**Like Fire, You're Catching**

**Summary**

Damian has relied on his body throughout his life—so when he suddenly feels as if he is no longer in control of it, due to his new dose of suppressants, he goes out of his mind. Fed up with it, and the fact that no one seems to care how miserable he is, he does away with them. With a loss of the medication though, he's thrust into a sudden heat, and turns for help to the last person he would have thought willing to be intimate with him.

Tim.

But things are never as simple as Damian hopes, and he's left with a tie to Tim that he can't sever. Worse, it's a tie his grandfather has a keen interest in—and what Ra's Al Ghul wants, Ra's Al Ghul gets. With it up to him to protect Damian, Tim has to step up and take control of the situation by whatever means necessary—and ultimately, decide if what he and Damian have can be repaired, and if the future is a possibility for them.

**Notes**

Even though my idea of the Beta will be explained as the fic progresses, I feel it's important to just note, before going in:

Betas are considered intersex and genderfluid, and can fluctuate between presenting either
alpha or omega traits. Otherwise they sit somewhere in the middle. Some react to their partners and take on the opposite role, while some have a preference- or a preference to be the same role as their partner (such as alpha/alpha or omega/omega).

See the end of the work for more notes.
Damian gritted his teeth, pulling his blanket up over his head against the light streaming in through his window. He did not remember leaving the curtains open- but it was possible, he had been sketching the other afternoon, prior to patrol.

He groaned, squeezed his eyes shut and breathed in hot air, knew he’d have to uncover himself in ten, fifteen seconds. Didn’t want to- wanted to curl up and sleep half the day away. He felt sluggish, exhausted- blamed his latest round of medication and despised it for making him feel so unlike himself. With a groan he pulled his blanket off his head, but rolled to his belly, pressed his face into his pillows. He was drifting closer towards sleep, back towards that sweet weightless feeling, when there was a knock at his door.

Three raps of a set of knuckles, and then, “Damian?”

*Drake.*

Damian mumbled something, ignored the sound when it came again, and then his door was opening. He heard Tim’s footsteps, the even sounds of his weight on his socked feet over the carpet, until he stilled, by the side of the bed. “Hey, you need to come downstairs and eat something.”

Damian mumbled again, something that was drastically like *bite me*, if one could understand him through his pillow. He didn’t need to roll over or look up to know Tim was frowning. Probably had his arms folded, legs slightly spread like he was braced for Damian to leap at him. Had that little frown on his lips, that *look* to his blue eyes.

Wasn’t like Damian had Tim’s face memorized. Wasn’t like he could trace it’s shape to life with nothing but a pencil.

Wasn’t like he *cared*.

“C’mon,” Tim said said, reaching out and tugging at Damian’s blanket, forcing it down his shoulders. “Bruce sent me, he’s not going to just let me walk downstairs without you in tow.”

Damian rolled onto his side, glancing up at Tim. Just as he’d expected, that little frown. Not nearly as becoming as when Tim smiled. *Not that Damian really had feelings on that.* “I do not care,” he mumbled, “I’m not hungry.”

Tim sighed, settled on the edge of Damian’s bed. Uninvited- but Damian didn’t shove him off. When Tim reached out, placed his wrist to Damian’s forehead, his skin was cool, and the younger realized he was pushing towards Tim, enjoying the feeling of that one small patch of soft skin.

“You’re a little warm,” Tim commented- and then, still frowning, “The suppressants still messing with you?”

“-tt- they are atrocious,” Damian admitted, forcing himself to sit up, to pull away from Tim’s wrist. Last thing he needed was to dwell on that patch of skin, what it might be like to feel Tim’s pulse, against his lips there. “I see no need for them.”

“They’re supposed to make your heats easier,” Tim reminded him, “And you know, the whole birth control thing.” Tim grinned, the silent joke about how Damian couldn’t stomach anyone long enough to *need* birth control in that smug sparkle to his eyes. Damian had heard the joke enough
from the whole damn family- at least Tim had the sense to keep it silent now.

Damian snorted. “Do not impose your lack of an intimate life onto me, Drake.” Tim laughed at that, head tipping back slightly. “And they have made nothing easier. I do not see why I needed to change- the suppressants I had been on were fine.”

“Bruce gave you this talk,” Tim pointed out as he stood up, “Now c’mon, let’s get some food in you. Alfred made an omelette special for you- don’t break his heart by not coming down to eat it.” Tim stood up off the bed, heading for the door- and Damian knew no matter how badly he felt he simply wanted to sleep, there was no way he would now. Not when Tim brought Alfred into the mix.

He sighed, swinging his legs over the side of his bed and standing. He stretched, before begrudgingly heading for the door, wondering if he could make an escape fast enough after breakfast to lock himself away again, in the hopes of returning to sleep.

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“Damian, are you listening to me?” Damian glanced up, across the desk in his father’s study. Bruce was watching him from around his laptop, frowning.

“Yes father,” Damian said, sounding bored. In actuality, he was still exhausted. He hadn’t crept back to bed and now, here he was mid afternoon, sitting with his father while the man prattled on about some plans he had to build a new youth center and revitalize a part of the Narrows. Damian had a tablet in his lap, the plans to that portion of the city open.

He could barely focus.

He had barely been able to focus on anything for the past two weeks and it was killing him.

“You’re lying,” Bruce pointed out, and Damian sighed.

“I am tired,” he admitted, “this ridiculous medication you have forced on me has completely unbalanced my body. I am tired no matter how much I sleep, I feel as if my mind is foggy-”

“They’re for your own good,” Bruce pointed out, “You’re not a kid now, Damian. You know suppressants make your heats easier.”

“They make my life far more difficult,” Damian pointed out, “I couldn’t give a damn about my heats.”

Bruce sighed, reaching up and closing his laptop. Damian knew the look- it was the look his father got every time they had to discuss anything involving his well being as an omega. As if Bruce just wished he didn’t have to talk about this.

Funny, because Damian knew that he wasn’t the first omega Bruce had raised.

“You’ve...grown up,” Bruce started, “And they’re going to be more intense, now. You know that- you were the one that pointed out the last one was different before we made the switch. Honestly I should have had you switch to a different grade suppressant a year ago- but I let it slip from my mind.”

“It is not worth feeling like I have just crawled from a grave,” Damian said, “That’s a feeling I’d be happy with only Todd knowing.”
“Damian.”

The omega grinned. A cheap shot- but he knew if the other omega was here, Jason would have given him a grin for it. If anyone enjoyed a good joke about his death, it was Jason.

Bruce sighed again. “I know the switch isn’t easy, but in the long run-”

“I will end up dead because I am unable to focus while on patrol,” Damian filled in, grin turning to a scowl. “I cannot continue like this, father.” Beyond the constant fatigue, Damian had episodes where his belly cramped up just like before his heats- but so badly he actually had to stop what he was doing. His appetite had all but disappeared- and even his moods felt different. His entire body felt out of his control- which was something he had never felt before.

Bruce was quiet for a moment. “The doctor did say the switch could make you feel strange, at first. It hasn’t been that long.”

“I should not feel this bad.”

“I’ll get in contact with her,” Bruce offered, “And discuss your symptoms with her. Perhaps we need a different dose, a different cocktail.”

“Perhaps I should just go off them all together.” Bruce winced, and Damian knew he was just pushing buttons now. But he was miserable and dammit if someone else wouldn’t be miserable with him.

“Damian you’re… unbonded. You don’t have a partner. Going through heats at your age like that… we’re just trying to keep you safe.”

“Todd hasn’t been on a suppressant in years.”

“Jason is bonded, has a partner who has not missed a heat in years- and they have built a family Damian. Jason went off them for a reason. Someday, you won’t need them.”

Damian clicked his tongue, shoving his chair back and standing up. He’d had enough- had enough of lectures and the goddamn world telling him how to rule his own body. It was his, and he didn’t see the need for anyone else to have a hand in it. “I think we’re done,” Damian offered, tucking his tablet under his arm and not bothering to look at his father as he turned and stormed from the room.

Bruce didn’t stop him. Only leaned his forehead into his hand, wishing he could make this easier on Damian. He didn’t have any desire to tell his youngest how to handle his own body- but he’d come across enough omegas in heat without any suppressants, and without at least a partner to help calm them- and it had never been a good sight.

He just wanted to save Damian the desperation.

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Tim held his wire tight as he swung up onto the rooftop, landing next to Dick. The alpha was surveying the docks, had been on his stake out for hours now. Hoping for a break in a smuggling case he’d been working between Gotham and Bludhaven.

“Want some company?” Tim asked, settling down on the rooftop next to him. Dick smiled.

“Always if it’s from you, little brother.” He tossed an arm out over Tim’s shoulders, gave him a good squeeze. Tim hadn’t run into him in Gotham since Dick had started the case- he’d been away
with the Titans for a while, had just come back recently- and when he did, Dick was following leads in Bludhaven.

He hadn’t seen him in a while. And he’s missed him.

“How have you been?” Tim asked, not looking at Dick but watching the docks as well. They’d long ago mastered carrying on a conversation and still keeping their eyes on their work.

“You know, busy. Good.”

Tim nodded. “How’s Wally?”

“Gorgeous as ever,” Dick said, offering up a grin. “Come visit us one of these days, if you ever take a day off.”

Tim laughed at that. “Between Gotham and the Titans? What’s a day off. I think this counts as a break.” Tim waved his hand at the quiet city. “Good to be back though.”

“Staying long?” Tim shrugged a shoulder.

“I’m not sure. Depends on what springs up. It’s nice to be home I’d like to stay a little while. If the rest of the team can keep the peace, that is.” He inclined his head, paused as he watched a few shadows along the closest loading bay- before deciding they were just that- just shadows. “Have you seen Damian lately?”

“Not much,” Dick admitted, and Tim sucked on his tongue for a moment.

“He’s not doing well with his suppressant switch.” Tim felt strange bringing it up- but Dick was their brother. He was the oldest, he’d always looked after them- and Tim knew Damian thought the world of the original Robin. “He’s pretty miserable.”

“Bruce mentioned it. We both know it’s not uncommon.”

“Yeah but… well. It’s Damian. You can’t just make his body feel strange and then expect him to accept it. I think they messed his dosage up. He really didn’t need much of a change.” Dick glanced at Tim then, and despite the mask, Tim swore he could see the dark blue of his eyes.

“Tim, you didn’t smell him last time. He’s my brother, and I had to take a step back. He was going to be miserable soon.” Dick sighed. “Wally’s talked about how the switch was weird for him too, when they had to up his dosage once he hit a certain age. But it didn’t last.”

“It’s just not right,” Tim said, pulling his knees up to his chest. “Something’s wrong.”

“I’d say I’m even shocked you’ve taken such a notice- but you do notice everything.” Dick offered a smile at Tim. “Listen, I’ll talk with Bruce, okay? Damian will be okay. I promise.” Tim nodded- took Dick’s word because there wasn’t a bone in his body that ever wanted to believe Dick could be wrong- even if he knew otherwise.

