The Never-Ending Battle

by sticktoice

Summary

It was the fifth night in a row that he'd spent more time thinking than sleeping, and he was so tired of it. Pun not intended.

It had been a hard week, and that in it of itself is so frustrating.

Nothing's changed. People still die, and I still have to keep fighting because there's no other alternative. I can't always save them, and I've accepted that.

So why am I here? It's close to two in the morning, and I'm sitting with my back firmly pressed against a granite slab. The weather is brisk enough as it is, and the stone's chill seeps through my jacket and permeates my skin in that slow, creeping way that cold does.

I don't want to do this; I don't even know for sure that I have to. It's like not wanting to vomit when you're sick but knowing that you might anyway so you go to the bathroom, and you can't help but think that maybe if you had just stayed in bed, you would have been able to keep everything inside.

I'm in the bathroom here. Pressing my hands against my forehead and squeezing my eyes shut changes nothing.

The other side of this slab still reads JACK DRAKE, and nothing I can do will change that.

I couldn't save my mom, I couldn't save my dad, I couldn't save my best friend.

So just what am I even here for.
The thought hurts, and I smile a little at that.

It's when it doesn't that scares me.

I have no clue how long I sat there with the wind half-blocked by the gravestone, but suddenly Cass is sitting down next to me. Just barely not-touching, and I know that's intentional because unlike another assassin we both know and love, Cass is a toucher. I appreciate the distance because touching would bring tears, and I'm not ready for that yet.

"Your father died today," She says it so matter-of-fact, not even bothering to make it a question. That makes me blink a few times because, "Oh."

She gives me a look.

"I didn't forget; I could never forget. I just forget that it does," I look down at myself. Curled up against a stone marking the location of my father's body, "this to me."

"You miss him."

"I don't want to miss him," I whisper it without thinking. Without double-checking to make sure it's something I want to admit.

(It's not.)

"What do you want?"

"I want to move on. I don't want to be fine for months and months, for it to only wipe me out every night for a week." I could stop now; Cass would let me.

But she tilts her head, and, I don't know, maybe it would help this time.

"Those months and months make me think I finally did it. I made it! And then this happens, and I don't know what to do anymore," I'm looking at anything except Cass now. A rock near my feet is particularly interesting. "Thinking through it doesn't help. I feel worse - I feel sad and stupid and then." I shrug. "Then, I feel useless."

Her silence at this point worries me, and I glance at her. It strikes me then how much she doesn't understand this. She's killed before. Done what Captain Boomerang has done to me to other, innocent families. And her reaction? She fights to fix it. While I -

I give up.

That realization upsets me even more. "And I know I can still help, and I know I still have people who care about me and love me but." I should have stayed in bed, but I am full-on throwing up now, and my filter probably didn't even make it out of the house. "But when it hurts like this, it just doesn't matter."

I don't even notice the tears until she hugs me, and the drops land on her uniform. They fall as silently as Cass on some unsuspecting thug. Her hand is in my hair, and my face is buried in her neck because if no one can see me or hear me, then I'm not really crying. I'm fine.

But I wasn't fine, and all the memories and the fears and the pain I so carefully pushed down and ignored surface, and I can't help but feel everything at once as the hurt explodes one after the other in my mind. When I open my mouth to breathe, an involuntary cry bursts from my mouth, and I'm
Cass lets me cry, but when I finally quiet, she pushes me far enough away so she can see my face. Her hands still grip my shoulders, but her face is stern. "You don't do this alone, Tim."

It surprises me how angry she is, and at the same time I want to calm her down, I also...don't understand. "I know that, and I'm sorry, but sometimes it doesn't help."

I worry that I hurt her, but she shakes her head, as frustrated as I am. "No." She nods at the gravestone. "This. When you're sad, don't do it alone. Don't sneak away alone."

I blink again. Starting to understand.


I bark out a surprised laugh and look down, but she still hasn't released me. She's waiting. I feel the sting of tears again as I look back up at her, but I smile instead and nod. She smiles a little too but continues to wait. I roll my eyes. "Promise."

She grins then and releases my shoulders, only to hug me. I hug her back.

But a thought settles into my brain that I can't admit to even Cass.

What happens if I lose her or Dick or Alfred? What will anchor me then?

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