’s there.

“We do,” Damian continues as if nothing happened. But he’s more relaxed now that he knows Timothy is watching over him. Romanoff frowns just a tiniest bit.

“I’ve never seen the lights go out like that. Is it something that happen often in the private part of the compound?”

“No,” Damian shrugs. “But Tony manages that part personally, so of course we have no problems with electronics there.”

Romanoff’s face closes off and Damian moves his head so she can’t see his smirk. He knows Timothy has been fucking with the Rogues, FRIDAY happily assisting him. Nothing big, just the little annoyances – warm water running out just five minutes into a shower, lights going off when they’re reading and when they get up to flip them on again they go on on their own, coffee maker stops working with half a coffee done. Timothy already said that they complained to the Accords, but because they don’t even rent the building they live in, they can’t do anything about it. They offered them that they could move into the building where the rest of the Accords people live, but that’s beneath them, because they turned that offer down within minutes, obviously not even thinking about it.

“So, training?” Her smile is back, as fake as any other she offered him. “We can train together.”

“No, thank you.”

“Why? Afraid you’d be beaten by a woman?”

Damian once again gives her an unbelieving glare.

“Miss, you are a world-famous spy, specialist in close range fight. I’m a civilian who went through one self-defense class so that if I’m kidnapped I know what to do. Of course you’d beat me.” Or at least that’s the story they want to tell. If Romanoff actually went against Damian, she could recognize his fighting style and with it his secret identity. And that’s the last thing they need. “I’m good doing my squats and sit ups on my own, thank you.”

He waits for her to go her own way, but she doesn’t. And when she opens her mouth to say something more, he decides that’s enough. He turns his back to her and leaves the gym.

He got good forty minutes of exercise in. He can go running now. With little luck he won’t run into anyone out there. And even if he does he can simply ignore them and run his own way.

Chapter End Notes

I wanna say this - the article Natasha mentions at the beginning, the one where Clark criticizes Batman and gives better examples of morality? As was said, that was written before Civil War and cap was included just because Clark didn’t want to leave
Superman on that side alone. It was part of their teasing and they both had a good laugh about it. Because you can't tell me Clark doesn't write articles like this just for the laugh of it. Especially when it's a slow week and he doesn't have anything else to write. But alas, Natasha doesn't know any of it.

Also, would you be interested in reading about Rogues' reactions to their secret identities? Later in the story and they would definitely not just tell them. I'm thinking about an emergency where they wouldn't have a choice. And of course Rogues wouldn't be able to go public with it. But honestly, I'd love to see them trying to come to terms that those "rich boys" are constantly kicking their asses. What do you think?

As always, let me know what you think about the chapter and I hope I'll see you again next week!
Lois Lane

Chapter Summary

Where one reporter fails, another takes his place to find out the truth. The only problem is - truth isn't a thing you can argue out and it has the uncomfortable habit of showing up no matter how hard you try to forget it.

Chapter Notes

Shorter chapter today, concentrating only on Lois and her visit with the Rogues. Once again, please keep in mind that I have no idea what DC canon is and the only Lois I know is the one from the movie Justice League. So yeah, this Lois is basically me going "hmmm, what do I wish Lois Lane was like?".

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lois understands why Clark is pretending to be a mediocre, almost incompetent reporter. He can’t afford to attract attention and even being too good would mean that he can’t hide as easily as he’s hiding right now.

That, however, doesn’t mean that when he finds the story, he doesn’t get it to the people. Lois doesn’t take charity and doesn’t take an easy story from him, but the rest of the reporters in the Daily Planet aren’t as stubborn as she is.

And this time, even she understands that stubbornness isn’t the best for... well, anyone involved. So, she took Clark’s research before doing some of her own. After hearing the recording of the... interview she’s pretty sure she’s more than ready.

“Good afternoon, misses Kent.”

Lois smirks. She kept her maiden name but telling so to the AI has been useless for almost two years now. Besides, after the first few frustrating attempts Tony told FRIDAY to explain herself or he’ll re-program her to actually start calling her her preferred name. FRIDAY explained that people belong to people. And there’s mister Kent and young mister Kent and little Kent (Jon is so frustrated over that one) and so it’s three to one, so it doesn’t make sense for her to call all of them Lane. Lois still didn’t understand why she has to belong, why she can’t be on her own, but then she had a surprisingly human conversation with the AI about how relationships are important for happiness and how destructive loneliness is and really, Lois can live with FRIDAY calling her misses Kent.

“Good afternoon, FRIDAY. Is someone coming to introduce me to the Rogues or am I to do it myself?”

“Mister Williams is otherwise occupied. I’m afraid you’ll have to find your way on your own.”

As she says it a light close to one door blinks out for a moment before lightning up again. Lois
smirks and looks to the closest camera, nodding at FRIDAY.

She makes her way, following FRIDAY’s subtle hints. The last door opens to something that looks almost like a living room. The moment the door opens though Romanoff is on her feet and on her way to greet her, flirtatious smile on her face. It falls for a moment when she sees her before she puts it back on. Interesting. Obviously she has no problem flirting with women, but it’s probably not her favorite? Clark told her how she and the little witch tried to sway him with flirting. It doesn’t surprise Lois to see them in outfits similar to what Clark described – she would actually bet that Romanoff’s outfit is exactly the same, while Maximoff’s dress is just a different color. Dark red, bringing out reddish strings in her hair. Lois wonders if they were there before she got her magic or after it. Barton is wearing a button down shirt that matches both Romanoff’s crop top and Maximoff’s dress. Lois looks around and realizes that the three of them are the only color-coordinated from all of them. If Clark didn’t tell her about the bats’ suspicions she wouldn’t think twice about it, but like that it makes her uneasy.

“Miss Lane, I assume?”

“Actually, it’s misses, but I did keep my maiden name. Misses Kent is just... not to my tastes.” Romanoff tenses and Lois smiles at her winningly. “Now, I assume you are miss Romanoff? That would leave the young woman on the couch miss Maximoff. Mister Barton is probably the gentleman she’s leaning into and mister Rogers is the only blond in the room. Sergeant’s Barnes’ metal arm is a great tell on its own and obviously the only black man in the room is mister Wilson. That leaves the man next to him mister Lang. Did I got someone wrong? No? Great. Shall we start? I have many questions and honestly, after the last experience, I’m a little worried about how long we have for you to answer them.”

Rogers’ face grows pink and Lois is immensely enjoying herself. She side-steps Romanoff and sits herself on the free armchair that’s obviously left for her. Once again from what Clark said the setting is the same – Barnes in the armchair opposite of hers, Lang and Wilson to her left and the rest of them to her right.

She takes out her recorder. It’s much newer than the old thing Clark insist on taking everywhere with him. She also takes a stock of papers out of her bag. She comes prepared.

“Now, I know you understand the importance of recording. After all, you let Clark record all that was said the last time. So, I assume you’ll give me the same curtesy?”

Romanoff’s face goes blank as she stares at the recorder. She knows that the only reason why they let Clark record was because his recorder is so old that it’s virtually unhackable. But if they said a word against her recording now she could easily claim sexism and do a very unflattening piece about them. And Romanoff knows that. Which is why when Rogers opens his mouth she digs her nails into his thigh. Interesting. Clark said the same happened last time.

“Of course,” Romanoff smiles at her, but at least she let go of the flirtatious thing. Lois wonders if it’s because of the whole “my husband” thing. After all she could easily tell that from the ring on her finger. If she noticed it.

“Great.” She turns it on and does the usual summary for the recorder. “So, you refused to comment on the Lagos situation for mister Kent. Do you have any information for me on that front?”

“It’s in the past.” Rogers’ face is set, determined, eager. Romanoff doesn’t do anything to stop him. Does she think that Lois will be swayed by pretty face? “We did the best we could. It’s over now and we have to move on.”
“Thirty-seven people dead and millions of dollars of destruction. None of that would happen if you weren’t there. That’s the best you can do. Good to know.” She makes a note and ignores Rogers’ sputtering tries at saying something else. “What about the fact that you raged against governments trying to control the Avengers two years ago, even when it was only the UN back then, but then the Accords you actually signed are government Accords, any comment on that?”

Rogers’ stubborn face is actually ugly now that Lois is starring right at it. Suddenly she feels impressed that Tony was able to stand them for so long.

“As I already told mister Kent, misses Kent-”

“That’s misses Lane, mister Roger.”

“Actually, it’s Rogers.”

“Is it?” Lois smirks. Rogers scowls. Lois remembers Tony telling them that Rogers’ expressions hit you really hard, but her younger son is best friends with someone who perfected his scowl by the age six years, so it doesn’t even move her.

“The Accords that we signed are very different from the ones that were put in front of us two years ago.”

“Can you give me two examples of that difference?”

“In the original Accords, a committee would determined where we can and can’t go.”

“Which is the same in today’s Accords, excluding emergencies. But those were excluded even two years ago. Something else?”

“By singing up you basically register yourself.”

“You can choose to sign under your superhero name, showing your true identity only to chosen few. The whole League chose that way, all their identities remain secret. Next?”

“If you have any kind of powers, you have to register.”

“Not if you don’t want to use them regularly, in civil space. Next?”

The Rogues try to come up with something, but every time Lois has her answer ready. She did her research, she knows that only few details needed to be amended and she knows that the US Accords are basically identical to the UN ones, no thanks to Rogues and entirely thanks to Tony and his friend, Rhodey.

Then, finally, Barton loses his temper.

“And how can we know you’re not just making this up?”

Lois raises her eyebrows at him, unimpressed.

“Did you not read the document you were protesting and then the one you signed, agreeing to adhere to its rules?”

Romanoff sits there all stiff and Lois feels great vindication. Of course, no court would ever take this as an admission, but it won’t be hard to word it so everyone understands that that’s exactly what the Rogues did.
“But, if you need a little jog in your memory.” She takes three thick files from her bag. “These are the original Accords from two years ago. There are today’s UN Accords. And these are the US Accords. Of course, you can find it all online, but I understand you,” she smiles sweetly at Rogers, “are an old-fashioned guy, so I took it upon myself to print it for you. Now, sergeant Barnes.” Barnes’ face is the definition of a stone mask, but he does look at her and nods, showing that he’s paying attention. “Thank you so much for sharing with mister Kent your side of the story. Can I use it in my story?”

“Of course,” he nods decisively. “I researched a little about what happened in Bucharest and then Germany. Is there any way to... give those people my condolences?”

“I’d be happy to pass them on, sergeant Barnes.” She doesn’t smile at him. Not the sweet, fake thing and not the soft, true smile. She’s not really angry at him to warrant the first one, yet she doesn’t feel warm to him to give him the other. “Now, mister Barton. By your own admittance, you were retired. Your wife told me that you were on a family holiday when mister Rogers called.” She pulls out the paper with email from misses Barton, now again miss Bishop. “She says that you were talking for about two minutes, you not wanting to leave your family. But then... oh, right.” She quotes from the email. “Rogers had to tell him something important, because suddenly Clint snapped into his agent persona and replied ‘I’m on my way. I’ll call when I’ll have a time estimate’.” She puts the paper back down again. “Then you told her you need to go and she hasn’t heard from you ever since. Can you explain what mister Rogers said that was so important that it warranted you leaving your family in the middle of a family holiday?”

“Stark was imprisoning Wanda.” Barton’s face is dark and angry. Lois notices that he doesn’t even ask how she got his ex-wife to talk. The truth is, it wasn’t that hard. Tony was the one who saved her and her kids from Ross. So when she e-mailed her, saying that she got the email address from Tony and that she’s doing an article about Rogues, miss Bishop replied two days later with detailed testimony of the civil war from her point of view along with an angry rant about the divorce and how complicated it was with Barton a fugitive. And permission to use all of that in the article. Lois will be happy to do so.

“Imprison,” she drags out as if deep in thought. “Peculiar word, don’t you think? But from what I understand, the compound wasn’t in a lockdown and you had no problem getting in or out of here when you came for her. More than that, miss Maximoff seems to be happy to be back. So please, explain how she was imprisoned.”

“I couldn’t leave! What more you want as a prove.” Lois keeps herself still, but she’s close to wincing at Maximoff’s shriek.

“And yet, you left,” she says simply. “Burying someone who took you as a closest friend ten feet underground, through concrete no less. Nevertheless, I wasn’t asking you.” She gives her a sharp look and almost looks away in disgust. The woman wears the same stubborn, proud look her sons wore when they were three and went through their “no” phase. It was frustrating on a toddler, but it’s entirely unbecoming for a grown woman. “Mister Barton,” she turns towards the archer again. “I know for a fact that you had free access to the compound. FRIDAY confirmed it, you could have just walked in and out as you pleased. FRIDAY also wasn’t authorize to stop miss Maximoff from leaving, so if you simply walked in, talked to her, she agreed to go with you, and then both of you walked out, nothing would happen. Except for miss Maximoff losing any chance for a visa, but that happened either way and here we are, back to square one, with her visa being in process of being approved once again. So really, nothing would be different, except maybe Vision wouldn’t be hurt and wouldn’t be against visiting you right now.”

“LIAR!” Now Maximoff really does shout. Lois raises an unimpressed eyebrow at her. “It’s not
Vision’s choice, Stark makes him stay away. It’s all Stark’s fault.”

“Oh, right. That brings us to your... tragic backstory.” Lois can’t help the sarcasm creeping into her voice. She takes another folder of papers and hands it to Romanoff. “I took a look into the bomb that fell on your house. September 2002, right?” Maximoff blinks in surprise and Lois controls her smirk. That was the biggest part of research that she did and she’s proud of it. It wasn’t that hard to come upon, she did harder pieces, but it wasn’t exactly easy, either. “Tony was the CEO of Stark Industries back then, so I do understand why you came to the conclusion that the bomb was his. Especially since you were 10 and obviously didn’t know that most of the actual power in Stark Industries belonged to Obiediah Stane, who was Tony’s godfather and so Tony trusted him completely. Which, I guess, you can still find him guilty of. Anyway – I looked into the bombs used during the civil war in your country. Did you know that Stark Industries dealt exclusively with governments, mostly the US one and just few deals with Great Britain and Germany? Which means that the protestors couldn’t have the bomb legally and neither could the Sokovian government. But Stane did a lot of illegal dealings with terrorists. Of course, that was done behind Tony’s back, so it already relieves him of any guilt. But no, Stane mostly focused on the middle east and their terrorist organizations. But what more – the bomb with his name on it didn’t explode, did it? Stark bombs have a reputation, even the illegally sold ones. Turns out that in Afghanistan, the US army left some of its bombs and weapons in secret shelters. Not secret enough for HYDRA, though. And HYDRA, as we now know, had a special interest in Sokovia’s civil war. In those papers,” she nods towards the papers in Romanoff’s hands, “you’ll find evidence that that day, neither the government nor the separatist were the one who attacked. It was HYDRA. Von Strucker was the one to give the order.”

“Liar.” Now, she whispers it, white as a sheet. Lois just smiles.

“Like I said, every piece of evidence is in those papers. I’d like a comment by the end of this interview, so please, look through them while I talk to mister Lang.”

Maximoff seems hesitant and Romanoff stands up and side-steps Rogers to sit between him and Maximoff, so they can look through the papers together. That’s fine by Lois.

“Mister Lang-”

“I’m sorry,” he blurs out before she can actually ask him anything. “I fucked up. I wanted to be a hero, so my daughter can look up to me and be proud of me. But I fucked up, became a terrorist and now my ex-wife won’t even let me see Cassie. I... I’m sorry and grateful that I didn’t actually hurt anyone.”

“Didn’t hurt anyone?” She will admit that his speech somewhat softened her to him, but the last part angered her again. “What about how you got into the Iron Man armor and started pulling out wires. Did you know what you were doing? Iron Man was high up in the air, were you sure that you didn’t pull anything that would make him fall and possibly kill himself?”

Lang visibly whitens. Lois is aware that she should want some kind of comment on it. Interviews are about what other people think, their views on different things. This is more like a hearing, but... well, Lois doesn’t give a shit. If nothing comes out of it, it won’t be that big of a deal for her.

“I... I... I’m sorry, I didn’t... didn’t realize... Fuck,” he looks down, puts his head in his hands and tugs his hair. “I could have... fuck.”

Lois raises her eyebrows at him before turning to look at Wilson. He’s watching Lang with worry in his eyes and anxiety all over his face.
“Wilson.” He jumps a little, turning towards her. There’s... fear in his eyes? That’s surprising. “Perfect soldier, chosen for the Falcon project with his best friend. You knew when to listen to orders, but you also knew when to stand up and question them when you were in the army. When did that change?”

Wilson frowns.

“It... didn’t?”

“Really? Can you tell me one instance of when you questioned Rogers’ orders? Or just disagreed with them?”

“I... I asked before... before Bucharest. If... if he was sure.”

Lois raises an unimpressed eyebrow at him.

“You... asked. If he was sure. That’s it? Have you protested? Have you stopped and demanded to stop the action when it was clear civilians were getting involved?”

“They didn’t stop either!” protests Rogers, loudly. “The guys that were against Bucky. They didn’t stop, either.”

“It’s recorded that at least five different people voiced their concern and unwillingness to continue. It was recorded and in later investigation they were found innocent exactly for their questioning the orders at the moment of heat. They were denied at that moment, so they continued in their orders, but it helped them afterwards. Can you, mister Wilson, claim the same?”

Wilson slowly closes his eyes and shakes his head.

“I’m sorry. I... trusted Steve’s judgement. It was wrong. I’m sorry.”

The last part is hardly noticeable over Rogers’ shouting.

“I wasn’t wrong!” His voice is even louder than Maximoff’s screech and Lois hates it. How can someone with such a temper be in charge of anyone else? “We were pardoned! That shows that we were right.”

“If we were right,” says Wilson tensely, anger clear in his voice, “we wouldn’t need a pardon, would we?” Lois smirks when she looks down to her notes. She’s not sure what kind of article she’ll be able to write, but it’s already clear that it’s putting a wedge between the Rogues. That’s good enough for her. “What exactly did we accomplish if the Accords are still the same?”

“Bucky is alive!”

There’s a crippling silence following that statement. Surprisingly, it’s Barnes who speaks up next.

“And fifteen civilians, three black ops, and five super soldiers paid with their lives for that.” It’s said softly, so softly it surprises Lois. “Not to talk about the numerous people who were hurt, colonel Rhodes and doctor Stark among them. What price are you willing to pay for my life?” He looks straight at Rogers. “Because I’m no longer willing to pay it. I’d rather die than let anyone else die or get hurt in my place.”

“Spoken like a true hero,” smiles Lois at him, completely ignoring Rogers’ try to say something. Then she turns towards Wilson and Lang. “Mister Lang, mister Wilson. Am I to understand that you regret your actions during the so-called civil war?”
Wilson looks doubtful and tries to look at Lang, but he’s still not looking at them. So Wilson gulps and looks at Lois before nodding. Lois smiles at them. Not icy, not genuine, just her professional look. Then she turns towards Romanoff and Maximoff.

“Miss Maximoff. My sources tell me that you joined HYDRA to get your powers so you could get your revenge on doctor Sark. Is that correct?”

Maximoff looks up to her and her face turns into a stone while her eyes shine with fire.

“Yes. Even if... this,” she sneers at the papers, “is true, it’s still his fault. His weapon.”

Lois just stares at her for a moment.

“The bombs that the US army left in Afghanistan were sold to them in the eighties. Tony Stark was a teenager in the eighties who was concentrating on his studies. His father was in charge of SI back then. And of course, once the bombs were sold, it was entirely the US army’s responsibility. Do you still blame doctor Stark for what happened to your parents?”

Wanda’s facial expression changes just a bit, tenses, and Lois realizes that she’s keeping back a sneer or a scowl or something similar.

“He’s still responsible for Ultron. And Ultron killed my brother.”

“Oh, right. Ultron. You did know that there are cameras everywhere in HYDRA’s bunker, right? After all, you called it a home for three years.” Lois then notices that Romanoff is more tense than before, her face a mask. Oh, right. Public officially doesn’t know about Maximoff’s involvement with HYDRA. Lois has been thinking about releasing it for ages now and this interview just seems like the right time.

“Did Tony put you up to this?” And that’s Rogers, coming to the rescue for a woman he sees as a kid still. Lois gives him a deadpan stare. “We know your husband is staying with Tony, he’s his friend.” It sounds accusatory from him. Lois is deeply unimpressed.

“My husband is friends with Bruce Wayne. He’s staying here and Tony Stark was generous enough to offer for Clark to stay here and visit Bruce for some time when he discovered that Clark came to do an interview. I think they met each other in Bruce’s mansion before when Tony was staying there.”

“Tony was staying in another mansion?” now Rogers sounds surprised. “Why?”

“The doctors didn’t want him to be alone and colonel Rhodes wasn’t enough to keep him company, considering that he was also recovering at the time. Bruce has a big family, so they offered to take care of them. Anyway,” she turns back to Maximoff. Only reason why she shared that information was because she knew it would hurt Rogers. She’s lying, of course. Or at least not saying the whole truth. She met Tony soon after he came back to the States along with her whole family. He was still weary of them back then and Lois isn’t really that close to him even now. But he’s part of family. Not the immediate kind, but sort of like a distant uncle to her boys. The bat family was the one who claimed him completely. “Ultron. After its failed algorithm, HYDRA was working on an AI with the help of the scepter, weren’t they?”

“I don’t know,” Maximoff shrugged. “I wasn’t involved in that. I was just given my orders and did as I was told.”

“Really?” In other words, Lois calls bullshit. “Is that why you’re included in the list of people who tested the AI?”
Maximoff goes white and Romanoff moves a little away from her. Did she not know?

“How... who told you that?”

“HYDRA files are freely available online. Of course, after the whole debacle of 2014 HYDRA made new secret servers, but by then you were already on the list. So, how close were they to finishing that AI by the time Tony Stark, the world’s expert on AIs, walked into the base?”

Maximoff takes a few moments to answer, her face doing some small movements that Lois can’t interpret.

“They weren’t anywhere near completing it.”

“Is that why you manipulated the world’s expert to do it for you?”

Maximoff smiles sweetly right then, fluttering her eyelashes.

“What gave you that idea, misses Lane?”

Lois smirks just a little bit, before taking her phone and loading the video she has ready just for that moment. It’s from the HYDRA base, from when Tony took the scepter. It clearly shows Maximoff doing something to Tony, letting him take the scepter, and then smiling ominously. When her brother then asked her why had they let him go, she said that he will destruct himself.

“Then, of course there’s more videos of you and your brother working with Ultron. So, once again. Did you manipulate doctor Stark to help HYDRA achieve their vision of an AI, which is what let to Ultron?”

Maximoff looks furious and Romanoff conflicted, while Rogers utterly confused. It’s Barton that makes her pause, though. He doesn’t seem to mind at all.

“I did not manipulate Stark.”

“We just saw you in his mind. What did you do, then?”

“The same I did to the rest of the Avengers. I showed him his biggest fear.”

There’s silence for a moment, before...

“Tony wasn’t affected! Not like the rest of us.”

“That’s because he thought it was his PTSD.” As Lois says it, she realizes it for herself. “And he’s used to dealing with that himself.”

Barton snorts at that.

“Stark doesn’t have PTSD. He’s just a prima donna.”

Lois just stares at him for a moment. It took a while for Tony to find the right therapist. Which led to one of those he didn’t choose after visiting going to the media. It was a big deal, Tony Stark having PTSD. News that got confirmed by not only SI and Pepper as their CEO, but also the Accords and more than one psychologist.

“Either way, all we saw was our past.”

“That’s because your biggest fears lie in the past.” Seriously, Lois is on the end of her patience.
“Tony’s a visionary. His dreams, his hopes, and his fears lie in the future, all at once. He also had a concept of an AI, the original Ultron. That got corrupted by the entity in the scepter. Which makes you at least partially responsible for Ultron. Certainly more responsible than doctor Stark, especially if we also count that you helped him, which you definitely did. Yet you’re comfortable blaming your brother’s death on doctor Stark. Why? Or better yet, how do you reason that to yourself?”

“It’s all Stark’s fault!” Maximoff starts shouting in earnest. “If he didn’t kill our parents, I wouldn’t have to join HYDRA and then Pietro wouldn’t be dead!”

“We already established that what happened to your parents’ wasn’t Tony’s fault.” Lois can’t let anyone but Clark hear the recording of this, she realizes. But she doesn’t really care. “And even if it was, you didn’t have to join HYDRA. You could have just... move on and live your life.”

“How dare you!”

“Now, misses Kent.” Rogers’ eyes are full of disappointment and Lois just stares at him. Is he for real? “Wanda went through some messy stuff. Stuff you can’t overcome that easily.”

“That’s why we have psychologists nowadays, mister Rochester.” Yes, she’s petty with the wrong name thing, but she won’t budge. She’s not Clark’s property and she can decide what name she wants to be called herself, thank you very much. “That’s all you have to say for those events? It was Stark’s fault and I only did what I had to?” Maximoff remains stubbornly silent. “Very well. Miss Romanoff. A few years ago you compromised the whole intelligence community. When questioned about it, you told the government that you are needed and so won’t be punished. Was that an admission of guilt?”

Romanoff is so stunned that there’s a moment of silence before Rogers starts practically shouting at Lois that what they did back then was the right thing to do. Lois is so done with the four on the couch by her right hand. She understands why the three others distance themselves.

“Mister Reese, by the sound of you you never before in your life did anything wrong.”

Rogers seems abruptly surprised by her.

“Well... I mean... it was, though! The right thing to do.”

“As was the civil war.”

“The fighting wasn’t right, but we had to stand up for what’s right!”

“And crushing the plane to the Arctic.”

“If I didn’t do that, the whole New York would be history!”

“And illegally enlisting to the army, even though you were so ill that you’d probably end up having an asthma attack in the middle of a battle, probably costing all your fellow soldiers their lives.”

Rogers’ face grows red, but Lois doesn’t get any satisfaction out of it. She hates such arrogancy. Everyone makes mistakes. Super soldiers and aliens are no exceptions.

“I proved to be a good soldier.”

She... doesn’t have words for him. She thinks about arguing – about showing him records from colonel Phillips who wrote him up for subordination repeatedly. About pointing out that if it
 wasn’t for the serum, he wouldn’t survive the boot camp. That he did not, in fact, go through boot camp – the two weeks he spent there were impossible for his small, fragile body and he never went back after he got the serum. She thinks about all of that before simply turning back towards Romanoff.

If nothing else, she can write all that in the article. There’s no way it’ll be classical interview, but she likes the sound of an article – one that shows the remorse of Barnes, Wilson, and Lang, and the delusions of the rest of them.

“Miss Romanoff, your answer?”

Romanoff smiles at her, but her eyes betray how nervous she truly is.

“I did what was needed to the best of my abilities.”

“Your best abilities was to reveal most of the secrets the United States have, some that the public was not ready to hear. And you couldn’t think of anyone else who could do it better?”

“If you’re trying to indicate that Tony would do it better...”

“Oh, I’m not indicating anything. Tony would do better. But that’s not what we’re talking about. Miss Romanoff?”

Romanoff straightens in her seat, her eyes hardening.

“Stark didn’t have the needed clearance.”

“Oh, so you decided that from now on, you don’t need a clearance to read those documents?”

Romanoff grits her teeth so hard Lois can actually hear it.

“I couldn’t get to those files while they were hidden, so everything had to go online.”

“And you didn’t consult an expert before doing such decision?”

“I knew what I was doing.”

“Yet your action led to death for thousands of innocent people.”

“They were HYDRA!” Rogers again. Lois doesn’t have the patience for this.

“Not all of them were. Even if three quarters of them were HYDRA, which isn’t true, it still wouldn’t be worth it. Anyway – you signed the Accords, but you went back on them once before. What can you say to our readers to reassure them that it won’t happen again?”

“There’s no longer infighting between the Avengers. I won’t be forced to choose a side.”

“Is that what it was? You agreed with the Accords, but chose mister Rogers instead of doctor Stark?”

Romanoff stares at her for a moment. Lois knows that it’s because there’s no good answer to that question. Not for Romanoff. Either she admits that she doesn’t agree with the Accords, or she admits that she acted on blind loyalty to the faulty “captain”. Either way, nothing good for her.

“I think this interview is over, misses Lane. Please, send me the text once you’re done with it so that I can give you the final go ahead.”
“Oh, I’m sorry, miss Romanoff, but I’m afraid that won’t happen.” She stops the recorder. “The only one I need permission from is my boss. And it most likely won’t be an interview. I can still send it to you right before it goes to print...?”

Romanoff nods at her tensely. Lois smiles.

“Thank you all so much for your cooperation. Daily Planet is very grateful.”

Chapter End Notes

Obviously, the Accords of MCU are not the same Accords from comics. In Civil War they don't really talk about the Accords, so I went and researched them. Turns out there's not much to the MCU Accords, but everything I wrote here (through Lois) should be true for the movies. Plus probably some details that I made up because seriously - the little I found online wouldn't be able to function without details. So if you want to argue with me about how in the comics everyone with the superpower did have to register, don't. Comics and the movies and two entirely different cases and I actually understand comic!cap POV in that. Honestly, in comic the whole problem of Accords is that there's no a simply yes or no answer, it's politics and it's always more complicated. But it looks like for the movies they were too afraid to really go into the politics of it and so they fucked up.
That's all I have to say for that. (For now, most likely. Yes, I'm still bitter over Civil War, but hey, you could say that from the mere existence of this fic.)

Also, this is everything I've got right now. When I started posting this fic, this is everything I got. I wasn't able to write at all since then and so I'm afraid there will be no more regular updates. I'm sorry about that, but please, have patience with me. Hopefully in a month or so everything will calm down a bit IRL and I'll be able to pick up the pace once more. Obviously, I'll try to write even during that month, but I have no idea how that will work out, so... no promises.
But hey, that means that if there's something you'd like to see, you can let me know and I'll see what I can do about it. I've never before posted a wip on archive and it's been ages since I did it in general, so I'm really excited about the interaction.

As always, please, let me know what you think and hopefully we'll see each other soon!
Interlude

Chapter Summary

While Lois is having her fun, Damian has other things to worry about. Week at the Wayne manor, finals, and then some fun with his lovers. There's no place to think about the Rogues, really.

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry it took so long. And thank you all who commented and gave kudos to this story. Honestly, it kept me going through some tough stuff, but also kept me interested in this story and it's actually the reason why I came back to it the moment I was able to. So really, thank you all so much.

So here, have a chapter that's mostly fun, fluff, and some sex thrown in, just for the fun of it.

I have no idea how American colleges and their finals work. We have six weeks to take all our finals (up to three times if it really isn't working for us), but from what I'm hearing you all have just a week. My apologies for that.

Enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Damian doesn’t mind intense study sessions. After all, “intense” is a word that describes his childhood rather well.

As the finals start approaching he devotes more and more time to studying. Tony is more than happy to help and Rhodey ends up dragged into their debates more often than not. Even father shares some of his experience to help.

So no, Damian doesn’t regret the time he spends preparing for his finals. But the more time he spends preparing the less time he spends actually physically doing something. And that gets on his nerve. He’s not used to stillness and that way not even meditation helps with problems he has falling asleep. The witch doesn’t help, but it’s not entirely her fault anymore, either.

So, father sends him home a week before the finals themselves. Kent is still in the compound and the last Damian hears, Lane is supposed to come for few days, too. In other words, he’s not missing anything.

Pennyworth takes one look at him and swiftly sends him to take a nap. Damian would argue, but one look at Pennyworth’s hard eyes makes him shut up and comply. He knows better than to argue with the butler in a mood.

He wakes up in the middle of the night to murmuring and cuddles.
“... stubborn prat doesn’t know when he’s in over his head and then collapses...”

“Talking about yourself in third person is a sure sign of narcissism, Drake.”

The arms around Damian tighten their grip, but Damian doesn’t fight them. For once.

“You look exhausted.”

“I’m fine.”

“You missed dinner.”

Damian sighs. He knows what’s Timothy saying without actually saying it.

*Alfred let you miss dinner. He was so worried about how exhausted you are that he let you sleep through dinner.*

Damian presses closer to Timothy’s chest and turns his face away from Timothy, closer to his own chest.

It used to bother him, back when it became apparent that his body will always resemble more his mother than his father. When he realized that his shoulders will never broader the way Timothy’s did. That even though he’s not the shortest anymore (by inches, really, but they’re important inches) he will always be the smallest.

But then came the moments like this one, when he’s fully enveloped in his lovers. And it no longer bothers him. In fact, he loves it.

“I will be fine.”

“You better be.”

It’s more growled than said and there’s no heat behind it. Instead Damian feels how Timothy burries his face in Damian’s neck, breathing deeply. Damian shudders and relaxes even further into his hold.

“Missed you.”

It’s said so softly that if it wasn’t said right into his skin, Damian would miss it. Now he simply takes and squeezes Timothy’s hand. He won’t say it out loud, but he missed him, too.

The week after that they both keep busy – Timothy with running Wayne Enterprises and Damian with once again combining studying and training. It’s easier here in the mansion where he has the batcave easily available. Usually they simply collapse to bed, exhausted after their day. It’s at the end of the week that Damian realizes that Jason’s teasing that they act like an “old married couple” isn’t entirely untrue. And it pisses him off.

So when after dinner Timothy heads straight to shower he gives him just few minutes before following him himself.

The moment he opens the shower door, Timothy is facing him. Not threatening, though. Mostly amused.

“Feeling dirty, Wayne?”

Damian snorts as he closes the door behind himself. Then he pushes Timothy against the wall and
kisses him, one hand on his hip and the other in his hair. The kiss is nothing like a boring, old married couple, Damian thinks with a smirk. It’s all teeth and tongue and Timothy moans into it, low and a bit feral, before flipping them, so that Damian is the one whose back is pressed to the wall behind him and Timothy is the one crowding him there. He lets himself enjoy it for a moment, the kiss growing harder, before he bites Timothy’s tongue, using his lover’s surprise to once again switch them, this time plastering their bodies right against each other so they can feel every breath, every shudder of the other. Not to talk about their erections, pressed together so tightly that the pleasure is tingled with pain. Not that Damian’s complaining. And by his throaty moan Timothy is definitely not complaining.

It only grows more aggressive from there. They both battle for dominance in the only relationship they have a chance for it. Even though Dick is never as... obviously dominant as Jason, he does always end up leading whatever it is they’re doing. Between Timothy and Damian, though, the result is never clear and the battle is half the fun. But today Damian didn’t want uncertainty. So today, he cheated.

Or technically, he cheated yesterday, when he hid the tube of lube they keep there. It’s usually easily accessible, but right now it’s hidden just enough so that Timothy won’t even think about it while Damian knows exactly where to look for it.

He waits just enough for the moment to get heated, so that Timothy loses track of hands and where they are. That’s the moment he can blindly reach for the lube, never stopping their kisses. Damian has his back to the wall in that moment, so when he gets three fingers slick with lube, he reaches his other hand to Timothy’s thigh, tugging it up. Timothy, thinking he gets the upper hand by crowding Damian to a wall, doesn’t think twice about it and simply goes with it, leaving his hole exposed. Damian smirks into the kiss and runs his slick fingers over Timothy’s entrance at the same time.

Timothy shudders, his grip on Damian going lax. Damian pushes one finger into Timothy and Timothy bites Damian’s lower lip, moaning into it.

“Fucking bastard,” Timothy grumbles and tries to regain his upper hand, but with each movement of Damian’s finger he loses more of it. When Damian adds another finger, he lets go completely. “We both know you’re not strong enough to hold both of us up.”

Damian snorts.

“And you are?”

But he doesn’t fight Timothy when he lowers them to the floor. Damian’s back is still pressed to the wall and sitting down he loses free movement pretty bad, but as long as it’s his cock that ends in Timothy’s ass and not the other way round, he’s not going to complain. He even lets Timothy battle for dominance still. He still fights back, naturally, but the battle turns less aggressive and more playful easily enough.

Timothy’s fingers wrap around Damian’s cock and Damian’s fingers in him curl in reaction, finding his prostate on instinct. That leaves both of them breathless and Damian looks up right then, right to Timothy’s eyes. The blue in them is darker than usual, the same dark blue that seems too deep, almost threatening, that Timothy’s eyes turn for Richard and Jason. The first time they turned that color for him and him alone was the first time Damian believed that he belongs. That they’re not just playing with him, but they actually want him there.

Damian surges up and kisses Timothy, tangling his free hand in Timothy’s hair. The kiss goes on for longer than expected, deep and sloppy and fuck, Damian knows he had a goal with this shower,
but he can’t think of a single thing right now, let alone his plans.

“Fuck, little D,” Timothy breathes out right against his mouth. “Just get in me already.”

For once, they move together instead of in defiance of one another and it’s glorious. Timothy sits down on Damian’s cock and he lets himself close his eyes and just feel for a moment. Timothy’s arms wrap around his shoulders and Damian wraps his around Timothy’s waist. They’re so close like that Damian can feel Timothy’s heart beating, hard and quick. Timothy presses his closed lips to Damian’s ear, making him shudder.

Then Timothy smirks and the moment is gone. Damian opens his eyes again, scowling at his lover and thrusting his hips up, right into Timothy.

The tender moment is gone and soon they’re back to it – Timothy trying to keep him in place and dictating the tempo, while Damian trying to thrust up to him, get him to surrender. It’s a battle and it’s a game and it fills Damian with sweet adrenaline. And when he finally comes, it’s light and freeing and glorious.

Timothy growls at him, but Damian simply wraps his hand around Timothy’s cock, kissing Timothy’s neck, biting and sucking just enough so that Timothy feels it, but it won’t leave a mark.

After, they simply lie there like that, Timothy still sitting on Damian’s cock. Timothy is collapsed against Damian and Damian kind of awkwardly wraps his arms around him. Timothy snorts into his skin.

“Don’t try to pretend you’re a real human person, demon spawn.” He pushes off of him and stands up, even if it is a little wobbly. “I’m dead on my feet. Come on, let’s go to bed.”

So maybe they are a little like an old married couple. So what? Damian is actually fond of it. Missed it, even.

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The week of finals is a blur. He goes from room to room, from one professor to another. Thankfully, they don’t expect him to talk, just take the test and leave, without a sound if at all possible. That’s everything Damian wants, really.

His classmates are not so considerate. Some of them try to start a conversation. He hates it. He has no idea what to do when a girl practically hyperventilates next to him. He’s not the person to go to when you want to lessen your anxiety. He can manage with his lovers, but that’s usually done through a series of inappropriate death-related jokes, jokes about his father adopting the whole orphanage if they let him, and a fierce competition about who’s better in combat. So really, nothing he can do for a girl who’s older than him and has a meltdown about an exam he’s sure he’s going to pass without problem.

The overconfident assholes who try to win his favor aren’t any better. He tries to avoid them but doesn’t really rip into them the way he wants to. He’s still not sure if he won’t need them, later on. Father does have a point with his playboy persona. No one would ever suspect him being a Batman with that going on. If Damian ever decides to go the same direction, he needs these doors open. And with them all those pretentious assholes that are trying to worm their way into his good side. He’ll allow it, for now. He likes keeping his opinions wide.
The teacher for his painting class is excited about the three paintings he submitted for it – one of Gotham, the view from the manor, one of the view from the other side, with the cliff and sea. And, of course, the one from the compound. They don’t really have an exam for that class, just five of them coming together to talk about their paintings. And because it’s class for non-art majors, his painting is the best. Not that he’s rubbing it in anyone’s face, but the teacher’s excited rant about light and shadows, about the dynamic of the sea and the stillness of the cliff seems to do it for him. The four other students glare at him for the rest of the... final.

He’s tired most of the week, but no longer exhausted the way he was weeks before that. It’s a relief, finally going and doing the finals instead of just preparing for them.

Friday evening Pennyworth insists on family dinner. Father is still at the compound, but the rest of the family is there. Even Jason makes it, ostentatiously for Pennyworth’s food, but Damian catches him making out with Timothy in the room two doors away from the dining room where the rest of them are. He just rolls his eyes and yells at them to make it quick, Pennyworth is serving dinner in ten minutes. Then he happily returns to Richard’s side. It’s been a while and he missed him.

Other than the four of them there’s Cass, Barbra, and Brown. Bruce might have never officially adopted Barbra or Brown, but they all know that they’re part of the family. If Damian is completely honest (which he usually avoids being) they do feel like siblings to him. Especially Cass.