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Damian tossed in his bed, restless. Exhausted but unable to sleep. His belly ached in these tight stabbing knots that made him almost think his heat was coming- but that wasn’t for a few weeks. The only good thing about the suppressants, his heats were like clockwork.

He gritted his teeth, threw his blankets off. His father had benched him from patrol that evening
when Damian had been so exhausted he nearly fell off his bike before leaving the cave. He’d called Tim down instead, from sleep, to take his place.

And the beta had gone without a question, looking at Damian like he was worried.

Damian didn’t need Tim to worry about him, didn’t need his sympathy-

But he might sleep a bit better if he was there.

The omega groaned, cursed himself now. Of all the people to develop an attraction for, Tim was the last he would have expected- would have wanted. Not the petulant boy who had thought he was good enough to be a Wayne-

But oh, that anger was a lie now. Damian knew it. He’d been with Tim nine years now- and whatever true rage he felt as a child was gone. They were friendly, they could hold a conversation- and if anything, Damian’s fronts of aggression were used to cover when he had stared too long, when he had thought about sliding closer, slipping his hand over Tim’s.

He didn’t know what to do with himself, over this. And with what his body was doing to him, it was all just too much. He couldn’t take this any longer.

Damian sat up suddenly. He climbed from his bed, moved to his nightstand and rummaged through it, pulled out his pack of suppressant pills. His lip twitched in disdain, and he pulled out the second, unopened pack, before crossing his room, heading for the bathroom.

“I’m not a child,” he muttered to himself, lifting the toilet lid and opening his partially used pill container. “And this is my body.” He dumped the pills into the toilet, before grabbing the unopened pack and ripping them open, tossing them in as well. “I will have it back.” He closed is, tossed the empty packets in the trash can, before flushing the toilet and heading back to his bed.

He’d have it all back. He wouldn’t ever let someone else control his body- and he would have no use for the poison everyone was so convinced his body needed.

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He didn’t feel different, for the first few days- but then Damian noticed he wasn’t so tired. He could focus again. As the drugs left his system, he felt like himself once more. He had the energy to zip across the Gotham skylines and return to the Manor still, to be able to sit up another hour and drag his pencil along paper so that the stress of the city could seep out of him.

He felt himself, until he didn’t.

At first it was just a mild cramp, a bit of a fever. He woke up with the warmth in his cheeks and played it off, chose to sweat it out by training. But by mid day, his stomach was aching, cramps seizing him in waves that had him pausing to gasp, to double over. He gritted his teeth, was thankfully he was alone, as he pressed a hand to the wall, stepping off the mats. He paused until his gut began to relax, until he could straighten up, take a deep breath.

Perhaps he was ill. He couldn’t rule it out- he knew the sudden stopping of his suppressants would mess with his system. He would simply monitor the symptoms, see if perhaps it would run its coarse.

By the evening, he felt like he was aching. His bones slid under his skin, seemed to bump his every joint, and patrol was utter torture. He was glad he was alone, that Dick was back in Bludhaven for the evening, that his father was working a case. It left him and Cassandra for patrol- and they split
the city, to be extra thorough.

He appreciated not having anyone see the slight sluggishness to his movements, the way he gritted his teeth. How he botched a landing and hit his knee so hard he was sure it would bruise- had given a howl because he already hurt.

It caused his patrol to go over, and by the time he returned to the cave Cassandra had already showered, was in her sweats by the computer, flipping through various video channels within the city. Waiting, because she did not like to turn in for bed until everyone was accounted for.

Damian could appreciate her care.

“You’re late,” she offered, glancing back at him. Damian loosened the neck of his suit, but didn’t pull his mask off. Didn’t want her to see his eyes- knew she would read them too easily. He said nothing, walking past her to head towards the showers-

And caught of a quick whiff of her scent. Stronger than usual, like it was reaching right up into his skull and squeezing at his mind. Damian sucked in a breath, paused- and Cassandra frowned, her brow furrowing.

“Damian,” she said, standing up. Her dark eyes were so pretty, were looking at him like she was worried- and he was an idiot to think she wouldn’t read his discomfort with just a few steps. The body was her language, and typically, Damian had nothing but love for that-

But in this moment, he wished she would just look away. Because she smelled good, and he wasn’t sure he’d ever felt himself have this sort of reaction around her before.

She took a few steps towards him, before she reached out, pressed her wrist to his hot forehead. Damian let out a breath, turned up towards her touch before he could stop himself.

Her eyes softened as she frowned. “You’re hot,” she offered, pulling away- and god, Damian didn’t want her touch to go. She was soothing, she always had been- and suddenly he wanted contact. Felt like his suit was suffocating him. “Are you-”

“-tt- I’m unwell,” he forced, cutting her off. He knew what she was going to say- and it was ludicrous. It was far too early for his heat, far too sudden. He should have weeks to go, by his count. “Nothing more.”

“You smell,” she paused, pursued her lips, “sweet. I think you’re wrong.” Damian only shook his head.

“I am not. Now, I’m tired.” Cassandra didn’t fight when he turned away, heading for the showers. Didn’t harass him- only left the cave herself, for her room for the evening. It was another thing Damian adored about the alpha- she gave him his space, gave him autonomy. Even if he may be wrong, she allowed him to deal with those consequences. Lectures were infrequent-

At the risk of hurting Dick’s feelings, Damian may dare say she was his favorite sibling. If only because he could barely dare to think of Tim as a brother now, with the way he had been thinking of him for far too long now.

Damian hoped the shower would ease his aches, would calm him- but his skin felt like it was alive, like it could be moving, and the water felt like thousands of tiny caresses- had his eyelids growing heavy as he wanted it everywhere, couldn’t get under the heat enough. He tried to ignore it, but he felt acutely aware of the feeling of shampoo against his scalp, the way his fingertips and blunt nails scratched so pleasantly- the slight pull to his short hair. He sucked on his tongue, tried to ignore it,
ignore how good it felt, how it made his belly knot up- but not ache.

It was denial, then. Pure and simple denial as Damian gasped as he rinsed the soap off his body. He told himself it was just water, the wetness between his thighs. Lies, but he clung to them. Even as he towed off, slipped into his sweats and headed up to his room.

Even as he swore he could feel every fiber of his sheets. Even when he wanted them on his bare skin- but refused. He kept his clothing on and let it suffocate him, wrapped himself tightly in his blankets and told himself he was fine. He was alright.

It would pass. His system was simply having a minor meltdown, probably from the way he abruptly ended his medication.

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Tim stretched as he walked out of his room, shoving his phone in his pocket. Cass had called him, while he was in the shower, had left him a voicemail asking him to check on Damian. Said she was worried about him- didn’t specify why, but Tim didn’t need a reason. If Cass worried, that was reason enough. Besides, he still felt concern for Damian, even if he seemed to have improved lately. Tim hadn’t asked about it, and just assumed Bruce had finally gotten the omega’s suppressants fixed- or Damian had finally adjusted to them.

Wasn’t like they needed to share with him- wasn’t his business he knew.

He paused outside Damian’s door, brushed his damp hair back before knocking. He got no response, and figured Damian might still be sleeping. It was late morning, sure, but he had been on patrol the night before- and how Cassandra had gotten up to go into the city with Alfred so early without a problem was truly beyond Tim. He pushed at Damian’s door gently, leaning his head in and offering a very quiet, “Damian, you awake?”

It took less than two seconds for him to smell Damian- for the overwhelming sweet scent to invade his head, make his thoughts swim for a second. Damian had always smelled like almonds to Tim- but he realized most omegas did, honestly. But it was stronger with Damian, laced with cinnamon and some sort of spice that always made Tim’s throat almost hurt-

He liked it, thought. He chose to never think on that he liked it- but he always had.

“Shit,” Tim muttered, letting himself in and heading straight for Damian’s bed. He’d never smelled Damian like this- so strong, so warm. It was making his heart beat just a little faster, making his steps a little faster than they should of been. When he got to the bed he sat on the edge, reaching out for the bundle of blankets that was Damian and gently placing his hand on the center of his back.

Damian made a sound, a sort of frustrated moan, and Tim bit his lip.

“Babybat, are you in heat?” Damian rolled onto his side, opening his eyes- eyes that seemed pitless, endless, gorgeous- and fuck Tim lost his breath over them, over the blush that colored Damian’s dark cheeks.

He didn’t need an answer.

Still, he reached out, pressed his wrist to Damian’s forehead. He was burning up, felt like a fire was crackling beneath his skin. Damian moaned at the contact, pushed towards Tim, who chose to run his fingers back through Damian’s hair, trying to soothe him.
“Hey, it’s okay,” he offered, felt Damian trembling. He’d seen Damian in heat before, and he wasn’t usually like this. He had that blush, yes, that look to his eyes- but he never smelt so intoxicating, never seemed to curl up like this until everyone was gone. Typically he just pushed his chest out and told everyone to leave him the fuck alone.

And that was what they did, aside of checking in to make sure he didn’t need anything.

“Shouldn’t be happening,” Damian mumbled, as Tim stroked his fingers through his hair again. “Not for… weeks.”

“Shh, hey, it happens. It’s alright. Want me to get you something?” Tim didn’t like to see anyone miserable- but especially not like this. He had enough omega friends that he knew heats weren’t something fun- not the way Damian suffered through them.

Alone.

Damian licked his lips, said nothing- only tugged at his blanket. It pooled down towards his waist, and Tim, without much thought, moved his hand from his hair down along the back of Damian’s neck, along his spine. The teen’s tank top was clinging to him, and Tim felt his heart tugging.

Yeah, he and Damian didn’t always get along the best- but he didn’t like to see him like this.

He hushed Damian again, as the omega whined, turning and pressing his face into his pillows. Tim rubbed soothing circles into his back, felt a shiver run through Damian- heard another muffled moan.

“Do you want me to go?” He knew it had to be a yes- it always was. Damian had never been one for company, even during the lulls of his heat. Tim had seen him during, but usually only if he was bringing him something. The only one in the family that had spent extended time with Damian during his heats was Dick- and that was because he clung to the oldest like a security blanket. When he’d been younger, Tim remembered Dick telling him how he sat on the side of Damian’s bed for an hour, just rubbing his back and watching the teen try to keep himself composed. How Damian had cried, once, because he hated that his body felt so out of control.

But the no never came. Damian glanced back at Tim, his eyes dark, and shook his head. “Stay,” he whispered, and Tim had no idea of the way Damian’s heart was racing, no idea of the way his pulse ached in his veins. “Please.”

Had Damian said please to him within the past six months? Tim couldn’t be sure.

“Okay,” he said, nodding. “I won’t go.” Though he wasn’t sure if this was what Damian needed- this wasn’t a lull, he could tell. Damian seemed about to crawl out of his skin, and Tim could only think the best course of action really was to leave, so Damian could get a little release.

“My fault,” Damian mumbled, slowly sitting up. The blanket fell further, draped around his hips, over his thigh. The movement brought him closer to Tim, and Damia leaned forward, pressed against his chest. For a moment, Tim went tense- before he wrapped his arms around Damian, held him.