Kate couldn’t make it, or so Pennyworth claims. Same with Selina who isn’t technically family, but still ends up in the manor more often than Jason and has her own room, too. Duke is busy with some case, but Pennyworth says that he’s sorry to miss it. (Damian is not that sure that’s true. Duke is still getting used to their peculiar brand of crazy.)

Jason and Timothy turn up minutes later, hair disheveled, clothes all rugged. That earns them some serious teasing from Barbra and Brown especially. Cass is never really vocal, but when Damian glances to her she’s relaxed and smiling just the tiniest bit. She’s enjoying herself.

It’s really not like their relationship is any secret in the family. Damian remembers Brown walking in on him and Timothy. Barba definitely walked in on Richard and each of them at least once. And it’s not like you can really hide a secret from Cass. But they’re not bothered and that honestly makes each of them feel less guilty about it. After all, they’ve seen weirder things while patrolling Gotham.

Dinner turns into movies which turns into Disney because of course it does, when doesn’t it. The only movie they all can agree on watching together is Mulan and then it usually goes from there, generally always in direction of different Disney princesses. Damian hardly ever joins that discussion, because his favorite Disney princess is Mulan so he’s always happy when they start with that. Jason has a weird fixation with Beauty and the Beast, especially now that Emma Watson is officially Belle, while Richard always wants to see Dumbo, because that was his favorite movie when he was a kid. Timothy always votes for Big Hero 6, which is really no surprise, while Brown wants to watch Tangled for some reason. Barbra always wants to watch Anastasia, even though it’s not really a Disney movie. Cass hardly ever joins the discussion, but when she does, they always end up watching Aristocats because no one is willing to say no to her.

This time, they end up watching the new live action Cinderella, because Brown hasn’t seen it yet and Barbra was adamant that to fully apprehend Richard Madden’s beauty you need to see him as prince charming. Even if you saw him in Game of Thrones. Especially if you saw him in Game of Thrones.

By the time the girls decide to just use their rooms in the mansion instead of going home and the
boys make it to their bed, it’s too late to even think about anything else but sleep. Jason snuggles both Timothy and Damian close to himself and even though Damian grunts a little about it, he settles easily enough. Jason is on his back like that, with Timothy laying half on top of him and Damian on the other side of Jason, covering the rest of him and a little of Timothy, too. It’s a nice feeling, Damian is not going to lie.

“Hey!” Damian opens one eye to look at Richard. Richard is grinning at them, wrinkles around his eyes making him look warm. “Is there no place for me?”

“No.” Jason’s reply is sharp and grumpy, but he’s still relaxed underneath them, not even bothering to open his eyes. “You’re gonna have little D for at least a week all for yourself. Let us have him for a while.”

“Yeah,” adds Timothy, already halfway to sleep. Richard rolls his eyes.

“As if you two didn’t fuck for the last two weeks.”

At that Timothy actually opens his eyes to look at Damian. Damian rolls his eyes. They didn’t, other than in that shower a week ago. Of course, Jason senses that, snorting.

“Old married couple.”

“Shut up.”

“Fuck you.”

“I’m just saying – if you two were any more boring, you’d be dead.”

“We can still leave tomorrow morning, you know, not spending the weekend here like we planned so far.”

“We planned?” asks Richard, amusement clear in his voice. Damian glares at him and Richard laughs. “Okay, okay. Let’s go to bed so we have more time tomorrow.”

With that he moves so that he’s spooning Damian, one leg sneaking between his to hook with Jason’s ankle. Timothy grumbles and reaches his hand over Damian’s side to reach Richard’s shirt, grabbing him tight.

“Good night, guys.”

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The thing about the four of them being together, especially if it’s after a longer time being apart, is that once they’re alone, it’s kind of hard to think about anything else but sex. And Damian is sure that it’s not just his still-teenage hormones talking, because this time it’s actually Richard who drags them back to bedroom from breakfast. Literally, in Damian’s case, while Jason and Timothy follow them eagerly.

By the time Jason firmly shuts the door to the bedroom shut, Richard already has Damian splayed out over the sheets, kissing him hungrily, letting his hands roam Damian’s body. It takes only few seconds to rid Damian of his clothes after that and when Damian glances behind Richard, he sees
Jason and Timothy on the armchair close by, Jason kissing Timothy’s neck and Timothy’s dark eyes firmly set on Damian himself. Damian throws his head back and moans.

Richard is gentle, his touch caressing and lingering. As a general rule and especially now that they haven’t seen each other in a while. He worries easily and gets clingy and Damian loves it. The only one who ever truly minds is Jason and it’s only after he already spent three days in bed after a bad injury. Richard kisses basically every inch of Damian’s skin and it’s driving Damian mad. So he looks straight at the pair in the armchair, commanding: “Come here.”

Jason snorts into Timothy’s neck before wetly kissing the spot. Then he picks him up and drops him back to the bed.

“Hey!”

“You know the rules. Little prince commands, little prince gets what he wants.”

“I don’t remember ever agreeing to those rules,” Timothy grumbles, but he moves closer to Damian and kisses him, wet and dirty. Damian curls his fingers in Timothy’s hair, gripping tight.

“Send that to me.”

“Sure.”

That makes Damian get away from Timothy’s ever so welcoming mouth.

“Another photo?”

“If you insist on fucking off to New York, I’m gonna take as many photos of you as I’m able.”

Damian gives Jason an unimpressed glare, before moving his look towards Timothy. Why isn’t he bothered about it?

“Don’t worry, I have our phones covered. No one’s getting those photos from his phone. Or his notebook.”

“You downloaded them to your notebook?”

“Better quality for jerking off,” Jason shrugs, not even a little sorry. Damian scoffs.

“You could call for that, you know?”

Jason grins, all predatory.

“Are you saying you’d be open to phone sex?”

Damian just stares at him for a moment. When was he ever not open to try something? Sure, turns out he’s not a fan of being tied up and doesn’t really understand roleplaying, but he always comes harder when they’re in public, almost getting caught. Then there’s the fact that he really likes it when Timothy doesn’t actually join them, just watches them from the side. He likes being looked at like he’s something highly desirable, like he’s wanted.

When he moves his head, Timothy is already looking at him like that and Damian feels the heat in his belly flame hotter immediately. He’s not really smiling, none of them do that all that often, but his look is intense and focused on him, only on him.

And then it isn’t. Timothy moves his eyes first to Richard, who’s busy kissing down Damian’s
chest, and then to Jason. But it doesn’t stop the heat in Damian’s belly, it actually does the opposite. There’s no one and nothing that matters out of this room, out of this bed. It’s just them for now and the rest of the day.

It gets confusing from then on. Damian is almost always kissing someone. He doesn’t really lose track of who it is at the moment, because they all kiss in different ways, but he’s almost never aware of who’s where when they’re not kissing him right then. Except for Richard, who refuses to leave from between his spread legs. The desire isn’t really heavy or blinding, insistent and everywhere. It’s more... comforting. It’s present and it steadily raises, but they take their time. All of them. Gradually, they all lose their clothing. It’s only when Richard lets out a low, long moan that Damian realizes that Jason is behind him, preparing him for his cock. Damian opens his eyes and looks up towards them then. Richard’s hands are on his hips and he knows with certainty that he will fuck him sooner or later. But behind him is Jason, kissing Richard’s neck and working him open.

“It’s quite the sight, isn’t it?” Timothy’s voice is breathless and rough. Damian just nods, not looking away.

“Especially for those who just watch,” grumbles Jason. Then he throws a tube of lube to Timothy. “Come on, Timmy, open Dami up for Dickie, would you?”

“With pleasure.”

There’s nothing amusing about Timothy’s smile right then. It’s predatory and sinister and Damian’s cock leaks when he sees it.

Timothy’s fingers are long and slim and massaging in all the right places and soon enough Damian’s thighs tremble and he’s panting. Timothy’s kissing him, slow and lazy, as if unbothered by everything that’s happening around him and God, but Damian hates him and loves him and hates him all at once. So he digs his nails to Timothy’s scalp, punishing and pleading all at once, and turns the kiss faster, more aggressive. Timothy moans into it and Damian smirks, happy about shattering Timothy’s cool demeanor.

And then Timothy pulls away from him, fingers and kisses and all. Damian bits back the whine and opens his eyes to glare at him, but instead finds Richard leaning over him, chest to chest, mouth to mouth. His kiss is still gentle, but pressing, as if impatient.

“You ready, Dami?”

Damian snorts and looks towards Jason behind Richard. Jason’s smirking at him, hands firmly on Richard’s hips, but he’s not yet in him, Damian notices.

“Stop stalling, Grayson, and get in him before we’re all too old for this.”

Timothy snorts, somewhere to the side.

“You turning too old for sex? I’ll believe that when I see it.”

There’s the sound of flash hitting flash and a yelp and when Damian makes himself look towards Timothy he’s all red in the face. Damian smirks.

But then Richard actually enters him and Damian’s eyes slide shut almost on themselves. He groans and digs his nails to Richard’s back. Soon enough Richard is fully in him, except then he’s driven even deeper because that’s when Jason drives into Richard and Damian feels so close to coming right then and there it’s ridiculous.
There’s the sound of someone snapping a picture and Damian quickly opens his eyes, looking towards Timothy next to them with his phone in his hands.

“Seriously?” He wants to be pissed, but it’s hard with Richard’s cock inside him and Richard kissing his neck and Jason smirking at them both from where he’s buried inside Richard. Still he at least tries to glare at Timothy.

“Seriously,” Timothy grins at him, toothily. “Jason does have a point, you know. You’re really pretty like that. And it’s always a treat seeing Dick without a shirt.”

“Thanks, baby,” Richard flashes him a grin. “You wanna join us?”

“Yeah. If baby bat wants to complain, you can make sure that his mouth is otherwise occupied.”

Damian would protest, but... what’s the point? Especially when his eyes drop to Timothy’s cock and his mouth waters instantly. Timothy doesn’t move though, so Damian makes himself look back up to his face. The moment they lock eyes Timothy smiles at him and quickly moves so he’s kneeling right above Damian’s head, his cock easily finding its way to Damian’s open mouth.

After then it’s madness, at least to Damian. Richard starts out slowly and gently, but soon enough it’s clear by the harsh, quick movements that it’s not him calling the shots this time. Timothy, on the other hand, is either just teasing, hardly ever slipping the top of his cock into Damian’s mouth, or outright fucking his throat. Damian is in hell and heaven all at once, one hand on Timothy’s hip and the other scratching Richard’s back. He’s not really able to pay attention beyond that. He does notice when Timothy leans in and kisses first Richard and then Jason, too. And fuck him if that’s not what makes the ridiculously hot situation even hotter.

The concept of time no longer applies to them and then, when he feels he might actually burst, a big, calloused hand wraps around his cock. He moans and comes, soon followed by Timothy who comes right in his throat.

He turns sensitive right then and Richard’s cock still driving in him like mad doesn’t help that. Timothy collapses next to him, but it’s almost an afterthought to Damian.

“Come on, Grayson, just come already.” It comes out a whine and he knows it, but he’s no longer bothered about that. He tightens around him and feels him come inside him. And then Richard is kissing him, messy and all tongue and no grace and fuck, fuck, Damian is filthy and tired and so, so happy right now.

Jason collapses on Timothy and Richard doesn’t even bother to move more than burying his face in Damian’s neck.

“Fuck, I missed this.”

Damian is not sure Jason is aware he said even that much. So he looks towards Timothy and like that they exchange a slow, lazy, satisfied smiles, both hugging their more dominant partners close to themselves.

“Missed you too, Jay bird.”

“Don’t call me that, replacement.”

“For fuck’s sake, can’t we have five minutes of peace? Especially right after sex?”

“No.”
Damian joins Timothy and Jason in their reply to Richard which leads to Richard cursing them all to hell. Damian smiles wildly at that, reaching with his hand towards Timothy and Jason, not really caring which one takes it but wanting more contact.

They have two days to enjoy this, then it’s back to business.

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The way from Gotham to New York is just under four hours long. But they have strong cars and the devil may care attitude, so they allow themselves good, long good-bye to their lovers that Sunday morning.

When they arrive at the compound it’s already four PM and they’re exhausted. Damian is ready for a shower and back to bed, but Richard wants a tour and insists that they should find father and tell him that they safely arrived. Damian rolls his eyes but listens to him.

He refuses to go to the non-private part of the building, though. The last thing he wants to do is run into any of the Rogues. But he does take him out, to the place that’s something like a square of the compound and points out which building is what. When they go back to the private building they head to the common room.

Father is there, as is Vision, Peter, Jones, and Cage. They’re all huddled together, quietly talking. Damian doesn’t exactly stop in the door, but he does frown when he sees that. Something’s wrong. Damian’s pretty sure that the last three should be in NYC, not at the compound. Peter visits rather often, but only during weekends and he usually leaves right after lunch on Sunday, so he can get ready for his mundane, school week. And there’s still two weeks left of the school year.

Damian gets worried, but it’s Richard who speaks up.

“What’s going on?”

The five of them turn towards them and for a moment there’s silence. Then Jones sighs and sits down in an armchair nearby. Cage sits on the arm of it.

“Tony had a relapse.”

“What?!”

While Richard next to him starts cursing softly Damian turns towards father. His face is dark and angry and there’s murder in his eyes.

“The witch?”

Damian’s quiet question shuts up even Richard’s cursing. Jones sighs, shaking her head a little while rubbing the bridge of her nose, and Cage puts one arm around her, but father subtly nods.

“We don’t know.” Vision’s voice is oddly electronic, as if detached. “Can’t know, really, not for sure.”

“Don’t even think about it.” Cage’s voice is dark and his grip on Jones tightens.

Tony’s sobriety was a complicated process and a reason why he stayed in the Wayne manor for six months. He did come to them so his physical recovery process would be quicker, but when he was there it became apparent that he’s got an addiction. They helped him start with his sobriety. He relapsed twice while there – always during the first month. When he finally passed the one month mark and Rhodey swore he’d be always with him, only then the family let him go.

He met Jones soon after. She wasn’t in such a bad place by then, she had the Defenders, started dating Cage, and was trying to turn her life around. But alcohol was stopping her. Tony recognized the signs and requested a talk with her in private. Jones has been sober ever since. Damian doesn’t know the details of it and he’s pretty sure that the Defenders are her main support system, but he also knows that her and Tony became “sober buddies” of sorts.

Jones herself seems on the verge of a breakdown, he realizes. Tony has been sober for almost year and a half after all and he still relapsed. It has to be scary seeing someone relapse after such a long time. Especially since she didn’t have a relapse yet, more than a year into her own sobriety.

“You okay, kid?”

Richard’s question makes Damian looks towards Peter. He’s white, arms crossed on his chest and shoulders hunched. He looks ill and Richard is watching him with worry. Peter just shrugs.

“Young mister Parker was the one who... found doctor Stark.” Vision pauses then, quickly looking towards father, before continuing. “That was yesterday afternoon.”

“He fell asleep again.” They all turn towards the door. A haggered-looking Pepper Potts is there, coming right to the rest of the people. She hesitates for a moment before hugging Peter tight. Damian sees Peter closing his eyes and slugging into the hold. She’s wearing a suit, Damian realizes, but one that looks like she’s slept in it. Damian has never seen her like that. She turns towards father then. “The alcohol?”

“There’s not a single drop of it in the private wing of the building and FRIDAY restricted his access to the other part.”

“Boss also can leave the building only in company of either boss-lady, colonel-man, or one of the bats, now.”

Some of the tenseness in miss Potts’ body leaves right then and she presses her forehead to Peter’s head, before moving just a little, so she’s still hugging him but also can see people around the room.

“Peter, you’re having dinner with us and then I’ll drive you to your aunt. She knows what happened and if you want to stay home from school for few days that’s possible.”

“I wanna stay here.”

“No.” Pepper’s voice is stern. “We can talk about visits and you’re definitely welcome to text or... whatever it is you two are doing, to Tony. I also already informed Harley and gave him the same rules, so you can conspire with him and plan what you want to do over holidays, but until Tony has this under control again, neither one of you is staying at the compound.”

“But I want to help! I can help.”

“You can best help by finishing your school year and be here for him when he wants you there.”
Father’s tone isn’t exactly warm, but it’s somewhat gentle still. He himself never really got to know Peter, but he knows how much that kid means to Tony and, of course, that he and Timothy quickly became good friends, so he’s not entirely indifferent to him. “In the meantime, we got him. Cage, Jones?”

“I’m staying.” Jones sounds ready to fight anyone who would be foolish enough to try and stop her. Cage sighs.

“We both stay for at least a week. I’ll see after that, but I think I’ll have to go back to New York.”

“We’re not going anywhere.” Father doesn’t even look at Damian or Richard when he says that. Not that they’re complaining.

“We have planned some things in the city during the week.”

“We have?” Damian can’t help the sarcastic comment on that. He’s not aware of any plans. Richard doesn’t even look at him.

“As long as he’s physically able to join us, we can take him with us. Should take his mind off of the whole fiasco. It worked before.”

Uneasy silence settles over them all and Damian’s good mood from the weekend disappears like that.

He doesn’t really know Jones and Cage and never cared enough to get to know Peter. He’s also pretty sure that this is the third time ever he met Potts. And he doesn’t really like people he doesn’t know. But this isn’t about him. This is about Tony and making sure he’s okay, that he’s better.

And maybe, just a little, about finding whoever’s responsible and kicking their ass. Again.

“Is there really no way to determine if it was the witch’s doing?” He’s the one to speak into the silence, this time. It comes out angry and frustrated and he’s not even sorry. “What about the X-Men, can’t they help? They do have some telepaths, don’t they?”

Potts perks up at that and looks towards father. Father frowns, obviously thinking about it.

“The committee probably won’t take it as enough evidence against the witch herself, considering that telepathy and magic are two different things. But if we can prove that there was an outside influence, it should help Tony’s record.”

“And even though it won’t be official, people will start looking at the witch with suspicion.”

“Yes, it all sounds nice. But Tony doesn’t trust people going to his head.” Potts sounds worried and Damian is glad for Tony. He knows that after the whole civil war thing Tony and Potts’ break up was still raw and Tony was desperate to keep the friendship alive. Looks like he was successful.

“He trusts professor Xavier.” It’s evident on Peter’s voice that he’s still shaken yet determined. “He is a telepath, right?”

“I’ll call Wolverine and we’ll see if this Xavier will be willing to come to the compound. Rhodey is with Tony?”

“Yes. He’s gonna spend the night there.”

“I’ll bring them dinner.”
Damian doesn’t really pay attention to the details, just enough so that he gives his permission to FRIDAY to contact him if ever Tony needs anyone, no matter the time of the day. It’s not like they’ll leave him alone for at least two weeks, but it’s nice to have FRIDAY as a back-up just to be sure.

He slips next to father while Richard goes to take a look at Peter. The kid looks pretty shaken up. If Peter found a drunk Tony in his lab, as Damian suspects, he’ll need all the support he can get. Damian was the one to find him for his first relapse and he spent the following twenty hours clinging to at least one of his lovers. It wasn’t a good sight and the aggression and self-hatred from Tony made it worse. Of course, he made sure Tony got the help he needed first, but then he searched for comfort himself.

“I’m informing the family.”

Father glances at him and back to the two Defenders, before nodding subtly.

_DemonWayne: Tony relapsed._

He waits for a moment, but when no answer comes immediately he puts his phone back to the pocket and turns towards father.

“Today dinner as always?” he asks while looking at the number of people around. It’s not a problem to eat in this common room, on couches and armchairs, when there’s only five or six of them, but with all these people he doesn’t think they’d all fit comfortably.

“There’s a room next to this one.” Potts obviously overheard and came over. Peter is no longer hunched over as he was and he’s even enthusiastically telling something to Richard. “It’s supposed to be a dining room, with a big table and about twelve chairs. We shouldn’t have any problems there. Any requests for dinner?”

Chapter End Notes

Hope you’re not disappointed after such a long wait! As always, I’m excited to hear what you think.

I also have a question for you that has nothing to do with the fic. More than 350 of you subscribed to this fic (and OMG, I seriously can't believe that nuber, the moment I hit post on this there will be over 350 emails going out with the news of the new chapter and I just can't believe it - thank you, every single one of you, so much for this!) and I have so many nice comments here and so many people left kudos. And even though AO3's statistics are awesome, there's one little thing I'm interested in that they don't offer (for good reasons, too).

Where are you guys from? Seriously, I'm so curious about in which countries my little fic is read. I'm from Czech republic, so even the concept of someone in the US reading it is kinda wild to me. And honestly, if you're willing to share that with me, I kinda want to get a map of the world and just... point out the countries my readers are from.

Lastly, I'm gonna try to keep to a regular regime the way I did before, but I don't wanna promise anything, because I'm working full time now and I'm not sure if I'll have the energy or even will be in the mood for writing that often. (Also, the weather isn't helping any - we have 30 degrees celsius nowadays and I'm not built for it. I'm
also in an attic apartment with no AC, so I'm kinda dying here.) I'll try to post monthly, ideally twice a month, that's all I can say.

Anyway, let me know what you think (or even from which country you are, if you feel like sharing) and hopefully I'll see you soon!
Richard Grayson

Chapter Summary

The vacation is over, it's time to take care of the relapsed member of the family. If you can get some sightseeing into that, it's just a plus, right?

Chapter Notes

Oh my God, thank all of you who commented on the last chapter! I seriously can't believe that I have an international audience =D
I hope you enjoy this chapter as much as I enjoyed writing it. Prepare for the fluff!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wanda is not fond of mornings. They’re cold and lonely and it usually takes her at least an hour to properly wake up.

That’s why she’s only partly awake when she stumbles to the kitchen that morning. And why at first she’s not sure she’s not hallucinating when there’s a half-naked gorgeous man in there.

Not that Steve or Clint aren’t gorgeous, but Steve is like a mentor to her and Clint is... well, he is a little too old for her for that. Wilson isn’t really her type and Lang... well, she never really saw him without his shirt on.

Either way, they don’t think about her that way and so she doesn’t think about them that way.

(Not entirely true. Clint does think about her in that way sometimes, just as he does about Natasha. They don’t really mind as long as he knows nothing like that is going to happen. Actually, it’s helpful at times that he thinks about them like that. Makes easy for them to... sway his opinion in the way they want. And she does think about Steve in terms of sexual attractiveness, but who wouldn’t? But he thinks about her as a kid. At the beginning she decided that it’s better that way anyway and nowadays thinks about him only when she’s lonely and needs distraction.)

But this man.

He’s around her age, maybe a little older. And his body is almost as muscle-y as Steve’s. He’s only wearing low-riding trackpants and damn, not only is his torso all muscle-y, but his butt is to die for. He turns around and smiles and Wanda’s knees go weak just a bit. He has bright blue eyes to go with the black hair and isn’t that just the most attractive combination ever?

She straightens (feeling just a little sorry about wearing a loose shirt she wears to bed, but then again she’s also wearing yoga pants and lacking a bra, so maybe it’s not that bad of an outfit) and smiles, subtly willing her hair to go from the craziness of the bed-hair to the soft waves she prefers them to be.

She makes a step closer and opens her mouth, when the scent hits her. She pauses just for a
moment before dismissing it. What if he burns something? She’s not after him for his cooking skills. And it’s not like if something happens to the kitchen Stark can’t afford to replace it.

“Hey there,” she breathes out, happy that her “just woke up” voice is still present. It’s low and a little raspy and sure to lure him in. He looks towards her and his smile loses some of its brilliance. That’s fine, Wanda reminds herself. He doesn’t know her, has no reason to smile at her like that.

“I’m-”

But then the alarm sounds and the hottie curses lowly before quickly moving back to the pan on the stove.

“I told you so.”

Wanda jumps just the tiniest bit at the unexpected voice, turning towards it. It’s just a kid, she realizes. He looks grumpy, half hides in an oversized black hoodie with... is that a red bat? It’s not exactly the same symbol the guy Batman uses (Wanda isn’t scared, per se, but the guy is a big mystery and there’s something about him that unsettles her), but it’s close enough.

It’s probably the kid Steve was complaining about a few weeks back, she thinks. The one who could be an artist if he was brave enough to step away from the money his daddy pushes to him. Not important then.

Except that he’s here with the gorgeous man.

“Shut up, brat,” replies said man. But even though he’s busy making sure whatever it is doesn’t actually catch fire, his voice sounds fond. “Drink your tea and give me time.”

“What’s wrong with cereals? You love cereals.”

“Well, yeah, but we’re gonna need our strength if we’re going to the city.”

The brat sighs dramatically.

“Do we have to?”

“Yes, we do! When was the last time you were in New York?”

The brat raises an unimpressed eyebrow and the hot man looks towards him when he doesn’t say anything for a moment. Then he rolls his eyes.

“Before that.”

Wanda doesn’t like this. Not only she got ignored, but the two of them seem to communicate without words in a way that seems impossible for just friends or, she thinks with thoughts about the obvious age difference, just a mentor and a student.

So she clears her throat and smiles a little awkwardly, hoping that will drive the hot man’s attention to her.

She doesn’t care about the brat. Steve had nothing nice to say about him and besides, he’s a son of Stark’s friend, another spoiled rich kid.

The man looks towards her, but without the smile that he had the whole time he was bickering with the kid.

“Can we help you?”
His voice is completely polite, but after hearing the banter there’s something icy to it. Wanda blinks in a surprise. Then she frowns.

“I see Stark has been spreading lies about me.”

The man seems amused when he winks at the brat. The kid snorts but when Wanda turns her glare at him he’s drinking from his mug, looking completely unaware of his surroundings. Wanda frowns once again.

“Are you assuming that I can’t read, miss Maximoff?”

He’s smirking now and Wanda finds herself annoyed. She doesn’t think the two of them will get along that much, but that doesn’t mean they can’t have purely sexual relationship. Sure, you usually don’t start such a relationship at 9AM, but nothing about her life is usual. So she makes herself come to the counter (right next to the brat, she notices, but she makes sure she’s away enough not to touch him) and lean into it, maybe showing just a bit of cleavage, and smiles sweetly.

“You have me at disadvantage, mister mysterious. You know my name, yet I don’t know yours.”

The man’s smirk grows less cruel and more amused.

“Call me Dick.”

She blinks in surprise. What kind of name is that? And he didn’t give her a surname. Well, definitely not a relationship and probably not even a repeat of... whatever’s going to happen, but...

But in that moment Dick sighs and leans towards the brat to kiss him right on the mouth. Just a peck, but so casual that it’s obvious that it’s not a rare thing for them. That, and the brat doesn’t even react to it, just raises one eyebrow at him, slightly amused and expectant.

There goes that plan, then.

“Fine. You really hungry? We can just bring Tony his coffee and go out for breakfast. Waffles sound good, don’t you think? Starting with sugar should be good.”

“If sugar is good, he can simply start with the sugarly mess you call cereals.”

“Hey!”

Wanda can feel her temper (and with it her magic) raising. They have no right to ignore her like that! Especially not in her own home.

But she can’t afford to blow up at them, she knows that. Natasha explained their poor standing with public to her (and Wanda is very much aware that Natasha is nervous about the article that has yet to hit the stands) and they can’t afford anything that could be twisted against them. Even if they are in right. Like in their own home.

But that doesn’t mean she needs to continue the flirting she was trying to start.

So she leans back and lets her lips curl into a small sneer.

“Stark employing you as his personal slave, then?” she nods towards the coffee that’s getting ready at the coffeemaker. Dick, for some reason, laughs at that.

“Whatever helps you sleep at night, little witch.”
“Don’t call me that!”

“Why not?” By then they each have a cup of coffee in hand and are on their way to the door to the private part of the building. “You seem to like when people think about you as a child. The fake captain most of all.”

There’s something cruel about the twist of his lips when he turns to look at her for a moment before they both disappear from view.

Her magic lashes out right then, but she doesn’t have a tight enough grasp on it so she gets mixed impression of feelings from both of them. Some tiredness, but mostly amusement and expectation and fondness and happiness. They’re not thinking about her, or at least she doesn’t think so. Before she pulls herself together they’re too far away for her to get more details without exhausting herself. And she doesn’t want to do that for a pair of idiots she probably won’t have to deal with ever again.

Of course the brat gets a hot man.

“Why does it smell like something’s burning in here?”

She relaxes when she hears Natasha’s question, turning to her with a smile. She doesn’t trust her, not truly (it’s stupid to trust a spy), but she’s the closest to a true friend Wanda ever got.

“That... Wayne? Kid and his boyfriend were there. Obviously, the boyfriend can’t cook and the brat is too good for it.”

It’s not only Natasha coming into the kitchen. Clint and Steve are with her and Wanda’s mood immediately gets better. These are her people and she knows that they have her back.

Clint and Natasha move to make the breakfast and Steve sits down next to Wanda, frowning hard.

“That’s... weird. When I ran into them the boyfriend was cooking.” Then, something dark crosses his face before he turns towards Wanda. “Big guy, right? Almost like me, tall and big both. He had a weird streak in his hair, mostly dark but light streak above his forehead.”

Wanda frowns.

“No. I mean – he was really fit, but not that tall and definitely not that buff. Actually, I think he was about the height of the kid.”

Clint snorts then.

“Cheater, then. Should have expected that. Have you seen what they write about his father?”

There’s disdain on Clint’s and Steve’s faces and Wanda agrees, even though she’s not surprised that he cheats with Dick. That man is really fit. But cheating, that’s just terrible.

Wanda wonders if Dick knows that that’s what the kid is doing with him, that he has a boyfriend. Surely he doesn’t, the poor thing.

“Well, we should have expected something like that,” Wanda shrugs. “Spoiled heirs are all the same. If a homosexual relationship isn’t scandalous enough, they’ll just cheat.”

“Yeah,” Clint snorts. “What a fucking disgrace. You think Batman will show up to training again? I mean, isn’t he supposed to be busy in Gotham?”
Natasha frowns at that.

“You’re right. Batman is a member of Justice League, but they’re not as active as the Avengers. And Batman and the rest of his gang usually keep to Gotham. The fact that both Batman and Robin has been to all our joined trainings is... weird.”

Something in Steve’s eyes brightens and his face turns in surprise before he turns towards Natasha.

“You think... You think Wayne is Batman?”

Natasha, for some reason, snorts at that.

“Yeah, right. Wayne is Batman, his son is Robin, and the rest of the kids he adopted during the years are the rest of the vigilantes in Gotham.”

Wanda’s eyes widen in surprise as do Steve’s.

“They... they are?”

Natasha gives them a highly unimpressed stare.

“I was kidding, Steve. It’s a meme – a joke, in Gotham. Even the Wayne kids are in on it. There are whole blogs dedicated to showing that the oldest son’s, Grayson something, I think, and Nightwing’s ass are one and the same and every time Red Robin solves something by hacking somewhere the new Wayne CEO, Drake-Wayne, gets asked about it. But although a genius, the Drake kid is too clumsy to be a vigilante. Wayne himself is too self-absorbed, not even talking about the number of photos, old and new, of him and Batman next to each other. The kids like to joke about how a group of rich people with generous life insurances obviously feel the need to go and risk their life during the night. There are entire videos of them talking about who would profit from that insurance if they actually did something as stupid as vigilantism.”

Steve deflates just a bit.

“Oh.”

“Yeah,” Natasha smiles softly at him in apology. “I know people like to think that all Gotham vigilantes are one big, happy family, but it’s more likely that they’re just a bunch of people working towards a common goal and so cooperating every once in a while. I mean – they even have separate deals with the Accords.”

“Yeah, that makes sense.” Steve sighs. “I just don’t like the idea of fighting alongside someone whose identity is an unknown to me.”

“I know. And you probably won’t have to. I looked over the deals they have with the Accords – both the League and the vigilantes. The end of the world situation would be the only one requesting us all to work side by side. We won’t need to work with them on the regular, Steve.”

Steve’s shoulders slump a little and he smiles at all of them. Not the big smile he has for everyone, but the smaller, gentler one that always makes Wanda feel special.

“Thank you, Nat. So, what are we doing for breakfast?”
The moment the door behind them closes Damian smirks and looks at Richard.

“What?”

Damian’s smirk widens just a bit at Richard’s defensive tone.

“She is into you.”

Richard rolls his eyes but doesn’t contradict him.

“You gonna be jealous now?”

Damian snorts. If he was to be jealous of everyone that’s attracted to Richard he wouldn’t have time for anything else. Richard is objectively the most attractive one of all of them and they’re no Quasimodos themselves. It’s only natural for other people to be attracted to him.

It’s just amusing to see them crash and burn. Especially someone like the Witch.

Actually, Damian frowns, maybe riling up the witch is not such a great idea.

“Be careful around her.”

Damian is too stubborn to look at Richard in that moment, but he’s still pleased when Richard bumps their hips together.

They head to Tony’s suite. He’s the only one who has a full suite of rooms instead of just one room in here, but then again he was the one who built the whole compound so it makes sense.

They’re all in the living room area of the suite. Father, Rhodey, and Potts are all in perfect suits, although Potts is wearing a skirt suit that father or Rhodey could never pull the same way she does. Tony is curled tightly in blankets and honestly, Damian’s not sure if he’s even wearing pants under all that. Jones is just in a slightly better shape – namely there are no bags under her eyes and Damian knows that she, at least is wearing pants. Cage next to her is dressed the same, without the bundle of blankets, and is watching his girlfriend and Tony both carefully. Between the three of them the big couch is occupied.

“Coffee!!” Richard cheerfully exclaims and happily gives his one cup of it to Tony. Jones brightens at the mention of coffee, too, but Damian simply gives the other cup of coffee to father and smirks at her before sipping from his own cup of tea. She probably doesn’t know that he doesn’t drink coffee, right? “So, what’s the plan?”

“Well, I am going to work,” miss Potts practically snaps at Richard, before visibly checking herself and making herself look at them. “See if you will be able to make Tony get up from the couch, I’m already late for a meeting. Good luck.”

Damian raises an eyebrow and turns his glare to Tony. Tony is not looking at him, but Damian just waits. He can see father fold his arms in the corner of his eye and knows that there’s no way Tony can withstand the combined power of both their stares combined. Even though he’s stubbornly ignoring them, watching the tv that’s... playing some kind of cop movie in there? Damian’s not sure, he only saw a police uniform when he glanced at the tv when he was looking around the room to know what’s going on.

Damian is only vaguely aware that Richard’s talking quietly to Cage, he’s simply concentrating at
staring at Tony. And honestly, he’s impressed with how long Tony lasts. It takes him about two minutes before he starts twitching just the tiniest bit. After that, it takes about three minutes before he glances at Damian, another two to glance at father and then, after five minutes of tense silence, he finally speaks up.

“What?”

“Didn’t say anything.”

“You’re staring.”

“Prove it.”

“Prove... you’re literally staring right at me!” Tony’s face is turning into a weird shape it always does when you deny reality and he has the undeniable need to argue with you. Then Tony quickly turns towards Jones. “Jessica! He’s staring at me, right?”

“Wouldn’t know,” she says, eyes pointedly glued to tv and a small smirk on her face. Tony makes a hurt noise and turns towards Cage.

“Luke!”

“Sorry, you were saying?”

Stark grunts and turns towards Richard, before stopping and sighing.

“You’re not gonna help me either, are you?”

“Dami’s eyes are piece of art. Enjoy them.”

“Enough.” Father’s tone is not entirely Batman, but it does have a slight undertone of it. “We’re going for breakfast.”

Now Jones frowns and looks first at Richard and then at Damian.

“Weren’t you two supposed to bring us breakfast?”

“No.”

The answer comes from both Damian and father, but not from Richard. Father frowns and glances towards Richard.

“Did you try to cook again?”

“Jason said the kitchen is so beautiful it’s easy to cook in it!”

“Don’t try to blame Jason for this... No, I’m not arguing with you about this again. Damian?”

“Don’t look at me like that, I haven’t touched a stove since that time I was nine and back then, it was Pennyworth’s idea.”

“Good.” Damian preens just a little under the praise, before catching himself, stopping that feeling, and pointedly not looking at Richard. “Neither of you is touching that kitchen. Other than for coffee and tea. Now, I need to be in New York in an hour. That should be enough time to get you to get yourself together at least a little and give you a ride. What were you guys thinking?”
“Waffles,” Damian draws out, nose scrunching. It’s not like he has something against waffles. It’s just that no one, and he means that, no one can make better pancakes than Pennyworth. Or, you know, as good as the butler does them. Mostly because Damian prefers them with fresh fruit and just a bit of maple syrup from that one family company in Canada. Damian’s pretty sure that they don’t really do export, but Pennyworth has contacts everywhere. No maple syrup ever compares, that’s for sure.

Yes, Damian is spoiled. Blame Pennyworth. He certainly does.

“Oh, there’s this great waffle place...” Tony starts talking, before he realizes what he’s actually saying, so he burrows even deeper into the couch. “I can give you direction. Actually, FRIDAY can give you direction. FRIDAY, you do know what waffle place I mean, right? Put it to the bat’s phone.”

“Or, you can go with the bats and show them yourself. I’m sure Jess and Luke will be glad to know a good waffle place in NYC.”

Tony actually winces when he looks at Rhodey’s frown. Damian would feel insulted, except he’s pretty sure that Rhodey has some blackmail on him from their MIT days and they don’t, so it does make some sense.

“I can call them and have it delivered.”

“No.”

“Nope.”

Damian smirks. It’s interesting to see the difference between the way father and Rhodey run things. Especially because he gets to see the differences in them doing it in professional setting and with family. Rhodey is much more relaxed around family. In his own way, father is too, but it’s not as visible.

“The whole point of getting you to go for a breakfast is getting you out of here.”

“Well, I don’t want to. I just want to sit here, drink my coffee, and watch b-99.”

Damian frowns.

“What’s a b-99?”

Suddenly, practically everyone turns their head towards him. Just Richard moans and puts his head in his hands.

“How do you not know about b-99? Dick!”

“Look, we have hardly any time to lay around watching tv, okay? We all picked a franchise – Tim chose Star Wars, Jason Harry Potter, and I picked LOTR. And we still haven’t finished the LOTR marathon.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Fourteen months,” Damian grumbles just a bit. Jason was adamantly they start with Harry Potter and that he has to first read the books. Every time after that that he caught Damian reading anything that wasn’t the Potter books (or the mission reports) he took the book and threw it away. Which is a real problem when you spend most of your time in a cave that has multiple levels and
ends in a water. The one time he caught him in the mansion he actually threw it into a fire in a near fireplace.

“And you haven’t finished three marathons in fourteen months?”

“We’re busy!”

“And it started as a group activity. It’s pretty hard to schedule all our times so we can sit down for up to three days to watch movies.”

Not to talk about how soon after that, “group activity” between the four of them turned into sex.

“So yeah, Damian hasn’t seen Brooklyn nine nine.”

“There’s something we don’t know, isn’t there?”

Only then Damian realizes that there are two people who not only don’t know anything about his childhood, but also don’t know about their secret identity. Or about their relationship.

Not that the last one is in any way relevant. It’s just still somewhat new experience, to think about it as a relationship. Damian knows that the rest of his lovers don’t really feel it’s that weird, but then again everyone of them had a relationship before this one. Damian... he just kind of fell right into this polyamorous mess right at the first try.

He still quickly turns his stare to Jones who was the one to ask the question.

“Geez, that’s some stink eye. You’ve got issues, kid.”

“You have no idea.” Damian turns his stare at Richard. “What? It’s true, she doesn’t.”

“And we’re not telling her.”

“What, you have some dark secret from your past? You spent the first five years of your life killing people?”

When five heads turn to stare at her, Jones looks surprised.

“I... was joking. You did, didn’t you? What the fuck, Wayne?”

“It wasn’t father,” Damian rolls his eyes. “It was mother. Mostly grandfather, really.”

Jones stares at him for a moment before turning her head back to tv.

“Nope, not getting into that. Not worth it. Less I know the better.”

Damian has to give it to her – that’s probably the best decision he’s ever seen someone make in the compound. Father sees it too, because he nods, before adding:

“You’re coming with us, Jones. You can give the boys some pointers about their sightseeing. If you really want to go back after breakfast, I’m pretty sure we will get someone to drive you, Tony. Now get up and let’s go.”

Tony frowns at father and Damian is proud to say that he doesn’t just look away after a second or two. Now he’s really part of the family – only family can withstand father’s glares.

Of course, that’s overruled by the fact that Rhodey simply rolls his eyes and picks Tony up,
blankets and all.

“Rhodey!”

“I don’t care, you’re showering. Right now. If you still feel like b-99 after waffles, you can have it, but you are coming out of this compound today if I have to drag you out myself. Don’t make this into another spring of 87.”

“Asshole!”

They can still hear the bickering even when the door to the bathroom closes behind them. Soon enough there’s the sound of the shower running and then Rhodey comes back out again, giving an unimpressed look to Jones, Cage, and Richard.

“You three sure that’s how you want to go to the city?”

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Rhodey has work to do, so it’s up to father to take them to the city. And considering there’s six of them they have to get the limousine. Because no other car available for them could seat six people. Damian amuses himself with Jones’ and Cage’s faces for most of the ride to the city. They’re the only people who aren’t used to limousines at least occasionally being part of their life.

Damian switched Jason’s hoodie for a soft dark green cardigan he was told brings out his eyes. Richard next to him is simply in jeans and a button down with short sleeves, no additional layer for him. But then again Richard gets whiny as soon as the temperature moves to 35 degrees. Celsius, which is about 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Even after all those years Damian isn’t used to the American ridiculous demand to tell the temperature in a way that no one else understands.

It’s only about 20 degrees right now, Damian is perfectly fine in his cardigan, thank you very much.

Tony grumbles the whole way over, but it’s mostly to fill out the silence in the car. He looks much better after his shower, with his weird facial hair trimmed back the way he prefers it and clean, although worn jeans and Black Sabbath t-shirt. Jones, in her own dark jeans, shirt, and a leather jacket, watches him sharply the whole way, but the more Tony talks the more relaxed she seems. Cage seems to be switching between watching Jones watch Tony and gaping at the interior of the limo. Father is busy reading some papers and Richard quips in Tony’s rant every once in a while, but mostly just listens with amusement, his thigh pressed to Damian’s.

Soon enough they stop in front of a fancy looking waffle house. They say goodbye to father and make their way inside. Even though there’s a bar everyone seems to order at, Tony simply makes his way to the biggest table in the room. It is table for six, so it serves the five of them well.

“Do they have only sweet breakfast here?” Jones asks, obviously not happy with that.

“Well, aren’t you the perfect little stereotype of the bad girl,” Tony chuckles and gestures towards a board above the bar. “They have bacon and eggs with waffles made of some kind of potato dough. Also some kind of pork meat with the same waffles. Looks weird, but Rhodey swore on it, so it’s still probably the best breakfast you’re ever gonna eat.”
“We thank you for your kind words, mister Stark.” Damian turns around to see a girl just a little older than he is. “And I see you’ve brought us some more celebrities. Welcome to Baffled waffles. Yeah, I know, lame name, my grandfather came up with it. We wanted to rename it as soon as he passed away, but... you know how it is. You hate it when he’s still alive, but once he’s dead it’s just one more thing that makes you remember him fondly. Anyway – what can I get you?”

“Bacon,” Jones says, her eyes sparkling. “And some of those eggs and potato waffles, I guess.”

“I’ll take that’ll be double bacon then. Something to drink?”

There’s something soothing about the easy chatter she seems to have with... anyone, probably. She also seems to be weirdly okay with a bunch of semi-famous people in her restaurant. Damian is easily recognized in a high-end American society mostly thanks to his darker skin and bright green eyes, but he’s not really that famous out of Gotham. He certainly doesn’t expect to be recognized by New Yorkers. But then who else... oh, right. The Defenders are pretty popular in New York, right?

Cage orders both the pork waffles and Nutella waffles and Damian would be surprised about that, except Cage really is a big man and so probably needs that much food. Jason is the same, really.

Then the waitress turns towards them and smiles.

“And what can I get for the Wayne brothers? We probably won’t wow you with a Nutella, but we have pretty good jam. Home-made, really. Strawberries, blueberries, we’re a little low on apricot, but we can definitely give you that if you want to.”

“Hey! What about my maple syrup.”

The girl rolls her eyes but smiles at Tony.

“We buy it at the local store. It’s pretty terrible. The maple syrup waffles are actually one of our least sold ones. I’m pretty sure dad keeps it just for you.”

Tony’s face goes through about five different stages and Damian is not sure what any of them mean. Surprise, hurt, amusement? Seems like a lot of opposite emotions for one face in such a short time. But what does Damian know. He still has problems identifying his own emotions half of the time. For example, his relationship with Tim. Turns out his annoyance and hatred weren’t really that, but attraction and envy. Who knew?

“I don’t know if I should be insulted or flattered.”

“Don’t worry about it, Tony,” she smiles at him and Damian realizes that Tony has to be a regular here for her to have such an easy relationship with him. He looks outside and tries to see where they are. And yes, there, just behind the corner and just outside the view, there’s a building he’s pretty sure belongs to Stark Industries. “So, I take it we’ll take your usual?”

“You got it, Kat. Thanks.”

“No problem. So, back to the handsome rich young single heirs.” She smiles at them with humor in her eyes. “I really recommend the jam. Any jam, really. I can even mix it up. Three waffles piled up, one jam between the first and second and different jam between the second and third? How about strawberry and blueberry? Personally, I prefer my waffles like that.”

“Sounds great. Can I get the maple syrup on that?”
Damian scrunches his nose.

“You’re disgusting, Grayson.”

“You love maple syrup.”

Damian gives Richard an unimpressed look. He knows how he feels about maple syrup that doesn’t come from Pennyworth. Or rather that one family company in Canada, but to Damian that’s the same thing.

“Okay, so I’ll write that down as the special with extra maple syrup for blue eyes, what will it be for you, jailbait?”

Damian blinks a few times in surprise.

“Jail... bait?”

“Yeah. You’re still a teenager, right?”

“Nineteen, actually,” grumbles Richard lightly, fidgeting a little in his seat. Damian moves his leg slightly so his feet presses to Richard’s. He knows that Richard still feels guilty about the fact that they started their relationship when Damian was still seventeen. Tim didn’t really care because he’s pretty close in the age that he could rationalize the whole law thing away. Jason doesn’t really give a damn about law in general. He operates under his own set of rules and although fucking children is a big no-go for him, Damian is pretty sure that his own rules are a little bit looser about teenagers who are close to 18. Plus, Damian is also pretty sure that Jason has never truly seen him as a child. Especially not after he died and came back again. That sort of thing changes you.

“Either way,” chirps the waitress happily, obviously missing the slight tension between the two of them, “you look pretty young and pretty... well, pretty at the same time. I know it’s different for kids of billionaires, but out in the street you’d definitely be considered a jailbait. So, what will it be for you?”

Damian frowns at the offer on the boards behind the bar.

“I don’t suppose you have fresh fruit to serve with the waffles.”

He sees Jones and Tony rolling their eyes at him and ignores them. There’s nothing wrong with asking. At least the waitress looks amused.

“No, not really. But the jam-”

“Thank you, I’ll just take the Nutella and banana one, then.”

“Don’t take it personally, he just never really understood the point of jam.”

“You can just have fresh fruit! You do know that we have the technology to have them fresh every day of the year, right? Wasting good fruit just to make jam seems like a… well, a waste.”

“Seriously, don’t take it personally. He has a personal chef at home who does his own jams and Damian still doesn’t eat it.”

“Pennyworth is not a chef.” Damian is actually insulted for Pennyworth. Richard knows that Pennyworth is much more important for the family than a simple chef.

“Ooooh, kay,” the waitress draws out, obviously not certain what’s going on. Good. “What can I
They order a mix of coffee (tea for Damian, thank you) and some juices before the waitress leaves them all with one last smile and a wink at Richard.

“So, what are you two planning to do in the big apple?”

Tony’s voice is still a little gruffy, but he seems at least a little intrigued.

“I figured the usual sight-seeing. I’ve never really been outside of Gotham and a few nearby towns.” Not true, exactly, but if Damian’s not mistaken neither Jones nor Cage know about their secret identities. Plus, it’s not like they do sight seeing when they go to various cities for missions.

“Well, I guess I was there with the circus. But I’m not sure if we went sightseeing. And if we did, I don’t remember it.”

“The circus?” Cage looks sceptical as he looks Richard up and down. Nothing new, really. After all, even though Richard’s jeans are worn and comfy by now, they are still designer. Richard may live alone now and have a job and everything, but he is still used to the rich kid style. He tried the alternative when he established himself as Nightwing, as away from Batman as anyone in the family is able to be. And while he didn't exactly suffer, he also got used to the rich life as soon as he came back.

“Acrobat,” Richard grins, wide and unapologetic. He loves acrobacy and no rich kids stereotype can keep him from it.

“Okay.” Cage still looks sceptical, but doesn’t pick a fight. Damian muses that he probably thinks something about rich kids eccentricities.

They plan the day because apparently you can’t just go willy nilly from one thing to another. Honestly, with the traffic of New York it makes sense. Even when they forgo the car and take the sub.

Tony seems weirdly excited about that prospect. Something about not being on the subway since the 90’s.

The waitress brings their drinks very soon, smiling excitedly at everyone as she gives them their orders and winking at Richard. Richard smiles at her teasingly and presses his foot to Damian’s.

There are some sights Richard wants to see that Cage and Jones seem they'd rather die than set foot in. Tony seems mostly amused by that and Damian is glad to see him better. He's still too pale, his cheeks drawn in, his hands shaking. But at least he's smiling.

The waitress (Damian thinks her name was mentioned, he just doesn’t care) comes back with waffles in the middle of the debate of Empire State Building. Damian is not at all surprised that she takes Richards side of “must see that one”.

“It’s especially beautiful during sunset. “ She’s not even hiding her flirting anymore and Damian resigns himself to watch his boyfriend flirt with an attractive girl closer to Richard’s own age than himself. He's not jealous, but he's not exactly comfortable with it. “Of course, it's not exactly easy to get there in time, the lines are a nightmare, but I’m sure you'll manage.” She winks at him and Richard chuckles, smiling at her easily.

“Oh, I’m sure I will. “

Richard smiles at her, lazy and wide with wrinkles around his eyes and Damian kind of hates her
for making him smile like that and kind of loves her for it, because now he gets to look at it. Not that Richard is as cautious about his smile as the rest of them.

The waffles are good, Damian will give them that much. The tea not so much, but then Damian hasn't had good tea outside of his home since he came to the States. And he had to repeatedly demand from Pennyworth to start getting proper tea. At first Pennyworth insisted that the British tea he preferred is proper tea. Damian had to order the first bunch himself. But once he got him hooked on the good tea he won.

They decide that since they want to see the sunset in the Empire State Building (a thing even Jones and Cage grudgingly agree with), they should start with the Statue of Liberty. Cage and Jones firmly refuse to go there, so they agree to meet for lunch in Central Park. Richard doesn't think that they will be able to spend the whole afternoon there. That's when Jones mentions the zoo there. Richard groans, but agrees that they can go there with a smile.

They leave the waffle bar with lemonades in bottles and the waitress’ phone number on a napkin in Richards pocket. Damian’s the one to take it and throw it into the nearest trash can. Richard just smirks at him.

The Statue of Liberty is not as impressive as Damian expected. The people all around aren't helping it. There’s a cacophony of voices, at least twelve different languages that Damian can recognize from each other. It doesn’t help that he understands most of them. His brain is doing weird gymnastics trying to understand all of them all at once. Richard presses his hand to Damian's lower back and maneuvers them a little away from all the people. Tony is taking a selfie with some tourists, from what Damian hears they're probably from Italy. His Italian is still not as good as he'd like, but he understands enough to hear Tony talking with them about some pizza place in Milan.

“You okay?” Richards voice is quiet and right next to his ear. Damian leans closer to him and shrugs. He won't lie to him, but he also knows that Richard is excited about this sightseeing tour and he's not going to ruin it for him. “We can leave.”

“No.” But then he frowns at the lines all around the island. “Do we have to wait here?”

“I'm sure it’s not... Where's Tony?”

Damian turns sharply to where he saw Tony last. There’s only the family left, the girl chatting excitedly about the latest Stark phone and the boy teasing her about her crush on a man who could be their father. They're father protests that with a smile and Damian stops paying attention because fuck, they lost Tony in first ten minutes on the Isle. That’s not good.

They turn their backs to each other without a word and start scanning the crowd. It doesn’t take even two minutes before Richard relaxes again.

“Five o'clock, with the security guard.”

Tony’s fake smile is on and the moment he notices them looking at him he waves them over, still talking to the old guard next to him.

“Guys, meet Gary. He was there when me and Rhodey came here at two AM twenty years ago, drunk off our asses. Can you believe this coincidence?”

“From what I remember from twenty years ago, that did tend to happen every time you and your friend were in the city, mister Stark.” The guard’s smile is indulgent and fond. “So, not that big of a coincidence.”
“Awww, Gary, so you do remember me! Anyway, these guys are Damian Wayne and Richard Grayson-Wayne.” Damian notices that the guards eyes widen slightly when Tony drops their names and Tony winks at them. “They're in New York for some sight seeing and don't really have much time - they're in the city just for the day. Is there any way we could… hurry things up here?”

The guard frowns at Tony and Tony just widens his fake smile. Damian has to admire the way he manipulates people to get what he wants. And he’s not even hurting anyone. In fact, Damian is pretty sure that if he had to wait for hours in the line he would hurt someone.

Finally, the guard frowns, rubs the bridge of his nose, and nods.

“Even though you were hammered, you were always nice enough not to cause too much trouble. I’m doing this just as a one-off favor. And because visits from famous people always cause too much trouble.” He looks around and then ushers them to the side, to the paths that are meant only for the security. “Come on, quick and quiet. You have your tickets, right?”

That’s how they make it to the elevator in record ten minutes. There’s already a small group of people. Three young girls speaking rapid-fire French (mostly about some party they’re looking forward to) and an American family. The father has a shirt with a confederate flag and the older son looks at Damian in contempt. Great. Damian's about to be in a restricted area with a couple of xenophobes.

But then they notice Tony and smile wildly at him before thanking him for his service to the country. Damian carefully doesn’t look at Richard.

Once they make it up Tony tries to shake the man and asks Damian and Richard what they want to drink. But the man misinterprets it and manages to invite his and his whole family for a drink. Well, himself and his wife for a drink. The older son tries to argue about beer, but the father shots that down, after carefully looking at Tony. The younger son looks mostly bored, hardly ever looking up from his phone.

Damian doesn’t mind that the man pointedly ignores him. What he does mind is that Tony looks uncomfortable and that he's clutching his bottle of soda tightly and that his eyes keep straying to the beer bottle the man ordered.

Richard is frowning, too. He tries to join the conversation, but the man just laughs at whatever it is Richard says and then goes back to trying to persuade Tony into making weapons. Because that’s what America needs - more weapons to defend its freedom.

Damian was so done with that the moment he started. But when Tony’s eyes don't stray from the beer bottle for full thirty seconds he decides that it’s enough.

He starts talking in Arabic. It’s mostly nonsense, something about the weather and also comments about how Richard's shirt looks great on him.

The man stills and slowly turns towards him. Damian smiles at him. He knows that his smile looks manic. Side effect of his first smile appearing when he was about ten, he assumes.

“Learn English, fucking foreigner.”

Damian just smiles wider. His answer is once again in Arabic.

“Or maybe you should learn another language. America officially doesn’t have just one language, you know?”
“The fuck did you just say about America?!”

The man stands up and steps towards Damian. He's huge, both in height and weight, and is looming above him. It’s not hard to shrink a little and stare at him with wide, scared eyes.

“Help! Security, help!”

The man looks confused for a moment. Just enough for a young security guard to come to them, assess the situation, and frown at the man. The guard easily inserts himself between the two of them, facing the man with the confederate shirt.

“Sir, please, step back and calm down.”

“I… But…The little shit started it!”

Damian makes his voice waver.

“It’s alright, sir. I’m used to it.”

The son joins the scene to defend the man and the mother yells at the guard to get their hands off her son when he tries to restrict him. More guards join in and soon the whole family is escorted out while some woman repeatedly apologizes to Damian. Damian just smiles bashfully and says that it’s okay. He doesn’t want to cause problems to the guards. After all, he did cause that scene.

When everything calms down again, Tony looks at him with amusement.

“Did you really just compliment Dick’s shirt very loudly?”

Damian just stares at Tony, but Richard speaks up.

“How the hell did you understand him? I thought you don't speak Arabic.”

Tony just shrugs.

“It’s not one of the languages I have a certificate in. I started learning it after the whole Afghanistan mess. People spoke many languages there, but Arabic seemed like the obvious choice. But then shit kept happening and Arabic is hard and I never really got around to learn it properly.”

Damian raises his eyebrows. Obviously, that means that he's not as good as native speaker. Interesting

Damian knows that Tony is a genius. Obviously. But so is Timothy. When the two of them talk, nobody understands them. And when they're joined by Harley and Shuri and Peter it's even worse. They can come up with things the rest of them couldn't even dream of. But languages? Timothy is bilingual, as is everyone in the family. But Spanish, the language Timothy chose as his second, proved to be complicated enough for him. And even though he's almost fluent by now, he refused to go through that again.

Damian always found his satisfaction in that. Because where Timothy sometimes has problems expressing himself in his actual mother tongue, Damian always picks up new languages easily enough. In fact, he picked French when he was twelve just to annoy Timothy.

So yeah, Timothy is a genius, but his genius is limited to technology and investigation. Damian… He’s not exactly a genius, but he does have a gift for languages and his strategy is usually the best one from the four of them. But Tony… It seems that Tony’s genius is not limited to one field.
“Are we going to check the view or do you two just want to sit here and drink the most expensive sodas you've ever drank?”

“Most expensive?” Tony snorts. “Kiddo, this doesn’t even enter the top ten.”

Damian glares at him, but with relief notices that Tony is once again relaxed.

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When Jones and Cage rejoin them in the Park, there’s a blind man in a business suit and another man in business suit that looks vaguely uncomfortable in it. Right, Danny Rand, another billionaire son that got lost and came back years later. Damian is less and less impressed with that routine.

Of course, he also recognises them as Daredevil and Iron Fist, the other half of the Defenders. The one with actual secret identities. Has no one told them that hanging around their non-secret colleagues in civilian clothes will kind of ruin their secret identity for them?

Damian can feel a glare on himself, but Rand's intense stare is fixed on Tony. Murdock, then. For a blind guy his stare is really impressive. But then again he's not your usual blind guy.

"Tony. Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Tony waves him away, obviously uncomfortable with the attention. "Danny, Matt, have you met Damian and Dick, yet? They're Bruce Wayne's sons."

Damian shoots Tony a stare, but Rand's intense stare is fixed on Tony. Murdock, then. For a blind guy his stare is really impressive. But then again he's not your usual blind guy.

"Richard Grayson-Wayne. Police officer in Blundhaven, right?"

Damian is not sure if Murdock is trying to impress them or intimidate them by showing that he did his research on them. Damian is mostly amused and when he sneaks a look at Richard's smile, he knows that so is he.

Obviously Timothy did research on all of Defenders the moment Tony got in touch with them about the whole Accords thing.

"Just trying to do my part, mister Murdock. You as a lawyer certainly understand that, don't you?"

Murdock's impressed and Damian just smiles before turning to Rand.

"Mister Rand, congratulations. My father tells me that ever since you came back your firm has been steadily gaining stock and that you've been pulling away from all the shady deals the previous CEOs had going on. Our new CEO certainly seems impressed by that kind of honest work."

They stay there in silence for a moment before Tony rolls his eyes.

"Now that we all established that everyone knows who the other people are, can we go for lunch? My treat."

"No."

Both Damian and Rand look in surprise at each other before Damian nods for Rand to continue.
"My treat." As he says that, he keeps his eyes on Damian. "It's no problem and I'd like to foster this new… friendship between us."

Damian raises an eyebrow at him, amusement hidden behind it, but doesn't protest.

The lunch is tense. It's plain to see that Murdock realized that his little snooping in their background wasn't as throughout as he thought and Rand keeps staring at Damian as if he's some mystery that he has to solve. Damian is glad when they say their goodbyes after lunch. Jones and Cage are as sharp as their colleagues, but they're also smart enough to recognize that they don't want to go digging in their past.

They take a stroll through Central park. Tony gets recognized on almost every step and Damian keeps monitoring the situation, but Tony looks happy to take selfies and sign things and talk to people about technology. He indulges kids in simple explanations of complex technologies and encourages teenagers to find answers to their own questions. At first Damian was worried it would be too much for Tony who relapsed just yesterday, but it seems that contact with everyday people was in fact exactly what he needed.

What a weird idea.

When they finally make it to the zoo he's completely relaxed, almost all the tension in his body gone. He smiles at Damian.

"Thanks. I needed that."

Damian shrugs.

"I didn't. It was Grayson's idea."

"You know I've heard you moan his first name before, right? It is a little weird that you keep insisting on calling them by their last name."

Damian shrugs and turns to quickly check that Jones or Cage didn't hear him. Technically, they are still brothers and between him and Richard in particular there's a pretty big age gap. Tony smirks a little at that.

"Don't worry. Not my secret to tell. So," he turns to where the rest of them are coming to join them, talking loud enough for them to hear. "If we want to for sure catch the sunset in the Empire, we have about 90 minutes before we leave." Damian scowls at that. Maybe. A little. Tony rolls his eyes. "Look, this is a small zoo. I'll take you to the Bronx one for a whole day, someday, okay? Now let's go. There's a Grizzly there that I still have some getting even to do with."

Damian hardly covers his smile and he's sure that Richard saw it anyway. He smiles at Damian, winking at him.

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The view from Empire State Building is impressive. Damian gives it that.

It's a little harder to get there with the whole line skipping thing. There's no guard Tony somehow knows and Jones and Cage are not exactly helping the matter. Just the fact that there's five of them
is a complication. But Tony uses his charisma and Richard helps with his own and soon enough they're up.

There's a bar there and Jones seems to be taken with the idea of a drink on the top of the world. Tony buys her virgin version of Sex on the beach. Cage teases her that it's just a juice like this. Damian is pretty sure that the only reason why he's not drenched in juice after that is because the drink is ridiculously overpriced and even though she didn't pay for it, Jones is very aware of that.

That means that Damian and Richard have some privacy for the first time since breakfast. There's still people around, so no kissing, but it still feels nice, standing this close, sure that no one's listening.

Richard teases Damian about the zoo and that he made them go to the kids' one and spent most of their time there petting goats. Damian let's him for once, just watching the city. Stark Tower is clearly visible from here and it's curious how different its light is from all the buildings around. They are all pretty modern and so the lights are white everywhere, but the Stark tower somehow seems… brighter.

Suddenly the sun sets a little lower and the city turns orange. A hush falls over the floor as everyone looks at the sunset and for once Damian is truly speechless.

It's not like it's something extra, he tries to argue with himself. But there's a whole new atmosphere in the room. As if just for a moment everybody holds in a breath. For a moment, everyone just looks at the unique beauty that is New York City. For a moment, just this one moment, everything is still.

"Okay, you were right," he begrudgingly admits, sure that Richard's listening. "The view is… nice."

"It sure is."

There's a gentle breathlessness to Richard's agreement and Damian turns to him, ready for his turn of teasing. But when he does so Richard is already looking at him, adoration clear in his eyes.

Damian turns back towards the view, cheeks warm, and breathless himself. Their hands brush each other and Damian hopes Jones is too busy with her drink to notice any of this.

Chapter End Notes

And that's it for right now! I hope you enjoyed it and as always, any ideas for this fic are very welcome =o) Let me know what you think and I'll hopefully see you in another two weeks
Lately Pepper and Tony's relationship has been strained. It's Pepper's fault, she's well aware of that.

Pepper tries to reconcile her friendship with Tony and Damian and his lovers have important talk about future.
Less Rogues-bashing, more an actual plot becoming part of the fic. Who saw that happen? Certainly not the author.

Chapter Notes

I'm so. Sorry.
Since now I'm not giving any time estimate ever.
I hope you didn't forget all about the fic in the meantime because turns out, my brain has great plans for... well, everyone. And it's hard writing an actual plot.
I hope you'll find the chapter worth the wait =o)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lately Pepper and Tony's relationship has been strained. It's Pepper's fault, she's well aware of that.

She didn't understand his need to be a hero. He did so much for people, why did it also have to be him to risk his life for them? Then she had Extremis and it got worse. She hated those powers and didn't want to have anything to do with them.

Of course, Tony saved her. Beautiful, brilliant Tony took only about a week to figure it all out and save her from the prison that her own body became. She felt hope then. That he understood. That he finally got enough of the whole superhero nonsense and would come to live the simple life with her.

But that's not what happened and they kept hurting each other. Pepper was the one to end things. It was the right decision. She knows that. She's as sure of that fact as she is that Tony is a true hero.

But the break up… It broke them in ways she didn't expect. She definitely didn't expect the rest of the Avengers to go and fuck everything up just a week after she had the talk with Tony. They were supposed to be there for him, to help him the same way Happy helped her.

But that didn't happen and Tony almost died.

She tried to call the hospital, but she wasn't on the list of his contacts anymore so they wouldn't tell her anything. She broke down crying when they told her.

When she finally got hold of Rhodey he explained everything in calm, soothing voice. How the
Rogues fucked everything up. How Bruce Wayne turned up and did Pepper know that he and Tony are childhood friends? (Pepper didn't know and it made her feel like shit.) That he and Tony are going to recover in Gotham.

When she wanted to go see them right away he gently but firmly turned her away.

"Give him time," he said. "He's hurting and you're scared. If you visit him now it will only end up in disaster. One way or another."

She listened to him. It hurt and she hated herself, but she listened and took care of Tony's company for him.

Half a year later he came back. With strained smiles and tense every time they were in the same room. She didn't know how to act around him and he was obviously nervous around her.

But if nothing else than they were both stubborn and marched on. They had business to deal with and that helped a lot. Sometimes Rhodey came to the city and they all did lunch together. Then she and Tony were on good enough terms that they went for a lunch on their own, just the two of them.

Their friendship is still on rocky ground, but Pepper refuses to give up on it. She might not know every single one of Tony's friends as she did once upon a time and Tony might not be as big a part of her work life as he used to be, but they're friends, goddammit, and Pepper is not letting either one of them give up 20 years of shared friendship just because their romantic relationship did not went as well as they hoped.

And this time it's Rhodey who's busy in work and can't drop everything to take care of Tony. And she knows that it's not really needed, because Rhodey himself assures her that the Waynes will take care of him. But she's not leaving her best friend battle his demons alone. And this time no one and nothing will stop her from helping.

Of course, she can’t just drop everything out of nowhere. That’s why she and her PA spend the whole Monday cleaning out her schedule for the rest of the week. It was hard job, doing so in between her usual meetings. Her PA is amazing, but there are some important people she needs to call in person to apologize. And of course, because they’re important they don’t have the time to take any random call in the middle of the day. So it takes a lot of phone calls just to arrange more phone calls. Pepper makes a note to give her PA a nice bonus this month.

The next morning, she packs a bag, puts on some old jeans and a joke shirt (a soft cream-colored one with blood red Mushu and Let’s get down to business right under that), and gets to her car. She doesn’t drive it that often, it’s easier and better for business to drive around with a driver, so she can prepare for her next meeting. Not to talk about the benefit of a professional driver in the city. They usually know how to avoid the worst of traffic and how to arrive at desired place on time and when to leave to actually make it in time.

But the only person she’d trust to take her to Tony in his time of need is Happy and he’s busy looking after the kids Tony somehow acquired over the years. Pepper is actually pretty sure that right now he’s in Tennessee, visiting Harley. Besides, her car could use the ride. She doesn’t use it often enough.

It’s a longer ride than she remembers, but then again she never drove there herself. It’s still almost noon when she arrives.

“Good morning, Boss Lady.”
She smiles at Friday’s camera. She was a little afraid of how Tony’s... creation (she was forced to stop calling them kids after Tony somehow got actual kids following him around) would react to her after their break up. She was relieved to find out that they don’t hold any grudge against her. Friday actually informed her that the bots miss her.

“Morning, Friday. Is Tony here or did someone manage to drag him out after all?”

“Boss is in the living room of his suite, along with all of his not-busy guests.” There’s a small pause before Friday adds in a pleased voice: “The little prince and mister Grayson-Wayne managed to take him on a sightseeing tour yesterday.”

Pepper blinks a few times when she hears the nickname. She never heard it before and honestly, is not sure what to think.

But she doesn’t dwell on it.

She smiles when she sees that there’s Brooklyn 99 on TV. She was the one to introduce it to Tony when they dated. She’s glad to see that it’s still his comfort show.

Tony is on the couch, in the corner of it. He’s not really curled into a ball, but he’s also not sprawled over it like usually. He and Dick (she can’t believe he actually calls himself that nowadays, but that’s what he told her to call him when they had dinner on Sunday) are kind of leaning into each other, comfortable enough to share a bag of chips. Damian is sitting on the other end of the couch, a sketchbook on his lap and his legs stretched out so that his toes are tucked under Dick’s thighs. From what Pepper’s seeing he’s not really paying attention to the TV.

Jones and Cage are curled together on the loveseat. They’re wearing some track trousers and loose shirts. In fact everyone is wearing comfortable clothes. Tony’s wearing jeans and a rock band shirt, Dick’s also in jeans and a tank top that looks a little too big for him, and Damian’s in legging and a Red Hood hoodie. Pepper is a little surprised to see him in a hoodie in this weather.

“Hey, Pep,” Tony smiles at her widely when he sees her. There’s still some kind of sharp edge in that smile, but he looks much better than she expected.

“Hello, Tony. Can I talk to you? In private,” she adds, looking at the loveseat. Jones sighs, but gets up.

“Come on, Luke, let’s check all the take out restaurants Tony usually orders from, maybe we’ll find something even we can afford to treat him for a change.”

“You don’t have to…”

“Shut up, Tony.”

Pepper smiles after them. It’s such a nice change from the freeloaders Tony called friends in the past. Then she turns towards the other two who didn’t even move yet. Dick glances towards Damian before staring back at the TV and speaking up.

“Not going anywhere. Anything you want to say to him we can be here to hear it, too.” He thinks for a while before adding: “We can move to the loveseat, though.”

“Hey!” Damian frowns at him. “I’m in the middle of something, here.”

Dick just rolls his eyes and pushes Damian’s legs off the couch.
“Come on, Demon spawn, let’s give them some space.”

“From the other room, perhaps?” Pepper asks in her polite, icy tone that made men older than her run and hide. But those guys just chuckle.

“Nice try, miss Potts, but if I leave this room I have to answer to Bruce. You’re not nearly as intimidating as him.”

Pepper raises her eyebrows at that. Bruce Wayne, intimidating? Sure, he is a big, fit man, but his body language is always non-intimidating and, if you look close enough, kind.

“Don’t worry, Pepper, the Waynes can keep secrets. And they will keep everything you say quiet.”

“Are you sure?”

“Oh, don’t worry, I know all their secrets. You stick around long enough, you’re gonna learn them too.”

“We’re not that bad!”

Tony gives Dick one unimpressed look before his eyes stray to… his pecs? Oh. There’s a hickey half-hiding under the tank top, but visible if you know where to look. Dick rolls his eyes and throws his arm over the back of the loveseat so Damian can lean back into him. He does so without even thinking, already once again lost in his drawing. Pepper notices all of that and carefully stores it away for now.

“You brought a bag?” Tony sounds surprised. Pepper just smiles.

“You didn’t expect me to leave you again, did you?” She’s teasing, but there’s also a softness to her voice. She lets the bag go next to the couch and makes herself comfortable on it, not touching Tony, but close enough so that he knows she’s not oppose to touches. “I don’t have enough things over here to last a week, do I? I never really had it here, actually.”

“A week? What about…”

“Don’t worry about it, Tony, me and Suzie took care of everything. The next thing I have to worry about is meeting on Monday afternoon. But really, that can wait.” She shoots a quick look towards the other guys, but Damian seems to be completely oblivious to anything going on outside of his sketchbook and Dick is concentrating on the TV so hard it’s obvious he’s giving them their space. “How are you, Tony?” she asks, softly, quietly. “Really, truly. The relapse can’t be easy.”

“I’m fine, Pepper.” But he sounds guarded. Pepper hates it and she’s not letting this to continue. So she pushes through.

“You’re not. And that’s fine,” she adds quickly when Tony looks at her with hurt in his eyes. Now he just rolls his eyes and grumbles something under his breath. Pepper can easily imagine that it’s his usual “why do you ask when you know the answer” routine and she smiles at it. She’s so glad she’s here. “And Tony - I’m so proud of you.”

“For what, for relapsing?”

“No! But before that? You made it a whole year and another six months to that. That’s amazing, Tony!”

“Yeah, well, it wasn’t my first relapse.”
“A relapse during first month is pretty normal, actually. And after that the odds of not relapsing ever again actually don’t go down by much. Institutions who help alcoholics recover usually have about 80 to 90% of their customers returning. And that’s not even counting those who don’t come back but still turn back to alcohol. You are an alcoholic and that will never change again. But you are in recovery and that’s all the difference.”

Tony just stares at her. It gets to point where it actually makes Pepper uncomfortable.

“What? You thought that just because I wasn’t there personally I wouldn’t be involved at all? Where do you think Rhodey got all those books he read in the manor you ran to hide?” She’s mostly ignoring the other guys but she does notice that they both tense when she talks about the manor. Another interesting thing for later consideration. “I read much more than what I sent as recommendation. The statistics all around the states are pretty interesting, actually. Plus, you know I’ve been pushing you to start doing something about your alcoholism. What made you finally listen?”

Tony looks sheepish at that. Damian snorts.

“We didn’t exactly give him a choice, did we?”

“Well, all I remember is that one day I came to the mansion and it had literally no alcohol in it. And then Bruce pulls me aside and explains that Tony is recovering alcoholic and if I want a beer I better get it out of the mansion, at least for another few weeks.”

“Because you definitely listened.”

“Hey! Jason was the one who came in with a six pack. And Bruce didn’t say anything about that, so I count that night as a win.”

Damian murmurs something just quietly enough that only Dick hears him and Pepper sees him move his head to look at Damian, but she can’t see his face from this angle. She can hear them start talking in that quiet voice so no one can really hear them, but she makes herself ignore that and turn back to Tony.

“I should have figured that would work. Should have done that years ago.”

“Wouldn’t work as well if it was my house with my butler/AI while I could just easily buy everything back.”

“You want me to believe that you didn’t try anyway?”

Tony laughs and Pepper lets go of some of the tension in her body she didn’t even realize that she was carrying in her. The TV is still on and she is pretty sure no one is paying attention to it and it almost feels like a home.

“I did. But it never got to me and the one time I asked Alfred, the butler, I got threatened with a knife. And I’m not talking a small, butter knife, I’m talking big-ass butcher knife. Also, it wasn’t your usual American threat. It was British, near MI5-level threatening.”

“MI6, actually.”

Tony rolls his eyes, but Pepper just looks at Damian for a moment. He’s not even looking at them, concentrating on his sketches, just Dick’s arm is around his shoulder instead of the back of the loveseat. She’s not sure if he’s joking, but… he looks too casual to play some kind of trick.
“You’re telling me that your butler worked for MI6?”

Damian doesn’t look up but Dick smiles at her.

“Don’t worry, he’s technically retired.”

“Technically?”

“Don’t… just don’t.” Pepper turns to Tony with a frown. That is maybe the third time she sees him speechless. Or, you know, without words. “Don’t go poking into the Waynes. If they want you to know stuff, they will tell you. If they don’t, it won’t end well.”

“Or what, they have their MI6 butler take care of me?”

“If you’re lucky.”

Pepper was joking. But the casual way Damian keeps throwing those comments is starting to make her uneasy. Also, the fact that he’s barely an adult who has a really weird sense of humor and neither Dick nor Tony seem to even notice that.

“Anyway,” she says slowly, “thank you for your… involvement in Tony’s recovery.” She hesitates for a moment, but then she clasps Tony’s hand in her own, leaning into him. Tony squeezes her hand and she smiles at him. “So is there any room where I can stay while here?”

“Yeah, sure. There’s still a free room over there,” Tony motions deeper into his suite. Pepper doesn’t think that’s a good idea. She loves Tony, God knows she does, and she’s gonna fight to her death before letting them fall away from each other’s lives again. But living this close together? She doesn’t think they’re ready for it.

“Or maybe I could stay in one of the rooms in the private wing? I wanna be there for you, Tony, I really do, but living together…”

“Yeah, no, sure, you’re right.” But Tony makes a quick move to let go of her hand. She doesn’t let him.

“You’re not getting rid of me that easily, Stark, so stop trying cheap tricks on me.” Then she looks at their joined hands and takes a deep breath. “Are we okay now, Tony?”

Tony turns their hands and moves their fingers so they’re interlocked. Then he moves them back and starts playing with her fingers, running his finger over Pepper’s perfect manicure. Pepper lets him. She’s well aware that touch helps Tony relax.

“We will be.” When he finally answers his voice is sure and determined. “We’re… not there yet, but we are gonna get there.”

Pepper smiles and leans her head on Tony’s shoulder. Like that, pressed close together and with their hands linked, it’s almost like when they were together. Not quite, but almost.

Pepper likes it.

Jones and Cage come back then. Pepper notices the way Jones quickly looks over Dick and Damian, as if confirming something to herself, before they both collapse to an armchair right next to Tony. It’s a little small for the two of them, but Jones takes the seat on Cage’s lap and that makes it easier.
“Pizza. Friday choose your toppings, boss lady, so I hope that’ll be fine.”

“Oh, are we calling Pepper that now? Boss lady?”

Jones just shrugs.

“It is a little awkward when only time I see her it’s on a cover of a magazine.”

Pepper grimaces a little. Her CEO status has stopped her from connecting with people before. This one time a waiter split water during a big meeting she had with some other businessmen. She tried to help, but the waiter seemed even more scared when she offered. It was one of her first meetings as a CEO and it took a while for her to realize that there was a big difference between being a PA of CEO and being the actual CEO. At least in the way that people see her.

She sees it in Jones and Cage, too. They’re more open to her, but there’s also a tenseness to them. They’re ready to shut down, shut her off, she realizes. She also knows that it’s nothing personal. Jones is a woman and Cage is a big black man. They both probably had some negative experience with people in power. They’re just trying to protect themselves.

Which means that she needs to be the one making the first step.

“Pepper is fine,” she smiles at them. “Really, boss lady makes me think too much of work.”

There’s a somewhat awkward silence before Tony finally speaks up.

“I think you offended FRIDAY.”

“It’s fine, boss.” FRIDAY somehow manages to sound both proud and insulted at the same time. “Me and the bots will just be in the lab minding our own business.”

“No, wait – FRIDAY!” Pepper sounds panicked, she knows, but that’s genuinely not what she meant. “It’s different for you and the boys. FRIDAY? FRIDAY!”

“I think you really offended her, Pep.”

Tony is smiling wildly and when Pepper looks around everyone seems amused. Pepper relaxes, but still frowns.

“I really didn’t mean it like that.”

To her surprise, it’s Damian who answers her. He shuts his sketchbook loudly and gets up, turning to her and putting the sketchbook back on the loveseat, along with the pencil he used with it.

“Let’s go apologise then.”

Pepper blinks at him in surprise and then turns slowly towards Tony. Tony just waves his hand.

“It’s fine. Damian can let you in today and we’ll sort out your access to it later.”

Pepper keeps staring at Tony for another moment, before she finally gets up.

“You’re leaving Tony alone?”

Damian snorts.

“Grason’s staying. He’s not allowed in a lab anymore.”
“One time I allow Tim to put things on fire,” grumbles Dick some, but Pepper is looking at Tony, who rolls his eyes and gives Damian some kind of meaningful look. Damian just looks away from Tony and towards Pepper.

“You coming or what?”

“Am I gonna die if I go with him?”

Once again it’s supposed to be a joke, but suddenly everyone is looking at Dick. Dick just rolls his eyes.

“Dami, don’t kill the nice lady who takes care of Tony’s company while he hangs out with us.”

“Spoilsport.”

“You did leave the katana in the gym, right?”

Damian doesn’t answer as they leave the room and isn’t that just a little bit worrying.

Damian walks through the hall all the way to the elevator before turning to her.

“Why are you here?”

Pepper blinks at him in surprise.

“I’m here to support Tony.”

Damian cocks his head at her and suddenly she’s very aware of how intensely green his eyes are, especially in his light brown face.

“You weren’t there the last time.”