“Hey, it’s not. It’s okay, you know this is natural.” He rubbed his back again, along his spine, and Damian shuddered, pressed his hot face against Tim’s neck.

“Stopped the suppressants,” Damian mumbled, and that had Tim leaning back, his hands going from Damian’s back to his bare biceps. He held him still, forced Damian away from his body so he could stare at him.
“You did what?”

“Flushed them,” Damian admitted, swallowed thickly. “Couldn’t stand them. Couldn’t...wasn’t me.” He sounded so out of it, and Tim’s heart rate picked up, began to hurt his chest.

“Shit Damian, you can’t just go off them like that. Do you know how much they were altering your system? No wonder you’re in heat. Fuck.” Tim sighed. “I need to go call Bruce. We can’t do anything about it, but he has to know—”

“Don’t go,” Damian said, and it sounded like him, his voice- heavy but there. Damian was looking at him intently with those now dark eyes.

“Damian… I think I need to. You… you’ve handled heats before. You know what you need.” Tim swallowed, and Damian leaned in, pushed past Tim’s hold to grasp at his shirt, look up at him.

“I do,” Damian said- and was Tim crazy, or was there a hint of nervousness to his voice? “But can you handle what I need, Drake?”

“Wha—” Tim was cut off when Damian leaned up, crashed their lips together. His hold tightened on Tim’s tshirt as his mouth moved without rhythm- heavy drags of his lip and Damian whining into Tim’s mouth, trying to press impossibly close.

And Tim- he didn’t tear away. He should have, but for a moment all he could do was sit there, let Damian have his mouth. Damian’s lips were warm- softer than he would have thought- and he smelled like heaven.

Without realizing it, Tim had his arms back around Damian, was rubbing his spine again, as Damian pulled off, gasped gently for air. He was panting, against Tim’s now wet mouth, looking up at Tim expectantly.

“I- you… you just…” Tim trailed off, shook his head. “Shit babybat, this is just your hormones talking.”

Damian frowned. “-tt- it is...not…” He took a deep, steadying breath. “You are using that...as an excuse. Simply- do not- have the guts to handle me.”

Damian offered up a devilish grin- and Tim knew he was baiting him, knew it- But maybe he didn’t want to. “Yeah?” Damian nodded, squirming closer, as one of Tim’s hands dipped down to the small of his back. “Think I don’t know what you’d want.”

Tim was baiting back- and god, what was he doing? This wasn’t a game he played- and not with Damian. Not with the babybat. Not with his brother.

Damian hummed, pressed his face into Tim’s neck, inhaled. Tim wondered what he smelled like, to Damian- knew he was different from everyone else- from the alphas and omegas Damian was used to being around. He’d been told he smelled like a fire, like the ending smokey embers of a pit, mingling in with that something sugary.

Bart had told him once he smelled like a marshmallow, and Tim had laughed for a solid week over it. He knew he didn’t have the sweetness of an omega, but he lacked that certain strength to his scent the alphas had. And he didn’t know a single other beta that he could compare himself to.

That was what he got, for being rare. For being special. There was no comparison.
“I believe you cannot deliver,” Damian mumbled, his mouth working along Tim’s neck. There was a playfulness to Damian’s voice- one that had Tim squaring his shoulders and suddenly shoving the omega down onto his bed. Damian didn’t resist, as Tim crawled between his legs, rocked up against him in a way that had Damian’s back arching, eyes going wide.

Tim realized two things, in that one movement- or three, if he was truly honest.

First, that Damian was hard- so hard he had to be aching.

Second, he was so wet. Wet enough that it had leaked through his underwear, his sweatpants. Wet enough that Tim could smell him.

And, third- that Tim hadn’t felt this turned on in quite a long time. That the motion of rutting against Damian once had his thighs almost shaking. That his cock was swelling in his own sweatpants, and he was sure Damian could feel it.

Tim leaned over him, planted his hands firmly against the mattress. Without much thought, he was rocking against Damian again- could smell his own vague scent as he let his pheromones wash over Damian.

Not the same as an alpha- not so invasive, but yet coaxing. Tim found he wanted to coax Damian, to get his body to respond.

What was wrong with him?

“Could prove you wrong,” Tim offered, as Damian ground down against his clothed cock. Damian flashed a grin, tipped his head back, "Dare you to.

“Dare you to.”

Tim should have had the restraint to say no- but he didn’t want to, and he was leaning down, crashing their lips together as Damian hooked a leg loosely behind his thighs, holding Tim close as they rutted together. Damian’s mouth fought back against Tim, teeth and tongue but Tim held his own- nipped and sucked on Damian’s tongue, bit his lip until it had been worried cherry and swollen. And when Damian tipped his head back, Tim moved his mouth to his neck, nuzzled his heated skin and inhaled.

Almonds. Cinnamon. That spice that made his throat ache.

Damian whined, hips rising, and Tim snaked a hand down, slid it beneath his tank top and then up, along his ribs, his chest. His thumb rubbed gently over Damian’s nipple as he sucked at his skin, sure the bruise, and the omega moaned, pushing his hips down against Tim’s cock and grinding like his life depended on it.

Tim closed his eyes for a moment, focused on what he wanted. He knew a lot of alphas and omegas who had a love-hate relationship with their biology- but he adored his, loved the freedom being a beta gave him. He could choose which of the two he wanted to echo- and in that moment, he wanted to calm Damian, soothe him.

The pheromones weren’t identical to an alphas- but Damian tipped his head back, breathed in deeply and sighed, a warm shiver running through him.

“You’re okay,” Tim whispered against his pulse. “I’m going to take care of you.”

Why did he like that idea so much?”
Tim finally pulled off Damian neck, helped him to work his sweatpants and underwear off. The moment he had the clothing gone, Tim groaned- saw how wet Damian’s thighs were, how hard his cock was. He settled between his legs, reached one hand up and pressed against his hole, two fingers sliding in with such ease Tim lost his breath.

Damian gasped, pushed himself up on his elbows, as Tim fucked him with the two digits. “Drake-wha-”

“I’m taking the edge off,” Tim whispered, leaning over him and pushing his tank top up. He kissed at his abs. “If I don’t do something, you’re going to lose your mind.”

“I want-”

“I know what you want,” Tim said- because it was true. He’d been with Bart when his friend had been in heat, a few times, and he knew what he was doing. He’d had to do the same thing before with the speedster- get him off once just to bring him down to a more stable place, before he could fuck him.

He planned to do just the same for Damian.

Tim hooked his fingers, rubbed against Damian’s prostate, and the teen was arching, gasping. He reached down, as Tim sat back up, wrapped a hand around his own cock and began to stroke- hips rising up to fuck his hand, before pressing down, riding Tim’s fingers. Tim sucked in a breath, dragged his eyes up to look at Damian’s face-

Flushed, lips parted- so pretty he didn’t have words.

“It’s okay,” Tim said again, messaging along his prostate now. “Don’t hold back- just feel good.” Damian gasped, stroked faster, his breaths coming quickly. “You can come Damian. You’re not proving anything to me.”

Tim reached out with his other hand, gripped Damian’s thigh and rubbed soothing little circles in with his thumb. Damian sobbed out a breath, before he gave a little cry and clenched around Tim’s fingers, coming up along his abs. Tim continued to rub his prostate, until Damian was falling back, body relaxing.

He smiled, eased off his prostate and began to thrust his fingers slowly, lazily. Damian let his hand fall away, breathing heavier, as Tim squeezed his thigh again. “Better with the edge off?” Damian nodded, licked his lips, and Tim leaned over him. He kissed his lower stomach- dangerously close to his cock- before mouthing up, until he was licking at the mess Damian had made. The omega groaned, Tim’s tongue felt like warm velvet on his skin.

Tim hummed once he’d gotten all of it- hadn’t expected to like the way Damian tasted so much, before he eased back, pulled his fingers free. Damian pushed himself up on his elbows, eyed him as Tim inhaled, slowly. Steadying.

“You really want me to stay?” Damian nodded, didn’t hesitate, and Tim gave his thigh a final squeeze. “Okay. Let’s get you a little more comfortable, then.” He nodded towards Damian’s shirt, and the omega tore it up off over his head, tossing it away. Tim smiled, pulling at his own tshirt.

“You to take off everything? Yes.” Tim sucked on his lip for a moment, before he climbed off the bed. Damian seemed to have calmed down a bit- not much, Tim knew, could tell from the flush still on his cheeks, his sweet scent still so strong-
The fact that his cock had never gone soft.

Tim reached down, gripped his sweatpants- and then in a single movement pushed everything down, off his thighs. He stepped out of his clothing- stood there rubbing the back of his neck as he realized he was completely naked in front of Damian.

And he was hard. And god, even a little wet- he’d never been perfect at controlling how his body responded to arousal. Usually let himself present as both alpha and omega, and just focused on whichever reaction fit the situation best.

Damian was looking at him- and when he licked his lips, Tim nearly lost his mind. God, when had Damian become, this? When had he become attractive-

When had Tim become attracted to him?

“Can you roll over for me?” Tim asked, as he crawled back onto the bed. Damian didn’t question him, just rolled onto his belly. Tim smiled, patted the back of one of his thighs. “Up a little for me.” A huff- but still, no question.

Tim knew Damian trusted him- he’d earned it, after all, through all these years. But being this unquestioning- it wasn’t like him. Still, Tim smiled, rubbed his hands up along his thighs, over Damian’s ass- gripped his head then and leaned in, lapping at his wet hole. Damian shouted, scrambling along the bed- but pushed back, as Tim’s tongue circled the muscle.

Tim trembled. Damian was so utterly intoxicating he was sure he might simply pass out. He pressed closer, pushed his tongue into his body- and Damian dug one shoulder into the bed, lifting his hips and spreading his thighs wider. Despite his orgasm, his cock was still heavy, flushed.

Wasn’t shocking, to Tim. He knew when Bart had been in heat, he’d be hard until he hit a lull. Most omegas dealt with it.

“Shit, you taste good,” Tim managed, as he pulled back to take a deep breath. Damian shuddered, and Tim leaned back in, lapping at the juices that seemed to gush so freely from Damian. The omega squirmed, reached back to touch himself a second time, and Tim groaned, moved both his hands to Damian’s ass and squeezed as he pulled away, looked down to watch for a moment. “Make yourself come again.”

Damian shuddered, as Tim massaged his ass between his hands, before moving back to fuck Damian with his tongue. The omega moaned, spread his thighs wider- and Tim was overwhelmed. He wanted Damian to come again so badly, wanted him to feel good, wanted to sink himself so far into him-

His own cock twitched, leaked precum onto his thigh, and he sighed, switching to running his tongue around Damian’s hole. The teen was moving desperately- and then, with no warning, he gave a sharp cry, and he was coming a second time.

Tim pulled back, gasped, before he flipped Damian over. The omega didn’t fight, arched his back as Tim grabbed his thighs, lifting them up. “Around my waist,” he managed, and Damian obeyed, locking his legs tightly around Tim as the beta, with no warning, thrust himself into his wet body.

Damian gave a loud cry, his back arching- and fuck, Tim wasn’t sure he’d ever looked so good. He’d seen the way his body moved before- he’d worked with him, trained with him- he’d seen muscles move and pull so perfectly over bone, below skin- but here it seemed different. Different angles, different twists- and Damian looked ethereal, flushed and grasping desperately at the bed,
his arms outstretched.

“Drake- Drake,” he breathed, and Tim leaned over him, his hair falling into his face. Damian squeezed his legs tighter around his waist, pulled Tim in deeper- and they both let out a breath. Tim’s hips rocked quickly- it might have been nice to drag this out, but he knew better, knew that heat sex didn’t work like that-

Damian needed release until his body final relaxed, and he hadn’t had enough yet.

The omega reached up, locked his arms around Tim’s neck and clung to him, leaned up to press his mouth to Tim’s. He could taste himself on Tim’s tongue, shivered over it as Tim nipped at his tongue, thrusting so hard into Damian’s body the omega couldn’t see.

He kept his eyes squeezed shut, gasping into Tim’s mouth, shaking. He dug his blunt nails into his shoulders, and Tim hissed, gave one thrust so sharp, so sudden that Damian ripped away from his mouth, actually screamed.

“Fuck,” Tim growled, growled like he wasn’t sure he ever had in bed with anyone, “Are you-”


“I know,” he whispered, leaned down to nuzzle at Damian’s neck. He kissed his pulse, the bruise he’d left already, inhaled the cinnamon-sweetness. “I want you to. Want you to come over and over again for me.” Damian choked, arching, his cock rubbing between their bodies, and Tim groaned. He was close himself, but bit at his own lip, willing himself to wait, wait for Damian-

Thankfully, the wait was short. Because barely a moment later, Damian arched again, giving a very loud shout as he came between their bodies, clenched tightly around Tim. Tim shuddered, turned and nuzzled Damian’s neck as he followed suit, unable to hold back. Damian’s body was too hot, soaking wet- clenching around him so perfectly, and Tim couldn’t resist.

When Damian collapsed, panting, his legs untangling from around Tim, the beta pushed himself up, pulled out. Damian whined over it, but didn’t stop him. Tim maneuvered over him, stretched out along his side, tentatively sliding an arm over his waist. He wasn’t sure if Damian would want the contact-

And got his answer when Damian turned, nuzzling right into the crook of his neck. Tim wrapped his arms around him, stroked along the heavy scar that traveled his spine. “You okay?”

Damian nodded. He still felt warm to Tim, but his breathing was calming down, and his scent wasn’t as strong.

“Okay. Good. I can go, if you want. We can talk about this later-”


“Okay. It kept you up, didn’t it?”

“-tt- For hours, on and off.” His voice was groggy, and Tim would only squeeze him tightly.

“Go ahead and drift. I’m used to it. I know that’s what you’ll be doing the whole time. I… I won’t go anywhere. Not without telling you.”

Damian mumbled something, shifting closer to Tim- letting their legs tangle together. And as he
drifted- Tim let himself wonder what the hell he was doing. Damian’s bed was the last of the family’s he’d ever expect to end up in- and it shouldn’t have been so easy, to stay. To want to stay.

Tim sighed, closed his own eyes. Focused on the soft pattern of Damian’s breathing. Focused on the feeling of his warm skin. On the slide of the sheets against him every time he moved. On anything except the fact that he had just fucked Damian-

And that he had enjoyed it.

*

Damian dreamt of burning satin. He dreamt of it on his skin, and the perfect chill of winter breath, soothing the ache it left behind. He dreamt of pretty eyes and fingers in his hair and on his scars. He dreamt of a fire that didn’t burn, of something sweet on his tongue that made him yearn for more.

Fever dreams had never once made sense to him, and later, if he were to think back, he would think these somehow made both less and more sense than usual. Less in that they felt so disjointed, like there was no story and only sensations-

But more so because each sensation could be tied to the man sleeping next to him.

Damian let his eyes flutter open. He shifted, felt hot- but not nearly as bad as he had, through out the night. Not hot enough that he didn’t want to push closer to the body heat he was nestled into it.

It took a moment for him to realize it was Tim. And another to realize what he’d done.

He pulled back slightly, felt Tim’s arms wrap around him tighter at the movement. Damian sucked on his lip, before settling back in.

There was no undoing it, now. And… it had not gone as badly as it could of. Or badly at all. The attraction- crush, if he wanted to be juvenile about it- hadn’t ended with Tim laughing at him, or rebuking him. No he’d stayed.

He’d seemed to enjoy himself.

Damian inhaled, sighed to himself. Tim smelled like a fire- he always had, as long as Damian could remember. It was one of the most soothing things, and even as a child he hadn’t been able to fool himself into thinking he’d hated it. Now, older, he could pick up all the little nuances to it. The sweetness, like something sugary and burnt- but in a good way.

He had once over heard Tim telling Jason that his friend Bart had said he smelled like a toasted marshmallow. The other omega had laughed while Tim seemed flustered- but Damian couldn’t deny it. There was truth to it.

He would be the last to complain.

He nuzzled Tim’s neck, felt strangely affectionate. Never once during a heat had he felt like this- but then again, they had always been alone. Typically it was just small rushes of arousal, something he could handle on his own, followed by bouts of fatigue that always felt like such a waste of time- but Damian couldn’t deny them. His heats were mostly cat napping, more so than anything else.

The level of arousal he’d felt, when Tim first came into his room- and the restless hours before- it was new, unlike what he’d felt before. And he couldn’t imagine- didn’t want to either- what it
would have been like soothing that on his own.

Tim had made him feel better than he ever had, physically. Never once had he made himself feel this good- and just thinking about it was making his thighs wet again. He gave a little groan, kissed at Tim’s neck, and the beta mumbled something in his sleep, clutched at Damian’s back. The omega felt a calm begin to wash over him- and Tim was trying to soothe him in his sleep, out of instinct.

Tim’s pheromones felt different than any alpha’s Damian had encountered. He’d had Dick try to calm him, before, when his anger had spiked- and it had always felt almost suffocating. Like the scent was thick and for a moment he couldn’t breathe. And while Damian could admit he liked Dick’s, Tim’s felt much tamer. Felt like it wasn’t a command, when they tried to coaxing a reaction from Damian’s body- but a request. And there was this strange different sort of calm to them, the kind Damian had gotten off of other omegas before.

He kissed at Tim’s neck again. “Drake,” he whispered, but got no response- and god how did Tim sleep so heavily? Damian sighed, rocked his hips gently forward, felt a bit hotter, beneath his skin. His next wave was coming. He was rather happy he’d woken up before it struck- he found it bothersome to wake up within the wave, to barely know what was even going on and just want to mindlessly rut against everything in his sleepy state. At least know he could come to, could feel it coming on.

He gently pushed at Tim, who rolled onto his back. Damian tugged at the blanket, tossing it aside, before he leaned forward, kissed at Tim’s abs. He nuzzled his skin, mumbling into him, “Drake, wake up.” Still no response. Damian huffed, reached his hand out and wrapped it around Tim’s cock, rubbing the nerves beneath the head with his thumb. “Drake.”

Tim pushed his hips up, giving a quiet moan, and Damian leaned forward, gently kissed at the head of his cock. He felt it twitch, felt it beginning to swell, and began to stroke, slowly, biting at his lip as he felt a wave of heat in his belly.

“Drake, wake up.” He leaned down, nipped at the beta’s thigh. “I need you.”

Later, he could be happy Tim was asleep and didn’t hear that.

Damian held his cock by the base, leaning in again and slowly sucking the head into his mouth. Tim pushed up at that, and Damian squeezing his thighs together, fighting back a moan as he wondered what it might be like to have Tim fuck his mouth, to sink his fingers into himself and ride them while Tim rode his tongue-

“Dami-” Tim started, his hands sliding along the bed, eyes fluttering open. The name broke off in a groan, and he pushed up against into Damian’s mouth. “Fuck-”

Damian pulled off, turning to look at Tim. His eyelids were still heavy, but he was looking at Damian, and the omega shivered.

“Drake, can you-” he broke off, shivering- and god, god his lull was over, he just needed- needed Tim, Tim inside him, touching him-

“Yeah,” Tim whispered, waking up a little more and pushing himself up. He slid back, until he was sitting against the pillows, watched as Damian’s hands, now free, clutched at the sheets where he knelt. Tim reached down, took himself in hand and began stroking. “Okay, whatever you need.”

Damian could ahve cried his thanks- but his pride wouldn’t let him. He scrambled towards Tim’s
lap, crawling on until he was straddling him, and Tim was gently pushing up, his cock sliding against Damian’s hole- which was so wet Tim lost his breath.

The omega hung his head, took a deep breath as Tim continued to slide his how hard cock against his hole. “You’re… teasing me,” Damian managed, and Tim smiled.

“Sorry, couldn’t help it. You’re just,” he paused, licked his lips, “You look really good. This is definitely nice to wake up to.” Damian flushed, before his mouth fell open as Tim finally guided his cock into his body. He tipped his head back, as the beta gripped at his hips, guiding Damian down until he was fully in his body. Tim turned, once he was, kissed Damian’s temple, his cheek, nuzzled into his neck as he began to thrust up, slowly. “Slow or fast, babybat?”

Damian sucked on his lip- wasn’t even sure what he wanted. Wanted to come already, wanted some relief so the fire in him would calm, but-

“Slow,” he managed, “god, Drake, slow, but- please, I just- I need-”

Tim hushed him, ran his hands up along Damian’s back. The touch was soothing- and how Tim’s fingers mapped the risen skin of his scars, how they felt like warm coals- the slightest roughness, but the kind that had Damian arching back against them.

“I know,” Tim whispered, and god, Damian didn’t doubt that he did. Somehow didn’t doubt that Tim knew what he wanted, needed- everything.

It was terrifying.

It was everything.

Damian leaned his head back, riding Tim slowly. His own cock was hard, but he was far too distracted by the way Tim stretched him perfectly, by the way he seemed to slide against his prostate with each slow thrust. Damian let his mouth open, sighing and moaning with every movement, forgetting all over again that only the previous night he had still been too afraid to touch Tim.

Had been convinced that, because of their past, the beta would never want to know the feeling of his skin.

“Is it okay?” Tim asked- and there was real concern in his voice. Damian didn’t doubt he honestly just wanted to make him feel good- wanted to relieve the stress, the heat, the knots in his body. Because he trusted Tim-

Oh anyone in the family, Tim had earned it- and he hadn’t made it easy for him.

Damian reached out, clutched at Tim’s shoulders as the beta leaned in, kissed at his neck. Was mumbling things into his skin, so pretty, you feel so good-

Don’t want to stop.

“Please don’t,” Damian moaned, began moving faster, “don’t ever stop- Drake, don’t.” He leaned down, caught Tim’s mouth, kissed him like he’d always wanted to. Like he wanted Tim to stay forever, like he might actually do it.