She immediately tenses, feeling her walls come up. She’s not used to kids talking to her like that. She’s also not sure why exactly she lets him talk to her like that. It’s just something in the way Tony interacts with them. She’s aware that she hasn’t really... seen them interact, but the little she saw... Tony is not treating Damian like a kid, to start with. And she knows for a fact that he treats a damn princess of Wakanda as a kid. (Sure, she is one, Pepper is not arguing that. But so is Damian!)

“Me and Tony were… not in a good place back then.”

“You dumped him two weeks before he was left for death by a person he thought of as a friend.”

Pepper once again blinks in surprise. That’s… blunt.

“I… put trust into people that did not deserve that trust. I trusted the Rogues to be there for Tony the same way I had people around me.” She questions why she’s telling him all of this. But the door to the elevator is still closed and Pepper knows that it’s not because they never really pushed any buttons. Also, even though his green eyes are objectively beautiful, there’s something dangerous in them. And Pepper might not know everything about them, but she knows danger when she sees it. And the fact that she doesn’t know that much about him actually makes her more cautious. “I was in contact with Rhodey the whole time. He didn’t think me coming over would be a good idea.” She hesitates just for a moment. “He was right.”

“How so?”
Pepper really doesn’t like the kid. But her glare doesn’t do anything for him. In fact, he seems amused as he leans back to the wall and crosses his arms.

Pepper stops herself when she sees that. That move looks uniquely... Tony. That makes her think about how he seems to have an answer for everything and how he seems confident, almost arrogant. And how he’s driving her nuts.

Exactly like Tony, twenty years ago.

He’s testing her, she realizes.

And she… doesn’t really mind. In fact, she’s glad that Tony has someone who clearly cares for him enough to check that his friends are true friends, now.

She ignores the little voice in her head telling her that that should have been her and then maybe, just maybe, Tony wouldn’t get so close to the Rogues, wouldn’t be hurt by them so bad. That’s something to think about some other time.

Instead, she decides that she can do the same now.

“If I showed up back then, it would end either in fight, or in us getting back together. And considering how unorganized and lazy Tony is in the business setting, it wouldn’t end well.”

Damian scowls at her and for a moment she reconsiders her strategy. It’s not usual to be actually scared of a nineteen-year-old, right?

“Tony’s neither of those things! He took a multi-million, national company and made it into a multi-billion international company with several...” Suddenly, he shuts up and scowls at her. Then he sighs. “Nicely done, miss Potts.” And he nods his head slightly in respect. Pepper smirks.

“You might be in business school, mister Wayne, but I’ve been in business for decades.”

She sees him look her up and down before he nods.

Finally, the door to the elevator opens and they get in. They don’t talk at all until the door opens again and suddenly, they’re in Tony’s lab.

The bots are quick to greet them and Pepper is just a bit surprised when Damian kneels to greet them along with her.

She pats them and greets them as always, but then she excuses herself. Not that the bots mind that much. They happily move to crowd Damian. Pepper is surprised to see him smile at that.

But she steps away to apologise to FRIDAY.

It takes her a while to get the stubborn AI to even talk to her, but she’s been dealing with Tony’s electronic kids long enough to know what to say and how to apologise, so in the end, FRIDAY accepts her apology and she’s free to re-join Damian.

He’s sitting on the floor close to the elevator, his back to the wall. He has U by his side all the time, gently petting him, while DUM-E and Butterfingers race each other for a tennis ball he keeps throwing them. Pepper slides down next to him, from the other side of U.

“You don’t have to stay, you can go back up.”

Pepper just shrugs and runs her fingers over U’s joint. U whirs softly and Pepper smiles.
“So, business school. You gonna do your internship at Wayne Enterprises?”

“Yeah.”

“With your brother, the CEO?”

Damian seems to freeze. He just sits there, staring at some point on the floor in front of them. He doesn’t move when Butterfingers gives him back the tennis ball, not even when DUM-E gets impatient and pokes him. He just raises his hand and pats DUM-E few times.

“Yeah,” he finally says, as if it didn’t take him minutes to answer, “that’s probably not a good idea.”

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Eventually, they make it back to Tony’s suite and to the living room in there. By the time they do so pizzas are there. Dick hands a box to Damian wordlessly and he takes it, sitting down close to Dick. Even Dick seems a little surprise at that. She can see him quietly asking if something’s wrong, but Damian just shakes his hand, looking quickly around the room, at everyone else that’s here.

Pepper doesn’t comment on it, but she and Jones does exchange quick glances.

Fifth season of B99 started by then and Pepper is happy to just relax, watch the show, and eat her pizza.

“What happened to the article Lois was writing?”

It’s not exactly a question out of the blue, Pepper guesses, but it’s the first time Dick joins the conversation that somehow turned to the Rogues and how the papers seem to just… ignore the fact that they came back.

“She’s waiting for after the whole Loki trial thing calms down.”

That makes Pepper frown.

“How’s that going anyway?”

Tony seems uncomfortable suddenly and that brings in the attention of everyone in the room.

“The trial starts on Monday in Haag.” He hesitates for a moment, but Pepper knows him enough to poke him. He glares, but then sighs. “I’m supposed to stand witness on Wednesday.”

There’s a silent moment, before Damian speaks up.

“Does father know?”

“I’m an adult man, Damian. Bruce doesn’t need to know everything. In fact, I’m older than Bruce.” Damian looks skeptical.

“If you’re sure.” Another pause. “I’ve never been to Haag. I hear it’s a nice city.”
“You’re not coming with me to Haag!”

“Of course I’m coming with you to Haag,” Damian actually rolls his eyes. “Father is busy in the city and Richard will have to go back to Bludhaven on weekend. And I’m pretty sure that outside of miss Potts, I’m the only one in this room who has ready a passport for a Europe trip.”

“We’re not leaving you alone, Tony.” Somehow, Dick’s gentle voice and easy smile isn’t as reassuring as Damian’s no-nonsense attitude. “Especially not if you need to see a sociopath again.”

“That’s just the thing,” sighs Tony. “I… don’t think he actually is. Sociopathic or psychopathic or whatever.” He gulps, before adding: “His eyes are green.”

Pepper is confused, but somehow Dick and Damian exchange looks, obviously hearing more than just an eye color.

“And they weren’t when you first met him?”

Oh.

“No. They were bright blue.” Tony looks straight at Dick and Damian. “Tesseract blue.”

“Do we know where the Tesseract is now?”

“According to Thor, it was destroyed with Asgard.”

“You don’t believe that.” Pepper frowns as she says that. Tony sighs.

“I don’t think it can be destroyed… that easily.”

“And Loki is the god of mischief.”

“And it would be the perfect thing to pull out during his trial.”

Tony smiles first at Damian and then Jessica and suddenly Pepper understands why Tony needs those people around himself. They understand him. Not the business side of him that Pepper herself understand. (Or not only it in Damian’s case.) But the side that sees ten steps ahead of everyone’s strategy. She was never quite able to do that, not even in business. But they see the flaws in people the same way Tony does. And while Tony often overlooks those flaws and gives people many more chances than they deserve, something tells her that neither Damian nor Jessica are in that habit.

“Still gonna argue about me coming with you?”

Tony groans.

“We want him to survive the trial, okay?”

“You flying private? Cause if so, check that he doesn’t have his katana with him.”

Damian glares at Dick and Pepper blinks a few times.

“Is that… like a thing? Should I look out for a katana now?”

"He usually doesn't have it on himself… Anymore." To Pepper's surprise Dick sounds more fond than anything else. Horrified would probably be a more appropriate answer, but that's just Pepper's personal opinion. "You're safe as long as you don't hurt anyone in the family."
"What kind of family is it?" asks Jones. Damian turns towards her so quickly Pepper is sure he hurt herself. Jones looks simply curious, yet Damian glares at her.

"The very close one where people are willing to kill for each other."

Jones grins at him and sips her soda before looking back towards the TV.

It's the proposal episode and soon enough everyone gets quiet. Pepper leans on Tony and he hugs her shoulders. She's careful to look around before she lets her tears fall. She always cries during that episode, so sue her, but Amy and Jake are made for each other.

"Are you crying?"

"Shut up, Grayson!"

"Awww, Dami." Dick hugs Damian close while Damian fights him. It looks pretty dangerous from where Pepper's sitting, but Dick manages to hold him close. "It's okay, they're our OTP, too."

"I'm not crying, Grayson."

"Come on, let me just take a photo of you."

"Fuck you, Grayson!"

With that Damian pulls a move that looks almost like something Natashalie would do before storming out of the room. Dick just laughs as he gets up and follows him. In the door he turns towards them.

"Sorry about that, we're still working on that whole emotions are good and natural lesson. See ya tomorrow!"

Pepper blinks a few times after him.

"Okay, I'm not the only one thinking they're gonna fuck, right?"

Pepper turns towards Jones in slight horror. They're brothers, right?

"Come on, Pep." Tony laughs at her and it's annoying and endearing at the same time. "Even you couldn't have overlooked the sexual tension between the two of them."

"They're… brothers."

"Adopted. Also - you're worried about the katana? Don't mention that little detail to Damian. He doesn't like to be reminded."

Pepper just stares at him.

Not only are they technically brothers, Dick is 30 while Damian is 19!

Pepper won't judge just yet, but she will keep her eyes out on them. Just to be sure nothing… non-consensual is going on.

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Damian is crying, is the problem.

He knows it’s not… a problem, per se. It’s not bad. No one will punish him for showing emotions. He… does have some anger issues, he’s aware. Mostly because when he was a kid, anger was basically the only emotion he was allowed to show. And he was taught to mostly channel it instead of showing it. Anything else was punished. Tears especially.

But tears of good emotions? That’s… weird. Damian learned in the last few years to enjoy the emotions, to not rush through them and just… enjoy the moment. But crying over fictional characters? That’s what he makes fun of Timothy and Richard for.

He slams the door to his room closed and lies down on his bed, face down. And yeah, both Jason and now Richard are staying here, but it’s still Damian’s room, damn it. It’s not the same as the room in the manor that was originally Timothy’s, but nobody thinks about it in that way anymore. Not even Timothy, who when he needs some alone time goes to one particular guest room in the manor.

The door opens and closes quietly and Damian moves just enough to wipe the tears from his face.

“Go away, Grayson.”

“Wait till the wedding episode,” is what Richard says instead. The bed dips and Damian moves just a little away from where Richard sits down. “Doesn’t matter how many times I saw it, I always bawl my eyes out.” Damian sighs and rolls over so breathing gets easier. He doesn’t look at Richard, just stares at the ceiling. “I really wanna hold you now.”

Damian rolls his eyes. With a relationship between four people, communication is the key. (Damian is pretty sure that applies for every relationship, but it’s extra fucking important when there’s four of you and there’s always something happening.) Out of the four of them, Richard is the only one who never hesitates to vocalize what he’s thinking and always asks for consent. And yeah, Damian does have a tendency to just… drape himself over one of his lovers if he feels like it. He’s never had any complaints, though.

But he likes that about Richard. So he sighs dramatically and moves over so he’s lying his head on Richard’s lap.

“Good enough?”

Richard chuckles and runs his fingers through Damian’s hair.

“Brat.” Damian closes his eyes and relaxes into Richard. Richard moves his free hand to hug Damian’s chest and Damian kind of… lashes into it, holding tight to Richard’s arm with both his hands. Richard lets him.

“You wanna talk about it?”

Damian laughs in that empty way he has that Richard hates.

“I don’t even know what that was!”

“Okay. We can talk through it.” Richard pushes Damian’s hair back and Damian looks up to him, finally looking into his eyes. “Do you want the guys for it?”
Oh fuck, yes. He wants Timothy sprawled right over him and Jason’s hand on the back of his neck, squeezing, silently telling him not to be an idiot. He wants them arguing over him over the idea of engagement in general – Richard gushing about the romantic aspect, Timothy explaining all the legal and tax benefits, and Jason just scoffing at it all. So that Damian can relax into that familiar atmosphere, listen to the fight, and figure out his own stance. Because right now he’s just confused.

But that’s not gonna happen. Because there’s no magical teleport that could give him that right away. But still.

“Yes, please.”

Richard smiles at him and Damian looks away. He’s only ever polite for Richard (and Pennyworth, but that doesn’t count) and Richard always smiles at him just a little brighter while staying gentle. Richard likes when he’s polite, but Damian doesn’t think that he realizes he does it only for him because Richard’s reaction to him makes him all warm inside. Jason gets it, but so far he hasn’t said anything to Richard. Or Timothy.

Richard stops petting his hair and Damian frowns, but Richard’s getting his phone, so he doesn’t complain. Better than letting go of his arm.

The phone rings out loud only few times before Jason answers.

“Fuck you, circus freak, I’m on a stake out. Some asshole has been recruiting kids to deal drugs again and I need to find out who it is asap.”

“How long have you been there?”

“Only about six hours.”

Damian and Richard both frown at that.

“Are you sure he’s even in the building?”

“And hello to you, too, demon spawn.” Jason sounds more grumpy than usually and Damian bristles at his tone. He doesn’t mind the nickname when it’s said fondly and teasingly. But like that, with a bite? He hates it. “You know how it is with big bad bosses. It’s gonna take months to get the one who’s the real problem. So far I’ve been researching who the kid dealers answer to.”

“In other words, it’s a problem, but nothing you can solve right now. We need to talk about engagements.”

There’s some kind of loud noise from the phone, some cursing, and then the noise of Jason running for his life. Damian smirks at Richard.

“Didn’t have to word it like that.”

“No, but then where would we get our amusement of the day?”

“If he gets shot and goes to Pennyworth, I’m so pushing you under the bus.”

“Wouldn’t expect anything else.”

Richards puts down the phone so they still hear the sound of someone running and Jason will probably hear them as soon as he gets back on the phone, but also so he has his hand free again. He
moves both his hands and Damian grumbles about it for a moment, but Richard just takes his face in between his hands and starts kissing him all around his face. Damian splutters some, but then he lets it happen, smiling into it.

“What the fuck, Richard?” finally comes out of the phone in Jason’s slightly breathless voice. “No, wait. Where the fuck is Tim?”

There’s a muted answer that sounds like Pennyworth. Richard sits back up and Damian relaxes again. They listen to the quick conversation between Pennyworth and Jason before there’s silence for a moment and then the sound of closing door and Jason obviously lying down on a bed.

“Oh, wait, what the fuck, Grayson?!”

“You sure we shouldn’t wait for Tim?” Richard’s voice is perfectly neutral, but his smile is wicked and he winks at Damian. Damian grins back.

“Richard John Grayson, don’t fuck with me right now. What. The. Fuck?!”

There’s something frantic, almost feral about Jason’s voice. By Richard’s expression Damian is not the only one surprised by that.

“Calm your horses, Jesus. We were watching B-99 and it came to the engagement episode, which made Dami freak out.”

“No, it did not, fuck you.”

“Oh, so it made him cry, which made him freak out.”

“Fuck you, Grayson!”

This time Damian doesn’t hold back when he punches Richard, which makes Richard oof. There’s a moment of tense silence.

“Fuck’s sake, Grayson, you seriously need to word your Earth-shattering news better.” There’s a clear relief in Jason’s voice. “And I suppose that now you want to talk about it. Why babybat seems to freak out every time he has a positive emotion.”

“Yeah, what’s up with that? Can we like, not?”

“What do you not understand about the whole communication is the key thing we all agreed on? But fine, we’ll wait for Tim. It’ll probably be easier with him either way. So, some asshole’s turning your neighborhood into a kid dealing sham. Tell us about it.”

That gets Jason ranting, obviously. Kids are untouchable where he’s concerned and he made it his job to make that clear to anyone who would want to even look at the kids wrong. Jason usually makes sure to make the rounds often enough so that no one forgets. But lately he’s been busy with Accords and, well, Damian supposes with himself and his other lovers. And suddenly he feels just a bit guilty.

He turns his face to bury it in Richard’s thighs, still carefully listening to Jason’s rant. It’s not really informative or anything, but Jason’s voice is soothing. And for once he lets himself be soothed.

“Okay, Alfred told me to come right up here and I find you ranting? Also, aren’t you supposed to be on a stake out of some kind, Jason?”
“I was, before Grayson rudely interrupted with talks about engagement.”

Suddenly there’s silence. Damian frowns and turns once more to see the phone. The call is still going on.

“See, Dick? You broke him.”

“I broke him? I’m not even there!”

“Well you were the one who started talking about engagements!”

“To freak you out, not to… break Tim.”

“Would you two shut up for a moment?” Tim’s voice is a little panic-y, Damian notices. He moves to sit up, but Richard silently puts his arm around him once again so he remains lying down. Damian frowns at him, but makes himself comfortable yet aware enough to pay attention to everything going on. “So… engagements. Someone better explain what is going on.”

“Brooklyn 99,” mutters Damian, half grumpy and half fond. He likes the show, okay? It’s well-written, actually funny, and it has some great representation. And yes, he likes all the pairings that are cannon, which is rather unusual.

“The engagement episode.”

“Damian flipped out.”

“I did not! You weren’t even there, Todd!”

“And he cried and you know how he reacts to crying.”

“Right, probably made worse by the fact that, I assume, it was happy tears this time around.” Damian is relieved to hear Timothy’s voice without the panic in it. Sure, he sounds tired, but Timothy always sounds tired. He also thinks about protesting, but… well, he does have a point. “So, are we talking about engagements or are we having another good feelings are good session? Cause honestly, I think Jason could use a re-run of the lecture.”

“What happened?”

Damian and Richard say it at once in the same, worried tone.

“Fuck’s sake, calm your horses. Nothing happened. Tim’s just being an ass, again.”

“You know he could use that lecture annually. Twice a week, shall we say?”

“Sure, as soon as we get you to sleep eight hours a day.”

“Stop flirting, you two. Or at least put the video on so we can see whatever it will turn into.”

“Asshole,” Jason mutters, but soon enough there’s a video to go with the call. Richard takes the phone and positions it so that Timothy and Jason may see them, too. They’re also on the bed, leaning back on the headboard, Timothy’s head resting on Jason’s shoulder and Jason’s arm resting on Timothy’s shoulders. “Well, aren’t you two cozy.”

“Seriously?” snorts Damian. “You wanna say that now? With Timothy all over you?”

“Says the one lying on Dick’s lap.”
“Stop it, you two. Now, we’ve all seen B99, right?”

“Yes.”

“Duh.”

“And we all cried during the engagement episode.”

“Obviously.”

“You can’t prove it.”

“See, Dami? Your reaction is human.”

Damian frowns at Richard. That doesn’t really make him feel better. Which is weird, because showing him that his reaction is normal usually does the trick. There’s still something bothering him. And he thinks he knows what it is, but…

“Is this about the expectation of a wife and at least one kid you grew up with?”

Damian scowls at the phone. Leave it to Timothy to voice exactly what’s been bothering him without him even properly putting it into full thoughts.

“Is that… really it?” Richard sounds surprised at that, looking down at him with hurt eyes. Damian quickly turns away, curling into a ball in the process, his face hidden from the phone and so he doesn’t see the reaction of his two other lovers.

Wife and kids (preferably two, but at least one, as long as it’s a boy) were always part of his future, at least according to what mother taught him. He’s the heir of Batman, he’s gonna become Batman himself and one day, he’ll hand the cowl down to his son. The private life, or the life of the Wayne heir, was always discussed much less during his childhood, but it was understood that he would find a nice woman and marry her before having the kids.

He’s also pretty sure that Ra’s has/had some more plans for him, plans concerning the league and possible the world domination (or just regular domination, what does Damian know), but he’s also pretty sure that he was always meant to be a contact outside the league itself. Sure, he was trained to be the best. But that was for Batman. And possibly that the league would be able to control Batman.

How glad he is that those plans didn’t work out.

“Do you want to… get engaged?” Richard’s voice is cautious and gentle. Damian groans and once again turns his face to Richard’s thighs. That’s not… it. Not really.

“He wants to be proposed to.”

Damian hates the way his face heats up, but like that no one can see it, so he’ll count that as a win.

It’s the truth, he supposes. Of course Todd figures it out more quickly than Damian himself. To be fair, he always seems to figure out this side of Damian quicker than Damian himself.

“We can do that.” Damian turns to look at the phone, staring at Timothy, unbelieving. Timothy shrugs. “Not in public, obviously, and not officially and not for a while. It wouldn’t actually lead to anything, but… well, we can’t really get married, so that’s kinda out of the question for us, but we should have those talks, right? Like, talking about our future.”
“Thank you, Tim!” Richard’s fingers are back in Damian’s hair and Damian is still not sure if he hates him for how vulnerable that makes him feel, or just simply loves him. “I mean, obviously, we can’t get married. We did established that we’re in it, all together, for the long term.”

And was that a painful conversation. Especially since it was before they established they were in a relationship at all. Damian was still only 17 and just figuring that he was actually attracted to the people he considered brothers back then. It didn’t help that since he was still illegal, no one actually slept with him while happily sleeping with each other. Jason at least made out with him, but... It was a mess. Thank God Richard got mad enough to sit them all down and make them talk about their emotions. It took another months of “building the relationship”. Damian wasn’t allowed to join in the sex back then, even though he knew for a fact that the rest of them did have sex with each other. Only Richard had the decency to look ashamed by that. It was only after his eighteenth birthday that they agreed to let him join in. It was also the first time they all slept together, not in pairs. Damian still counts that as the best birthday gift ever.

However, at the same time Damian is actually glad they made him go through that. Richard, mostly, to be honest. Damian is pretty sure that if Richard didn’t keep Jason on a leash those first three months and wouldn’t shoot Timothy warning glances Damian would lose his virginity much sooner. The point is – those first few months kind of shaped their relationship to the way it is now. And honestly, Damian needed those months to get comfortable with his lovers. When they started he was still jumpy when anyone touched him.

“But there’s more to the future. Like, do we want kids?”

“The fuck?!”

“Kids?!”

Damian is so schocked he actually sits up before turning to stare at Richard. Richard frowns at him before turning to the phone. Damian glances at the phone and sees that Jason’s reaction is exactly the same as his.

“Look, I’m not getting any younger here. And I get that now’s not the time and really, Damian is too young to actually adopt, but we need to talk about it. And don’t make faces at me, Jason, you’re just few years younger than me.”

“Well… I mean… yeah, but… kids?!”

Damian actually smirks at the way Jason’s voice jumps up and down and exchanges a quick look with Timothy.

“Don’t you need to be married to adopt?”

“And yet…,” Richard gestures at himself and the phone. Timothy rolls his eyes, but nods. “Does that mean you want kids?”

Damian’s heart, so recently calmed down, beats out faster and in his throat once again. Then Timothy just shrugs and – what the fuck is he doing, just casually agreeing to kids?!

“I mean, I figured we’d eventually adopt one anyway.” Damian just stares at him. “Stop staring at me like that, demon brat. Jason loves kids to the point where he kills people for them even now when he’s under a scrutiny, Richard adores kids, and Bruce’s tendency to adopt anyone in need he comes across was obviously passed down to you, Damian. Sure, for now you adopt pets, but how long before you come across an adorable orphan who mouths off to you just enough for you to
Those are some seriously good points, Damian has to give him that. Obviously something Timothy thought of more than once.

“What about you?” asks Richard, as he slowly tugs Damian so he’s resting against Richard’s chest. “How do you feel about kids, Tim?”

“Cautiously optimistic,” Timothy shrugs and Damian stares. He knows he stares, but he can’t believe it. He can understand why Richard thinks about it, he is… well, older. But Timothy is just four years older than him! “I mean, not until Damian finishes college and settles as the CEO.” Damian is a little surprised at how easily Timothy says that. He knows that Timothy is not his competition, but hearing it confirmed so easily like that is really nice. “Plus, if we get kids, we need to have our shit together legally. Both as our secret identities and as our alter-egos.”

“That would mean either retiring or following the Accords fully.”

“Well, yeah,” Timothy chuckles and leans his head back to look at Jason. “Would that be so terrible?”

Jason clenches his jaw and looks straight at Damian. For a moment there’s silence.

“Okay, you guys know that we hate when you do that. It’s weird and unexpected that the two of you can communicate without words while the two of us stay completely in dark about what it is you’re thinking.” They all can communicate silently, but usually the rest of the four know what’s going on. With Jason and Damian it’s different. Damian is pretty sure that it’s the fact that they both were trained by the League. “So what are you two thinking?”

The silence continues for a while before Jason finally interrupts it.

“Kids aren’t a… terrible idea.” Another silent moment. “Stop staring at me like that, you guys. I’ve literally never thought about having kids before. I do know some who really could use a home. And between the four of us we should give them enough attention even with your super busy jobs.” He frowns and turns his eyes towards Richard. “You’d need to move back from Bludhaven, too. Wait, are we living in the manor in that hypothetical situation? Cause you know that if we do Bruce is gonna spoil them rotten.”

“Please,” snorts Timothy, “Bruce is gonna spoil them rotten no matter where we live.”

Damian clutches Richard’s arm. This is a little too fast for him. Ten minutes ago they were joking about engagements and now they’re talking about where they’re going to have their kids. As in, more than one. And Jason seems actually excited about it.

“Hey, babybat, you alright?”

There’s a light touch on his upper arm and he leans into it, hard.

He doesn’t know how to raise a kid. He hardly knows how to interact with people that are not family. Actually, he just doesn’t know how to talk with people. He figured it out with father and his lovers and Cass and Steph and Barb. And Tony. But that’s mostly because he either spends so much time with them on daily basis he has to get along with them, or they’re the same sarcastic assholes he is. He doesn’t even get along that well with Selina or Kate and he spoke hardly three words to Duke. Mostly because Duke mostly avoids him. He did catch him muttering something about katana. Seems like his reputation precedes him.
“Damian, talk to us.”

“We were just talking about possibly once having kids and now we’re thinking about where we’ll live and how many kids we will have? As in, plural? That’s crazy.”

“It’s still hypothetical, Dami. And like I said, it would have to wait years before you feel comfortable in your position as CEO for us to take such a big step in our private life. And that’s not gonna happen at all if we all don’t agree.”

“So,” adds Richard, once again running his fingers through Damian’s hair, “what do you say about the possibility of having kids?”

Damian sighs, fully leaning into Richard, and closing his eyes.

“Let me think about it. We have time, right? So just… let me think about it.”

***

They stay on the phone. Pennyworth is even so accommodating that he brings dinner to Timothy and Jason. FRIDAY informs them not long after that that the chinese Pepper ordered for dinner arrived, so Richard goes out to bring it to them.

Damian falls asleep surprisingly easily, lured to sleep by the voices of his lovers. Of course that just means that he’s up again few hours later with a slight headache and persistent feeling that he’s not worthy of love. And he’s thirsty.

Getting out of the bed is easier than usual with Richard in his bed. It’s the weather, he thinks. Sure, AC is running in all the buildings in the compound, but Richard still gets easily overheated. So while he likes to cuddle, in summer he usually ends up away from his lovers.

Damian gets out of the room, grabbing a dagger from his table at the last moment. He trusts the people around Tony, but that doesn’t mean that he’s leaving himself weaponless for no reason. Especially since to go to the kitchen he needs to go to the other part of the building, the one with people he certainly doesn’t trust.

He’s still sleepy and very aware that the witch is in his head, so when he turns a corner to the hall leading to the kitchen and with it the other part of the building and sees Tony there, he stops and blinks a few time, certain that it’s an illusion.

It’s not.

“Tony?” he hisses, admittedly more angry than he wanted. Tony whirls around to look at him. He’s pale, with dark circles under his eyes and his cheeks sagged in. He looks terrible. “You wanna get tea?”

“You’ll drink the general stuff that’s in that kitchen?”

“Please,” Damian snorts, “you know I already have a stash of Chinese finest in there. Come on.”

Tony still hesitates.

“And if the… Rogues are there?”
Damian smirks, takes out his dagger, flips it a few times, before putting it back away. Tony blinks a few times, looking him up and down. Damian’s in leggings (they’re comfortable and it’s Timothy’s fault, he’s standing by that) and Richard’s shirt with long sleeves.

“Where do you even hide it?”

Damian smirks once more and opens the door to the other part of the building. It’s the only door that doesn’t open automatically as you walk to it. Sure, since Damian has the access he could just ask FRIDAY to open the door for him and she usually does so when he has his hands full (or just to piss off the Rogues if they’re present when he goes back to the private part), but Damian still feels better when he has to physically open the door. It’s irrational, but he feels better about the security of it when he does that.

The kitchen is dark and empty. Damian is thankful for little miracles. But…

“FRIDAY, is everyone in their room?”

“Yes, little prince.”

“Inform me immediately if that changes. Tony,” he turns towards him, walking backwards towards the kettle. “Cravings?”

“And nightmares.” Tony closes his eyes, obviously in pain. “I haven’t been sober even forty eight hours and I just… want it so fucking bad, Damian.”

Damian just stares at him, not sure how to react. In the kitchen in the manor he’d just give him chocolatte, maybe skittles or something. But he has no idea where to look for that here or even if it is here somewhere.

Still, it’s worth it to look for it, he supposes. And maybe distract Tony in some way.

“Richard wants to adopt.”

There’s a loud sound and Damian turns back towards Tony just to see that Tony walked into a chair by the bar. Suddenly, he looks wide awake.

“What?! Is that about the engagement episode? Cause that’s quite the jump.”

“I know!” The water is boiling, so he quickly prepares the pot for the tea before going back to his sweet search. “And Timothy seems to have a whole strategy for our life figured out. Jason was the only one with normal reaction, but then he was suddenly talking about kids, as in plural, and where would we live and hey, Richard, you need to move back to Gotham for that and are we living in the mansion and everyone seems to agree that in few years, when I’m the CEO and we’re settled and figured out the balance between the vigilantism and our private life, we’re gonna adopt some kids. And I don’t even know if I want kids!”

By that point Damian himself really wants some chocolatte. Thankfully he finally finds a cupboard with sweets in it. He takes two of the three chocolate bars and a big bag of skittles. He puts them on the bar before going back for the pot and two cups. He sits down opposite of Tony and takes one of the bars, opening it and starting it before even pouring himself a cup of tea.

“Wow. Tell me how you really feel.”

Damian snorts and smirks at Tony. Tony takes a bite of his own bar of chocolate and pours himself some tea. He tastes it and makes a face and Damian chuckles. Tony is a coffee man. The
coffeemaker behind him whirs to life and Damian gets up just in time to put the cup under it to catch the coffee.

Damian hands Tony his coffee before sitting down with a sigh.

“There’s something telling me I’d be a terrible father and I’m not sure if it’s actually me or the witch.”

Tony frowns and leans closer. Damian counts that as a win. It’s an easy way to distract Tony from his problems – give him your own problems to focus on and he’ll help you solve them while relaxing so his own problems become smaller. Somewhat selfish, but effective.

They talk about Damian’s own childhood. It’s a little weird to actually voice it, but the setting makes it easier. Late night, in the kitchen, eating sweets while drinking coffee and tea respectively? Tony will need that for at least another two weeks. And that’s without the witch’s influence. And with Damian himself waking up during the night it won’t be a problem to have more such sessions.

Talking things through helps. It’s the truth, as much as Damian hates admitting it. Talking about how his childhood sucked helps him realize that while he is anxious about being a good dad, the fears of him turning into his grandfather are not his own. Turning into father, on the other hand… well, his father is not a bad father per se, but Damian would like to be… different. He thinks.

And now he’s actually not thinking about whether to have kids but about the details of it!

“This is insane! I’m so not ready for kids!”


“Look, I love the bots and I really mean no insult, FRIDAY, but having a kid is different from making AIs. And the actual kids you do tend to adopt are teenagers.”

Tony just shrugs, no longer denying his adoptions. Sure, none of them are legal (Damian is pretty sure that legally, even Tony can’t adopt a Wakandan princess), but Tony is basically a father figure to Peter, Harley, and Shuri.

“It’s not like you can’t start with teenagers.”

“How many kids do you think we’ll have?!”

“I don’t know, you keep talking in plural.”

He keeps thinking in plural, is the problem. He remembers how lonely he felt in the League and how amazing it feels to have a big family. Hopefully his kids won’t have such a big problem acclimating to a big family.

He groans when he realizes what that means.

“I really am like father in that, aren’t I?”

Tony laughs at him and Damian would like to protest, but he really can’t.

“I can’t wait to see you four forming a family. What would the kids even call all of your family? Grandpa to Bruce, obviously, but what about Barbra and Stephanie? Aunt who almost was a mummy? And then there’s the mess of you and Tim both having best friends in the superfamily. And then there’s Roy who I never know on what terms he is with the Green Arrow and his group.
And of course Wally and the Flash band.”

“It’s not that weird,” Damian rolls his eyes. “Especially since I’m not having my kids being Robins.”

Tony smirks at him and Damian frowns before realizing that he’s already talking about them as if they’re a sure thing. He scowls.

“That’s such a bad idea. I mean – we’re talking at least another six years, for me to finish college and settle into the position and figure out a way to work with the Accords in a way that will work for everyone.”

“They don’t work for you?”

“Just… stop working for one second, okay? We don’t like oversight that much, but we will figure it out. The point is – by that point Richard is gonna be at least thirty six. Isn’t that a little… old?”

Tony shrugs.

“I was over forty when Harley came into my life. I started properly working with Shuri just last year. Besides, in our line of work, age isn’t the most important thing. And if something does happen… well, there’s four of you in the relationship. You will help each other out, share the hard parts of parenting. Even if Dick will be forty when you first adopt, you and Tim will still be pretty young.” Tony’s eyes are surprisingly intense when they look at him. “I’m not saying you have to agree with having kids. It just seems that you want to and are just looking for reasons not to.”

Damian smiles at him before looking at the rest of his tea.

“Another round of coffee and tea?”

“Boss, little prince, Legolas just left his room.”

They look at each other before quickly finishing their drinks, dumping the cups and the pot in the sink, throwing away the paper from the chocolate bars, and taking the half-full skittles bag with them before making a run for it. Honestly, the last Damian wants is to run into the infamous Hawkeye.

They stop behind the door standing between them and the Rogues and just look at each other for a moment.

“You okay with your meditation?”

“Yeah, it worked for me before falling asleep, but I woke up just few hours after.”

Damian sighs and nods.

“Time to try that again. Good night, Damian.”

“Night, Tony. And thanks.”

“No problem. Just make me a godfather of one of your kids, okay?”

“Please, you’re so gonna be the second grandfather.”
Miss Potts stays with them for the week. Damian doesn’t mind… in theory. He likes miss Potts. She’s fierce and loyal, and yeah, she made mistakes, but she owes them and and works to make it better. Doesn’t expect those she hurt to simply forgive her, but works to show that she’s sorry to make their relationship better. Damian likes that.

But at the same time she’s frustratingly nosy. Damian is used to not being as free with his lovers when there are other people around, but usually they’re able to sneak some teasing and light touches during the day. Ever since miss Potts came to the compound Damian feels like he’s always watched. During the day by miss Potts, during the night by the little witch. It’s maddening.

At least he has his late nights with Tony. He wakes up in the middle of the night regularly, but now he has a reason to check on Tony. They still make their tea and coffee, but now they move it to Tony’s suite, to his living room. Considering that Damian saw Brooklyn 99 from the third season Tony insists on starting from the beginning the night from Wednesday to Thursday. Rhodey sticks his head out of his room, dark circles under his eyes, before shouting at them to turn it down a bit and going back to bed. The night from Thursday to Friday Richard walks in, zeroes on Damian, and tackles him to the couch, hugging him close so that Damian is lying on Richard. Damian sighs and moves to find comfort, but doesn’t protest. Richard is shirtless and so with luck won’t overheat like that.

Damian falls asleep to the sound of tv in the background, Tony’s soft snores on the nearby armchair, and Richard’s soft heartbeat under his ear. Who knew that would be the thing to keep the witch away from his mind?

Of course that’s how miss Potts finds them in the morning. She wakes them up, ostentatiously for the breakfast she brought with her. But she gives Richard the stink eye for five minutes straight. Damian rolls his eyes at that, but happily munches on the croissants she bought for breakfast.

Jones and Cage join them happily, bringing another round of coffees with them. Jones hands her second cup to Potts, Cage hands his second cup to Tony. Damian frowns. He could do with a nice cup of tea right now. Richard sighs and puts his hand on Damian’s thigh, massaging it for a moment.

“I’m gonna get us some caffeine, too.”

“Careful, the kitchen is occupied by the enemy forces.”

“Aye aye, captain.”

Damian chuckles at the surprised face Cage makes at Richard’s comment.

“It’s… I’m not…”

“You’re better image of what America should aspire to be than good old captain ever was.”

“I’ll take black, bulletproof man as an image of what America should aspire to be over a narcissistic, self-absorbed man with white savior syndrome any time.”

Cage gives him a wary look.

“Thanks, kid, but… from what I understand, our moral codes don’t really… align.”
Damian snorts.

“By which of course you mean that I have no moral code that you can see.” Cage makes a face that screams guilty. Damian smirks. “Don’t worry about it. Most people are scared of us.”

“Which you don’t enjoy too much and don’t support by behaving weird on purpose around other people.”

Damian just winks at Tony and Tony laughs. He’s still pale with circles under his eyes, but he already looks much better than he did Monday.

They go back to their breakfast. Damian is painfully aware that miss Potts sits down next to him and settles for an awkward conversation and possibly some mild threats. He won’t hide himself, but he also won’t endanger his family in any way. Ever.

“Hello, Damian,” she smiles, but the smile is strained and Damian is not impressed with her try at a small talk.

“You have something to say, just say it, miss Potts.”

Miss Potts gives him a worried look. The gall of that woman!

“Are you alright, Damian?”

Damian puts on one of his fake, bright smiles. The one media love on him. The one his lovers despise on him.

“Never been better.” And that is the true. He cocks his head to the side, widening his eyes just the tiniest bit to push the innocence part over the psychopathic part in his face. “Why do you ask, miss Potts?” His voice is perfectly polite and just a touch too sweet for a nineteen year old. Okay, so Tony does have a point – he enjoys freaking out people.

“You and Dick seem awfully close.”

“Please, miss Potts,” Damian rolls his eyes, letting go his innocence routine. “Just ask what you want to ask.”

Miss Potts nods and breaths in. The phone on the table in front of Damian chimes with a new message. Damian’s surprised to find that it’s his phone. Richard had to bring it with him during the night.

“Damian, is Dick… making you do anything?”

Damian took his phone before she finished her question, but now he just looks at miss Potts as if she went mad. Then he rolls his eyes.

“Don’t worry. If anyone’s worried about my honor, it’s Grayson.”

BoyWonder: did you guys know that Dami cheats on Jason with me?

LittleWing: oh, whatever shall I do?!

BabyBird: wait, how do i fit in?

BoyWonder: not sure
Damian smiles at his phone before putting it back on the table. Then he turns towards miss Potts again. Miss Potts who’s frowning at him. Damian rolls his eyes.

“Look, despite what you might think, I am, in fact, an adult and can make my own decisions. And trust me – whatever it is you see between the two of us, I’m enjoying it and more than likely, I was the one to initiate it. Now, if you have more personal, invading questions, can we leave them for after my morning tea?”

Miss Potts gives him one last look, this one reavulating. Then she smiles at him.

“Enjoy your tea, Damian.”

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Richard brings his own coffee along with Damian’s tea. The couch is pretty much full with Jones, Tony, miss Potts, and Damian all on it, so Richard takes a seat on the floor, leaning back to Damian’s legs. Cage is on the armchair and Rhodey is on the loveseat. Soon enough father joins them and Damian and Richard have the pleasure of taking the picture of the two of them, fully in suits, in the loveseat, eating their breakfast, as uncomfortable as father visibly is doing anything.

By Jason’s answer full of emojis Damian is sure he’s gonna thank them for that photo in person when the opportunity comes.

They both leave soon enough, even before all the pastry is gone. Damian has no idea where miss Potts got hold of a box full of pastry as good as this is in the middle of nowhere as the compound is, but she did it.

Damian savours his cup as long as he can, but eventually it runs out. He just looks at the empty cup for a moment. Richard leans his arm on Damian’s knee, leaning back into him.

“You want me to get you another one? With some luck the terrible four aren’t even in the kitchen anymore.”

“Hey, that reminds me! Weren’t there terrible six originally? Or seven or something?”

Everyone turns to Damian which, yeah, okay, fair enough. Since Rhodey and father left he’s the only one who was with them in a gym since they came back. Damian sighs.