Tim’s fingers dug into Damian’s back, blunt nails that felt so much stronger with his heightened sensitivity. Damian shuddered, moaned around Tim’s tongue, his hips moving faster, beginning to lose his resolve. Tim met each movement harder now, until Damian was nearly sobbing into his
mouth, grinding and bouncing desperately as he sought the release he couldn’t deny any longer. He murmured Tim’s name, over and over again- was still saying it, when he finally came, clenching around Tim tightly.

The beta stilled, let Damian ride out his orgasm- and only when he was satiated, when he was slumping down, did he move his hips again. The sudden sensation had Damian’s head snapping up, eyes going wide, and-

“Drake, Drake, Drake!” He was nearly screaming, shuddering as his body kept clenching up tightly around Tim- like he was coming all over again, like he couldn’t stop- and Tim leaned in, bit at his neck, dug his teeth in and nearly broke skin and Damian screamed for him again, babbling a string of yes and fuck and don’t stop-

He’d never come like this, when the second orgasm hit. Never been left on that high only to somehow tumble over the edge again- but he clutched at Tim, dug his nails into his skin and screamed again, came so hard he was shaking as Tim followed, emptied inside him for a second time and clutched his arms around him, held Damian tightly.

The omega slumped, when the waves finally subsided. He was panting, staring down at Tim’s collar bone- couldn’t bring himself to even raise his head, or his eyes. Barely felt like he could move.

Tim was rubbing his back, panting just like Damian, watching his pretty jade eyes as they wouldn’t rise. “Okay?” he asked, and Damian nodded. “Do you need more?”

The omega shook his head- was fairly sure if Tim tried to get him off again, he’d simply die. His heart would shut down and his lungs would cease to function and he’d simply explode, each and every cell. Tim chuckled, leaned in and kissed his temple, hands sliding down to his hips.

“So we lay back down? Think you can do that?” Damian nodded- but didn’t protest as Tim helped to lift him. Nor did he fight when Tim guided him down to the bed, when Tim stretched out behind him, pulled the blanket up over them and hooked his arm over his waist, gently rubbing his abs. Damian hummed, let his eyes fall shut- simply enjoyed Tim’s body heat, that warm sweet-fire smell, the way he kept nuzzling the back of his neck, kissing his shoulder.

“You’re good at this,” Damian observed, keeping his eyes shut. Tim laughed at that, pressed his forehead to the back of Damian’s head.

“Got enough experience. Spent a lot of Bart’s heats with him, figured out what works best. I know everyone’s different, but there’s a bit of a formula to this.”

Damian sucked on his tongue. He felt a tightening in his chest, this strange feeling in his belly- didn’t care for thinking about Tim like this with anyone else. Didn’t care for the fact that Tim could feel good like this with someone else-

Damian had never claimed that he wasn’t possessive, even of the things that were not his to have.

“Oh?” he finally managed, and Tim nodded.

“Yeah. Take the edge off first, tire you out. Multiple orgasms. And then slow it down- make it worth your while.” His hand was still rubbing Damian’s belly gently, was somehow easing the jealous knots there. “It worked.”

“-tt-” Damian shifted, pulling away slightly. “Perhaps. For now.”
Tim chuckled again, gave Damian a squeeze. “Are you saying you’re not done with me?” When Damian didn’t respond, Tim lifted his head, turned to kiss a scar on Damian’s shoulder. “You know, I have patrol tonight.”

“Then I will miss you while you are gone.” The words came out before Damian could filter them, and he flushed, clutched at the sheets beneath his hand. But Tim only nuzzled his shoulder.

“I can come back… after you. If you want.” He sounded a little hesitant, and Damian knew this was his chance to cover for himself. He could tell him no, that he had done enough. He could cover all his little slips-

“I do.” Or he could be honest. Tim nodded, before Damian added, “But when you come back, you will not discuss anyone else in my bed.”

Tim laughed at that, leaning partially on top of Damian, chest pressing to the omega’s shoulder. “Jealous?”

“No.” A blatant lie- but Tim didn’t call him on it.

The fact that the beta continued to allow Damian to give himself away and not call attention to it-well, it only made Damian’s chest swell with more affection for him.

*

Tim clung to his line as he swung off the high rise, heading for one of the lower building. He’d been following a lead for a smuggling ring- but a rush of cops towards a home invasion had sent his group scattering, and in the confusion he had lost his trail on all three.

Didn’t help that he was tired. The day with Damian had worn him out- and despite the fact that when Damian napped, he drifted as well, he still felt bone tired. But he knew the moment he was back at the Manor, he’d be alive again.

Because Damian was waiting for him.

He landed on the building, reached up to activate his com. “Batgirl?”

“Here, Red.”

“I lost my lead, they scattered. Do you need anything?”

“No, the city is quiet.” Tim nodded. Didn’t think Cass would need anything, but he didn’t want to dare turning in early for the evening without making sure. “Alright. Bats- you cool with me calling it a night?”

He knew Bruce was out by Arkham, was keeping an eye on a patient transfer- no big names, but a man that had been held at Blackgate but deemed more worthy of time in Arkham. Any patient transfer with that place could be dangerous.

“Fine.” Bruce’s voice was gruff, to the point. Tim knew he as concentrating. “Please check on Robin, make sure he is alright.”

Tim hadn’t had a choice- he’d had to tell Bruce that Damian was in heat. The alpha was going to figure it out, and Tim figured he should be forward about it. Granted, he left out all the parts where he had stayed in Damian’s room all day- all the ways he’d brought him off, again and again-
All Bruce needed to know was that Tim had checked in on him, but that it seemed pretty rough. That he should probably give Damian his space. Cassandra hadn’t been shocked- she’d admitted she had been concerned about Damian the night prior, and Tim fully understood her call from that morning, in that moment.

Tim made his way back to his bike, made the drive back to the cave. Part of him wanted simply to run up to Damian’s room- but the fact alone that he was so excited that the omega might still want his bed open to him had him pausing, forcing himself to breathe.

Loose the suit, shower first. Don’t act like a goddamn kid getting his hands on his new toy for the second time.

Tim thought the analogy was tasteless.

He took his time stripping of his suit, making sure each piece was properly put away. He showered, he checked the computer once- checked on Cassandra and Bruce’s locations, made sure everything was still going smoothly. And then, when he felt he had put it off enough, when he felt he had proved that he had a little self control, he let himself get in the elevator, head back up to the manor.

He almost hoped Damian was sleeping. Almost hoped he had been fairly under control, while Tim was gone, that he’d get some rest. That he’d eaten. Tim had managed to get him to eat a little before he left- and Damian had promised he would while Tim was gone.

He had seemed more concerned with crawling into Tim’s lap for one final fuck before the beta left for patrol.

Tim sighed to himself, heading up the stairs. He knew the eagerness had to do with Damian stopping his medicine- and honestly, he wondered how long ago he’d done it. He hadn’t brought it up to Bruce- and as much as he wanted to, as concerned as he was, he knew that was something Damian needed to do himself. He’d remind the omega of that, when this was over.

He just wanted to make sure Damian was safe.

Tim paused at Damian’s door, went to knock- but instead pressed his hand flat to the wood. He leaned his forehead against it, closed his eyes, inhaled again. Tried to steady himself, brace himself-

So that he wouldn’t come undone just under those jade eyes.

Tim couldn’t think of a single person who had ever done this to him- had him feeling so desperate. Even when Bart had let Tim crawl in bed with him during his heats, Tim had never felt like this. And all those times with Kon, Tim had still felt in control. Not like he was suffocating under something he couldn’t name, some strange weight on his chest.

Damian was just unlike anyone else, and it was beautiful and terrifying and Tim had no idea what he was doing.

Now wasn’t the time to think.

He pushed at the door, peeking in. “Damian?” he offered, quiety, and for a moment thought the omega really was sleeping. For the better-

Until he heard a soft moan, could see Damian arching despite the sheet he’d thrown over him. Tim stepped in, shut the door behind him, inhaled deeply- grew dizzy over Damian’s scent. He cursed,
under his breath, as Damian turned his head smiled at him- but oh, he looked so utterly wanton, as he kicked his sheet off.

He was blissfully naked, his hand between his legs, fingers pressed into his body. Tim shuddered, said softly, “baby” without meaning to, and Damian tried to broaden his smile.

“Come here,” he said, and Tim moved, crossed the room quickly. He leaned over the bed, found Damian’s mouth and kissed him hard. Damian met his movements, sucked on Tim’s tongue as it pressed into his mouth. Damian moaned against him, still fucking himself, as Tim reached down, grasped the omega’s cock and began to stroke. Damian broke off his mouth, gasping, and Tim dipped down lower, sucked at his throat.

“How long?” he whispered, as Damian twisted his fingers, brushing his prostate.

“Hmm- since- hours- I don’t.” Damian tipped his head back, gave Tim better access to his throat. The beta opened his mouth, dug his teeth into the skin- didn’t break it, but Damian gave a shout, his cock throbbing in Tim’s hand.

Tim smirked as he released Damian’s neck. “Okay, you’ll be okay. I’m going to take the edge off.” He rubbed his thumb along the nerves beneath Damian’s cockhead, got a broken little mewl as Damian pushed up towards him, before moving back down onto his own fingers. Tim ran his thumb up over the head- came back wet, before he took to stroking again. He moved to Damian’s ear, nipped his earlobe gently, before, “You can come for me, babybat. I want you to. That way when I fuck you you’ll be nice and relaxed.”

Damian shuddered, and Tim wondered how hot he was, under his skin. What this felt like. Bart had tried to explain it, before- and Tim seemed to understand. But Damian seemed something different, something fierce, now. Tim knew it had to be from his lack of suppressants, from stopping them so suddenly.

Even Jason hadn’t done that, Tim knew. He’d gone to a lower grade for a month, before he started taking them every other day- and then, after a month of that, had stopped completely. He and Roy had had to wait three months before they could even try with any hope of getting pregnant.

For a moment, Tim almost worried with that thought- no suppressants meant no birth control. But he tossed the thought aside, as he nuzzled Damian’s cheek, his neck. He was practically infertile, as a beta, there was no way he’d ever create a child without extensive hormone therapy to help.

“You’re doing so good,” Tim whispered to Damian, felt his cock gush precum at the praise. It wasn’t shocking that Damian liked that- he’d watched him grow up, watched the way he would light up anytime someone told him he did something well. Even if he tried to hard to hide it.

“Drake,” Damian gasped, and Tim kissed his throat, tightened his hold as Damian fucked up into his fist, then down on his own fingers- and then with another cry, came up over Tim’s hand, along his abs. Tim smiled, whispered how good he was, how well he’d done, as he stroked him through it, until Damian was relaxing back into the bed.

“You okay?” Tim asked, kissing his temple. Damian licked his lips, swallowed.

“I… think.” He glanced over at Tim. “It feels like you have been gone years.”

“It was a few hours,” Tim said with a laugh, as he helped Damian sit up. He leaned in, kissed the bridge of his nose, had Damian twisting his face up. It was cute.