“Barnes seems to mostly… keep to himself. And from what I saw Lane talked some sense into Lang and Wilson.”

“You saw the interview?!”

Damian frowns at the shocked voice Jones has.

“What? The interview was in the compound, FRIDAY has the video of the whole thing.”

“I actually think Jason is making a remix version of it.”

Damian chuckles, because yeah, Jason is definitely making a youtube worthy, meme inducing
remix of that video. If Lane ever comes out with the original version, Jason will be ready. (And maybe, if Timothy will be willing to code it so no one will find where it came from, even without Lane publishing the original video.)

“Can we watch the video?”

There’s something predatory in Jones’ face. Damian likes it.

“Seriously?” It’s Potts who answers, though. She seems tired of them all. “We just spent three days straight here, on this very couch, watching tv. Can’t we do something fun today?”

Jones gives Potts an unimpressed look.

“So you’re telling me that watching the Rogues be destroyed by Lois Lane, a very accomplished journalist, won’t be fun for you?”

Potts and Jones stare at each other for a moment before both smiling in a way that spells trouble. Probably for the Rogues, so Damian allows himself to enjoy that.

“Well, I did promise you the zoo, didn’t I?”

Damian smiles brightly at Tony. Richard chuckles.

“So, the video humiliating the Rogues, and then we’ll head for the zoo?”

There’s a general approval of Richard’s plan. Damian, however, doesn’t feel like sitting down to watch the humiliation of the Rogues for the tenth time. They had their fun with it, but he’s over it now. He can’t wait to see what Lane does with the actual article and how the public will react to that, but he doesn’t want to see the interview itself for that.

“Alright, so I’ll see you guys in an hour? I saw the tape and I need a jog.”

“Good idea. Let’s go before Rogers decides he wants another round of his own morning jog.”

Damian smiles and lets himself be tugged up to standing.

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They’re late. Damian blames Richard. It was after all Richard who cornered Damian against a tree and proceeded to make out with him for twenty minutes. They made it back to the compound in the hour they promised, but they need a shower. That, or about ten minutes in a closet, but they’d probably need a shower after that, too, so just taking a shower is probably easier.

So they ask FRIDAY to tell everyone they’re sorry they’re going to be late.

They make it to Tony’s suite not even thirty minutes late, so Damian counts that as success. And they’re ready for a day in zoo. Damian is even wearing jeans. He does not find them as comfortable as Richard proclaims they are, but they do sit nicely on his ass and Richard does have to go back to Bludhaven on Sunday. He figures he gives him a little treat this way.

Of course Jones takes one look at their still wet hair and smirks at them.
“Good jog?”

Damian just raises his eyebrows at her, but Richards smiles brightly.

“The best. Enjoyed the video?”

Jones smirks.

“I like that Lane woman.”

Chapter End Notes

And that's all for now!
What did you guys think about Pepper? And what do you think about the idea of our guys adopting? Cause I'm not gonna lie, I'm a sucker for a good kid fic. Let me know what you think and I'll try to finish next chapter quicker this time around!
Loki's trial

Chapter Summary

Timothy enters the picture and we're entering a part of the fic that starts a coherent, long-term story, instead of just scenes of me bashing the Rogues. Because apparently, I'm rewriting Infinity War and Endgame. Who knew?

The X-Men, the Asgardians... the world is much bigger than what MCU is trying to sell us so far.

Chapter Notes

Okay, this time around, I have an excuse! The Harry Potter fandom sucked me in (thanks, EliottMoon) and I'm kinda working on a complete rewrite over there, too? So if you like my writing and Harry Potter, feel free to check that out. (I don't know how to share links in here. Sorry.)

Also, I've never before really written a fic with a proper, not romance-oriented plot, so... it's hard to figure details out. But I like it and I hope you will, too.

Also, I know literally nothing about any kind of law, let alone international one. But I'm from Europe and we don't really have jury here, so I'm taking just judges and running with it. Also, I'm aware that a trial like this would take forever, but hey, this is a crackfic and I kinda need to move the plot along, so just roll with it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It has taken longer for Tim to arrange things at Wayne Enterprises so he could leave for New York than he’d like. He wanted to be done by the time Damian finished his finals, but it took another week to do so.

The news that Tony relapsed only made it worse. He knew that his time away from his CEO duties is coming and he was already looking forward to figuring out the whole witch mess, now he just also wants to help Tony. He can’t imagine what it’s like, abstinence. But he likes to help.

It’s late night when he’s finally free to go on Friday. Which is why he decides to wait until Saturday morning to go to the compound. The X-Men are supposed to arrive on Saturday, too, after all.

He sets an alarm for Saturday morning, so he arrives early enough to spend some time with Dick and Damian before the X-Men themselves arrive. Of course, he sleeps through it. Alfred wakes him up at ten, wondering if he didn’t have plans to leave early that morning. Tim curses, quickly packs and accepts coffee in a travel mug from Alfred. He tries not to make a face as he takes the first sip in front of Alfred. Alfred just rolls his eyes.

„You’ll be getting your daily dose of love with your morning coffee soon enough, master Timothy.“
Tim chokes on his coffee. Alfred smiles tightly and waves it away.

„I know, I know, no exchange of the l-word yet. And may I just say, after more than a year, that’s just a little pathetic, master Timothy.“

„How do you even know that?!“

Alfred gives him an unimpressed look and honestly, Tim feels like he just disappointed his grandfather.

He needs to stop thinking about his family in those specific terms.

„This house is full of detectives, better or worse. Nothing stays secret for too long. You know that, master Timothy.“

Tim would love to stay and argue some more (yeah, no secret ever stays secret long, but this is way too specific and way too minor in the grand scheme of things for Alfred to know), but he’s already late, so he just makes a mental note and gets going.

He arrives at the compound just after noon. Yes, he pushed his car as far as it would go. Also, he’s the only one Bruce refuses to let behind the wheel when he’s with them, so he probably pushed more than was clever.

He parks in the private parking lot next to the private building and quickly gets out of there. He takes his bag and hurries inside.

„Welcome to the Compound, mister Drake-Wayne.“

„Hello, FRIDAY. Are the X-Men here already?“

„Yes.“ Tim curses softly. „They arrived ninety minutes ago. They all took tea in the living room with everyone before professor X, miss Grey, and Boss left for his office. Do you want me to show you the way to your room?“

„Damian’s room will be good enough.“

„That’s what I said.“

Tim smiles. FRIDAY is a little bratty, but it’s hard not to like her. He follows where she leads him and just leaves his bag there, quickly turning around and going back to the hall.

„Can you lead me to the living room now?“

FRIDAY wasn’t exaggerating when she said everyone’s there. Father, Rhodey, miss Potts, Damian, Dick, Logan, and Jessica Jones and Luke Cage are there. Technically, Tim doesn’t know the last three personally, but hey, he knows everything about them there is to find about them. Which isn’t really that much in Jones’ case, but still.

„Tim!“ Of course the first to notice him is Dick, with his sparkling eyes and wide smile. Tim smiles softly and nods at him, sparing enough time to do the same to Damian when he notices that Damian watches him with those intense eyes of his. But he doesn’t really have time for that. He makes it to Logan, who sits in an armchair, looking uncomfortable.

„Logan, right? Come with me.“

Logan looks up at him with a frown, disbelief clear in his eyes.
„Why should I, squirt?“

Tim pushes back a snort. He’s pretty sure he’s taller than the man.

„Because I have some questions you do not want to answer in front of everyone.“

„What makes you think I want to answer them at all?“

Tim rolls his eyes at how amused the man is and leans close enough to murmur, so the other people won’t hear him.

„Because I have information about a facility just behind the Mexican border that got ahold of your DNA and are doing things with it I’m sure you’ll want to end.“

Logan tenses as Tim speaks and when Tim takes a step back, Logan growls at him.

„Tell me!“

„Oh no, I think you don’t understand. You answer my questions, I’ll answer yours. Let’s go.“

If Tim knows anything, it’s a way to a lab. He spotted it even on his way to the living room, so he goes back to the elevator and the door opens to him before he has a chance to call it to himself. He smiles at the camera in thanks.

„Careful about the robots. You do something to them, Tony is gonna fuck you over.“

Logan raises one amused eyebrow at him, clearly not believing him. His mistake. Tony is very protective of his kids. Tim thanks all gods that he met him after he was too old to actually become one of his kids. Bruce as his father figure brings enough issues for Tim, thank you very much.

They got into Tony’s lab and Tim pats the bots somewhat distractedly while looking around at all the projects Tony has going on. Finally, he sees a table without anything on it. He takes a chair on his way there and plops down on it once he makes it to the table, gesturing for Logan to take the chair in front of the table.

„So? What do you want from me?“

„You have the X-gene. Your mutation is strength and healing powers. Nowadays, your skeleton is also basically a massive hunk of metal. It was installed into you by the US Army, against your will.“

Logan is obviously not happy to hear all of that.

„If you’re trying to blackmail—“

„I’m just making sure we’re on the same page.“ Logan stares at him in surprise and Tim smirks. Obviously, Logan is used to his mean front working and intimidating people. Well, tough luck. He’s no scared teenager and this attitude simply doesn’t work on him anymore. „The metal is a burden in a lot of ways, but reports say that it also makes you immune to mental manipulation. Is that true?“

Logan frowns even harder.

„Is that your question?“

Tim shrugs.
“One of them. So?”

Logan glares some more. Tim simply smiles. Then Logan smirks.

“You’ve got spirit, kid. I like you. Yes, the metal protects me from any form of mental manipulations. Thelepaths aren’t even able to read my mind.”

“Cool. You have the metal all around your skull, right?” A nod. “The metal is a surprisingly well-kept secret of the army. Do you know how they do it?”

Logan shrugs.

“Never really needed to know, considering that, as you said, I have it all over myself.”

Tim frowns, but nods. He was expecting that, but it complicates things. Well, nothing for it.

“I need a sample of the metal, then. What can I do to make you agree to giving that to me?”

“Look, kid, there’s nothing—”

“What about a mansion on Bahamas, with private beach, for you and your lovers for the whole week? A private jet to get you there and back included.”

Logan stares at him with slightly open mouth. Tim just raises one eyebrow at him. Logan and both his lovers are teachers. There’s no way they can afford something like a holiday in Bahamas. And yeah, sure, they’re also X-Men (one of them is even a leader), but even those need vacation.

“How do you know about...“ Logan’s voice is low and truly dangerous this time around. Tim smiles.

“I make sure to know what I’m dealing with before meeting anyone new. I’m not going to tell anyone, if that’s your worry. Your relationship is your own thing and I don’t really care either way. I just assumed that a romantic holiday is something that could persuade you.”

Logan keeps staring at him for a long while.

“How can I trust your word when you still didn’t give me the information you promised?”

Tim watches him just as carefully. But he did give him the confirmation he was after.

“The facility collected DNA samples of you and few more X-MEN. I’m not quite sure how, but they created children.“ Logan tenses and Tim takes out the flash drive he took here just for this purpose. “There’s everything I know. Including a file on a little girl who seems to have the same sets of powers as you. Metal claws included. It also has my phone on it, for when you decide to cash in the Bahamas mansion.”

Logan stares at him, but he takes the flash drive.

“Do you seriously have a mansion on Bahamas?”

“Not me, personally,” Tim shrugs. “Bruce bought it years ago and we’ve been using it as a vacation spot for years. We probably won’t go till later this year, so just let me know when you want to use it. Three days in advance would be good. The private jet needs to get ready, too.”

Logan glares at him some more, before raising one of his arms and letting one claw ride out of his knuckles.
„I assume you’re not going to sell it on the black market or use it to blackmail the army.“

Tim snorts.

„I have much better things to blackmail the army with. They haven’t upgraded the firewall on the Pentagon files for three years now, would you believe that?“ Then he stops himself from just grabbing the nearest thing to break a part of the metal off of Logan. „If I just break it, will it hurt?“

Logan snorts.

„Sure, but I can handle it. If you even can break it."

Tim frowns at that. He doesn’t like that, giving people pain. Especially if they’re cooperating and giving him exactly what he wants. Sure, it comes at a prize, but what doesn’t?

Finally, he finds a blowtorch. Logan doesn’t look that happy about it, but he doesn’t flinch when he takes it to break the metal from him. Just about an inch, just enough to analyze and maybe, hopefully, multiply.

He doesn’t wait for Logan to leave, he starts the analysis right away. He already has files on vibranium and starkandium – perks of being friends with both the princess of Wakanda and Tony Stark himself. There’s still a lot of tests to do, considering that so far he only had time to go over the theoretical parts, but he’s going to have fun with it.

„Does that have to do anything with Charles and Jean inspecting Stark’s mind for foreign influence?“

Tim smirks at Logan. He likes smart people. And he has a feeling this man likes to play gruff and kinda dumb, but that he’s not really either.

„It seems like the witch is playing with everyone’s mind in this part of the building. I’d like to stop her from doing that."

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Damian frowns harder as he watches Timothy leave with Logan behind him. He doesn’t know why he chose Logan.

It’s not like any of them ever met anyone of the X-Men before, but then again, Damian and his family did their research on them the moment X-Men stepped up and signed the Accords. Of all people Damian assumed Timothy would be interested in from that group (miss Grey, doctor McCoy, not to talk about professor Xavier himself) Logan was not one of them.

Richard smiles at him when Damian catches his eyes. Richard is talking with Cage while Damian is curled with a book in what is basically a corner of the room. Richard smiles at him and that makes Damian relax. Timothy made sure that once he leaves Gotham he will have time to stay there longer than few days. They have time.

Logan comes back not long after. His eyes sway from Damian to Richard and back again, frowning hard, but he just sits back where he was sitting before Timothy came. Rhodey just starts the conversation where they left it back then.
Tony and his companions come back soon after. Tony looks exhausted, collapsing on the couch in between miss Potts and Rhodey. Professor Xavier is frowning, but it’s miss Grey who lets Damian know exactly how bad it is – she’s positively fuming.

„We can’t prove it was the witch.“

Damian frowns himself when that is what professor Xavier decides to open with.

„But there was something.“

„Is something.“ Miss Grey’s voice cracks a little as she says it and she has to visibly hold her powers back as she coughs a little to go back to her usual, polite voice. „Doctor Stark is visibly not comfortable with us even being in his mind. I would not assume to intrude in such a way. But I have to repeat – the trouble won’t go away unless you have someone take care of it.“ She starts by glancing at everyone in the room, but in the end stares at Tony. „Of course it should preferably be someone you trust. But unless you take care of it, it’s going to press on and make your state worse, doctor Stark.“

Father glares at miss Grey, but miss Potts and Rhodey exchange a glance before each taking one of Tony’s hands. Miss Potts straightens and looks at miss Grey, looking regal even in her old jeans and loose shirt.

„Thank you for your council. We will take it under consideration. Can we take it that you’re offering your expertise for that task?“

There’s something unnatural in the unwavering stare miss Grey gives miss Potts just then. It goes on for a long minute, before miss Grey smiles softly.

„I would be most honored, miss Potts.“

„We will make our reports, independently on each other, to the Council by the end of Monday.“ Professor Xavier glances to miss Grey to confirm that date, but miss Grey just mutely nods. Her temper now seems to be back under control and she seems content to stand down and let professor Xavier handle the rest. „Is there any other way we can be of assistance?“

Damian glances towards father, as does Richard. They nod subtly enough that he sees it.

„No, thank you. Would you-“

„Actually, before lunch arrives, could you check me and my sons for the same kind of influence?“

Damian holds himself rigid enough not to flinch when father includes both of them in the „son“ category, but he understands the necessity.

Professor Xavier smiles a little when he hears that.

„Before the lunch arrives?“

„You hurried over at your earliest convenience to out aid. The least we can do is pay for your lunch. We’re all trained in meditation. As long as you respect our privacy and just check for foreign influence, we can do it right here.“

Miss Grey is clearly surprised, but professor Xavier calmly looks towards her. They’re clearly communicating telepathically and Damian lets himself sink a little further into meditation. He’s been concentrating on staying close to that state ever since father told them what he’s planning to ask
them.

„Do you also require us to both concentrate on one, or do you trust one of us to check each off you?“

„We’re all good enough to recognize if you do something you shouldn’t, just one of you should be enough. Dick, Damian?“

„I’ll take the redhead.“

„You’ll take what you’re given, boy,“ growls Logan and Damian smirks at Richard. But Richard seems just as amused as Damian feels by Logan’s jealousy. Miss Grey rolls her eyes and drops her hand on Logan’s shoulder for a moment before she moves in front of Richard. Damian smirks the tiniest bit. She won’t be controlled by a man, not even one she’s dating. He respects that.

But then professor Xavier is in front of Damian and he concentrates on him instead. There’s a tiny part of him reminding him of Richard’s history with redheads, but he easily battles that away. They talked about this particular insecurity of his (and it turned out that Timothy shares this one with him, and even Jason isn’t that happy about that particular fascination of Richard’s, even though he is a natural redhead) and he’s over it now. Besides, miss Grey seems more amused by Richard’s flirtation than anything else.

„What can I do for you, then, mister Wayne?“

Professor’s Xavier’s calm smile doesn’t exactly settle Damian down. He feels like it’s designed to do just that and that stops him from relaxing. But Charles Xavier is a good man, from everything they were able to gather. He made mistakes, of course, but in his core he is a good man.

„I’ve been living here for almost two months now, with two weeks of being away that ended a week ago. Check me over and try to find out if the witches’ influence grows the longer you are in her presence. Also, I am a master of my mind. Try to actually do something to it and I will kick you out and press charges afterwards.“

Professor’s eyes widen lightly, but he seems appreciative of the clear terms. That, and mostly amused.

The check on his mind doesn’t take long and professor Xavier then moves towards father while miss Grey walks over to where Logan is sitting and settles her hand subtly on his back.

„You battle your battles well, my friends,“ professor Xavier comments, but doesn’t look that happy. „I can take care of it right now, if you wish.“

Father just smirks.

„What good would it be? We’d still be in the presence of the one causing it. Thank you for the offer, though, professor.“

The professor and miss Grey exchange a dark look.

„We’ll have the reports done as soon as possible, then. Will the council accept it during weekend?“

„Either way, we will send it today. Tomorrow at the latest. If they read it Monday, we still did our best to deliver it as soon as possible.“

„That bad, huh?“
Logan was tense when they came, obviously a soldier looking for a trap. But he relaxed easily enough. Now, though, he’s watching Damian and his family with newfound interest. His look is dark, almost dangerous, but Damian doesn’t… feel it. He doesn’t think Logan means them harm.

„We ordred burgers,“ speaks up Jones when no one answers Logan for some time. „We hope you don’t mind us ordering for you, too. Logan helped with that choice.“

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The X-Men leave after lunch. Logan has just enough time to mention that Timothy is in the lab. Before Damian can even think about going there and greeting him properly, Tony disappears there to talk about whatever project the two of them started together. Damian resigns himself to seeing Timothy in the evening.

But they don’t see him then. In fact, Timothy doesn’t make it back to bed that night at all. Richard is pissed at that, considering that he has to leave that afternoon, so right after breakfast he goes into the lab to drag him out. He comes back forty minutes later, without Timothy, but with a resigned half-smile that tells Damian that Timothy convinced Richard that whatever it is he’s doing in the lab is more important than spending time with his lovers.

„It really is important this time.“

„Yeah, whatever.“

Damian wants to give him a cold shoulder, but then Richard hugs him and he realizes that he doesn’t know when he’ll see him next, so he melts into the hug and hugs him just as close.

When Richard leaves Damian takes his sketchbook and goes to the common room. Not the living room in Tony’s suite, but the common room meant to be shared among all the bedrooms in that part of the building.

Miss Potts finds him there two hours later.

„I was starting to wonder where did you go to brood.“

Damian would protest that he’s not brooding, but… well. The room is pretty dark and the only reason why he’s even still able to sketch is the window right behind him. Miss Potts comes in and sits down on a couch nearby, silently watching him for another minute.

„I talked to Tony and… Bruce.“ Damian notices the slight hesitation and smiles. The fact that father invited her to call him so means that miss Potts proved to mean her worry about Tony. And Damian can’t argue that point – miss Potts was as attentive to Tony this last week as Rhodey. „And I know that you have the practical part of your studies covered in… well, your firm. But if you were interested in a model that you’re perhaps not as familiar as you are where your CEO comes to play, I’d be willing to take you on as an intern.“

Damian looks up, amused.

„Intern?“

Miss Potts smirks right back, the same amusement visible in her eyes.
„And what else would you be in your own firm? But I imagine that you know a lot about Wayne Enterprises, living now with both former and current CEOs of the company. But if you wanted to see the way of other people handling that position, being with me everywhere, assisting me daily...“

„So I’d be your assistent?“

„Would that be so terrible?“

Damian watches her for a minute, reevaluating his possibilities. Sure, getting an inside look at Wayne Enterprises was an easy and obvious way to go about the practical part of his education. But what miss Potts offers is too tempting – seeing someone out of his family dealing with the business side of things, seeing the inside of a company that’s even bigger than Wayne Enterprises. Sure, father is successful and the company is growing. But it’s still mostly a local, national company and father is a millionaire. Tony is on another level entirely.

„If I am to be your assistent, I want to be paid.“

„Do you think I allow any interns to demand anything of me?“

„I’m not any intern,“ Damian smirks. „The existence of such an internship itself would be a great PR for your company.“

„And it wouldn’t for yours?“

„Besides,“ Damian adds with a smile. „I talked to Tony. I know all your internships are paid.“

Miss Potts rolls her eyes, but there’s a somewhat indulgent smile with that, too.

„Is that a yes?“

„I’ll have to see the contract before saying anything binding. But I like the idea, yes.“

Miss Potts’ smile is as delicate as it is cutting.

„I’ll have Suzie take care of it and I’ll show the result to you and we can talk about it then. I should get going now. Are you packed? The plane is set to leave at eight.“

Tony’s testimony is on Wednesday, but the trial starts on Monday at 2PM local time. The way from New York to Amsterdam, the usual city to fly to in Netherlands, takes a commercial flight about ten hours. So Tony’s plane should make the way to Hague in eight. If they leave at eight in the evening New York time, they will touch down at four in the morning New York time, ten in the morning Hague time. With enough time to stop by the hotel to refresh and be there for the opening statements.

Damian nods. Of course he’s ready.

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At six sharp both Damian and his father meet in the hall in front of the entrance door. Father’s lips curl into the smallest smile as they move their suitcases into the car Tony and father agreed to take to the airport. Tony wouldn’t let even father drive, but they can still agree on a car.
The way to New York airport takes an hour, ninety minutes at the latest with bad traffic. But father is father and he wanted to leave at six thirty at the latest.

So of course, at seven sharp they make it to the lab just to find both Tony and Tim in the middle of an experiment with some kind of metal. Of course they make it just when the explosion happens.

„Timothy Jackson Drake Wayne!“

Timothy shrinks and makes a face.

„It wouldn’t blow up like that if you didn’t walk in just now!“

„You know how I feel about you and explosions.“

„Tony is right here!“

„And,“ father continues as if Timothy hasn’t said anything, „when we’ve been waiting for the two of you for the last thirty minutes, as we agreed on in the morning.“

Now it’s Tony’s turn to make a face. Timothy blinks in surprise, before remembering the message waiting on him on Friday evening when he made it back home, to pack his passport and to prepare for a Europe trip, too.

„That’s today?“

Damian is the one to give Timothy an icy stare. He’s happy to see that he has more impact on Timothy than even father – Timothy flinches back and hunches on himself.

Father sighs.

„You two obviously need showers. Tim, I hope you’re packed. Tony, you’re so lucky Pepper still takes care of you. Twenty minutes, you two.“

Timothy perks a little at the mention of shower and looks towards Damian, but Damian just stares at him as icily as he’s able to, so Timothy shrinks again. Good. Damian turns around and heads back out.

They’re able to leave before eight and take off just after nine. Timothy carefully sits next to Damian, pressing their knees together. Damian glares at him some more, but then he somewhat resigns himself. Timothy is just Timothy, lab is his natural environment and his projects are supplying his will to live. Timothy’s words, not Damian’s. And they have about a week of vacation in front of them. Being angry at him would just ruin that vacation.

Soon after take-off they go to beds that are abroad. Perks of private jets. Tony even picked the smaller one, the one that has just three beds, so Tony and father graciously leave the biggest one to Timothy and Damian. So Damian is quite happy to curl up in that bed against Timothy and sleep, for once without the influence of the witch.

The pilot wakes them up about half an hour before landing. They strap in and Damian looks out the window, trying to see what’s under them, but there’s clouds and he can’t see anything.

They land just before noon. Father is not happy about that.

„We can either stop by the hotel or catch a lunch before the opening statements, not both.“

„We can if we catch a lunch in the hotel.“
Father makes a face at that, but doesn't protest any further.

They make it to the court just in time.

They see Thor in the benches just behind Loki, looking anxious, but brightening when he sees Tony. Tony, in his sunglasses, ignores him as father guides him to sit in the corner, behind the side of people pressing charges. He will be talking on their behalf in two days, after all.

Not that the division is that important in this trial. From what they’ve been able to gather (from Tony, who thanks to his cooperation with the process has the best possible information) Loki has been cooperating since the very beginning. Even now he sits there in dark suit with cuffs on his hands, seemingly calm and collected. Damian watches him carefully to see if it’s just a front or if he truly is that calm. He hardly notices that Timothy takes his arm to guide him to sit in between Timothy himself and Tony, placing him in the guarded position along with Tony.

And then, Loki looks at him, straight in his eyes. Damian is startled, but doesn’t look away. Tony is right – Loki’s eyes are bright green. Close to the shade Damian’s own eyes are, actually. Loki smirks for some unfathomable reason before looking at Tony and nodding at him, in clear respect. Tony next to Damian gulps, but nods back.

The media has their representation up in the galleries. Damian swipes the galleries for cameras and is happy to find none. He checked it out – there are no cameras allowed in the courtroom. Not even notebooks or tablets to make notes on – just a notepad and a pen. Technology is allowed outside the courtroom and in the media rooms, but not in the courtroom.

The opening speeches are long and full of jargon, but they’re not exactly dramatic or meant to provoke the other side. They still take almost four hours and before they’re done it’s six o’clock in the evening.

The sum of it is – Loki committed crimes in New York and Germany six years ago and he’s not denying that, but there are circumstances that the public doesn’t know that will be revealed in the upcoming days.

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The problem of jet lag comes to haunt them that night. Damian thinks it’s worse for Timothy and Tony than it is for him and his father simply because they at least are used to sleeping daily. But the fact of the matter is that Europe is six hours ahead. Which means that while it’s nine in the evening in Europe, a perfectly reasonable time to go lie down, it’s just three in the afternoon in New York.

They all go for a walk in the end. The modern part of the city isn’t that impressive to them, but Tony quickly takes them away from there. And the historical buildings, or often just buildings of different branches of government, are another story entirely. Tony takes them first to the International court of justice where they were just that afternoon, but the dark took something of its majesty and so they hardly stop there before continuing.

Hague isn’t that impressive city, once you know European cities at least a little bit, but it still is different from American cities. The way new and old combine is something Damian is always curious to watch in Europe at least and Tony takes them on a walk that takes almost two hours and
takes them all the way to the government building (that’s much better lit in the night) and back to
to the hotel by another route. The walk does its work and Damian is happy to fall into his bed.

Father doesn’t let them sleep in the next day simply because they can’t afford to sleep in the next
day and father doesn’t want them to fall into the habit of it.

As much as Damian wasn’t really impressed with the city during the night, he finds peace in it
when they walk to a cafe for breakfast, eat it outside, watching people around them going about
ter lives. Europe is the opposite of America even in that, he thinks. In general he prefers American
cities during the night, while he doesn’t find anything that interesting in them during the day.
European cities work the other way for him.

Or maybe it’s just him enjoying his night work in America. Hard to tell.

They spend the time being tourists. Tony still gets recognized, Damian can tell. But only a small
percent of those who recognize him step to them and ask for an autograph. In America that’s also
different.

They’re still in public, so Damian and Timothy are careful to watch their interaction. But once they
make it back to the hotel again they fall to bed together for once. Demanding kisses and bruising
touches and Damian allows himself to believe, just for an hour, that they’re truly on vacation.

Throughout all of that they still keep an eye on the process going on not that far away from them.
The first day, it turns out, is to just give voice to all the victims in Germany and a chosen few of the
invasion in New York. Doctor Selvig and about two other people who were SHIELD agents before
Loki controlled them (and after, for some time, before being employed by Stark Industries) are
scheduled to stand witness the day after, right before Tony.

Clint Barton would most likely be a part of that group just few years ago, too. But nowadays his
own standing with UN is on rocky ground. Yes, he’s officially no longer wanted. But that’s a
success of American diplomacy, not of Barton’s own doing. And so if he does step a toe outside
the US, he could as easily be standing accused in that building instead of witnessing.

The next day they all put their best suits on and walk into the courthouse. The cameras in front of it
go crazy with every arriving witness. With Tony they’re worse, as per usual. And the fact that he’s
flanked by the bigger part of the Wayne family doesn’t go unnoticed, they’re sure.

They sit and watch the witnesses go on about how Loki controlled everything they did from the
moment he touched them with his staff to the moment they were… well, they use different
language, but what Damian is getting from them is they were attacked by their own agency.

„A blow to head,“ one of them says outright, not looking happy about it, but taking it as what it is.
„The only known thing to get rid of the mind rape by Loki.“ The woman sneers the last part and
Damian can’t hardly blame her.

Curiously, that’s the moment when Loki frowns and moves to whisper something to his attorney.
Damian can’t see the expression on the lawyer’s face, but he can see them talking quietly for long
moments. The judges notice, too.

„Mister Richter.“ It was a curious decision to give Loki a German representative, Damian thought,
but that was the decision of international court. „Is there something that the court should know? Or
a need for break, perhaps?“

„No, your honor. Just an information we weren’t familiar with. We will adjust our defense in
accordance, there's no need for a break. Please, continue."

Mister Richter, when given the choice to question the witness, takes his chance for the first time in the trial. Considering that the accused cooperated with the investigation and the prosecutors throughout the whole process, this trial is more a way for public to become aware of what was found and for victims to feel they were heard. Mister Richter so far refused to question any of the witnesses while the prosecutor always made a point to ask for the color of Loki's eyes. Damian is aware that the public is already speculating that that qustion is just one big joke.

This time, mister Richter takes the chance and it visibly surprises the prosecutor.

„SHIELD… lets say applied pressure to your head to free you from the influence of the scepter, correct?“

„Yes.“ The woman is annoyed and a little angry. „As I already stated before, that's the only known way to free someone from a mind manipulation.“

The attorney just nods before turning to judges.

„We would like to point that out to the court. We have a few chosen questions about that fact we'd like to ask mister Thor once his turn on the witness bench comes.“

The judges (five of them. Damian doesn't exactly know how european or international justice works, but five judges seems like a good balance, especially since there's one for every continent, with just one judge for both Americas for the purposes of avoiding a draw) don't seem that pleased, but most of them just nod. The main one, though, lists through the papers in front of her.

„Thor Odinson, brother of accused Loki, is to be a character witness, is that correct?“

„That was planned, yes. But mister Thor is also the only person in this room other than my client who has any kind of experience with magic. My client's word would not be believed right now, for obvious reasons. And because my client is contained without the possibility to talk with his brother in the time between now and mister Thor taking the bench, and because we already said that we were just made aware of this situation, mister Thor's word should be enough on that matter. Unless you want to call Thor into stall right now to clear everything up. We're not against that, either.“

Damian sits up straighter, as does Timothy next to him. Father seems to not react, but when Damian glances at him his eyes are going from the attorney to Loki to the prosecutor to the witness to all the judges in quick succession. Even Tony in between them, frozen as he is, seems shocked by that. The rest of the people present and the media on galleries are not as quiet as them in their surprise.

The judges are in similar state, although much quieter. For a moment they huddle together, speaking softly with each other. It takes about two minutes before they come to a decision. The main judge orders silence with woody hammer.

„That's not necessary. Thank you for highlighting what will be important later, but we will proceed as expected. Any more questions for the present witness?“

„No, your honor. Thank you."

The witnesses change and the four of them move just a bit to be closer to Tony.

„Did they seriously just punch them in the face and were done with it?“
“I… guess.” Tony doesn’t look happy about that. “I don’t like magic and SHIELD doesn’t like me. By the time they came to my employ it was in their files that that was dealt with. I didn’t know that’s how they dealt with it!”

“We don’t doubt that, Tony,” father says softly, but he exchanges a quick frown with Damian. That is not the way to deal with mind manipulation.

Doctor Selvig’s testimony, surprisingly, does not go the same way the rest of them do.

“Are you saying that you weren’t controlled by Loki?”

“No, I’m… I’m saying that the control wasn’t… absolute? The wording seemed… deliberate. ‘Open the portal for the Chitauri to come’, he kept repeating. He had to know a way to do so, he came through the portal opened by the Tesseract after all, but when I didn’t know what to do and came to him for advice, he told me to figure it out, dismissing me, not looking at me longer than necessary. I had to figure it out myself. It was the reason why I was able to leave that back door open, why agent Romanoff was able to switch it off so easily after.”

“What are you trying to say, doctor Selvig?”

“I know Thor, mister Irwin, and he talks about his brother. I can’t talk about his morality or his character, because honestly, many tales Thor told us I thought Loki was the villain. But in every story, Loki is clever, almost cunning, planning ahead and not leaving anything to a chance. The longer I think about it the less of that Loki I see in the man who came through the portal. That man was not cunning. His plan had many holes that, in the end, doomed him. And he seemed too concerned about that phrase. ‘Open the portal for the Chitauri’. That was all that mattered. And when it came to getting the part I needed in Germany – surely it could have been handled more discreetly. I can think of about ten different ways we could have done that without drawing the attention of SHIELD. Surely involving them at that point was unnecessary.”

“But you were controlled by Loki from the moment he touched the staff to you to the moment agent Romanoff was able to bring you back.”

“My actions during that period weren’t my own and they were mostly dictated by Loki, yes.”

“And what color were Loki’s eyes?”

“Blue. The same vivid blue as the Tesseract.”

Mister Richter just asks again that SHIELD didn’t do anything else to liberate him from the scepter’s influence. Doctor Selvig has more patience for that question than the previous witness had.

By then it’s two in the afternoon and so it’s time for a lunch break. Damian knows that Tony is not happy about that.

“Come on,” he says softly, pressing his arm against Tony on the armrest in between them. “There’s a buffet in the bulding, they offer soup. Let’s get that into you at least and hide from the media before they call the court back into session.”
“Please state your full name and occupation.”

“Anthony Edward Stark, CTO and owner of Stark Industries. And well,“ Tony’s smile grows mischievous, his eyes sparkling, „some people have called me an activist for superhuman rights lately, but that’s hardly a paying position, wouldn’t you say?”

Damian doesn’t allow himself to be nervous. There’s no reason to be nervous. European media isn’t going to twist Tony’s words just for the fun of twisting them. Not those allowed in the room anyway. And Tony is a witness, not accused.

But there’s something about this trial that doesn’t feel good. When Damian and his family went looking into New York, they were all left feeling that something’s missing. No matter what they hacked (or just found online thanks to someone letting a whole classified database to find its way online) they still felt like a big part of the story is missing.

Tony, when they approached him about it shortly after he was released from hospital, was as mystified by that fact as them. But judging by his behavior these last few days, the way he changes subject every time they try to ask about his testimony, he figured out the missing piece.

The prosecutor asks the same questions he did to everyone else – what led to Tony’s involvement with the invasion and how did he meet Loki. Thanks to Tony being special, of couse, it doesn’t stop there, though.

„What did you think of Loki, meeting him yourself?”

„That he’s a drama queen?” The question is playfull and Tony’s smirking, but he’s careful to avoid looking at Loki and grows serious very quickly. „And the arrest was too easy. Loki is… well, not an Asgardian, but not human, either.“

„But your suit was all fired up and ready to shoot while agent Romanoff was aiming at him with a fully loaded jet. Not to talk about Captain America, a well-known close range fighter, who was already engaged with Loki in an equal fight.“

„Was it? Equal I mean.“ Damian tenses when he sees Tony grow nervous when talking about the soldier so directly. He doesn’t think anyone else noticed Tony’s discomfort, but that doesn’t make it okay. „Loki is over a thousand years old with almost as long experience in using magic. Steve Rogers is stronger and faster than any given human being, including the best soldiers, but he’s still under thirty, with no previous experience fighting aliens, let alone magic. Not that he was alone in that, me and Romanoff were right there with him. Yet Loki surrendered. Weird, don’t you think?”

„Don’t you think you’re underestimating yourself and your… companions at the time, doctor Stark?“

„There’s many people who would tell you my problem is the exact opposite, mister Irwin.“ Tony’s lazy smile just highlights the charisma that’s oozing out of him. Damian is aware that the whole room is charmed by Tony, but he pays no attention to it. Because he knows Tony. And under all that he’s annoyed that people expect him to just deal with all the shit he deals with daily, to make it work and make it better for them. The annoyance is understandable. In fact, Damian is beyond that annoyance. He’s angry.

But then again the prosecutor didn’t really ask because he himself expects that of Tony. He asked because people (judges in particular) need to hear the answer.

„We’re just people. We might be better equipped to deal with extraterrestial threats than your
regular Joe, but we're still mortal. He probably could have killed us all. If he was as cruel as we were led to believe he would even decimate the city in doing so."

„But you said before that Captain America arrived to Loki monologuing, quite the villain style.“

„Yes. And it was that melodramatic way of his that made it possible for us to predict where the portal would open. Lucky us."

The questioning continues in that direction. The prosecutor is there to represent the people, yet he manages to lead the questioning in such a way that it let's Tony express his concerns about certain situation, highlighting everything that didn’t sit quite right with Damian and his family. The attorney finishes with the same question as always, after letting Tony describe in detail how Loki tried the same mind altering trick with the sceptre and why he failed.

„What color were Loki’s eyes?“

„Bright blue. I think doctor Selvig said it best when he described them as Tesseract blue."

Mister Richter takes over the questioning then. And by the way mister Irwin doesn’t react to that Damian says that was also agreed on.

Question about what Tony saw behind the portal surprises Damian. After Tony told them what he saw father went to Justice League about it. Jon has been on a mission ever since, coming back just few times when he needs a breather, usually beaten up and needing a place to hide. Damian hates that there’s no way for them to keep in touch when Jon is off world, but Jon was the only one to find a lead on something happening in the universe. The other members they sent out came back saying that there’s something, but their contacts don’t know what and they weren’t able to find out themselves. Almost like there’s two universes, one just barely touching the other.

The reason why Damian is surprise isn’t that the subject isn’t grave or that it doesn’t need inspecting. It’s that Tony was surprised that they went to investigate, because his „team“ was belittling him the whole time that he was just trying to usurp attention. That the fight is over and he just wants to fearmonger. Which is bullshit, obviously, but for some reason, Tony believed them.

Tony’s voice gets shaky a few times and for a moment Damian is afraid that a panic attack would take over. But instead Tony looks towards them. Damian pursues his lips a little and lifts his chin, seeing in his peripheral that Timothy smiles just a tiniest bit and father nods at Tony. That does it and Tony breaths in a shaky breath before looking back towards the attorney and trying his best to estimate the number of ships and to describe them to his best ability.

„And you informed SHIELD of all of that, doing a full report on it?“

„Yes."

„Your honors, we have that report here, along with the dates of submission and the signs of agent Hill and agent Fury signing it, proving that SHIELD was informed about all of this."

The attorney gives the judges the papers. When Damian glances at Timothy he’s already looking through their documents from the SHIELD data dump. Damian turns back towards the trial. It’s getting late, he doesn’t think they’ll be there much longer.

„Thank you, mister Richter. Please, proceed.“

„That army that you saw, it was ready to attack Earth?“
“Yes.”

“Nothing. They were certain that the closure of the portal solved it for them.”

Tony’s smile gets wider while his shoulders get tenser.

“I might not know aliens, but I know war. And when was the last time that the first battle won the whole war?”

Tony’s comment is the last thing to happen that day for the trial and the people in the room seem to grow restless with it. The judges don’t look happy about the fact that that’s the way they’re ending the third day of trial, but it’s already set. And while it’s not that late yet, everyone even slightly involved looks exhausted.

“Great,” Tony smiles at them, a little too widely while his eyes wander all around the room. “Now that that’s over, what do we wanna do next? There’s this model city here that’s kind of cool, the beach near should be the best part of the beach here in Neatherlands. Or hey, I’m sure there’s plenty of museums and galleries around.”

Damian closes his mouth with a snap, somewhat guiltily letting father handle that one. He knows, by the slightly manic look in Tony’s eyes, that the only thing Tony should do is go to bed. But art galleries… it’s been ages since he’s been to any other than the Gotham one and he knows that one almost as good as the curator. He likes art, okay?

“Why don’t we let the boys have their fun in the city and meet them for dinner in the hotel restaurant at… let’s say nine? That gives us some time to rest in the hotel and then maybe a walk before dinner. What do you say, Tony?”

Tony raises his eyebrows at them and smirks when Timothy nods lightly at him.

“Alright. See you guys in few hours.”

Father and Tony quickly leave. Timothy and Damian follow them at a somewhat slower pace. Of course, Timothy’s nose is buried in his phone the whole time, before he just sighs and puts the phone into his pocket before brushing his fingers over Damian’s.

“Apparently, there’s a gallery on every second corner, so let’s just walk.”

“Sure. But lunch first.” After all, the little soup they had before wasn’t enough and now Damian is really hungry. Timothy probably isn’t, but still could use something to eat.

Damian determinedly doesn’t think about this as date. No, sir, they’re here to help Tony, nothing else.

If they do squeeze in a little date where just the two of them enjoy lunch, visit a gallery, and then go to a museum, well, that’s just a nice bonus.
„Please state your full name and occupation.“

„Thor Odinson, king of Asgard, currently in exile in Norway.“

Thor looks more serious than what’s normal for him, from what Tony told them. But Tony also told them that he’s probably gonna be much more serious. If nothing else, he always talked about his brother with fond exasperation in his voice. His concern for Loki makes sure that he’ll take the trial seriously.

Thor tells a few stories from their childhood and growing up. Honestly, Damian is amused by those stories. Timothy has to know, because when Thor gets to the one where Loki turns into a snake just to stab Thor, he brushes his knee against Damian’s. When Damian glances over, Timothy has a small smirk on. Damian looks head on, but has to suppress the desire to smile himself.

„I can still stab you any day, you know,“ he says so quietly he’s almost sure father can’t hear him. „If you want it so bad all you had to do is ask.“

„Fuck you, demon spawn.“

But Timothy is smiling, so Damian presses his knee against Timothy’s and turns back to Thor.

„What I’m getting from all of that is that your brother caused a lot of mischief everywhere he went, but it all was in good spirit and no permanent damage was ever done, am I right?“

„Yes! He teased and did mischief, but when it mattered, he was there, with his rescue plans and watching our backs. In a real fight, he always had my back.“

„But then you were on Earth when Loki attacked it through the… Destroyer, tried to kill you with it. How did that happen?“

Thor’s face is pained and a little hesitant. Damian turns just a little to see Loki’s reaction.

„I’m not sure. Father said… Loki always… I was meant for a throne and Loki has always been bitter over it. Right before I was banished to… Earth there was supposed to be a coronation. It was interrupted by the Frost Giants, Asgard’s main enemy. Father says that that was the last straw for Loki, his greed overtaking him. He was the one who let the Frost Giants in. He was the one who took over the throne while I was here.“

There’s whispers about how Thor is supposed to be Loki’s character witness and how he’s not really doing a good job. But Damian is looking at Loki. And Loki is not happy about what he’s hearing. Damian doesn’t think it’s because this doesn’t paint him as exactly a good person.

„But when father showed up in the middle of our fight Loki surrendered to him right away. I don’t think he meant to usurp the throne. He certainly didn’t put up a fight to hold onto it.“

Thor’s retelling of the rest of their adventures goes even worse. He does admit that Loki didn’t put any kind of fight after he was captured in New York. The story of Loki helping against the Dark Elves helps somewhat, but that’s soon forgotten when it’s revealed that Loki did actually usurp the
throne, looking like Odin no less.

„He did good, though!“

Turns out, everyone on Asgard knew that the Odin who was ruling them for the last few years was Loki. But Loki invested in diplomatic missions while supporting all the warrior groups on Asgard, invested in social care for everyone interested in it and supported all who were trying to study and conserve asgardian culture. Turns out, Asgardians actually liked having Loki as king.

Thor also tells the story of Asgard’s fall. Somehow Damian feels like he’s keeping a lot to himself, but he doesn’t think that he’s exaggerating Loki’s involvement in saving the Asgardians.

„So let me get this straight,“ mister Richter says and Damian feels that that part of the day is coming to a close. Loki’s testimony next, „other than the Dark Elves and Hela’s army, Loki didn’t actually kill anyone? Not even on a planet where fighting and killing was part of survival?“

„No,“ Thor snorts. „He found… another way to stay alive.“

Loki smirks. Suddenly Damian is curious about what way he found to stay alive.

„So the only time he killed people without provocation was in 2012, after he came through the portal, before you took him back to Asgard. Is that correct?“

„Yes. He does stab occasionally, but that’s mostly friendly stabbing.“

Timothy next to Damian snorts at that, pressing his knee even closer to Damian’s.

„That remind you of someone?“

„In my defense, I thought I hated you.“

„Mister Odinson, let us go back to the question of magic. On Asgard, magic is always present, a part of your everyday life, yes?“

„Yes. Magicians are part of our society in the same way that scientists and doctors are part of your society.“

„Is mind controll part of that?“

Thor grows uncomfortable with that. So the honest answer is probably yes.

„Not everyday part, but… yes, it’s been known to happen.“

„So how does your doctors deal with mind control? Do they also punch the person affected in the head and be done with it?“

Thor frowns, hard, insulted.

„No. I don’t really understand the details, you’re truly better off talking to Loki about that kind of thing. But the doctors usually like to keep those affected at least a week in the close quarters for procedures and looking after. The procedures usually take at least three days, mostly because mind is a sensitive place and whatever changes you make to it can either be very, very long lasting, or just temporarily. From what I was told during my lessons, damage is usually long lasting, while healing takes more than one try to truly take in. It can’t be healed all at once and even partial healing needs to be looked over during next few days to make sure that it actually works.“
„So a single punch isn't efficient in that matter?“

„It’s usually enough to shake off the influence of whoever is controlling you at the moment. But it doesn’t take care of the damage done to your mind. I don’t know more.“

„But you know all this for certain?“

„Yes.“

„One last question, mister Odinson. What color are Loki’s eyes?“

„Green. Always were.“

Thor’s testimony, while eventually providing a character testimony, doesn’t really clear anything about what happened in 2012. The prosecutor doesn’t have questions, highlighting the fact that this trial is mostly just a show for public. Or so Damian thinks, but people around them seem happy about that fact. Either that, or they don’t even realize it.

The questioning about mind control doesn’t really help with that trial either, although Damian suspects it’s going to help keep the new SHIELD on leash.

The judges deliberate for a moment before ruling that a lunch break is in order before Loki will be allowed to speak for himself. The break is to be ninety minutes long, so Tony drags them out of the building to have lunch in an actual restaurant.

They’re back in time to watch Loki be escorted into the witness stand, still in cuffs.

„Please state your full name and occupation.“

„Loki Laufeyson, prisoner.“

There’s amusement in the slight curve of Loki’s lips. Damian looks around and realizes that the people see the arrogant smile and nothing behind it. That’s not exactly helping Loki, but Damian finds himself understanding the god of mischief more and more lately.

„Mister Richter, you have the word.“

„Thank you, your honor. Now, mister Laufeyson. We heard mister Odinson’s and… well, Odin’s version of what went down since the first coronation of mister Odinson. Can you tell us your version?“

Loki smiles and does so. Damian frowns harder the longer Loki goes. He can’t detect any lies, but then again, isn’t Loki supposed to be a god of lies?

He takes out his phone to search what the mythology has to say about Loki. He still listens to Loki’s side of things, though. That yes, he was the one to let the Giants in during the coronation, but then he names serious concerns about Thor not being ready for that kind of responsibility. It gets worse from there. How one of the Giants touched him and it didn’t hurt, but the place did turn blue. How he confronted Odin about it and how he felt, being the monster of the children tales. How Odin fell into Odinsleep and how Frigga was the one to appoint him king.

„The Destroyer… yeah, okay, that was a little overkill, wasn't it?“ His smile gets a little self-depressing. Once again, Damian can relate. He has to tense, because suddenly Timothy’s pinky brushes his thigh. Damian makes himself relax, puts his phone in the other hand and puts his other hand on his thigh, close enough to Timothy’s that they can interlock their pinkies. „I was pissed at
Thor, how privileged and easy his life has been and how he just expects everything to go to him when I’m right here, always in his shadow. I was overreacting and, “and Loki looks right at Thor in that moment, „I’m sorry.“

„The battle on the Bifrost happened. The moment Odin turned up you surrendered your power back to him, correct?“

„Well, yes. I wanted his… approval.“ Loki’s face consorts into something difficult, but Damian can read the disgust and disappointment in there. And honestly, he’s not even surprised that the lightly maniacal villain of Avengers is so easy for him to read. He does kinda fit the particular crazy of his family. „It wasn’t really about the throne. But Odin lied to me and I wanted to get back on him while showing him that… that I’m not the monster. That I’m just as good a son as Thor.“ The distance Loki is trying to put between himself and his words is betrayed by the tears in his eyes, barely visible from this distance, but still there.

„Mister Odinson already told us that you fell. Can you tell us what happened between the fall and your coming to Earth?“

Loki’s testimony gets even more emotional than Tony’s. Once again, Damian doesn’t think anyone else really notices. Maybe Thor, by the way he seems to fidget in his seat, but other people probably aren’t really used to the level of control Loki has over himself. Plus, Damian has been trained to watch people all his life, to read their signs, to notice the small things.

He tells them about the planet he landed on, small and cold and holding a small army. How the army captured him and he was presented to Thanos, the Mad Titan. Thor goes white when he hears the name. And really – is this the first time he’s hearing that story? What kind of a trial Asgardians have? Last Damian heard Loki was taken after New York to stand trial in front of Odin.

„He was already in possession of the mind stone that gave the scepter its power. Thanks to my recent visits to Earth, I was able to obtain the information about the space stone within the Tesseract residing on Earth. Thanos was very… persuasive about me joining his side.“

„His side of what?“

Loki’s tenser than ever and Damian reacts in kind. Not that he expects an attack, just… this is it. This is the part of story that’s been missing all those years. He can see Timothy next to him is not only as tense as all four of them by now, but he’s also on his phone. Searching the internet maybe, but probably also contacting the Kents, asking them if they know about this Thanos guy.

„He doesn’t see it as a war. It’s a crusade. His world was devastated by a shortage of resources. He’s now the advocate of population control. Namely that we as a galaxy have enough resources for half of our population. So, he decided to go from world to world, killing half of their population.“

A horrified whisper breaks across the room. Damian’s fingers curl and Timothy moves to take his hand. For once Damian doesn’t move it away.

„Order in the courtroom!“

Loki waits just long enough for the people to settle.

„But he is still just a Titan, and although they have much longer lives than you people, he’s not exactly immortal and the galaxy is too big for him to go from one planet to another and he realized that. That’s why he needs the stones.“
Mister Richter then asks Loki to explain what the stones are. Damian starts recording on his phone. He doesn’t care that it’s forbidden, he won’t care if he’s kicked out of the room for it (which, honestly, he doubts), they need this. For the League and for the rest of Tony’s team.

Loki explains about the six stones that between them hold the power of the whole universe.

„Thor told you about the reality stone that was at a time in Jane Foster. While the warriors of Asgard moved it to a presumably safe location, I wouldn’t assume that it will stay safe forever. Thanos already sent a guy for a power stone and I think it’s better to assume that he already has that one. The soul stone has been lost for centuries and from what I was able to find, the time stone has been guarded for almost just as long. The mind stone I believe a being called Vision has in his possession.“

„That leaves the space stone. This Thanos sent you to retrieve it from Earth, right?“

„Yes. He used the mind stone on me before sending me to Earth, to use the space stone to open a portal so the Chitauri could come.“

Which perfectly aligns with doctor Selvig’s testimony, that Loki was obsessed with that concrete phrasing. If Loki truly was mind controlled by Thanos at the time, listening to the instruction to the letter would mean that he did everything in his power to help fight against him.

„Objection!“ Once more Damian gets a sense that what he’s watching isn’t a trial as much as a prepared play with the way the prosecutor stands up as he says that. „Accused says that he was mind controlled, but the only provable mind control was done by him.“

„Your honors, all of the victims who came to direct contact with my client said that at the time of the invasion, my client’s eyes were bright blue. But my client has green eyes, as you can see for yourself. What more, mister Odinson, my client’s brother, already proved that that’s not just my client using a glamour right now, considering that he also said that they were green his whole life.“

The judges deliberate for a moment before settling once again.

„The details from the statements from both doctor Selvig and doctor Stark seem to support the idea of mind control and mister Odinson’s testimony about the history of accused seem to support the mind control of this as of yet unknown entity. Objection overruled. Mister Richter, please, continue.“

„Thank you, your honors. Mister Odinson seems under the impression that the Tesseract was destroyed along with Asgard. How possible do you think that is, mister Laufeyson?“

Now Loki smirks and Damian has to admit that it’s quite a sight. No wonder people are so keen to see him as a villain. And then Damian freezes. Because Loki raises one of his hands in front of him while leaning into the other one, still on the bench in front of him, cuffs nowhere to be seen.

„Quite close to impossible, actually.“ He waves his fingers around and suddenly there’s a light blue glowing cube in front of him, just to the side of his face. „You might want to put it somewhere shielded, though. Thanos is definitely coming for it and you already have a mind stone to worry about.“

„Loki, you son of a bitch!“

Loki just lazily smiles and answers something to his brother, but Damian doesn’t exactly hear him over the uproar in the room. He rolls his eyes and relaxes back into the bench, stopping the recording and squeezing Timothy’s hand before letting him go. When he looks at them, Tony has
an amused smile on behind his sunglasses and father's stone mask is firmly in place, yet Damian still senses exasperation from him. Timothy seems as amused as Tony and honestly, even Damian kinda sees the fun in that.

„Order in the courtroom! Mister Richter, I assume you can explain.“

Of course Loki doesn’t even glance at all the guards all along the room that have their guns out and are aiming at him. Instead he makes himself more comfortable, now obviously out of his cuffs. His amused smile isn’t even that small, he’s practically laughing in everyone’s face. Of course, people don’t like that, but Damian admires that kind of balls.

„Of course, your honors.“ The attorney simply takes the briefcase from the floor and puts it on the table, showing that he came prepared for the cube. Now he moves to Loki. „May I?“ Loki just nods and nudges the cube closer to the attorney. The man takes it from the air and moves back to the table, putting the cube in the suitcase and shutting it up. „There’s not a force on Earth that could keep mister Laufeyson contained if he didn’t want to. SHIELD tried it and it didn’t work out. I hear doctor Stark is working on something, but the Court didn’t want an out job for this. And it wasn’t really needed, considering that mister Laufeyson cooperated the whole time. I’ve been working with mister Irwin as long as I’ve been assigned this case. Mister Laufeyson graciously agreed to surrender to our conditions, even though he could have escaped at any moment. Be careful with it,“ he adds to the officer he gives the briefcase to. „I believe that this should be given to the Accords committee and trust that we can count on the court to do so. Also, mister Laufeyson understands the political reasons for all of this, and that he needs to go through this trial so not only he will be able to live a free life hopefully soon, but also for the sake of the Asgardians looking for shelter. We just thought that it would be prudent to show that willingness to cooperate in showing that we don’t really have as much control over him as we like to think, yet he lets us set the boundaries because he understands that he needs to show us that he’s serious about this trial. Also, I would like to point out that my client could have easily got away with stealing the Tesseract from Asgard, using it for his own gain, probably even use it to hide from Thanos. He decided against that, showing his willingness to stand with Earth against Thanos or any other threat that might come to Earth.“

„And he will come.“ Loki’s smile disappears as suddenly as it appeared. He moves so he’s once again concentrated. „Right now you have at least two stones on your small planet, your people are not at all known in the galaxy, and your technology is still light years behind what we would call a civilized world, although there are some who are closer than others.“ Damian doesn’t miss that once again Loki seems to zero in on Tony. „He will assume Earth to be an easy target. You can use Asgard to help you defend your world.“

„But you aren’t exactly Asgardian, are you, mister Laufeyson.“

Loki shrugs, but Damian sees the invisible walls raising once more.

„Whatever you do with me, you already put more effort to this trial than Odin ever did. And if you let Tony Stark help, you might even be able to contain me.“

„Speaking of Odin, surely he would be more qualified than we to judge if you were mind controlled.“ Apparently, the order doesn’t really apply when you find out your accused can just disappear whenever he wants to. „What was his ruling in that?“

„You assume he let me talk,“ Loki snorts. „He took one look at me and sent me straight to jail.“ A strange shush falls over the room. Damian and Timothy exchange a glance. Talk about daddy issues. Loki almost chuckles. „Not like you can ask him now anyway.“

„Your brother told us about how mind control affects the mind long term. If you were thrown
straight to prison, how were you treated?“

„You’re forgetting that I’m an experienced magic user on my own… your honor.“ The way he adds the adress is not exactly mocking, but it’s not entirely respectful, either. Then he seems to hesitate. „And mother provided me with the means to cure myself. She wasn’t allowed to visit in person, but we… have other ways to communicate. And she was allowed to bring me books. It’s easier and quicker to have other, more experienced magic users cure your mind, but it’s possible to do it yourself. Better, even.“

They go back to the events of invasion. Loki confirms that his insistence on the one phrase was intentional.

„It was the only way to keep Thanos off my back. If I tried and failed, he would chalk it up to my incompetence. That’s why I needed Stark involved. If I just bailed, he would go after me.“

„Didn’t he control you enough for you not to bail?“

„Not at that time, not really. The moment I stepped through the portal all that was controlling me was that phrase. My mind was still… it was not my own. But it wasn’t his, either.“

Honestly, Damian is impressed. He could have just easily say that he wasn’t in charge, that it was all Thanos‘ fault, and be done with it. But he didn’t. He owed up to his actions. Damian admires that.

Loki’s attorney asks him questions about the rest of his time between the invasion and coming back to Earth again, making sure to ask about his intentions in every step of the way. Turns out, knowing about Thanos made him more interested in the asgardian throne simply because he knew that they’re tragically unprepared for what’s coming.

The hearing is long and exhausting, but the rest of it is mostly formality. Certainly nothing as shocking as the Tesseract and Loki’s own mind rape revelation again. Honestly, it’s a good thing.

At the end of the trial, Loki makes a show of letting himself be cuffed again and escorted out of the room. Honestly, Damian finds it funny. So does Timothy and Tony. Father does not approve.

When they make it out of the building a number of cameras is shoved into Tony’s face. Father steps in front of him and Damian and Timothy quickly navigate the crowd so they’re away from all of that in no time at all.

It’s still nice enough out there that they decide to get dinner at a restaurant with a garden in front of it, enjoying the fresh air.

„So, there’s no way they’re actually sentencing him now, right?“

They all look towards Tony, because even though Bruce has some experience with courts (they all do, usually as their alter egos), Tony is the only one who has any experience with international one. Or, well, international politics, but close enough.

Tony just sighs and doesn’t look away from whatever it is he’s watching somewhere to the left, doesn’t answer for a while. So instead, Timothy continues.

„Connor says that they’re trying to contact Jon to give the council some information to support Loki’s testimony about the threat.“

„They will probably contact Tony soon enough.“ Bruce isn’t happy about that, but Damian is sure
that his displeasure is more about them seeing Tony as the obvious choice for almost every problem, not about them actually dealing with the threat for a change. „SHIELD did have files about him informing them, right?“

„Already sent their way.“

„Good. Tony?“

„They won’t set him free entirely. The general population would not handle that well and honestly, I’m not sure Loki would handle general population of Earth well. But they won’t try to keep him in prison, I don’t think. Thanks to their little demonstration today, it’s apparent that wouldn’t work. So they will try to find a compromise. I expect them to find him not guilty citing diminished capacity, setting some kind of restriction on his movements. I assume the restriction will be to the village Norway and Asgardians are setting together. So he can be with his people while they keep him somewhat contained.“

„Sounds about right. It’s still rather early. Damian, Timothy, you never made it to the model city, right? We could go see that after diner.“

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The closing statements are short and to the point. The prosecutor asks for Loki to not be set free entirely and the attorney asks the judges to consider the diminished capacity Tony was talking about. The room is even fuller than during the rest of the trial. Damian gets it. Not only is this a highly anticipated trial with twist happening in it just the day before, but it’s been pushed to a super speed by the political climate of the world. The Asgardians need a home and the victims of the invasion need a closure. So a trial that would usually take months was pushed to take only the one week. One exhausting week in which every day felt like a decade, but still just a week.

The lunch break is set to last two hours. In the end, it’s just a little over three hours when the judges make it back.

In the end, it’s just as Tony said. Almost exactly.

They do claim diminished capacity, but that doesn’t make Loki innocent, not exactly. So he needs oversight. And apparently, the Asgardians can't exactly be trusted with looking after Loki. And because they already know him, the honor of looking after Loki goes to the Avengers. Namely, he will be housed in the compound.

If the Council approves it, of course. But everyone knows that’s just a technicality.

„Well. Living with a god of mischief. While also living with the Rogues. What could go wrong?“

„Don’t tempt the fate, Timothy. For all we know, we’ll have two sides to keep an eye on now.“

Chapter End Notes

You didn't expect me to just leave Loki to fend for himself, did you? What kind of
mischief is he going to get into in the compound? And how will the batfam react to him? Your guess is as good as mine. Wow, this WIP thing is an experience all right.

A giant thank you to everyone leaving comments and kudos on this fic. I seriously see every single one of you and it helps keep this fic alive. I love those assholes, but my mind is a strange place and fixation are easy to leave my focus. You help prevent that. Thank you for making me diving back in Damian's mind. I don't know a single cannon version of that boy, but I love him all the same. Thank you.
But. I started moderating comments thanks to a troll who found its way to this fic the last time I posted. I apologize to anyone who was affected by it (the taking of nicks is just gross, tbh), won't happen again. I'm not exactly sure how moderating comments work, but hey, time to find out!
Also, is it weird that I'm weirdly proud of the troll? Like, my fic is good enough that the other side noticed and bothered to do something about it. You know you're doing something good when you have haters, right?
Anyway, to every other commenter - this isn't about you and I really appreciate every single comment. Thank you.
Back at the compound, Tim is ready to finish his little project. Meanwhile, Jason's hearing for shooting Rogers is going surprisingly well.

Sexual interlude in between plot chapters and a little preview of what will happen to the witch. For now, without Loki.

When they make it back to the compound, Shuri is there. Her and one Dora Milaje – a hard looking woman with strong jaw, big nose, and a permanent frown etched on her face. Shuri introduces her as Ayo, but Tim finds himself not really caring. Instead he drags both Shuri and Tony to the lab.

"Am I finally finding out why I sent you those samples of vibranium?"

Tim just smiles at her sharply and leads the way to a clean table when he can show her what he and Tony worked on. Ayo is with them, but she doesn’t really follow them as much as looking around. Checking for safety protocols and breaches, Tim assumes, but lets her to it. It is her job, after all.

He focuses on finishing that damn circlet after that.

He figured that vibranium, starkandium, and adamantium all have the potential to block a mental attack. Shuri said that magic is known to Wakanda and that yes, they use vibranium to shield against it. Tony has no idea if starkandium would work, but it is basically a synthetized vibranium, so Tim has faith. And of course, there was his whole conversation with Logan about the adamantium.

And of course, it’s all made worse by the fact that they’re not dealing only with the clean fact and data of the metals, but more importantly, they want it to protect the mind. Considering that Logan says that the coating of his whole head in the metal is what protects him, both Tim and Tony feel confident that if they provide a shield around one’s head from the metals it would help. But in the long run, they’d like to go the implants way and lacing a circle around your skull under the skin doesn’t seem like a good idea.

But that can wait for Peter and his interest in biology. Right now, Tim is focused on making it work for Damian. And because technically, Damian is their first tester and because Tim just wants to make a little circlet crown thing for him (yes, as in crown for their prince, he kinda likes that theme going on, shut up) and because they don’t need to figure out which metal would be the best for implants, they can simply use all three metals. Either melt them all together, or just get each metal a string and weave them together.

But of course, with the three of them in the lab all at once, they get easily distracted. First, it’s by the theoretical idea of implanting the metals. But then Shuri suggests a number of experiments with vibranium and then when they point out that they have just enough to make the circlet, she pulls out more without even a blink of an eye.

It’s fun. Ayo stops coming around as soon as she makes sure the the lab is secure (or as secure as a
lab can get) and as soon as she realizes that she doesn’t really understand them. Tim doesn’t know what she does with most of her time, but Shuri just shrugs and says that she’s good in amusing herself and so far she didn’t have any complaints. Tim thinks for a while what would it take for the woman to complain to her princess (he saw how fiercely loyal Dora Milaje are to the royal family), but then Tony calls him over to start yet another experiment and it’s an easily forgotten thought.

Not even ten days after the end of Loki’s trial Jason is scheduled to have a hearing with the Accords council about him shooting Captain America during training. Or, you know, Red Hood is scheduled to have a hearing, because even the Accords committee doesn’t know who they are under their masks.

Jason makes it to the compound for dinner the day before the hearing. Doesn’t look happy about it, but after dinner he hurries them to their bedroom and for once, Tim is glad he left the lab. It’s a little confusing and in the end they end up in a heap of limbs, satisfied and a little messy. A lot messy. Damian says something about a shower, but Jason just groans and rolls so he’s on top of Damian and Tim is happy to do the same. Damian protests, but in the end it’s him who holds them close, so strong that Tim is sure he would have to fight him to get off the bed. Not that he’s protesting.

The hearing is set to be at two in the afternoon. Damian goes with Jason, but Tim hurries to the lab. They’re close to done with the circlet and he wants it on Damian’s pretty head as soon as possible.

Of course, he gets lost in it, so when Ayo comes to drag them out to dinner (something she took to doing over the last ten days), he’s more surprised than anyone else. But for once he joins Ayo in hurrying them along.

But once they make it to the dining hall, neither Jason nor Damian are in sight. When he sees that everyone else is already there (minus Jones and Cage. Apparently, they were bored without Tony there and Tim can’t really blame them. Plus, they do have their own lives outside the compound), he starts to worry.

„They made it back two hours ago.“ He doesn’t jump when Bruce speaks up right next to him, but that’s only thanks to him being used to this. And not only from Bruce, either. „The hearing went well. Rogers tried to argue that the second shot was after Rhodey called the whole thing off, but the records from the cameras in the gym were missing, so it was a he said, he said case. You wouldn’t know anything about that, by the way, would you?“

„Nope.“

He didn’t even have to hack in, considering that Tony gave him full access. So the only thing to be careful about was making it look like an accident. Piece of cake.

Bruce snorts softly at that, but doesn’t comment on it.

„Jason recited what kind of injury he caused, what it did to a baseline human, and his speculation about how Rogers’ enhancement would effect it. In the end, he was able to persuade the committee that he knew what he was doing. Not even a reprimand this time around.“

That’s actually kind of impressive. It also indicates that the Accords are not happy with Rogers. Because reprimands are something Jason is almost collecting by now. Especially when there’s not enough evidence to decide either way.

Everyone starts to sit down around the table. Tim starts to back up.
„Sorry, not that hungry. I’ll see you all tomorrow.“

Bruce gives him a long look, but at the end just nods and goes to the table. Something to worry about later, he assumes. For now, the slight anxiety that overtakes him every time Bruce gets too close to their relationship eases.

He hurries to their room. He doesn’t think about it when he opens the door and steps in. But that’s when he freezes.

That room is smaller than their rooms in the manor, so from the door he has a clean view of the bed. The bed where both his currently present lovers are on.

Damian is completely naked. His dark skin and all his scars are glistening with sweat and his muscles are tight from the strain of keeping himself together. And… are those tears in his eyes? His legs are spread wide and between them is Jason, still fully clothed and if Tim couldn’t read the shade of his eyes as good as he can, he’d almost say that he’s entirely unbothered by the sight in front of him. But Tim can, so he knows that Jason is barely holding onto his sanity.

Then Jason looks at him and smiles.

„Close the door, will you? We don’t want B to accidentally see his precious little boy like that.“

Tim does, only then realizing that he’s already hard. He smirks.

„I’m pretty sure that the only one who thought about Damian as ‘his precious little boy’ is Dick. Although now that I see him like this… Is he crying?“

By then he makes it to the bed, so he’s not really surprised when Jason snatches his shirt and pulls him in for a kiss. Tim lets himself sink into it, bites into Jason’s lower lip and moans when Jason retaliates.

Damian whines, which makes them pull apart. Jason smiles and moves his other hand, buried in Damian. Tim groans when he sees that, settling down on the bed, next to Jason, and puts one hand on Damian’s thigh.

Damian shakes and his eyes open up. When he sees Tim something in his face changes and his feet jerk a little, but then Jason moves his fingers and he jerks again, but then also throws his head back, closing his eyes and…

„Is he mewling?“

„Our little prince can make so many noises you’ve never heard before, babybird. Now get naked and get on with the program.“

Tim just smirks, but listens to Jason. It’s easier that way. He can try and pretend that Jason isn’t completely in control, but it’s just wasting time. It’s easier to just go with it.

Damian jerks some more and Jason’s free hand lands on his hip, keeping him firmly in place.

„Shut up, babybat. You know I’ll take care of you.“

Tim is a little surprised when he realizes that Jason’s touch is almost… gentle. Not the same way Dick’s touch is always gentle. It’s still hard enough to bruise Damian, but it’s lingering, caring, almost soft. Certainly softer than Jason ever touched him.
Damian just sighs and opens himself up once more. And fuck, but is it a sight to behold. Tim sinks back in, full nude, leaning into Jason, sliding his hand over Damian's thigh once more. The muscles under his touch tense and relax again, reacting to his touch. Damian seems to soak it up, opening himself to it.

Jason pulls back and turns to kiss Tim again. Tim happily lets himself be kissed. When the kiss is over, Jason doesn’t pull away, just moves so he buries his nose in Tim’s hair.

„Yes, he cries. He mewls. He’s nonverbal right now, too. Not from anxiety or anything else, but because the pleasure is too much and it’s overwhelming and, well, because he didn’t know a kind touch until… well, honestly, until we got together. I mean, there was Jon and Colin, but… nevermind. Just keep your hands and mouth on him.“

Jason pecks the crown of his hair and Tim smiles. That shouldn’t be a problem.

He moves so he’s straddling Damian’s thigh, pressing his hard cock into it and leaning over Damian, resting a part of his weight on him. Damian arches into him, moaning breathlessly. There’s a ripping sound and Tim is surprised to see that the sheet under Damian ripped open in his grip. With a grin he turns towards Jason. Jason just winks at him, so Tim turns back towards Damian. He tries to kiss him, but Damian isn’t really responding and it just doesn’t feel right, so he moves a little lower, attaching his mouth to Damian’s neck, and moving his hand over Damian’s belly towards his ribs, firm enough so Damian has to feel it, gentle enough that it shouldn’t bruise. Probably. But God, Damian’s skin is warm and… well, not smooth, because he has too many scars for his skin to be called smooth, but Tim still loves the feel of it under his skin.

There’s a hand on the place where Tim’s ass morphs into thigh, squeezing tightly. Tim’s not exactly surprised, but he still bites down in response, quite hard. Damian jerks a little, pressing his thigh hard into Tim’s cock. Tim groans and runs his tongue along the place he just bit.

It’s… almost lazy. If you can call the heavy atmosphere of their arousal that’s present at every moment lazy. And that’s not even talking about the wonderful, quiet, punched-out noises Damian makes. Tim never thought he’d be able to think about him as sweet, but here he is.

He moves lower with his mouth, to places where if he bites, Damian won’t murder him the next time they’re in the gym together. He never really got the chance to just… explore Damian’s body. Not the way he did Dick’s and, on one special occasion, Jason’s, too. But never Damian’s, because their moments together alone where more a battle than… well, love making.

Tim shudders just a little when he thinks that. Of course, that’s when there’s the sound of a camera going off. Tim lazily moves, so he’s still plastered to Damian’s side and his fingers graze over his nipple. He glances at Damian’s face (eyes still closed, which is a pity, because Damian has the nicest eyes. They all agree – Dick has the nicest ass, Damian has the nicest eyes, Jason gives the best hugs, and Tim is the one to go when you have a shit day and need distraction, because he can’t keep his mouth shut when watching movies. For some reason, his lovers find it soothing. Not the cinema people, Tim got banned from every single one in Gotham) and almost stops for a moment when he sees the tears streaken face. How is that so beautiful? But then he continues to look at Jason. Jason with a phone in his free hand. Tim rolls his face and makes himself comfortable. He’s aware that Jason’s taking more pictures, thank you very much, but he doesn’t mind. As he said to Damian, he made damn sure that no one would be able to get those pictures out of them.

„You’re really starting to have an obsession with photos, you know?“

„I’m a visual guy. Come here.“ Jason moves his hand to Tim’s hair, tugging him to sit back up. He’s not strong enough to actually make him move like that, but it would hurt like hell if Tim
didn't move, so he does. Jason bites his shoulder before moving suddenly. Damian under them tenses. With wonder Tim realizes that Jason moved to wrap his fingers around the base of Damian’s cock, stopping him from coming.

„He can come just like that?“

„To be fair, we’ve been stimulating him for some time now. But yes, he can come just like that.‘‘ Another kiss. Then Jason smiles wickedly at him. „Do you want to join in on the fun?“

Tim’s eyes slip down before they widen.

„Join in? You already have four fingers in him. Surely that’s enough even for your cock.“

„Not everything is about my cock, you know, replacement.‘‘ Tim makes a face at Jason. He hates that nickname. Jason makes sure Damian isn’t on a verge of coming anymore before tugging Tim close to him, once again nosing at his hair. „Just look at him.‘‘ Finally. Damian’s eyes are open again. They’re a little foggy, unfocused, but Tim thinks he’s trying to look at them. He also licks his lower lip and Tim presses himself closer to Jason and moves his hand on his cock. Jason makes a disapproving noise and smacks his hand away. Tim rolls his eyes.

„Control freak.‘‘

A tube of lube smacks Tim in his chest.

„Shut up and lube up, babybird. Wouldn’t want to hurt our little prince, would we.‘‘

Tim grins at Jason before scrambling to do as he’s told. Damian really is their little prince, isn’t he?

Jason slips two of his fingers out so Tim can slip two in and fuck. He never really realized how hot that is. He moves quickly, getting his other hand on Jason’s neck to bring him down, enough to kiss him. Jason lets it happen for a moment before gently pulling away, but letting his forehead rest on Tim’s.

„Not that I’m not enjoying that, but I meant what I said. Us not touching Damian right now means that he’s taking it as punishment and while that could be useful, it’s not exactly what I had in mind for tonight.‘‘

Tim grins.

„I can make it up to him by sucking him off?“

Jason’s smile is wicked.

„Not the kind of contact I had in mind, but please, do that.‘‘

Tim enjoys sucking dick. He and Damian have a weird… power battle going on, but with Damian pliant like that and Jason in charge, he gets to fully enjoy it. The angle is a little awkward, because both he and Jason still have their fingers up Damian’s ass, but it’s still… very satisfactory.

Between the two of them they get six fingers in Damian. With a small jolt Tim realizes that Damian likes the sometimes painful stretch that comes with adding another finger. That he… maybe even… almost craves it. Tim never thought he’d be into that, he certainly doesn’t understand the whole ‘turning pain into pleasure’ thing himself, but seeing Damian react to it… it does… things to him. Delicious, toe curling things.
“Alright, fine, I think we've tortured him enough. Go back to cuddling him so I can fuck him."

“Why do you get to fuck him?"

“Don't worry, he loves overstimulation and he usually has at least two orgasms in him."

Tim jerks so hard that his fingers go straight to Damian’s prostate, which makes Damian go tense with tension. Jason growls and suddenly one of his hands (the lubricated one) is around the base of Damian’s cock while the other one is on Tim’s neck, squeezing tightly.

“Stop being a fucking teenager about this, babybird. One of those is enough for me, thank you."

“Wait a few years, you're gonna miss the multiple orgasms and almost no refractory period."

Jason looks at Damian for a moment, moving his hand from his cock to slowly caress his chest.

“You know, I don't think that's gonna happen to Damian. Look at him, so sensitive, so eager to please. He’s our good boy, isn’t he?"

Damian whines and moves his legs apart a little bit more. Tim isn’t particularly dominant (the firm grasp Jason still has on him is prove enough), but this sigh of Damian works for him. It works for him so good that he’s certain that he’s going to come any minute now.

He moves, laying next to Damian once again, one hand thrown over his waist, the other in Damian’s hair, his body pressed closely to him, one of his legs intertwined with one of Damian’s. Jason glares at him for that, but Tim thrusts against Damian’s thigh and that makes Jason smirk, so Tim assumes he’s forgiven.

Tim alternates between nipping at Damian’s shoulder and just watching Jason. Damian is precious like this, but Jason is a fucking powerhouse, completely in control and still mostly dressed.

“You know the deal, little prince. You can come now, but only-“

Damian comes. Just like that and without even softening and it’s too much and it’s really fucking hot and Jason doesn’t even pause in his slow, deep thrusts and… well, Tim is coming, too.

He bites Damian's shoulder, hard. But fuck, that's probably the hardest orgasm he had in… probably since the first night all four of them were together.

Fuck, he misses Dick.

He’s lazy after orgasm, running his tongue over his bite before he moves a little. Damian is squirming and mewling and letting out these little breathless sounds and when he looks at him Jason is intensely focused watching both of them. Tim smiles lazily and moves his hand to Damian’s cock. Slow enough that Jason can smack it away if he wants to, but he doesn’t. He watches the hand long enough to know what Tim’s planning, but then he moves his eyes back up to their faces.

Damian’s little sounds become louder and more urgent soon enough, the muscles in his stomach clenching periodically. But he won’t come. For a moment Tim watches his face, before moving once again to look at Jason.

“You really have him trained, don't you?“

Jason smirks before he lowers himself to them, kissing Tim, slow and long and so throughout that
Tim forgets everything. Of course then Jason just turns and does the same to Damian, a little less effective considering that Damian is still rather unresponsive, although he does seem to enjoy it.

„You can come now, Damian.“

Watching Damian‘s orgasm face is amazing and Tim is kinda amazed that it‘s the same face he‘s been seeing since Damian‘s eighteen‘s birthday. He was expecting it to be different, because Damian has been a little different tonight, more… himself. But turns out, he‘s been himself around them since the beginning of their relationship.

Tim gets cuddly after an orgasm and Damian is soft and warm and pliant. And sure, moving a little, because Jason didn‘t stop just because Tim and Damian are both drained out now.

It doesn‘t take that long and Tim gets to cuddle a warm, soft Damian.

He turns away from Damian just to watch Jason‘s face during his orgasm. Jason‘s face relaxes and his mouth falls open and his eyes go soft and Tim loves them all with such a fierceness it almost hurts.

Jason gets rid of the condom before curling on the other side of Damian. Damian doesn‘t even open his eyes, but he curls into Jason while blindly reaching for Tim‘s hand. They interlink their fingers and suddenly Tim has to fight really hard to keep his eyes open to look at Jason.

Jason just smiles and runs the back of his fingers over Tim‘s cheek.

„Just sleep, Tim. We‘ll get something to eat first thing in the morning, but there‘s no chance we‘re waking Dami now and I‘m not leaving him here alone.“

Tim looks at Damian. He looks relaxed and already asleep, but he‘s gripping Tim‘s hand really hard and he can see that he has the same tight hold on Jason‘s hand, too. Jason smiles at him and Tim can feel himself melt.

He curls tighter around Damian, rests his head on Damian‘s shoulder, and goes to sleep.

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Damian wakes up warm, lazy, and deeply satisfied.

There‘s a strong arm thrown over his waist from his left and strong chest pressed closely to him. Jason has always ran hotter than the rest of them and never seemed to particularly mind it, like Richard does during summer. Plus, the scent of the cologne Jason wore yesterday for the hearing still clings to him.