“Hours feel like centuries when I’m burning.” Damian was looking at him with these serious eyes,
the jade so pretty but dark. There was still a fire there, flames that licked along his irises- felt like they could reach out, catch Tim’s breath afire. “Will you leave again?”

“Not tonight,” Tim promised, reaching out to stroke Damian’s cheek. Damian turned, nuzzled his hand, kissed his palm- and Tim felt like he was burning too, like the fire had caught.

It was in his belly, this tightness over seeing Damian’s affection.

“Do you...need me?” he asked, as Damian moved his mouth to Tim’s wrist. “Or do you want to get some sleep?”

“You.” It came quickly, a breath against the tender skin of his wrist, and Damian was leaning in, kissing the corner of his mouth. “Please.”

Again, please. Was this Damian or simply some painting come to life? Tim honestly couldn’t be sure, could barely fathom that the omega would talk to him like this, would want him, would open up-

He shut those thoughts down. Shut down off and locked them away in the cracks in his ribs as he stood up, pulling Damian with him. The omega climbed out of the bed, and Tim turned him, pushed him back two steps until he bumped against the wall. He was still naked, and Tim leaned in, licked a hot strip up along his neck, had Damian trembling.

“I’ll do whatever you want,” Tim offered, and god, it was true. He’d always been willing with Bart, told him whatever he wanted, needed he’d do. But with Damian he felt it stronger, would have done anything the omega asked to bring him relief.

Tim was well beyond the phase in his life where he wanted to see Damian suffer.

“Your clothes,” Damian managed, hands on Tim’s waist, twisting in his tshirt. “Lose them.” Tim stepped back, tore his shirt off and tossed it aside. His sweatpants and underwear followed quickly, before he was grinding back against Damian, kissing him like it was the first and last time.

Damian sighed into it, and Tim swallowed the breath, the sound, the fire- took it all in for himself.

Damian hooked one of his legs back behind Tim’s calves, rocking his hips out to meet each of Tim’s movements. Tim was still a bit shorter than Damian- shorter than everyone in the family, except Cass who stood perhaps a half inch shorter- but he seemed to have no problem lifting up to meet his mouth. Tim’s hands reached for Damian’s hips, squeezed as he was hardening against his thigh, aching as Damian’s teeth tugged at his lip.

Without a word, Tim rubbed his hands down Damian’s thighs, gripped them tightly and hoisted him up. Damian broke off his mouth, gave a little gasp- the sound turning to a groan as Tim eased him down onto his cock. His legs went around Tim’s hips, as the beta pinned him to the wall.

“Fuck,” Damian groaned, bending so he could sink his hands into Tim’s hair, kiss him again. He tangled his fingers in the longer locks, tugging, and Tim felt a pleasant fire in his scalp, needles of pain that seemed to make all his other nerves sensitive, like they were just now waking up.

Damian was so wet Tim could barely breath, and when he has babbled earlier that it had been hours since this wave started, he could believe it. That made him ache, somewhat- that he hadn’t been here, when Damian needed him-

But oh, he was here now. He’d make up for it. He growled into Damian’s throat, dug his nails into his thighs as he fucked up into him, had Damian gasping for breath around his tongue. The omega broke off, dropped his head back and let it smack against the wall, uncaring as he gasped for
breath. His cock was hard again, rubbing against his belly and smearing it wet.

Tim thrust harder, got particularly deep and Damian gave a loud cry. He grinned. “Like that baby?” Damian nodded, and if he had problems with the pet name use, he didn’t voice them. Tim gritted his teeth, felt a trickle of sweat along his spine, as Damian’s legs clutched him tighter. “Say it, tell me you like it.”

“Drake-”

“Say it.”

“I like it!” Damian groaned, squeezed his eyes shut. “Fuck, hell- Drake- I like it, I like it, I like it.” He was nearly screaming now, and Tim was so thankful for it, wanted to fuck him forever like this- but knew he couldn’t last. As it were he was biting at his tongue, trying to keep from coming- “Tell me I’m good,” Damian whispered then, broken, and Tim was leaning up, kissing his mouth.

“You’re good,” he breathed against Damian’s lips. “You’re so good, Damian. So pretty. So-” he broke off, gasped as he felt Damian going tight around him, “-you’re so close baby. It’s okay, Damian- c’mon babybat. You’ve been so good, you deserve to come.”

Damian’s hands, clutching at Tim’s shoulders, tightened their hold. His nails dug into Tim’s skin as he trembled, tossed his head back again and came with a loud shout. Tim lost himself in the same mouth, groaning and bowing his head, pressing his forehead to Damian’s shoulder as his body milked him completely dry.

Neither moved after. Damian stayed pinned between the wall and Tim’s body, as they tried to catch their breath. When Tim began to move, to pull out slowly, Damian whined.

“I hate losing you,” he murmured, and Tim choked. Told himself that was the fever, that was Damian coming down from his blissful high. Told himself a lot of this was only for this night- the past day. That after his heat, he was sure Damian would change his tune. Might not even be interested.

“Trust me, if I could stay inside you the whole night, I think I would.” Tim grinned, lifting his head, turning to kiss the side of Damian’s throat. “Think you can stand?” Damian said nothing, but carefully began to untangle his legs from around Tim’s waist. The beta held his thighs, helped him down, until Damian had his feet back on the floor, was leaning against the wall. “Let’s get you back in bed.”

“I...need another moment,” Damian admitted, feeling dizzy. He was fairly sure the only reason he was actually standing was because of the wall he was leaning on, because of Tim still holding at his hips. Tim nodded, nuzzled his neck before leaning up to kiss his cheek affectionately.

“Okay, whatever you need.”

Damian hummed. “I need you to stay the rest of the night.” The words, Tim noticed, seemed to shock even Damian, as his cheeks flushed darker the moment they were out. But Tim only nodded, pecked the corner of his mouth.

“I can do that,” Tim offered. “I can stay as long as you need me to.”

* 

Damian would realize that, as much as Tim wanted to mean that, it wasn’t true.
Come morning, the omega found himself tangled in his blankets, resting against Tim’s chest. The beta was on his back, sound asleep. He was warm, and Damian snuggled closer, kept his eyes closed against the few slivers of light that wanted to escape from his curtains.

He felt less feverish- but that made sense. His heats were short, typically. It had already been over twenty-four hours, and he figured by that evening he would be well enough to resume his life. Typically, his waves were less frequent, more subtle during the last day, and he could for the most part act as normal- occasionally sneak back to his room for a few moments with himself, perhaps, but that was it.

He wasn’t sure if he wanted to chance that just yet. Not with what this heat had done to him- coming so unexpectedly, leaving him feeling like the hellfire itself was in his veins.

He sighed, shrugging it off, tightening his arm over Tim’s waist. He’d have to figure out how to deal with this, as well. With Tim. Could he just admit to the long standing attraction? It seemed rather obvious, now. Didn’t matter how desperate Damian was for release- he would never give himself to someone he was not interested in. He could only assume Tim could deduce this much.

But how much dare he tell the beta- and what was to become of this? Would Tim simply shrug it off and leave him, would things go back to normal? Damian didn’t want them to- knew that, when he was honest with himself.

Tim Drake was his- he wanted to think Tim was meant for him.

But Tim wasn’t something to be owned, to be kept. Damian knew that.

Still, he clutched Tim tighter- might have drifted off to sleep in all honesty, if a sudden buzzing one of his nightstands hadn’t begun. Damian frowned, furrowed his brow and pressed tighter to Tim’s chest, trying to ignore it. But the beta was stirring, mumbling, “that’s my phone,” and blindly reaching out for it.

“Ignore it,” Damian muttered, even as Tim unlocked it without even opening his eyes.

“Hello?” He shifted, one arm wrapped around Damian, rubbing the small of his back. Damian nearly purred, before he felt Tim going tense. “What? When?” The beta sat up, forcing Damian to slid down him, land on his thigh. He groaned, pushing himself up and glaring at Tim. “Shit, yeah, okay. Absolutely. Tell Cassie to get here as soon as she can- I’ll be suited up.”

That didn’t sound good.

Tim ended the call, letting his hand with his phone fall down to his lap. He glanced at Damian, and his blue eyes were so suddenly awake- and so distracted.

Damian didn’t need to ask. “You’re leaving.” It was a statement, and Tim frowned.

“I have to. The Titans- serious trouble. Kon’s missing, Cassie’s out of her mind over it- they were running a mission together and his tracker just up and went dead. No trace of him. It sounds bad.”

“There is a team to handle this,” Damian pointed out- and Tim’s stare turned into a glare.

“Know is my best friend. And he’s been missing for two damn days. This didn’t just happen five minutes ago. They need me. Hell, this might go above us- might have to call in the League or something.” He reached up, pinched the bridge of his nose. “I’m sorry,” he offered, and Damian pulled back, crossed his arms.
“Whatever.”

He sounded like an insolent child—knew he did, knew Tim didn’t deserve that—but he couldn’t help himself.

“You seem better,” Tim offered, tossing the blanket back. He got out of bed, walking around it and hunting for his clothing. He tugged his sweatpants on, gathering up his tshirt and underwear.

“I will be fine by tonight,” Damian said, “It’s probably best you go anyway. I won’t need you.”

Now he was just being cruel.

But Tim only nodded. “Yeah. Listen… when I come back.” He paused, straightened up, licked his lips.

“Let’s talk? You know… about this.”

“Is there something to discuss?” Damian felt defensive, felt like he needed to push Tim away— it was better than him leaving. Leaving hurt, leaving made Damian feel like he wasn’t enough, wasn’t worthy—

His thoughts broke off when Tim leaned over him, kissed his temple. “Yeah, there is.” Damian sighed— and for a moment, gave up the defense. He turned, found Tim’s mouth and allowed the beta to kiss him softly, sweetly. “When I get back. Promise.”

Damian nodded, watched Tim cross the room, let himself sneak out into the hallway.

Promise. Damian didn’t care for promises.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Denial is something Damian can live with, but he knows that eventually, he has to face the truth. But facing the truth requires support- and support, for Damian, is very far away.

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone who read the first chapter! I actually had the second done way before I expected (I planned to be posting in Christmas or the following day!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Damian gripped the ledge of the building, his hold like iron, as he leaned over, surveying the city streets. Below was the shattering sound of gunfire, as at the end of the street a vehicle turned into view. There were two men leaning out the windows, opening fire as behind it there was a figure on a bike, just managing to avoid the bullets.

Damian clicked his tongue, his legs tensing. His other hand was on his belt, grabbing his grapple hook. He waited- waited until the vehicle was closer, before he leapt off the edge. He shot across the street, the hook taking and allowing him to fall, before it went tight-

And then he was dropping down on the hood of the car as it moved.

The men inside began to fuss, but he had a batarang knocking one gunman’s weapon to the road, before he leaned over, tugged the other man partially out the window. A swift punch to the jaw, and he pulled him completely free, tossed him off towards the side of the road.

The car swerved, just as the bike behind it picked up speed, pulling up to the side. A hand grabbed the second gunman and pulled him free, leaving him in the road behind, as a voice shouted “Damian off!”

Damian leapt off the car, as his partner reached in, punched the driver square in the jaw. The bike pulled away as the car swerved, before it hit a street lamp, the driver knocking his head and falling unconscious.

It didn’t take long to secure all three men and call in the GCPD. The trunk of the car was filled with chemicals stolen from Gotham General- and the men were known to be in Crane’s employ.

“Guess we better pay him a visit tomorrow,” Stephanie said, as Damian climbed up behind her on the bike. He slide his arms around her waist, held tight as she tore down the streets, the Manor their target now.

Home sweet home.
Damian didn’t say anything as she drove. Instead he let his forehead rest against her spine, eyes closed. He felt a little sick, but he wanted to believe it was from the chaos his life had been, as of late. The stress of holding down the city with just Stephanie and Cassandra.

They pulled into the cave and Stephanie gave his hands a pat. He lifted his head, climbing off, and she followed, tugging her cowl off and shaking her hair free. “God I need a shower,” she said, pulling at her gloves. Damian nodded, stretching.

“I’m sort of hungry,” he said, following her as she began to process of unclasping her suit. She glanced over at him, quirking up a brow.

“Didn’t you snack before we left?” He shrugged a shoulder. “You stress eating? You know that’s a Tim thing. We all miss him but don’t be picking up his habits.” She smiled, was teasing- Damian knew she had no idea about what had happened between he and Tim, what felt like centuries ago now.

A month and a half, six weeks. He’d been gone six weeks now. And Damian hadn’t spoken a word to him.

“Hopefuly he’ll be home soon,” Stephanie continued, “Now that Kon’s back safe. I know he was worried about him. Bruce will be home soon too.” Damian only nodded. He hated to admit, but Tim’s concern over his friend had been accurate- had involved Luthor- and ended up being an issue the Justice League had to step in for. Bruce had been gone for nearly two weeks now. Hadn’t wanted to leave until he could see Luthor’s holding cell while he awaited trial.

It was assumed that Tim would return home with Bruce.

Damian tugged his own cape off, hanging it up. He was facing away from Stephanie now, heard a zipper on her suit. Cassandra had returned possibly an hour earlier, was most likely already in bed, he assumed.

Where he wanted to be.

He worked his tunic open, his gloves off. Took a few minutes- and while he was working the bottom half of his suit, heard Stephanie giggling behind him.

“You take so damn long,” she said with a roll of her eyes. He glanced back at her- standing in her underwear and a sports bra, hands on her hips. Without a damn care. He was almost envious.

“Perhaps I don’t care for you watching me undress,” he pointed out, and she threw her hands up.

“Alright, alright. I’m hitting the showers. Don’t go upstairs without me.” She turned on her heel, heading for them, leaving Damian to finish undressing in peace.

When Damian made it into his bed, he tangled himself up in his blankets and tried to chase sleep. But it seemed most nights, even after patrol, it evaded him.

The first week Tim was gone, he had been fine. He hadn’t felt strange, hadn’t really focused much on the weird longing sensation in his belly. It hadn’t mattered, his heat ended and there was work to do and things to distract him.

But it had been weeks, and Damian wondered if Tim ever lay awake and thought of him. If he curled up in his bed and wondered what Damian was doing, wished he could wrap up around him again.
Damian had told himself, over and over again, that what had happened meant nothing. Tim had supplied some much needed relief when Damian needed it- a mutual physical exchange. One he’d been curious about for some time-

It was a lie. To Damian, it meant everything. And having Tim gone, having no idea how he was feeling about it- that hurt. That hurt far more than Damian was willing to except.

He sighed, rolled onto his back. He felt this strange mix of queasy and hungry- and figured it was his nerves. Wound tight from the whole ordeal with Tim, from being over worked with Stephanie and Cassandra, holding down the city. And perhaps Stephanie was right, maybe he was stress eating.

Still, he pulled himself from his bed, tugged a hoodie on and made his way across his room. Down the hallway and the stairs, and he let himself into the kitchen. He fumbled around in the dark, didn’t bother with a light, as he warmed up some water and set a tea bag in it. He could at least give himself this, to try and soothe himself back to sleep.

Once the tea was done he headed back up to his room, paced it in the dark and sipped at the warm liquid. This might have been easier if he’d heard from Tim, but he hadn’t. No one had, to be fair. And he was trying to be fair.

But Stephanie had had a point- Bruce would be returning soon. He would bring Tim with him, Damian was sure. Knew his father would be eager to have Tim home for a time, again. To get him away from the stress he’d been through.

A large part of Damian just wanted to know Tim was alright, to hear his voice. To hear him say his name and promise Damian he’d be back soon. Even if promises still meant nothing- words, even less. Actions were what Damian needed, but he’d lie to himself, let himself believe it- if just for a moment.

He paused at his desk, setting his cup down. His stomach felt tight, and he gripped at the corner, sure it was nerves-

A moment later, he was crossing the few steps to his bathroom, dropping down to the tiled floor on his knees and leaning over the toilet bowl. He wretched, so suddenly it made his head hurt, coughed at the end as he gripped the porcelain. He hesitated a moment, afraid to move- until another wave hit him, and he felt like his was choking, throat burning.

When the sickness had subsided and he was able to flush the toilet, to stand, he moved to the sink to brush his teeth. He’d never been one to get sick, not physically. He’d seen so much, knew he had a strong stomach- but as of late it felt weak, like it was trembling on the thinnest of threads. He didn’t like it, but assumed, as with everything, it was stress. Perhaps the change in his hormones, as well. With the mess happening, his father seemed to have missed that he had stopped his suppressants- and if the remaining alpha in the house, Cass, could tell, she didn’t say a word.

Damian figured she could, but she kept it to herself. It wasn’t her business. And he didn’t think Stephanie would notice- distracted enough with everything else.

He set his tooth brush aside and left the bathroom. He ignored his tea in favor of stripping back to his underwear and crawling into bed now, mouth tasting like mint. He pressed his face into his pillow, forced his eyes shut and chased sleep, wishing that the pillow still smelled like Tim.

*
A knock at Damian’s door woke him. He groaned, rolling away from the sound, even as the door opened and footsteps crossed the room. There was a weight on his bed, and then a hand, on his shoulder.

“Damian, kiddo, c’mon. Come get some breakfast.” Damian grunted, ignoring Stephanie as he felt his stomach rolling again. This was unfair- and he briefly wondered if he had actually caught something.

But she didn’t relent.

“You can’t sleep all day,” she offered, “I know. I tried. Cass wouldn’t let me.” Damian huffed, rolling onto his back, reaching up to rub his hand over his face.

“Not today,” he mumbled, “I do not feel well.” Stephanie frowned, reached out and placed her hand to his forehead.

“You don’t feel warm,” she offered, and Damian huffed.

“It’s my stomach,” he offered, sitting up slowly and knocking her hand away. She frowned- and he realized he must have looked pale, or something, from the look she was giving him. He clutched at his blankets, swallowed slowly. “I was sick last night, after patrol.”

“Oh sweetie.” She reached over, wrapped her arms around his shoulder protectively. Damian wanted to push her off- but Stephanie was soft and smelled like sunflowers and almonds, and he leaned into her, let her stroke his hair. “It could be nerves. We’re all a mess. Even with everything wrapping up, it’ll be good to have Bruce home. Tim too.”

Damian trembled over the name, and Stephanie hugged him tighter. “Brown, let me go. I may be ill.”

Stephanie let Damian go, crawled off the bed and reached out, offering her hand. Damian took it and she led him towards the bathroom, helping him down onto his knees. “You’re okay,” she offered, getting down as well and rubbing his bare spine. Damian gritted his teeth, told himself he was okay, he was fine-

He wasn’t.

To Stephanie’s credit, she didn’t leave him. She brushed his hair back off his damp forehead, kept rubbing his back, his shoulders. Even as he was simply panting, hating the weird rolling in his stomach that seemed to come and go, with no warning. That could disappear for days and then plague him again, even since shortly after Tim left.

“You need to get away from everything,” Stephanie offered, as she reached up, flushed the toilet. “Getting sick from nerves sucks. Only thing worse is morning sickness.” She glanced away, and Damian didn’t need a recounting of her own experience with it. Knew of Stephanie’s past, and the baby she had given up, what seemed like in another lifetime. “I had it bad. Rollings waves in my belly that made no sense.”

Damian choked. But told himself it was nerves, because there was truly no other explanation.

“How about we get you back in bed,” Stephanie offered, “And if you feel like breakfast later, I’ll keep you company.”

Damian offered up the smallest of smiles- because that sounded like the perfect plan.
Tim scrubbed his hands up over his face. He was exhausted, slumped back in a chair in the Tower. His eyes stung like he hadn’t slept in weeks - which was accurate. Even with Kon safely back at the tower, his recovery was slow-going, and Tim barely slept even now. Spent so many nights sitting up, looking in on him -

Spent a lot of nights up with Cassie, both of them understanding the fear the other had felt.

He sighed, slowly forced himself to stand. His back was in knots, and his knee still ached like there were hot needles in it with each step, from an injury he’d sustained. But he’d survived - they’d survived, and soon things could go back to normal.

Tim made his way towards his room, picking his phone up off his nightstand. Bruce was still in Metropolis, with Clark, securing Luthor’s holding. Bruce had discussed returning to Gotham after, but Tim figured there would be at least a day detour to the Watchtower, if not longer. Perhaps he wouldn’t even leave Metropolis right away - might remain an extra night.

With Clark. Tim wouldn’t blame him.

He shifted his phone in his hands. With everything calming down, he was reminded he had his own life to handle, back in Gotham. Had things to discuss, people to see-

*Person*, if Tim was honest. Damian. With everything that had happened, he’d barely had a moment to think about him, about everything that had happened. And he felt terrible about that, about leaving Damian -

Really, his only solace was that the kid probably hadn’t given him a second thought, since he’d left. That it had been just sex, and Damian probably moved on with his life.

Tim sighed as a knock sounded at his door, before it was gently pushed open. Bart leaned in, smiling at Tim softly. “Hey.” Tim gave him a nod, and the omega stepped in, heading for the bed and sitting right next to Tim, so close their thighs brushed. “You doing okay?”

“As okay as I can be,” Tim offered, staring at the black screened phone in his lap. “Exhausted. But we all are.”

“Not as much as you, and probably Cassie. The rest of us seem to know that staring at Kon’s room or even him while he’s trying to sleep doesn’t change anything.” Bart leaned against Tim’s arm. “He’s back, he’s okay. You can let your guard down a little.”

Tim sighed. “I guess. It was just… we almost lost him. And...and focusing on him now, let’s me forget about other shit.” He felt Bart’s arm encircling his, as the omega leaned into his shoulder. “Spill, Timmy.” Tim sighed again, long, drown out breaths.

“I slept with Damian, before this happened.”

Bart’s eyes widened. “Like, *Damian* Damian? Your little brother?” Tim winced at that.