Then there‘s someone on his right side. Not as hot as Jason, but still pleasantly warm, curled to Damian, head on his chest and legs thrown over Damian‘s. Curled even around Jason‘s, he‘s sure. The scent of coffee and the fact that the hair that‘s brushing Damian‘s face hasn‘t been cleaned for a while tells him who that someone is, too.

Timothy.

Fuck.
The laziness disappears quicker than Damian would thought possible and the warmth he felt shrinks.

Timothy is not supposed to be part of that deep-bone satisfaction Damian always feels after Jason… Damian doesn't have words for it, but Jason always manages to take him apart and put him back together. And somehow every time he does that, Damian feels lighter, happier, more… himself. At least for a while.

Whatever it is Jason does to him, Timothy is not supposed to be a part of that!

Getting out of the bed is more complicated than usual. Timothy clings and Jason… Jason would kill him if he said he clings, but that is the way to describe the way his arm tightens around him. It takes some careful maneuvering to get them to cling to each other instead of Damian.

The moment he stands next to the bed by himself he realizes how sticky he is. The soreness isn’t that bad (honestly, he’s used to it) and he knows Jason used condom. But there’s still dried semen on his thigh and Damian’s annoyed. Now he needs to take a shower before and after his workout. Considering that the stain is on his right thigh, he blames Timothy.

He takes the quickest shower in history of showers. The last thing he wants is for his lovers to wake up.

He makes it to one of the smaller gyms in the building, the one that can be reserved, and that doesn’t have anything else in it than a mat and a boxing bag. He checks that no one else is using it and for once, he’s lucky – the plan is free until eleven.

„FRIDAY, I’m booking the room until eleven. Don’t let anyone else in.“

„As you say, little prince.“

Damian rolls his eyes at the petulant tone the AI takes with him, but ignores her otherwise.

He starts by the standard exercises he’s been doing forever. By now they’re instinct. Stretching, mostly. Then he tapes his knuckles and goes for the bag.

He takes out his anger out on the bag. Except… except it’s not really anger. He’s not angry that Timothy joined them in the bed. He’s embarrassed and a little frustrated and a touch more anxious than he’d wish. But he’s great at channeling all of that into anger and that anger into… whatever it is when you beat up a bag.

He doesn’t really watch the time. But his clothes are drenched with sweat and his hair is plastered to his head by the time the door softly opens and closes again. He glances there before quickly moving so his back is fully to the door.

„I thought I told you to not let anyone else in, FRIDAY.“

„Mister Todd is not anyone else, little prince.“

Damian rolls his eyes just as Jason behind him snorts. His footsteps are completely silent, but he simply makes it in front of Damian and leans into the bag, so he keeps it in place for Damian to punch it.

Damian pretends to ignore him, but suddenly he’s acutely aware of Jason’s presence. Still, he can out-stubborn him any day. He just continues his punches and tries to ignore his sudden need to… be held in Jason’s arms.
The moment he realizes that’s what he really wants his punches get more aggressive and he sets his mouth in a thin line.

„You weren’t in the bed when we woke up.“

„That’s what happens when you get up to do some actual work out, lazy ass.“

He doesn’t look at Jason. He doesn’t. So he doesn’t see how Jason frowns.

„We could have all go for a work out, if you woke us.“

Damian doesn’t respond. What is he supposed to say? That he panicked and needed to be alone?

Well, yeah. He can hear Richard telling him that’s exactly what he should say. Communication and all. But it’s easy for Richard to say that. He’s good at talking. Damian’s words just… get stuck in his throat. And that’s when he knows what he wants to say. Most of the time, he’s just confused and uncertain. Emotions suck.

Jason fidgets some and Damian realizes that he’s not alone in being unable to voice what’s on his mind. Jason is as bad.

„Are you okay?“

„I’m fine.“

There’s a long silence.

„No, you’re not. It’s soft and quiet and Damian wants to punch Jason’s face now. „Is it really so terrible that Tim joined us?“

Damian sneers and actually punches Jason. It’s strong enough that Jason moves his head, but not strong enough to make him let go of the bag. Damian winces and quickly steps closer to Jason, his hand going to his face before he quickly moves it back. Jason snorts.

„Well, your aim is good.“

Damian sighs and steps back, untaping his knuckles and going to the small bathroom closeby. He wets the towel and goes back. There’s not that much blood, but Jason’s nose is already swelling a little. Damian softly dabs the wet towel at Jason’s face.

„Sorry,“ he murmurs. It’s not exactly clearly said, but Damian knows that Jason hears him. Mostly because he rolls his eyes.

„Not the first time someone broke my nose, not the last.“ Jason watches him, but Damian doesn’t look him in the eyes. „I can’t believe I’m saying this, but... talk to me, babybat.“

Damian takes care to get rid of all the blood on Jason’s face before answering.

„You... understand me. The more... violent, more... darker side of me. You understand me in ways Timothy and Richard never could.“

Jason hums softly and moves one of his arms around Damian’s waist.

„They might not know the way the dark sometimes consumes us, but they can’t understand it if we don’t explain, don’t let them in.“ Damian looks up in surprise. Jason’s face looks pained. He sighs when he notices that Damian looks at him. „There is four of us in this relationship. And if it’s
supposed to work, we need to share ourselves with all of us.“ Then he smirks and Damian can feel the atmosphere shifting. Thankfully. „And judging by Tim’s reaction, it’s working. Shame you haven’t seen his face the first moment he stepped in the room yesterday, babybat. He almost creamed his pants on the spot.“

Damian shudders, once again feeling his cheeks heat up. Jason smirks.

„Yeah?“

Jason just smirks and kisses Damian’s forehead. Damian closes his eyes and leans into the touch.

„Come on, now.“ Jason takes a step back and Damian straightens. „I started making waffles and left Tim in charge. We should probably go back to make sure that the kitchen isn’t on fire.“

„The kitchen is fine.“ Damian doesn’t jump when FRIDAY speaks up, but he is surprised. Damn it. He should be used to the AI being everywhere in the compound now. „There are unwanted individuals, though, and master Tim seems annoyed.“

Damian frowns and takes a step back.

„Who’s there with him?“

„Legolas and Red.“

Well, that would annoy Timothy. He despises incompetence.

Damian frowns as he looks down at himself. He needs a shower.

„Come on. Breakfast first, then shower.“ Then Jason frowns. „Do you think that the shower stall in our room will fit all three of us?“

„It’s my room and what, you afraid of a little skin to skin contact?“

Jason smirks.

„Brat.“

The situation in kitchen is… tense is an understatement. Timothy is stubbornly ignoring both Barton and Maximoff, who are standing in between the door and the counter where Timothy is furiously ignoring the two of them, focused on the waffle maker. Next to that there are two plates, one of them has waffles stacked on it so high that Timothy obviously thought it wiser to start another tower. Damian looks at it with eyebrows raised high. But then he realizes exactly how hungry he is, so he doesn’t comment.

„So what, now all the people Stark hangs out with are too good for us?“

Damian rolls his eyes when Barton sneers that and exchanges a look with Jason. Jason smirks and so they both move to walk around Barton and Maximoff, each on one side of them.

„Yup.“

Barton and Maximoff both flinch and Damian takes pleasure in it. He moves to the coffeemaker. He notices that Timothy’s first cup is almost drained, so he sets on making another one, careful to position himself so Timothy doesn’t see him. He will lower his intake of sugar with his coffee to nothing one day, but for now, he’s happy with just the one spoonful he managed to get it to in the last two years. He knows Timothy refuses to reconsider his caffeine addiction, but Damian can at
least make him drink the coffee without the mountain of sugar he preferred it with before they got together. He doesn’t think Timothy noticed that he’s been lowering his sugar intake for years now.

„What?“

„Your question.“ Jason sounds annoyed, but when Damian glances at him amusement shines from his eyes. Of course, Damian doesn’t think anyone outside their family would notice that. „Everyone hanging out with Tony is too good for your company, yes.“

Damian loves bothering the Rogues as anyone else he knows, but red mist appears around the witch’s hands and he tenses. Physically, he can take anyone on that sorry excuse of a team. But magic is different. You need to be prepared for magic.

„You spoiled little-“

„Alright!“ Timothy once again ignores the two Rogues in the room as he moves the newest two waffles into the batch of them and pours the rest of the dough into the waffle maker. „I’m almost done. Let’s grab some plates and some tray and move it to our room. Dami, your tea,“ he nods towards a pot full of tea. Damian nods at him and hands him his cup of coffee. Timothy smiles at him, small and warm, and Damian once again fights a blush.

Maximoff and Barton sputter some more, but they ignore them. Timothy and Damian gather everything on a tray while Jason goes to fridge and a pantry for some syrup, nutella, and jam. Damian takes two cups for the pot of tea. Jason is not as much of a fan as Damian, but he prefers it to coffee.

They leave the two Rogues in the kitchen without a word, but as they go to Damian’s room (and it is his room, damn it!), the silence gets somewhat tense. Damian hates it.

Once they make it to Damian’s room they make a picnic of it on his bed. They’re careful to send the sheet and the pillow to the floor so that they have relatively stable place and they don’t have to keep everything packed on the tray. The only things that stay there are the tea and coffee. Timothy takes a sip from his coffee and sighs into it, satisfied. Damian smiles into his own cup.

They start the breakfast and the silence lasts. Damian stops looking at his lovers and simply eats his breakfast. Nutella is pretty much a sugar bomb, but Damian figures that once in a while it can’t hurt. Besides, it’s not like he does nothing all day everyday.

Finally, Timothy is the one who can’t stand the silence any longer.

„Okay, what’s going on? Cause honestly, I don’t see anything wrong, but you two are so tense it’s a surprise you’re even able to sit here and don’t snap. Also, what happened to Jason’s nose?“

Now Damian quickly looks up to look at Jason. Jason just smirks at him.

„Our little prince has a good aim and I managed to piss him off in about five words. Nothing new.“ Timothy raises one sharp eyebrow at Jason before looking at Damian and back.

„That’s not all this is. Is this about last night?“

Now Damian tenses. The last thing he wants to do is talk about this. He wants to run and hide. Hell, he wants to fight Timothy. Except he doesn’t. Not really. Those responses are just… instinct.

He still doesn’t want to have that conversation. Sure, they probably need to have it. Doesn’t mean
he has to like it.

„Turns out, babybat doesn’t like anyone knowing he turns into a softie when we’re alone.“

Trust Jason to make it easier by blurting things out and letting Damian glare at him. The fucker even has the nerve to smirk at him.

„Really?“ Timothy sounds doubtful and when Damian looks, he’s wearing a wary expression. „I mean, sure, you’re usually careful to keep your tough guy persona, but it’s us. I mean, for your last birthday we took you to a pet shop and I saw you laughing while being buried under a bunch of puppies. What do you call that?“

„That’s not… it’s not about…“ The words are just not there and Damian is so frustrated with himself. He runs his hand through his too long hair. He seriously needs to have it cut again. He looks at Timothy and takes a deep breath a few times. Timothy just cocks his head to one side, watching him with his intense blue eyes. „The… submissiveness Jason wakes in me.“ He looks back down, fidgeting where he’s sitting. There is silence for a moment.

„Well, that… makes sense, I guess.“ Damian quickly looks up to Timothy. Timothy looks thoughtful. „How did that even happen?“

„I don’t know. Jason just…,“ Damian’s cheeks once again grow hot, „knows how to touch me.“

„You bet your ass I do.“

Jason’s hand curls around Damian’s neck and Damian leans into him, pressing his side to Jason’s, letting him to slid his arm around his waist. It’s… comfortable, warm. When Damian looks back up at Timothy, his other lover is smiling softly at him.

„It suits you.“ Timothy’s smile grows wider and Damian finds the soft teasing… acceptable. Jason’s hold on him tightens and Damian braces himself for whatever remark he has for them.

„Oh yes, Timmy, please, tell us more about how much you like our babybat giving himself to us completely.“

Damian’s fight or flight response is back. He doesn’t want to do either of those things, but… he doesn’t want to talk about himself being… submissive and entirely in their mercy, either. It’s embarrassing how easily Jason gets him like that, how needy he turns when he’s in that state.

Timothy rolls his eyes and leans in to give a long, deep kiss, first to Jason and then to Damian. Jason takes charge of the kiss, but Damian… doesn’t. It’s new and a little surprising, but Damian actually melts into the kiss. Not just letting Timothy control the kiss, but leaning into him and even whining softly when Timothy pulls away. Timothy smiles when he notices that the only reason Damian isn’t leaning into him (and possibly ruining their breakfast) is Jason’s arm still holding him in place. Jason is looking at him appreciatively.

„Wow, babybird. Maybe I’ll be able to train you, too.“

„I am not.“ But then Jason slips his hand from Damian’s neck to his hair and tugs, hard. Damian moans and moves with the movement, before his eyes clear some and he glares at Jason. „I hate you.“

Timothy snorts at that and starts actually eating for a change. That’s also when he realizes that the circlet is finally done. He looks at the tower of waffles and then glares at his two lovers, who are more busy with each other than the breakfast.
„Eat up, you two. There’s something in the lab I want to show you.“

„Oh, so now we’re allowed to go in the lab?“

„Technically, it’s a gift for Damian, so you don’t actually have to come with us...“

„Alright, alright, shutting up now. Jesus, what got your panties in the twist?“

„Not you, apparently,“ Damian grins at Jason and Timothy laughs at them.

The rest of breakfast is peaceful and almost lazy and it leaves everyone with a content, warm feeling. Timothy even manages to get a picture of his two lovers, Damian leaning into Jason and Jason cradling his chin as he kisses him, and sends it to Dick. Dick, of course, is not happy. He sends Tim a photo of his desk with some files and a to-go cup of coffee and a quick *I hate you*. Tim smiles at it and shows it to his lovers. Jason chuckles, but Damian just rolls his eyes. Tim doesn’t understand how Damian doesn’t understand their liking of photos.

He also sends a quick text asking Tony if he plans to go to the lab any time soon. Of course, Tony can’t simply answer, so he has to admit that he plans on showing Damian his circlet and yes, he would prefer an empty lab.

*I’ll keep the princess away, then. Just don’t get any cum on any of my projects. Or my robots. Or my tables. Just, you know, don’t have sex in the lab*

Timothy rolls his eyes. As if he wants to have sex in a place he closely associates with Tony. But still.

*Spoilsport*

***

It’s not like Tony restricted Damian’s access to his lab. He can come and go as he pleases, same as the rest of his family. But he understands that lab is a private space for Tony and that doesn’t change just because people he trusts are there with him. He only ever comes when it’s his turn to lure the local geniuses for dinner. And recently Ayo took that responsibility on herself.

The place is not different from what he saw the last time he was there. Sure, the things that create the mess are different and there’s no clean table unlike the last time and the projects seem different. But the bots still hurry towards them to say hi and there’s no apparent system to the mess.

Jason is still a little wary of the bots, but Damian just rolls his eyes and kneels to be on the same level as the bots. They beep at him as he pats them and he nods and hums, frustrated that he still doesn’t understand them, but he keeps smiling at them. It’s not the bots’ fault that he can’t pick up their language as easily as any other.

„Alright, kids, that’s enough. Damian, can you? I have something for you.“

Damian frowns as he slowly gets back up again.

„Should I be worried?“

Timothy rolls his eyes.
Come on, I worked on it with both Tony and the princess. Although it was surprisingly Keener who had the most comments about the aesthetic side.

Jason and Damian exchange a worried look as they slowly make their way to the table Tim is waiting for them at. Tim rolls his eyes and nudges Damian none too gently to sit down in the nearby chair. Damian does so, but doesn’t stop giving Tim dubious looks.

“You have serious trust issues, demon brat.”

“Can you blame me?”

“Not really. Honestly, that’s kinda why it’s so hot that you’d trust us enough to let go. Anyway. Close your eyes.”

“You’re not serious.”

“Dead serious. Don’t,” he adds quickly, raising one finger in Jason’s direction. “Just… don’t. Come on, Dami. I promise, it’ll be worth it.”

Damian doesn’t look any less dubious. Jason rolls his eyes.

“Just do as he says. It’ll be faster this way and I’m almost sure he wouldn’t do anything to hurt you.”

“Almost sure, that’s reassuring.” Damian grumbles some but with a sigh closes his eyes. With a smile Tim gestures for Jason to stay quiet as he moves to open an unassuming box on the table Jason barely noticed before. Tim takes out a silver circlet and Jason’s jaw actually drops. It’s made of three parts that intertwine each other to create a pretty looking pattern in the circlet that honestly could any prince in the middle ages wear. Jason smirks. Little prince indeed.

Damian, on the other hand, is getting nervous.

“Should I extend my hands or anything?”

“No. Just… don’t flinch.”

With that there’s a weight settling on his head. Damian flinches a little before making himself sit still. It’s a… crown?

“Okay, you can open your eyes now.”

Of course, there’s nothing different around him when he opens his eyes. So he frowns at Timothy, hard.

“What, exactly, did you just put on my head.”

Timothy just grins and hands him a mirror.

It’s a… circlet. Circlet crown. The kind of thing a king would wear in his day-to-day life rather than the crowns they would be forced into during ceremonials. Or maybe the kind of thing a prince would wear.

“Hilarious.”

He goes to take it off, but Timothy stops him.
“Wait. I didn’t made it just to poke fun at you.”

“Oh, I’m so glad you had more than one reason for it.”

“Come on, don’t be like that. Do you honestly think that I just whipped it out after yesterday? We can talk about your issues about being seen as submissive, but did you really think it would make me love you less? That’s stupid. Not to talk about the months it took me to actually make this and I already told you Tony and Shuri helped and… why are you looking at me like that?”

They’re both staring at him with wide eyes and slack faces. Damian manages to open his mouth few times, but he’s not able to actually speak. So it’s Jason who gulps and replies.

“Love. You said… you said you love Damian.”

Tim can feel himself growing red, but he stubbornly refuses to look away from them. Instead, he shrugs, feigning indifference.

“It’s not like it’s not true. I love you. Both of you. Well, all three of you, but it’s not like Dick is here.” And shit, but he’s going to be pissed he missed this. „Besides, it’s been pointed to me recently that not exchanging the l-word after almost two years is pathetic.“

More silence and Tim’s starting to grow uncomfortable with the way Damian is staring at him. Not in a wrong way, just… intense. Really, really intense.

“Alfred got you too, huh?”

Finally, Damian looks away.

“What do you mean, too?”

“Apparently, going this long in a relationship without sharing your feelings is pathetic and certainly he raised us better. When I pointed out that technically, Bruce is the one who raised us, he didn’t speak a single word to me for another week.”

“Okay,” says Damian after a while. „That’s… a new information. I… That is I feel…”

Tim smiles at the way Damian visibly struggles with voicing his emotions. He leans in and kisses him, ready for the usual battle, but pleasantly surprised when Damian simply gives in, leans into the kiss and gives himself to Tim. And Tim gets it. Damian is not good with words, with emotions. But he’s learning to show them what he feels, even if he himself is still unsure what it is.

“I know. It’s okay. It’s why I never said anything either – I know. And I thought you do, too.“

Damian smiles at him and Tim’s breath catches. He’s still not used to seeing that… that soft curl of lips, the open happiness in Damian’s eyes.

“I do now.“

There’s a soft sound of movement close to them and they both turn to look at Jason. He looks unsure and a little out of place. Tim smiles and extends his hand to him.

“Come here, you big lump, and tell us you love us.“

“Hey! How come Damian gets out of it and I still have to say it?”

“You said it yourself – one teenager in this relationship is enough for all of us.“
He did what?!

„Shut up, demon spawn,“ Jason says as he hugs both of them, but then he noses Tim’s hair and murmurs into it: „I love you. All of you.“

For a moment they simply stand there, quiet and content. Jason holds tight to both of them and Damian and Timothy lean into each other as they share the space, share their breaths.

Of course, Jason is the first to move away, moving his hand as if to adjust Damian’s new crown, but it fits perfectly so he ends up adjusting a lock of hair.

„Why don’t you tell us what’s so special about the crown then?“

„It’s a circlet, and sure. So, you know how the witch has been messing with everyone’s head since she came to the compound?“

The atmosphere changes immediately and Jason scowls. Timothy absently squeezes his arms, but keeps his focus on Damian.

„I did some research. You know Logan from the X-Men, right? His file says that he’s immune to any kind of telepathic attack. I did some digging and it turns out he has all his bones covered in metal, his skull included. Also, you know how Magneto keeps wearing that weird helmet thing? Apparently, he and professor X used to be friends and he started wearing it because it keeps the telepath out of his head. So, I figured, if we get the same metal Logan has, or maybe even the most powerful metal on earth, to circle one’s head, we should prevent her from entering our minds, right?“

„That’s why you needed Tony and Shuri. Shuri provided vibranium, and considering that there’s three parts of the crown—“

„Circlet.“

„Whatever, then that means that you got what that Logan guy has, vibranium, and a third metal. I’m guessing the one Tony synthetized?“

„Yes!“ Timothy’s eyes sparkle and Jason and Damian exchange fond, amused smiles. „I mean, in theory, it should work with any of the three metals and we’re working on a theory that three simple implants should do the job, but for now it’s just a theory and we’re nowhere near to test it. But this… well, we’re ready to test this.“

„On me,“ Damian adds, deadpan. It’s easier to point out that he’s basically a beta tester than it is to explore the warm feeling in his stomach this brings him. After all, out of everyone staying in the compound, Timothy told him he did it for him. „It’s the worst during the night. How am I supposed to sleep with it?“

Timothy shrugs, somewhat sheepish.

„I’m not saying it’ll be easy. But the circlet should fit you perfectly. I had Friday do some scanning and we designed this one to fit you perfectly.“

The feeling in Damian grows and after a moment of hesitation he moves to hug Timothy.

„Thank you.‟

Timothy hugs him back just as tight.
„Aww, you guys. We really should have saved all of that for Dick. He’s gonna be mental he missed all this.“

„I can send him the recording of this morning from this room, master Jason.“

Jason’s smile grows wicked just as Damian and Timothy move enough to see him.

„That sounds great. Do it, Fri.“

„With pleasure.“

***

Jason leaves that day. Neither Damian nor Tim are very happy about it and Jason happily laughs at them.

„Chill out you two. I’m gonna be back next week for the pride here in New York. But the Gotham pride is this Saturday and because B is busy, Dick is suiting up as Batman. And I’m not missing that.“

Damian frowns at that. He hasn’t missed Gotham pride since he was thirteen. Sometimes as Robin, sometimes as Damian Wayne, but always there. Missing it seems somewhat… weird. Not only is it the only day Gotham doesn’t seem so gloomy and dark and… well, insane. But lately the feeling of belonging to the community really helped Damian.

And of course, the mostly friendly Gotham villains usually attend and behave as well as you can expect from villains. Harley and Ivy attend almost every year and even Catwoman usually shows up. They’ve never really done anything during the celebrations – most they did is shoot glitter guns on anyone against the pride. Honestly, it’s kinda hilarious. But they’re there and although Gotham citizens are used to them, there are few tourists who tend to be nervous. Which is why the vigilantes also attend each year.

All in all, Gotham pride is a Thing and Damian is honestly sorry to miss it.

So he whines to Timothy for long enough on Saturday that Timothy agrees to go to gym with him and spend some of their energy on sparring. There’s only one better way to spend some energy and that usually follows the sparring, so Damian is looking forward to it.

Except… except the circlet doesn’t really work while sparring. Damian already slept with it and in the morning found the circlet in its place on his head. He’s also been sleeping somewhat better – once he falls asleep he doesn’t wake up so easily. But falling asleep is still a chore. Damian remembers what the woman from X-men, professor Grey he thinks, t old them, warned them about – they already have the witch in their minds, they need to get rid of it. Something to work on.

But during the sparring the circlet keeps falling off his head. They’re not sparring even for ten minutes when it falls off for the third time. Timothy sighs and steps a little away from him.

„This isn’t working.“

There’s a sharp response that Damian bites off.
“What do you suggest, then? It’s not like I can just stop training.”

Timothy looks thoughtful for a moment before raising his hand with one finger extended.

“Give me a minute.”

Of course, it takes him more than a minute. Damian tries sit-ups and squats and other exercises he’s used to doing. Some of them he still can do, but during most of them the circlet falls off. It’s frustrating mostly because he’s supposed to wear this even out during patrol, right? How is he supposed to fight for his life when the damn circlet keeps falling off?

Finally, Timothy is back with some pins in his hand. Damian frowns at that.

“You can’t be serious.”

“How do you think the girls get their hair to stay in place? Just give it a try. Come here.”

Damian frowns at the way Timothy needs to raise just a bit on his tip toes to be able to work the pins into his hair so they keep the circlet in place. But he keeps still.

“Alright. Give it a try.”

Damian does. It falls soon enough.

Timothy works like that four more times before the damn circlet actually stays on Damian’s head. By that time Damian is mostly annoyed and not really in the mood for sparring anymore.

“So? What do you say?”

“Great. Hope you remember the pattern, because I’m not showering with it.”

Timothy’s smile turns dirtier.

“Skipping the foreplay? Alright.”

Damian thinks about resisting, but in the end he lets himself be seduced. After all, they can try sparring next time. And hopefully it won’t take as long to pin the damn circlet. Shower with Timothy sounds like exactly what he needs right now. And now that Jason isn’t here to spoil his fun with Timothy, he can even show him that he won’t just submit to him.

In the end, it is a very pleasant afternoon. And when the first photos from Gotham pride appear online he’s still pleasantly satisfied, so he can just look at them and smile. Seeing rainbow-colored Batman flirt with Red Hood is something he never wanted to see, but enjoys nonetheless.

***

Timothy notices that Damian still can’t fall asleep, but of course the damn stubborn prat won’t talk about it.

Timothy comes back from lab that Saturday and finds Damian reading a book in dark room with just his bedside table lamp on. Timothy sighs as he goes along his evening routine.
“Can’t fall asleep?”

Damian just smirks at him as he puts down a bookmark and closes his book. After he puts it on his bedside table he turns to see Timothy who’s sitting on his side of the bed now.

“You know that.”

Timothy rolls his eyes.

“I can call professor X tomorrow morning.”

Damian sighs as he lies closer to Timothy, pressing close to him and closing his eyes.

“Leave it for Monday.”

“If you can’t sleep...”

“It’s weekend and with the school I don’t think he gets much free time. When I fall asleep I can sleep through the whole night, thanks to you. So help me fall asleep and leave it for Monday.”

“Damian,” Timothy’s voice gets husky and Timothy shivers. Timothy’s hand slides to Damian’s waist and there under Damian’s tank top, softly brushing his fingers over Damian’s skin underneath. Damian shivers. Timothy smirks as he leans to murmur into Damian’s ear. “Want me to tire you down a little?”

“Want you to try, at least.”

But Damian’s words are betrayed by the breathy way he manages to get them out with. Timothy’s lips brush against his ear so he feels the smirk.

“You sure you want to challenge me?”

“You’re yet to match my... my...” Damian’s words are cut with a moan as Timothy’s lips suck in his earlobe and his teeth gently graze it.

Unnecessary to say, Damian doesn’t have any problem to fall asleep later that night.

***

Apparently, professor Xavier is unable to make the trip any time soon. But he sends help anyway.

The redhead woman arrives on Wednesday afternoon along with another man. This one is taller and much slimmer than Logan and by the way he seems to almost shadow the woman Damian guesses that’s the third of their relationship, Scott Summers, leader of the X-Men and teacher at the school for mutants.

“Nice crown,” the woman smiles at him.

“It’s a circlet!”

Damian smirks at the way Timothy seems honestly insulted at the way everyone assumes it’s a crown.
“Either way, it’s cute. Is it why you called the professor?”

Damian raises his eyebrows in amusement before turning to the man.

“Is she always this quick or are we just special?”

The man frowns at him.

“Careful, kid.”

“Don’t worry, old man,” Damian smirks at him. “You and the hunky older man can keep her.”

Both Grey and Summers stop in their movement and Timothy groans.

“And here I was, thinking that you know the value of subtlety.”

“I do know the value,” Damian rolls his eyes. “I just don’t see the point. Besides, if Logan’s power set is what you said it is, they already know about us. There’s no way he hasn’t smelled us on each other when he was here.”

The couple looks a little unsure.

“Logan… did mention smelling… something. We just weren’t sure.”

“You are brothers, after all.”

“And you are mutant teachers and also part of X-Men. We all have things to lose if our relationships become public and now that we all know about them we can continue on. What is it called again, assured destruction?”

“Mutually assured destruction, but yeah, point. So, coffee? Tea?”

Miss Grey and mister Summers exchange somewhat baffled looks, but in the end miss Grey smiles and asks for tea. Damian leaves for kitchen to prepare their tea (coffee for Timothy) and Timothy takes the couple to the living room. Of course, the kitchen isn’t empty, but it’s just Wilson in there so Damian counts that as a win.

Wilson smiles at him somewhat awkwardly.

“Can I help you?”

“No.” Damian’s answer is sharp and cold as he makes his way to the kettle. He carefully looks towards Wilson and inwardly sighs when he sees that the man is carefully avoiding him. “Just here to make tea.”

Wilson flinches at the added answer, obviously surprised. Then he smiles.

“I’m Sam Wilson. Are you here as Stark’s guest?”

“That’s doctor Stark to you.” He might not be as pissed at Wilson as he is at the rest of them, but Wilson still has issues that he should take care of. And Damian is not there to help him with them. He has his hands full with his own family, thank you very much. “And yes. Is that your coffee?” he adds as he points to the full cup of coffee in the machine.

“Hardly. I’ll get out of your hair in a minute, don’t worry.”

Wilson’s face falls and Damian smirks. The guy made a mistake and now he reaps what he sowed. It will be good for him, Damian’s sure.

He makes a whole pot of tea along with the coffee, puts it on a tray with three empty mugs and with a short good-bye leaves the kitchen.

He finds Timothy excitedly lecturing the two X-Men about his research and the theory behind it.

“Anyone in need of rescuing?” he draws out, amused. Timothy glares at him and Damian smirks.

“Thank you, but that is actually fascinating. May I?” miss Grey gestures towards Damian’s head.

“Let him at least set the tray on the table,” mister Summers says without a tone in his voice and with his face as impassive as ever. His visor hiding his eyes doesn’t help. But somehow Damian doesn’t think he’s really annoyed. More like… fondly exasperated.

Or maybe that’s just Damian projecting. Fond exasperation is how his lovers tend to talk to him.

He sets the tray down and pours the tea. Timothy eagerly takes the cup of coffee and practically inhales it at once. Damian rolls his eyes at that.

“I’m not making you another cup. Wilson’s cooking.”

Timothy makes a face.

“You didn’t scare him, did you?”

Damian just smiles, sits down, and turns towards miss Grey.

“You were saying?”

“May I?”

Damian breaths in, straightens, looks at miss Grey, and finally nods. Miss Grey’s face turns serious as she stares at him, right in his eyes. The seconds go on and Damian grows uncomfortable. Miss Grey’s eyes don’t sway away from his and Damian does look away to look at Timothy, but he looks back soon after. Miss Grey frowns and leans closer to Damian. After that it lasts only a moment before she leans back in and smiles.

“I can’t get anything and I wasn’t exactly gentle. Did you feel anything?”

“No.”

Now miss Grey looks impressed as she looks towards Timothy. Mister Summers hands her her cup of tea and she absentmindedly accepts it.

“Very impressive work, mister Drake-Wayne. Do you plan to patent it and manufacture it for superheroes?”

“Didn’t think about it yet. Maybe? Later, though. We need to create the versions with just one metal, then maybe combinations with two of the three metals if the single metal doesn’t work. Then we have this whole theory about implants that could protect the wearer without the additional problems of wearing an external device.”
“Drake.”

“Right. Sorry.”

“No, no, it truly is fascinating. Would you mind sending me the research?”

Timothy grows sheepish.

“I mean… I would if it was only my research. But it’s not. And we didn’t apply for a patent yet.”

Summers’ face sours, but Miss Grey just sighs and nods.

“Fair enough. I expect to be sent at least an article with which you will apply for the patent. Now, is there some other way I can help you?”

Damian smirks at the way she tenses, turning her body language towards Damian. She’s much easier to read than her partner. Both her partners, Damian mentally adds when he remembers Logan.

“Drink your tea, Miss Grey. I’m not letting you in my head just like that.”

Timothy rolls his eyes.

“Excuse him, he’s emotionally stunned and has trust issues. But yes, we’d like you to clean his mind. He still can’t fall asleep and we think it’s because the witch’s magic is already there. The circlet prevents the magic from entering his head again, but if it’s already there…”

“I’d be happy to do so,” Miss Grey smiles at Timothy before turning to Damian. She studies him for a moment before sighing and making herself more comfortable. “I’m mutant, so I never really fit in with other children. Charles took me in when I was young and since the very beginning he was the one who taught me. Apparently, my powers are one of the most powerful anyone’s ever seen. I have a medical doctorate and a minor degree in psychology. Right after finishing my studies I returned to Charles’ school to join X-Men, help doctor McCoy care for the children’s health, and teach biology. I’ve been in relationship with Scott since our high school days. Logan joined the X-Men ten years ago, we’ve all been in the relationship for the last eight years. Technically, me and Scott have been engaged for fifteen years now, but as you know, there’s no way all three of us could get married, so that’s all we are. Is that enough or would you like more information about me before you let me in your head?”

Her face is a mix of amusement and challenge. Damian cocks his head to one side and squints his eyes.

“What university?”

“Damian!”

“What? She asked.”

Timothy rolls his eyes and gives Damian a soft slap over his head. Damian growls at him softly.

“We’ll thank you for your help, doctor Grey.”

She waves her hand.

“Miss Grey is good enough for me, thank you. And I don’t mind,” she adds with a small smile towards Damian. “Letting someone, let alone a stranger, into your head is… terrifying. Ideally, I’d
like us to spend some time together and get to know each other better. Of course, you could join us at Westchester, but from what I understand you’d prefer not to.”

“Spend time in a mansion full of teenagers?” Damian makes a face. “No, thank you.”

Both miss Grey and mister Summers look a little taken aback by that.

“That’s… what puts you off? The teenagers part?”

Damian gives mister Summers an unimpressed look. He can’t exactly tell him that if he was against mutants he would be pretty much a hypocrite, but do they really think he’s terrible enough to be xenophobic like that? Then he sighs and looks at miss Grey.

“Alright. I don’t want to keep you here too long. Shall we?”

He tries to pull the circlet off, but he isn’t able to do it. Timothy snickers, but moves to help him get the pins out of his hair to slip the circlet off.

“You’re trained at some kind of mind arts, right?”

“I know my mind and I’m able to recognize when the thoughts in my head aren’t my own. I was able to sense your professor in my head and I knew to concentrate on certain things so that the professor wouldn’t be able to access things I didn’t want him to access. I’m… fairly sure I’d be able to kick him or you out if something like that happened.”

Miss Grey looks unconvinced, but to her credit she just nods.

“I promise I won’t go looking for any trouble. Will you want me to add this to the report we already made to the council?”

Damian looks towards Timothy who looks as surprised as Damian himself feels. They’re not naive enough to think that father doesn’t know about their meeting, but they haven’t talked to him about it. Father did ask them if it works, but when they reported that it does work he left it at only that.

“Can we get back to you about that?”

“Of course. I’ll prepare it just to be sure. Now, are you ready?”

“Give me a moment.” Damian closes his eyes and concentrates on himself, his breathing, and his mind. He’s aware that Timothy talks quietly to the couple and that they reply to him just as soft and quiet, but he ignores it. He carefully examines his thoughts, putting away those that he knows don’t belong to him. It takes him a while to properly sink in and to make sure he gets a grip on everything. When he’s sure he has and that he will be able to keep it even with opened eyes, he opens that.

Miss Grey smiles at him before her face turns serious. The room gets totally silent and this time, Damian feels her. He feels her presence and after a moment he feels pressure. He has to make himself not panic and not kick her out of his mind.

Then miss Grey raises her hands, twisting her fingers in weird pattern Damian saw before. The witch does that to summon her dark red magic. Miss Grey’s fingers twitch, but no tendrils twist around it.

Until the red mist starts showing up. But this time, it slowly comes from Damian’s head. Damian tightens his hold on the armchair under him and focuses on his breathing.
“Do you have some container for it?”

Damian hopes miss Grey doesn’t expect answer from him, because he’s doing his best to not flip out and just kick her out of his head.

Rationally he knows that the pressure is a good thing, that she’s getting rid of the red mist, not showing it in. But it’s still hard not to follow instinct and protect himself.

He focuses on his breathing and staying open to miss Grey. It goes against everything he was taught and he doesn’t exactly feel comfortable with being that vulnerable to a stranger, but it is for the best. And it will give them ammunition against the witch.

He loses his sense of time.

When the pressure eases and he opens his eyes miss Grey is slumped in her place, her hair sticking to her face with sweat, obviously exhausted. There’s a kitchen container on the table where the red mist swirls around, occasionally trashing against the side of the container.

There’s a cup of tea pressing into Damian’s hand and with surprise Damian realizes that Timothy is sitting on the armrest of his armchair, giving him the cup and leaning into him.

Damian grabs the cup, but shifts his attention back to miss Grey.

“Are you alright?”

“Me? You just got nasty magic pulled out of your head.”

“I’m not the one looking like I’ve just battled the villain of the week.”

Miss Grey’s lips twitch and even mister Summers’ purses his lips. Timothy doesn’t bother to hide anything, he simply snorts.

“Maybe you should look in a mirror, brat.”
Comingout

Chapter Summary

NYC Pride 2018, with Stark-Wayne car and unforeseen consequences
James Barnes is not Bucky and he's fed up with Rogers saying otherwise

Chapter Notes

I know less about comic book Bruce Wayne than I do comic book Damian. So that's not even nothing, I'm pretty sure we're in negative figures now.
So yeah, OOC, most likely. You've been warned

Adjusting to the twenty first century is a feat. Especially considering that James is still remembering things from the thirties and forties. It’s wild, dreaming about a life in the Depression and waking up in twenty first century, into a compound full of the newest technology and with always full fridge and pantry.

Going to the kitchen at five in the morning to make mac’n’cheese is the most absurd thing in his life. In his mind he can still see his little sisters, faces dirty and hair stubbornly refusing to stick to the braids he put it in just hours before, looking at him, pleading him to cook them something from the little they had at home. All that while he idly chats with Friday while quickly putting together the instant version of the only meal he was ever able to whip together.

Doctor Wilkins, who he has to talk to twice a week now per the accords deal, tells him that it’s good that he recognizes the surreality of all of it. But she also insists that while yes, retreating his memories is important, not locking himself in the past is even more important. She encourages him to explore this new age (“future”, Steve calls it, but how can it be future when they’re living it right that very moment?) in any and every way he’s comfortable with. She recommended some books and gave him a name of some documents. He read some of those and watched all the documents, but he found himself most fascinated by the Internet. Whatever the topic he’s interested, from politics, to science, to culture, he always finds relevant (and even some irrelevant, he soon finds) information on the Internet.

The feminist movement fascinates him and with heavy heart he hopes his sisters got to enjoy at least some of the differences it brought. He knows that at least Sarah would love the opportunity to go to college and later work at an actual job that society respects.

The Vietnam war gives him nightmares that rival his own memories, although he’s pretty sure he wasn’t personally involved. At least something to be happy about.

The scientific progress, especially in medicine, fascinates him. People are no longer periodically dying of most of the terrible diseases he remembers from his childhood. Apparently, nowadays there’s vaccine for basically everything short of cancer. The discovery that there are people protesting vaccines nowadays baffles him before he gets angry and needs to shut the Internet down
for at least a few hours.

But what fascinates him the most is the progress that gay people made in the last century. He reads about Stonewall and is not at all surprised that it’s a place in Greenwich Village. After all, in the old days, when he wanted to have fun, it was safer to just... leave Brooklyn behind. And Greenwich was the best place to have fun with other guys. Or gals whose name on their ID didn’t quite match up with their personalities. But really, James has always been a guys type.

He reads all of the information he can consume, all the while remembering those nights at Greenwich. Not only the guys and the fun he used to have, but also the way he had to dodge Steve to have those moments.

Becky, another one of his sisters, confronted him once. She was the second youngest and she didn’t like that he was dodging Steve and letting her deal with him. James doesn’t exactly remember what was said, but he remembers her intense eyes staring at him for a long moment without her saying anything. Then she nodded and told him to leave Steve to her.

He’s not sure she knew exactly what was going on, but she never questioned him again. And if he remembers correctly, there were evenings where she refused to let him go, mostly when both their parents were working and they needed to look after their other three sisters. But other evenings she let him go herself.

He remembers all that as he reads about the persecutions and the riots and the fight and the victories. By the time he makes it to 2015 and the Supreme Court legalizing gay marriage he’s not only crying, he’s outright sobbing. It feels too much like a panic attack, it hurts his chest and it’s impossible to breathe. Next time he carefully asks doctor Wilkins about it and she just smiles.

“It’s alright, mister Barnes, you can breathe now. There’s still a lot of problems for the LGBTQ community, but you can breathe. No one’s going to arrest you for simply being gay. Or for kissing another man.”

James cries again. And he keeps his eye on the whole pride thing.

So when the last Sunday in June comes, he knows that it’s pride day.

They’re all in the living room. And by all he, of course, means the “Rogues”, as he repeatedly saw referred to them online. He’s not sure he likes his inclusion in that group. Sam and Scott aren’t as bad. He started to talk to them more after the interview they did with the fierce woman. He had his misgivings about the whole accords situation by then and seeing them regret it as well made him more open to a conversation with them. They’ve been talking more and more recently. Partly because apparently, they each have a different version about what happened, so it’s good to compare notes on all of it. But mostly because... honestly, James doesn’t like the rest of their group. And he thinks that Sam and Scott are coming to the same conclusion as him.

But still, the TV is on and the living room is big enough for all of them and he likes to keep an eye on them. He knows that the Widow is dangerous and there’s something about the Witch that doesn’t sit quite right with him, so he likes to have his eyes on them.

They’re both playing some kind of card game along with Rogers (ever since their stay at Wakanda he’s always been Rogers. Stevie the little skinny sick kid from his childhood, Steve the jacked soldier that rescued him the first time around, but ever since HYDRA it’s Rogers) and Barton. Wilson sits on the other end of the couch James himself sits on, reading some kind of book, while Scott is lazily browsing through the TV channels. He usually stays on one just long enough to see what’s there before switching again. James is half paying attention to that, half to the article about
upcoming election and the rival nominees. Technically, he’s allowed to vote again, and it would be
dumb to not use that opportunity.

“Wait, that’s pride!”

James is almost embarrassed about how quickly he looks up to see the screen. He’s a little
surprised to hear the excitement in Barton’s voice, but when he glances at him he’s smiling softly
at the colorful screen.

“The March is slowly making his way up the 7th avenue as this years Grand Marshals are getting
close to finish. It looks like this year marks another record-breaking attendance.”

“The organizers are estimating the attendance at two and a half millions, police say just about
million eight hundred thousands. Last year the number was above two millions. You were there,
Susan, weren’t you? What do you think about the number, comparing it to last year?”

“I wouldn’t be afraid to call at least the two millions, Robert. I’m sure the Stark-Wayne ride has
something to do with that.”

The screen changes to one car in particular. Tony Stark stands on the lower levels, waving and
shaking hands with anyone who comes close enough, from time to time he even leans over the
railing to hug people, mostly young ones. When he straightens the reason why becomes apparent –
along with bisexual flag (and what a world they live in – not only they have word for everyone
now, but every group also has their own flag!) painted on his cheek he has a black t-shirt with
white writing “Free dad hugs I’m proud of you” with the word “proud” in colors of the rainbow.
Next to him miss Potts has similar shirt, her saying “We are all human” with every letter in the
word “human” expressing different pride flag and a number of raised arms, each in a different
color, under it. She doesn’t have her cheeks painted, but her make-up is more colorful than usual,
with dark red eye-shadows, eyelashes painted golden, and lips painted red with golden middle. Iron
Man make up, James knows immediately. Also something much bolder than what she’d get to
wear in her day to day life.

They’re both obviously having a good time, dancing to whatever music their car is playing and
posing for photos for whoever asks for it.

“Dick?”

James’ fingers twitch when the witch speaks up. It’s almost automatic reaction and his eyes
quickly go to Rogers. He knows that their past grants him some points in Rogers’ cards, but
considering how he’s been coddling the young woman he’s not sure which side he’d chose if he
realized that James is getting ready to one of these days injure her, at least.

“Dick? Who’s Dick?”

“The handsome guy who’s been with the Wayne brat in the kitchen. What is he doing in the car
with Stark?”

That’s when James realizes that on the second part of the screen on the higher platform of the car
there are five men. The oldest one stands the furthest away, watching the rest of them in
amusement. His gray shirt proclaims in colorful letters “Do you know what I want for my kids?
Happiness”. The four younger men in front of him are much more colorful – three of them wear
flags as capes, each of them a different one. One of them is shirtless in light jeans with pansexual
flag tied around his shoulders, with a heart made from pansexual colors on his cheek and a
rainbow flower crown to tip all of that off. He’s dancing and laughing and drinking beer from a can
from another man who’s pouring it to his mouth.

This other man has blue jeans, black shirt, and blood red flower crown, along with rainbow colored peace sign on his cheek and the same colored flag tied around his shoulders. He’s more smirking than smiling or laughing, but he has one arm thrown over the shoulders of a third man and the other extended out, pouring the beer.

The third man, the one under the arm of the second one, has ridiculous green shorts for some reason and rainbow colored tank top to go with his bisexual pride cape-like flag. His flower crown is in the same colors as the flag and he has a bisexual flag on one cheek and rainbow heart on the other.

The youngest man has a white thobe, thanks to which he’s more covered than even the man in jeans and shirt. The white of the thobe highlights that his skin is much darker than anyone else’s in the car and he’s the only one without a pride flag, but he also has a flower crown and his is the same rainbow colored one as the first man’s. The rainbow flags on both his cheeks are much messier than the rest of his companions’ and he’s watching everything with clever eyes. He’s tenser than the other men, his face mostly impassive.

“Are you sure? Because there’s also the boyfriend I saw him with – the one in the shirt.”

“Yeah, we saw him, too. He was there with the brat… is that him in that Arab thing?”

“Wait, those are the lovers of the youngest Wayne?”

Now James doesn’t hide that he looks straight at the Widow. She never sounds like something surprises her. Thing of pride, James guesses. After all, she’s supposed to be great at watching everyone around her and making deductions about them so she could chose the best way to manipulate them. James knows that she’s not as good as she likes to think. While he knows that she watches him every time he’s in the same room as the rest of them, he’s pretty sure she never really knows what it is he’s paying attention to. That’s a big overlook on her part. But now she not only is incompetent. Now she even sounds surprised.

“Yes.” Now the witch has a somewhat dreamy expression as she watches the half naked man with the pansexual flag. However he’s not sure Maximoff knows what the flag means. While he was watching Stark, she and Steve had some… not nice comments about everyone attending the March. “I’d remember those abs anywhere.”

“These can’t be his lovers.”

“Why not?” Steve’s voice is full of disgust the same way it always was the few times in the forties when he talked about the “fairies” (James didn’t like the term back then and he’s glad to see that it’s officially recognized as a slur nowadays). “One isn’t enough for him so he takes more. And he shows it off so obviously.”

“No. That can’t be his lovers.”

“And why not?”

“Those are his brothers.”

That actually silences the whole room. James’ eyes quickly glance to the TV (the guy in shirt has the youngest one in headlock. Full of affection, but James himself can’t tell if it’s the brotherly affection or something more) before he saves the article and goes looking for…
“The shirtless one is Richard Grayson, the one in shirt is Jason Todd, the one in tank top is Timothy Drake-Wayne, and the one in the Arab robe is Damian Wayne. The first two were never officially adopted, but they are Wayne’s son nonetheless. The Drake-Wayne one is currently the CEO of Wayne Enterprises, but it’s widely known that he’ll be much happier in the position of the head of R&D. The CEO position is reserved for the youngest son, the only biological son of Bruce Wayne. That’s the man behind them. Are you sure those are the boys you saw here with him?”

From what James can see online, Natasha’s information checks out. But then again, he’s on Wikipedia. If that’s where she gets her information, it would actually explain a lot.

“That’s disgusting!”

“Surely, that’s not legal.”

Apparently, according to what James quickly found on Wikipedia, it’s not so easy.

“It’s not so easy. But it doesn’t really matter. What matters is the scandal it would cause if the fact of their relationship leaked to the media.”

“If?”

James doesn’t like the malicious gleam in the witch’s eyes. There’s something… red in them that he doesn’t like. Luckily, Natasha feels the same way, by the way she moves just the tiniest bit away from her. She tries to hide it in a way that she lowers her chin and smiles at the witch, but James saw her first reaction and he knows what it means.

“Let’s first find out what that little information can get us from them, shall we? There’s no reason to anger another America’s favorite family at us.”

“Another?”

“Stark might be entirely too childish and stubborn, but right now he and Potts are playing at the America’s favorite family.” Are they? From what James sees in media, Potts and Stark has been separated for at least two years now. And yes, Tony Stark is America’s favorite bachelor, but he doesn’t think he plays at anything to get that role. To be completely honest, from what little media coverage he saw of him these last two months, he’s not sure Tony Stark really wants to be America’s favorite anything. “Waynes are somewhat less rich and their usual power circle doesn’t extend to New York, but New Jersey is too close to risk it.”

“So what do you want to do?” Sam’s question isn’t as casual as he’d like it. But that’s probably because when James looks to him Sam is looking straight back at him, so James can see his pursed lips. “Do you want to blackmail them?”

“Not necessarily.” Natasha’s trying to be casual, but the smug smirk on her face somewhat betrays her. “I just think that it would be good if they knew that we know about their little… secret. The troubles we have with the Accords committee we’ve been having could certainly become… less troublesome. Wouldn’t you say?”

Barton and the witch both smirk while Rogers beams at Natasha, verbally praising her for her dedication to the team. But when he looks towards Sam and Scott, neither one is happy about it. He slowly, carefully, moves his hand so it’s free enough for him to quickly sign three silent commands he learned while he was with HYDRA and that he taught to Sam and Scott. Sam immediately nods and gets up to leave. The whole room looks up to him, Rogers even asks where he’s going, but James isn’t paying much attention to Sam’s answer, instead he holds gaze with
Scott. Once he’s sure Scott is the only one paying attention, he repeats the signs.

The commentators in the TV aren’t heard over Rogers and Maximoff feeding each other in their rants about homosexuals and about how they’re ruining the society. Even when Scott gets up and murmurs something about calling his daughter no one’s really paying him any attention. It’s only another five minutes later when James himself gets up that Rogers turns to him with his puppy eyes.

“Going somewhere, Bucky?”

How he hates the name Bucky. It didn’t use to be like that. Before doctor Wilkins he just wasn’t entirely comfortable, being called that. Doctor Wilkins explained that in his case, recreating his own identity is an important part of recovery, and that if he’s not comfortable being called what he preferred years ago, it’s fine and he should say so. And he did. He repeatedly explained to Rogers why he doesn’t want to be called Bucky, but Rogers simply ignored it, repeating again and again that “soon he’ll be properly back again”. When he thinks about it – that is when Steve became Rogers.

“Out.”

“I can-”

“No.”

He can hear Natasha calming Rogers, citing that he just needs time, but he ignores it. He’s beyond trying to explain himself to Rogers.

He can hear Sam talking before he even steps into the library.

“-in the forties. It was still illegal to even be homosexual back then and I’m pretty sure they considered transgender people as mentally ill.”

“The first gender changing operations were performed in Europe in the forties,” he says as soon as he opens the door. “It’s not like the LGBT people were invented in the sixties right before the Stonewall Riots, Sam. Don’t excuse him. Who are the Waynes?”

“Rich family from East Coast,” Scott shrugs, looking to Sam. Sam sighs.

Considering that the rest of the “Rogues” doesn’t even come here, library became something like a common room for the three of them. Every time they’re sick of the four people in the living room they find themselves there. And Scott and Sam even got used to the forward way James tends to ask questions. He still has a lot to learn about this century and he doesn’t like to beat around the bush. Admittedly, Sam has been the more helpful teacher in everything from science to politics, but Scott is much better at explaining popculture.

“Waynes are the most prominent family of Gotham. The city is a little weird and mostly keeps to itself, but Wayne Enterprises have business even outside Gotham. Apparently, Gotham Enterprises and Stark Industries started cooperating a bit more in the last two years, mainly in their charities. Bruce Wayne, the main shareholder of the Enterprises and apparently a friend of Stark’s, started practically adopting kids when he was almost a kid himself. He himself is a little younger than Stark and his oldest, Richard, is already thirty. Jason was assumed dead back when he was a teenager, but apparently he was just kidnapped and when Wayne was taking too long for the kidnappers’ tastes they sold him to someone more willing to pay. He’s somewhat a cryptid, although during the last two years he started to show up more, mostly around his family. Those
two were given to Wayne’s care, but not actually adopted, but they occasionally use the Wayne name as their second surname, with the oldest Wayne’s authorization, of course. Timothy Drake-Wayne was a rich kid before he met Wayne. After his parents died, Wayne offered to adopt him, combining their companies. Drakes weren’t as rich and didn’t have as big a company, so it was to the benefit of everyone. The youngest one, Damian, is apparently the only biological son and as such is in line to inherit the company. There’s not much known about him, except the fact that he suddenly showed up in public’s eyes about ten years ago, when he already was nearly ten. There’s also a daughter, I think, but she’s not really publicly known.”

“And you don’t care about the lives of celebrities you say?”

Sam rolls his eyes and James and Scott exchange amused glances.

“They’re big in society, but they also have a good impact on Gotham, okay? Besides, for the last almost twenty years they were close to any senator who represented Gotham, pushing a more stern laws against guns. His oldest is a police officer, it’s a big thing to discuss among the armed forces.”

There’s a moment of silence when James sits down at the same table as his two companions and turns back to his tablet. It’s the most amazing thing science came up with, in James’ humble opinion.

“Do you think they’re telling the truth?” Scott fidgets nervously under James’ gaze, but that’s nothing new. Even though they’re spending more and more time together, Scott still seems to be almost afraid of James. James sees that Steve doesn’t like it, but honestly, James is mostly just amused. And just a bit glad. At least someone takes his skills and the danger he potentially represents seriously. “That the Wayne brothers are… together.”

Sam shrugs, so James answers.

“I think so, yes. They don’t have a reason to lie. They talked about the youngest Wayne having at least two lovers here and another guest. They recognized them at the TV, apparently before even knowing they are related in any way. In this case, I would trust them on that particular information.”

As Scott and Sam exchange a charged look James tries to figure out what he thinks about the four brothers being in a relationship. He knows he’s gay, so all of them being men is not something that bothers him. Four of them instead just two is a little… unusual, but they evidently know about each other, so James doesn’t think that’s something that’s anyone’s business. But them being brothers…

He remembers his sisters and just the thought of him having that kind of relationship with them twists something in his stomach. And not just because they’d grow up to be women. He changed their diapers, cooked for them, made them laugh when they were sad, and hugged them when they cried. Later, close to the war, they even cried about boys. He can’t imagine having any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with them.

But then again, that was them. And maybe (apparently) the Waynes have different relationship with each other. Three of them being adopted is probably also something that plays a role. And they probably didn’t have to share their room, their very bed with their siblings. So that’s probably different, too.

“But those relationships… they’re illegal, aren’t they?”

“Apparently not in New Jersey.” James shows them his tablet and what he found. Once again, just a quick search on Wikipedia, but the information seems solid. “Marriages are not a possibility, but
considering that there’s four of them in the relationship, that’s still a given without the extra obstacle. Besides, Wayne never officially adopted the first two, so technically, his younger two sons could, theoretically, marry his older two sons.”

Scott makes a face, but then just sighs and nods. Sam on the other hand looks towards James, his usual “therapeutic” face on. James looked into it, he knows that technically Sam isn’t therapist and doesn’t hold any kind of license. But that’s a talk James is not ready for yet. Doctor Wilkins says it’s not his responsibility to correct other’s problematic behavior, but he’s starting to… like Sam. And he’d like him to get better and to get over some of his issues. He started to question Steve’s words, which is a good start, but it’s not all that needs to be corrected.

“You’re taking it better than expected.”

“Better than Steve, you mean,” James corrects him with amusement. Sam inclines his head, a little embarrassed. “That’s because Steve was always a homophobe. Greenwhich was always a fun place to go to, but I had to always shake Steve off first to go there in the first place. Only place one could have some proper fun without someone calling the cops on him.”

“Greenwhich, huh? I thought Brooklyn was the place where poor immigrants were in the thirties.”

“Poor immigrants, yes. Often very religious. It wasn’t as dangerous to queer people, but there were known bigots you had to dodge. Steve was one of them. Spoiled little punk who no one wanted to tell anything because if they told him anything, they would be ignored, and if they tried to punch him for his ignorance, it would end badly for Sarah, Steve’s mother. Everyone and their grandmother in Brooklyn knew that Steve was an ill rut and if you touched him wrong some of his bones would break and then Sarah would have to pay the bills.”

“I thought Steve was supposed to be an all-American good boy.”

James snorts.

“You’re confusing the myth with the man, little ant.” Scott jerks and James smirks. He’s not going to lie, he’s in charge of his Russian accent as much as he is in charge of his Brooklyn accent. It just so happens that Scott’s reaction to his Russian accent amuses him greatly. “I saw those little comic books the government started publishing during the war. I don’t know who those stories are about, but it’s not the Steve I remember. The Steve I remember went around Brooklyn picking fights with anyone willing and many unwilling.” He sighs and puts the tablet down. “He loved fiercely and loyally and my sisters loved playing dress up with him when they were little. He was funny and artistic and tried to help people that needed help. No one is as one dimensional as a comic book character.”

***

The disadvantage of all four of them sleeping in the same bed is that one person can’t leave without waking up at least one another person.

Damian wakes up pleasantly sore, warm, and because someone moved him. Jason’s face is close to his as he grins at him.

“Don’t wake the clinging duo,” Jason whispers. “Wanna go running?”
Damian grins, but when he moves he realizes that Richard is clinging to him.

“Gonna help me?”

Jason just grins and pulls back. Damian glares at him and Jason’s grin widens.

Eventually, he manages to wiggle out of Richard’s grip and into a pair of Timothy’s leggings and the tank top from yesterday. Then he runs as fast as he’s able to, dodging Jason as often as he can, until they’re almost a mile away from the compound and Jason catches him. Damian shrieks when Jason lifts him up from the ground and instinctively moves so they both end on the ground. Jason moans and groans and Damian is not at all sorry that his elbow digs into his ribs, but then he rolls over, still on top of Jason, and kisses him.

Damian lets Jason roll them over and take charge of the kiss before he tenses and moves his head.

“Rogers still likes to run in the morning and we are rather close to his favorite trail.”

“Continue this in the shower?”

Damian smirks and lets himself be pulled up so they can run in their usual pace. They don’t talk, but soon enough Damian can feel that Jason is far away in his thoughts. He doesn’t say anything for the longest time. Just when they’re close to coming back to the compound he slows enough to just walk. Jason copies him.

“Want to talk about it?”

Jason sighs.

“Told Oracle about the case I’m working on. She promised to look into it.”

“But you still worry about the kids.”

Jason grumbles some, but he heads to one of the benches along the road. He sits down heavily and doesn’t look at Damian, so Damian does the same.

“I hate the thought that I left them vulnerable enough that some asshole took advantage of it. I should be there, making it better, but...”

“But we’re all here and so are the Rogues.” Damian hesitates before he turns to face Jason. “But we can handle Rogues. You know we can handle them. That, however, doesn’t mean that we don’t want you here.”

Jason smirks as he turns to look at Damian.

“Look at you, babybat, learning to properly voice your feelings.”

Damian rolls his eyes and nudges Jason’s shoulder. But when he glances at him Jason is smiling.

“The point is, if you chose to go back to Gotham to keep an eye on the kids, we’d understand it. You know we support you, especially when you’re being a hero.” Damian smirks when Jason grumbles automatically at the name. “But I admit, you just made it here. I’d hate for you to go already.”

Jason smiles at him as he leans close and rests his forehead on Damian’s. Damian closes his eyes and relaxes into the touch. Jason’s hand softly touches his hair.
“Finally growing up, huh?”

“Shut up, Todd.”

Jason smirks and moves to kiss his cheek.

“I like it.”

Damian fights his urge to giggle, but allows himself to smile into Jason’s cheek before he moves away.

“Still in public. Come on, let’s wake the Sleeping Beauties.”

They’re still sleeping. Jason smirks at Damian before jumping at the bed, right at the two sleeping figures. Richard automatically takes him into a headlock and Timothy rolls over, falling off the bed. This time, Damian doesn’t stop his laughter.

They don’t all fit in the shower. Not all four of them. After a short fight Damian just sighs and locks himself in the bathroom for a quick shower. When he comes out in just a towel, Jason slaps his ass and goes in the bathroom. They rotate in the bathroom and not even twenty minutes later are ready to go for breakfast.

Of course, nothing ever is as easy as that.

All the Rogues are in the kitchen. Barnes, Wilson, and Lang are sitting at the table, each of them a tablet or a newspaper in front of them. They all look up at them and nod in greeting. Barnes then looks back down at his tablet, his face not even twitching, while Wilson and Lang somewhat awkwardly smile at them. Damian spares them a little attention (Barnes is dangerous no matter how “unarmed” he is), but turns to the rest of the Rogues.

Barton and Romanoff are in the kitchen, obviously used to working side by side. Maximoff and Rogers sit at the bar, although Rogers is seated so he still sees the rest of them at the table. Interestingly, Damian doesn’t think that the three at the table isolate themselves just because the bar is one chair short for all of them.

“Good morning.” Richard’s voice is bright and happy and Damian looks towards Jason, who is already rolling his eyes. “How long do you think you’re gonna take? And will we be in your way if we just sit there?”

“Yes!”

“No.”

Damian raises his eyebrows in amusement at the way the witch’s quick a nswer is beaten by Wilson’s seemingly-casual one. But instead of speaking he just walks over to the other end of the table and sits there, at the head of the table, opposite of Barnes.

“Something interesting?”

“Apparently, the Dodgers were sold to L.A.”

“In the fifties, yeah,” snorts Jason. “But I guess that’s when you were a Nazi killing machine, so you didn’t really pay attention to baseball.”

“Hey now-”
“Yeah, the Nazis are more into boxing.”

Jason laughs and Barnes looks up at him and smirks. Damian watches all of that thoughtfully and then looks towards Timothy and Richard. Of course, Richard is frowning almost disapprovingly at Jason, but Timothy looks right at Damian and raises one eyebrow. Damian rolls his eyes.

“And technically, they were still making me into their killing machine in the fifties.”

“Really? Even in the late fifties?”

“From their files on me, my first mission, in 1956, backfired spectacularly, and so they spent another five years… installing me.”

“You stubborn son of a bitch.”

Rogers is protesting to that language somewhere in the back of Damian’s attention, but he’s fully concentrated at the way Barnes and Jason seem to measure up each other. Barnes seems almost amused about the way Jason talks to him. Again, Damian knows that Jason is… fascinated by Barnes. Hell, by the way he sometimes talks about his kills and his stats from during the second world war, Damian would almost say he has a man crush on him. Damian is… not entirely comfortable with that.

Timothy collapses next to Damian and longingly looks towards the coffeemaker. Damian rolls his eyes as he stands up.

“I won’t be in the way if I make us coffee and tea, will I?”

“You’re always in the way,” sneers the witch at him. “What, now you even need a crown to prove yourself you’re better than us?”

“Actually, I do need the circlet.” With amusement, Damian hears Timothy’s quiet groan. He thinks about adding that he needs it because of her. After all, miss Grey already filled her report and gave it to the Accords. Now it’s just a question of time when they’re going to act. But then again, him telling her so would give her a warning. And that’s not something he wants. “And the only one obsessed with one’s worth in relation to someone else is you, miss Maximoff. Now, miss Romanoff, mister Barton. Will I be in your way if I make us coffee and tea?”

Romanoff turns to see him, so Damian puts on his best innocent expression. In that he’s not exactly smiling, but his face is also seemingly open and not as frowning as he usually is. It also makes his eyes widen and shine, he’s very much aware of that. It’s the look he uses to get whatever he wants from Richard.

Finally, Romanoff shrugs and smiles back at him. Not her best move. Damian knows how to spot a trained smile. It’s even more visible on the Widow than it’s on him that they weren’t used to smiling at all until they were too old to learn the expression properly.

“But of course not. We’ll be out of here soon enough so you can cook your own breakfast. I’m sure you’re already hungry.”

That’s a bait if he ever saw one. But he doesn’t react to it, instead he goes to the coffeemaker to set Timothy’s order there and then start a tea for himself and Jason. Of course, a bait like that can’t be entirely ignored. Not from the Rogues, at least.

“What do you mean, surely we’re hungry?”
“We saw you. At the parade.”

As Rogers says it Damian glances towards Barnes. Surprisingly, he doesn’t seem to agree with Rogers’ disgusted tone.

“Well, yes. The fact that we’re not exactly straight is no secret, Dick and Tim even had coming out stories printed. Dick at some Gotham newspaper, but Tim for People, so most people know that about us.”

“Well, of course.” Damian carefully doesn’t look at any of his lovers at the way Romanoff almost purrs those words. Sure, Richard and Timothy are not entirely gay and the flag of Jason’s choosing for yesterday was rather subtle, but does she really think she can use seductive language in almost every interaction? “But we also saw you here, earlier, in the compound.”

“And by we you, of course, mean Rogers.”

“And Maximoff. She was almost salivating that one time we met here.”

“That’s because you insist on promenading around without a shirt, you exhibitionist.” Case in point, even in that moment Richard has no shirt on.

“Are you complaining, Jason?”

“So you’re not even denying it?”

“Denying what? If this is supposed to be an accusation, you’re doing it all wrong. For starters, you haven’t accused us of anything yet.”

“Oh, you’re not understanding. We’re not accusing you of anything.” Damian turns to see Romanoff and is not at all surprised to find her smiling at them sweetly. Honestly, does she really think this is the best way to talk to them? Sure, he knows they didn’t exactly give her an opportunity to read them, but there’s a lot of information about them to be found without them being in contact with the person who wants to play them. And this is just… wrong. “We’re just wondering. For example, does your father know?”

“Do I know what?”

Now Damian freezes. He knows what they’re dancing around – neither Jason nor Richard were exactly subtle in the way they behaved around him when Rogers and Maximoff were around. And he wasn’t really bothered, either. But father…

He tries to tell himself that he doesn’t care what father says. But he knows himself better by now. And he knows that the only one who has a truly functioning relationship with his father is Timothy. Richard likes to pretend that he’s completely independent from father, but he cares about his opinion more than probably the rest of them. Jason would react violently to father rejecting them, claiming that he doesn’t care, but lashing out. Probably even on them. Most likely for their own good – pushing them away so that they’re safe and happy, in his mind. Timothy would probably react the most adult-like, able to lead a debate with father about it while not letting him destroy his relationship.

Damian himself… he has no idea how he’s going to react. If father rejects them or if he accepts them, Damian still has no idea how he’s going to react.

This emotional vulnerability thing sucks.
“That your sons are perverts.”

Damian carefully looks at father and to his astonishment finds him amused.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to be a little more specific, miss Maximoff. What have my sons done now? By the way – I already got five requests for interviews about the little girl you saved yesterday, boys.”

“We didn’t save anyone,” Richard rolls his eyes. “She was lost and we took her to our car, so she wouldn’t be crushed by all the people and her parents would find her more easily.”

“Yet the people see it differently. Anyway, you were saying, miss Maximoff?”

“What Wanda is trying to say, mister Wayne,” Romanoff jumps in quickly, placing her hand on Maximoff’s. Maximoff, Damian notes with amusement, is not pleased with that. In fact, she seems to be almost trembling with rage. For once he’s really glad to have Timothy’s circlet on his head, “is that we have information that certain media sites would be interested in.”

“Miss Romanoff.” Father lets his amusement fill his voice. In any other case Damian would almost suspect him faking that amusement just to play Romanoff, but as he watches his calm eyes, he knows that for once he’s not playing anything. “Certain media sites would be interested in what underwear we’ve got on today and what our breakfast was. So once again, I have to ask you to be more specific.”

“What I mean, mister Wayne,” Romanoff’s smile fades and her expression suddenly becomes icy, stone-like, “is that we’re aware that your sons are in romantic relationship with each other. Are you?”

“Aware? Yes.” Father’s casual answer seems to disturb everyone in the room – not only the Rogues, but Damian and his lovers as well. And while everyone at the table, Damian, Barton, and Romanoff freeze, Rogers and Maximoff react in shouts.

“What kind of...”

“And you’re just...”

“... father are you?!?”

“... standing there...”

“Don’t you...”

“...like nothing’s...”

“... care at all...”

“.. wrong?!?”

“... that they’re gonna burn in hell?!?”

“Please, mister Rogers,” father turns to him with pleasant expression and Damian nervously glances at his lovers. Timothy’s looking at him with a little wide expression, but Jason and Richard are both staring at their father. “Don’t push your religious believes on the rest of us.”

“But I am right.”
“I believe you are certain of your beliefs, yes, but so are Muslims and other religions and they don’t exactly agree on everything with you, do they? According to the history books, you’re catholic, right? Even protestants don’t exactly agree on everything with you, that’s why they’re protestants. And there’s a lots of groups of those. Doesn’t change anything on the fact that, whatever you believe, we probably don’t believe the same thing.”

Rogers frowns as he stands up and crosses his arms over his chest, making himself bigger than he really is. Understandably, considering that father is tall and broad, even though he usually makes an effort to not come across as such in civilian clothing.

“Let me guess. Another set of ateists?” Rogers’ tone betrays what exactly he thinks about that group of people. Father just smiles.

“We’re non-practitioners. Now, miss Romanoff, I hope you were not just attempting to blackmail my sons. Because if you were, I’d be forced to contact the Accords to inform them of your behavior that, I believe, is in direct violation of the deal you signed with them. And of course, if you leak to anyone any information that you found out in the compound, you’ll be in direct violation of the deal you signed that allows you to stay in the compound. We’re, of course, ready to prove anything that might get into the media as a rumor in court, but my lawyers would take your deal with the Accords and make sure that not only you won’t be able to stay in the compound, but they will prove that since you breached one of the deals you signed in relation to it, your pardon is null, and so you will be extradited to some countries who are still waiting to judge you in a trial. Am I making myself clear?”

Damian just numbly watches the Rogues react to father’s small monologue. To his surprise, they react with silence. The witch’s magic leaks around her, but the four at the bar and in the kitchen seem to almost freeze.

Damian hands his father a cup of coffee. His father smiles at him.

“Thank you, Damian.”

The three Rogues sitting at the table are tense. Well, Wilson and Lang are tense. If Barnes is tense, he’s not letting them see. He seems like he’s just sitting there, minding his own business.

“That was a question so I’m expecting an answer, miss Romanoff. Am. I. Making. Myself. Clear?”

“Yes,” she whispers.

“Yes what.”

She breathes in, clearly irritated, and juts her chin out.

“Yes, mister Wayne.”

Father smiles pleasantly.

“That’s what I thought. Pleasure, miss Romanoff. Boys, can you?”

Here it comes. Damian makes a quick coffee, nothing close to what he usually makes for Timothy, but he assumes that something’s better than nothing, and hands it to him as they’re leaving the kitchen and with it the whole part of the building that’s available to the Rogues. Barnes says goodbye and Lang and Wilson quickly add their own goodbyes as they’re leaving.

Father doesn’t say a word for the longest time, instead just silently leads them through the hall.
Richard opens his mouth at least three times, but he always shuts it up again. Damian is more worried about Jason, who has a stubborn expression and dark eyes. Jason’s inability to handle emotion and his tendency to react angrily at anything father-related is a well-known problem. Damian just hopes it’s not going to blow up in their faces right at that moment.

Father leads them to a room that was probably supposed to be a meeting room, but now just has a table and a bunch of chairs. Father takes one and sits at the head of the table. When they just stand there for a moment, he just sighs and waves his hand for them to sit down. Richard lowers his head and goes while Jason frowns and opens his mouth. Damian and Timothy exchange a look, roll their eyes, Damian follows Richard and Timothy takes Jason’s hand to lead him right behind Damian.

“Bruce I-”

“I assume all of you have a plan in case something leaks.” He looks at them expectantly until everyone nods. Well, everyone except for Damian. “Damian?”

He sighs.

“I guess I can talk to Jon. Whenever he’ll be on Earth again…”

“You do that. I don’t think our little talk will work for long on the little spider.”

“Look, B, I know what you’re going to say.”

“You do? Please, enlighten me, then.”

Breeze runs along Damian’s spine at the way father says that, and his fingers twitch to take Jason’s hand to stop him from answering. Whatever he’s about to answer, it’s going to be full with anger and father is going to react in kind. Timothy reaches for Jason’s hand instead of Damian, so he can see how useless it is.

“You’re going to tell us how fucking irresponsible we’ve been that the Rogues know about us, that they even can blackmail us. You’re going to say how foolish it is that we’re together and you’re going to tell me in particular how irresponsible it is for me to be with them because they have bright futures ahead of them, Tim and Dami as Wayne Enterprises public figures, and I’m going to ruin all of that. And you don’t even have to say how fucking angry you are, because all we have to do to see that is look at you.”

“Of course I’m angry, Jason! Also disappointed, but mostly damn angry. Because what kind of shit father I have to be that for almost two years you say nothing and I have to officially hear it from Natasha fucking Romanoff of all people!” Suddenly, all fight leaves father and he crumbles some and sighs. “What a shit father I have to be that not one of you felt secure enough to come to me with relationship that’s so obviously making all of you happy.”

That deems Jason speechless. Damian carefully does not look at father, but he tries to at least see his lovers’ reactions to try to figure out what it is he’s feeling. It’s uncomfortable, tight in his chest. And it has something to do with the fact that he doesn’t want to see father right now. Or maybe just doesn’t want to look at him.

“So, how did you… um… found out?”

Finally he looks towards father and he finds him smiling somewhat sadly at Timothy, although Richard was the one who asked.

“You’re very good about deleting uncomfortable footage, Tim, but sometimes I’m quicker. Also,
Damian’s last year of high school was surprisingly calm and uneventful, considering that I refused to allow him to self educate, and Jason started to actually show up regularly at the manor. I admit figuring out that all four of you are together was something of a surprise, but the rest of it…” Father just shrugs.

“And you’re… really okay with it?”

“Does it really matter what I think?” Father half-smiles the irritating fond smile of a parent. “You’re all adults and capable of making your own choices. But for what it’s worth, I really do think that you’re making each other happy. And that’s what really matters.”

The silence after that is tense.

“That’s… it? No lectures? No terrible predictions?”

“No, Jason. Not today. Now, I have to go. I’m sorry for dragging you away from breakfast. Dick, can you come with me, please?”

Richard whitens some, but nods and gets up along with father. Damian, Timothy, and Jason stay sitting down.

“That was… weird,” Timothy says as soon as the door closes behind them.

“You think?” Damian is not sure what to think of Jason’s voice. He turns to look at them, but Timothy mostly blocks his view of Jason. “He wasn’t that nice to me since…”

Jason’s voice fades and Timothy clutches his hand in between both of his. Then he looks back at Damian, rolls his eyes, and inclines his head to Jason. A little unsure, Damian gets up just to find himself standing next to Jason from the other side. There’s no chair there.

Jason snorts, wraps his free arm around Damian’s waist, and tugs him to his lap, leaning his forehead on his shoulder. Damian looks at Timothy somewhat awkwardly, but Timothy just smiles at him and leans into Jason’s other side.

“Told you. He just wants us to be happy.”

Jason snorts.

“I’ll believe it when I’ll see it.”

“You just did, you stubborn prat.” Then Timothy looks up at Damian. “How are you doing, demon spawn?”

Damian shrugs as he leans all his weight on Jason, trusting him to hold him. Jason moves his hand to treat his fingers through Damian’s hair. Damian hears Timothy sigh and then move a little.

Richard finds them like that – Jason sitting on his chair with Damian in his lap, curled into him, and Timothy sitting on the chair next to them, but also leaning into Jason, his head on Jason’s shoulder and his hands still holding Jason’s. When he steps in Timothy looks up at him, but does n’t move otherwise.

“Where’s my spot in the pile?”

They move a little more then, to look at the chair and each other.

“I’d offer to take you on my lap, too, but I’m afraid the chair might not survive.”
Timothy stands up and moves to sit on the chair previously occupied by Damian. But Jason doesn’t let him go and when Richard sits simply tugs him down to sit on him. Damian extends his hand to hold Richard’s hand.

“How did it go?”

Richard sighs.

“Apparently, he’s really happy for us, but if I somehow manage to hurt either one of you, he will hunt me down himself. Apparently, faking my own death counts as hurting you.”

“Good thing we can keep a secret and if you ever need to fake your death again, you won’t fake it for us.”

Richard grins and kisses Timothy’s head.

“So, breakfast?”

“Do we really have to go back the only place the Rogues can ambush us at?”

Damian rolls his eyes at the incompetence of his lovers.

“FRIDAY? Is the kitchen still full?”

“Not full, little prince. Sergeant Barnes, mister Wilson, and mister Scott are still present, the rest left for the living room.”

“So? Are you hungry enough to try with the three?”

To his mortification, it’s his stomach that grumbles aloud. Jason and Richard laugh while Timothy snickers. They drag him to his feet and go to the kitchen together.

Damian ignores the three still sitting at the table and goes right for the coffeemaker. Again. But this time he takes his time to make the coffee perfectly to Timothy’s liking. And then to Richard’s.

“Good to see who you think of first, brat.”

“You get your tea with me. Now go, cook. You’re the only one who can.”

“And that’s why you love me – for my food.”

“And nothing else.”

Jason kisses his cheek and ruffles his hair as he goes around him to the kitchen. Soon enough he’s starting to make eggs, so Damian leaves his cup of tea near him. When he turns to join his other lovers on the kitchen bar, he’s surprised to find them sitting at the table. Timothy is studying something on a table he found who knows where, but Richard is intently listening to Wilson.

“-n’t agree. He’s from the forties-”

“I told you that’s bullshit,” grumbles Barnes some, his eyes set on Timothy. “Something wrong?”

“Well, it’s Wikipedia, so it has a lot of little details off. Obviously, I don’t know everything about it, but from what Pentagon has on pre-2001 Afghanistan, it’s more complicated than this. And yes, oil played a role, bigger than our diplomacy or anyone in higher political functions is willing to admit. I’ll get you the secret documents.”
“You can do that?”

“Legally? No. But considering your legal status around the world, I assumed you wouldn’t mind.”

Wilson shuts his mouth abruptly, but Barnes just smirks. Damian thinks about pushing the issue, but decides against it. After all, there’s something he’s more interested in.

“You were saying about the forties?”

“I, um.” Wilson coughs a little, apparently uncomfortable under Damian’s watchful gaze. “I was just… apologizing. For Steve. He grew up in the forties, so some things are a little… hard for him.”

“So did I and I don’t use it as an excuse.” But Barnes is already looking at something at the tablet that Timothy handed him. And Damian is more interested in a different detail than Wilson’s pathetic need to excuse Rogers’ behavior.

“Just for Rogers?” Wilson blinks at him in confusion and Damian has to restrain himself not to roll his eyes at him. “Are you apologizing just for Rogers? Or for the other two, too? Maximoff, who spewed the same bigoted bullshit as Rogers, perhaps? Or maybe Romanoff, who was actually the one who attempted to blackmail us?”

“You have to admit,” Lang starts with energy, but as Damian and Timothy both turn their intense stares at him he gets nervous, “that… um.. that is… incestuous relationships are… unusual.”

“That’s just it, mister Lang.” Timothy’s carefully polite yet dangerous smile is somehow a turn-on to Damian. Just great. “We’re not admitting anything. Let alone incest.”

While Wilson and Lang just stare at them blankly, Barnes chuckles darkly and looks up.

“What Sam’s trying to say is, we don’t share the opinion of Rogers and Maximoff and while we were aware of Romanoff’s plan to try and blackmail you, we didn’t agree with it.”

As Damian looks at Wilson and Lang, he doesn’t quite believe it. On the other hand, Barnes is nothing if not honest.

Well, Damian thinks as he looks towards still busy Jason, he’s ready to give Loki a chance. Maybe he should do the same with Barnes.

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