“He’s not… not *exactly* my brother. But, yeah. I was actually in his bed when you called me, about all this.” Tim inhaled now. “He went into heat and Bart, it was so bad. I’ve never seen someone like that. Even your rough ones were never like that. He went off his suppressants, just cold turkey. And it fucked with him.”
Bart winced. “Poor thing.” Tim knew it was genuine, knew Bart understood what Damian must have felt.

“Yeah. And… I don’t know. It just happened. He tried to play the you can’t give me what I want card, and god, it was a challenge. And I wanted it so badly.” Tim’s cheeks tinged. “To show him up, I mean. At least, I think that’s what I mean. I don’t know. But Bart… it was so good.” Tim smiled, glanced over at the speedster. “That weird to hear?”

“Hell no. Remember the time I called you after Jaime and I fucked for the first time?” Tim laughed at that. “We didn’t date, Tim. We didn’t feel anything- and honestly? I want all the details about your sex life.” He leaned his chin on Tim’s shoulder. “You haven’t spoken to him at all, have you?”

He shook his head. “Haven’t been able to. And well… maybe that’s for the best. It’s Damian, he probably is just as happy not discussing it. It was just sex, after all.” Bart nodded, leaned up and kissed Tim’s cheek affectionately.

“You need to relax. And you probably do need to talk to him- but maybe it can wait. Until you’re in a better mindset.” Bart shifted, until he had his arms around Tim’s shoulders, hugging his friend. “How about you and me, we go somewhere. We can meet up with Jaime and we can forget the world for a couple days.”

“Bart, I need to be here-”

“No, you don’t. Not now. Kon is okay. He’s going to be fine. And he has Cassie- she won’t let a thing happen to him. What you need to do is take care of you, Tim. So c’mon- call the Bat and tell him he can go back to Gotham without you, because you’re taking a few days off.”

Tim glanced at his phone, before turned and pecking the corner of Bart’s lips. “Not sure if you’re the angel or the devil on my shoulder.”

“I can be both,” Bart offered, as Tim clicked on Bruce’s name in his phone. “Sometimes you’ve gotta listen to both sides anyway.”

*

When Bruce returned to Gotham, it was without Tim. Damian pretended to not notice- but when his father said that Tim was away for a time, trying to get himself back together from the ordeal, with Bart, Damian felt the smallest bit of jealousy, in his belly.

It didn’t help that he had been sick again, that morning.

He chose to not spend time with his father, and instead locked himself away in his room. He tried to cat nap, but sleep was evasive. Drawing wouldn’t hold his attention, and books were even worse. All he could do was pace, pause to stare idly at something, as if it might suddenly speak, give him some company. Quell the sickness he feared would return, as it had a tendency to do.

He let himself out of his room when he heard Bruce and Cassandra in the hallway, heading down the stairs. Leaving for a late lunch, it sounded like. Bonding time. Damian didn’t know where Stephanie was, but considered asking for her company. She had been rather soothing, the previous day.

He knocked at her bedroom door, opening it with a “Brown?” only to find it empty. He wondered if she was in the cave, as he walked in further. He peeked around, saw no sign of her, and was going to check the cave-
When he paused. And truly, Damian wouldn’t be sure what set him in motion, what had him walking for her personal bathroom. He stepped in, flicked the light on and moved to the medicine cabinet. He opened it, gently, ignored her suppressants in plain sight, reaching up over his head and finding exactly what he knew would be there.

He held the small box in his hands, gently opening it. There were two pregnancy tests inside. Gingerly, he slid them from the box, before closing it and settling it back where he had found it. He stuffed them in the pocket of his hoodie, closed the cabinet and flicked off the light, heading back for the hallway.

Damian had figured that Stephanie had them, only because he had heard her discuss it once, with Tim. However since she’d ended up pregnant once, she kept them. Felt like it was just smart, to have them on hand. Even if she and Cassandra were safe- Stephanie on the proper suppressants, and had been for quite some time.

Damian closed himself in his room, told himself this was ridiculous, but he simply needed to calm his mind. He’d go out and buy replacements for these before Stephanie even noticed they were gone. She’d never know.

He closed himself in his bathroom, telling himself he was simply ridiculous.

But, ten minutes later, Damian didn’t feel ridiculous. He felt positively sick.

He held the test in his hands, slumped down in the chair by his desk. He’d been staring at it for a full minute, barely blinking, barely breathing. Staring at the very blatant and clear yes that had appeared on the small result screen.

It… had to be wrong. It simply had to be. There was no way that he could be pregnant- it was impossible-

He knew he wasn’t reading it wrong, of course Stephanie had bought the easy to read ones, nothing with those asinine lines and such. Still, it must be a false positive. Yes, that was it.

He was up out of the chair and back in the bathroom, tossing the test and grabbing the second one. He’d just take the other, and when it came out negative, it’d be fine. These things weren’t always right, he knew that.

But the second test read exactly the same. Damian gritted his teeth, and in anger tossed it forcefully in the garbage, before storming out, towards his bed. He flopped down onto it, pressed his face into his pillows.

They were both wrong, they had to be. He couldn’t be pregnant. He’d never- not with anyone-

Not except Tim. And sure, he’d been off his suppressants, he’d been in heat- but Tim was a beta. Damian had always been told betas were practically infertile- that for one to either conceive or impregnate, there had to be hormone therapy for both partners- that it was a long, drawn out ordeal that didn’t always work-

He rolled onto his side, glanced at the sliver of open space between his heavy curtains, glimpses of the land around the Manor.

He couldn’t be pregnant. He simply couldn’t.

With a heavy sigh he sat up, dragging himself back towards his desk. He settled in his chair, pulling one of his legs up to perch his foot on the edge and opened his laptop. A fresh browser, and
he was typing quickly-

_Betas and mating._

Damian bit at his lip as he clicked a link, opening an article. He began reading, quickly, skimming over it as he got about the same information he already had- betas were as good as infertile. Frowning, he backed out to the search, clicking on the next link. Could both tests have been false positives? Perhaps he needed to go buy a different brand. After all, he had to buy a replacement for the ones he’d stolen from Stephanie-

He jumped when there was a knock at his door. It opened, and he slammed his laptop shut as Stephanie stepped in. “Hey, there you are- oh god,” she paused, staring at him for a minute, “Tell me I didn’t just interrupt you watching porn or something.”

Damian frowned. “-tt- As if, Brown.” She sighed in relief, sweeping a hand back through her messy hair. It looked as if she had recently pulled it out of a ponytail, and there was sweat on her forehead, under her tank top. “What do you want?”

“I’m lonely,” she offered, “Bruce stole Cass and training alone can be a bore. Wanna come spar?”

“I’ll kick your ass.”

Stephanie laughed. “Alright, hotshot, prove it to me.” Damian rolled his eyes- but it sounded like a good idea. Perhaps he needed to clear his head, relax his mind. Come back to this with a blank slate so he could better take in and understand everything.

“Fine.” He stood up, pausing a moment. When Stephanie didn’t leave, he frowned. “I have to change. Are you going to stay?”

“What do you want?”

Stephanie laughed. “Alright, hotshot, prove it to me.” Damian rolled his eyes- but it sounded like a good idea. Perhaps he needed to clear his head, relax his mind. Come back to this with a blank slate so he could better take in and understand everything.

“Fine.” He stood up, pausing a moment. When Stephanie didn’t leave, he frowned. “I have to change. Are you going to stay?”

“Want an audience?” She was grinning, and as if to challenge her, Damian tugged his shirt off, dropped it on his chair. She only whistled. “Abs that could kill a man, babybat.” Damian huffed, placing his hands on his hips.

“Get out.” But he smiled at her, and Stephanie grinned. She turned on her heel, raising her hand to wave.

“See you in a few!”

Damian waited until the door shut, before he glanced down. His body looked exactly the same as it always had- and surely, _surely_ this was all simply a mistake.

*

Sparring with Stephanie took longer than expected- led to a rather good training session, if Damian was honest. He might not admit it out loud, but Stephanie had come quite a ways- she was impressive. She held her own.

He admired that. And despite that she was chatty, he did rather like her. Found her charming, in a way he found Dick charming.

Training led to dinner, led to bracing for Patrol. Bruce had given Cassandra the night off, and was joining them in their sweep of the city. And Damian could admit, it was rather nice to fly through the night sky with his father again. They split the city- Stephanie branching off on her own, Bruce and Damian taking a slightly larger portion since they were together, but it was, in the end, rather quite. Far different from the previous nights Damian had experienced with Stephanie and
Perhaps the mere sight of the Bat back in the sky was enough to make Gotham behave for a night. Still, by the end Damian was tired. He felt like there was lead in his bones by the time he crawled into bed, pressing his face tight to his pillow. He snaked an arm under it, clutched it to him and nuzzled into it, falling asleep quickly for the first time in weeks.

The sleep was fitful, even if it was deep. Dreams of Tim that he hadn’t experienced, since shortly after Tim left. His hands and his mouth and things that had Damian aching, in his belly. Mostly, those gorgeous eyes and the way they looked at him, as if he was the center of the Earth. As if Tim was blessed simply to get to see him.

When he woke up, it was to a gnawing pit in his belly that distracted him from the nausea- a loneliness in his bones that weighed heavier than fatigue.

Damian sighed, flopped onto his back and stared up at the ceiling. He hated that he missed Tim so much- hated that whatever attraction he’d held before his heat had only intensified, once he’d had Tim. He’d almost hoped it would have dissipated, and he could have resumed his normal life without distraction. But of course, life would never be that simple for him.

Just once he wished it would give him a damn break.

He dragged himself from bed, sitting up and pausing as his stomach did a flip. He reached up, covered his mouth, pressing his palm to his lips and inhaling slowly through his nose. Much to his relief, the nausea began to subside- and after a minute of simply sitting there, he stood. A deep breath, and he felt alright- and with a small smile, he made his way towards the shower.

After his shower, he headed downstairs, made some tea. Alfred was up and offered him a smile, inquired if he was interested in breakfast. Damian simply shook his head, heard in the other room the sounds of Stephanie’s giggles and Cassandra’s quiet laughter. Alfred was smiling over it.

“Lovely, the two of them,” he offered, stirring his own tea. “Always a miracle when someone finds a bit of happiness in this world.” Damian only nodded, daring to peek out around the corner, at the two.

They were seated at the table, eating breakfast. Except that Stephanie was standing, her chair shoved back, leaning all the way across the table to tap the tip of Cassandra’s nose as the alpha blushed. They looked happy.

Damian was glad for them- but there was jealousy, in the pit of his belly. He wanted to wake up and have Tim there, be able to sit across the table from him while Tim drank his required morning coffee and slowly became one of the living again. He wanted to see Tim’s lazy smile, to feel his fingers in his hair again-

“Master Damian?” Damian glanced up at Alfred, who was watching him expectantly. “Is everything alright?”

“Fine, Pennyworth. Why?”

“You merely seem distracted.” Damian shrugged a shoulder, and in a sudden fit of honesty, blurted out,

“I miss Drake.” The moment it left his mouth he reached up, covered it, glanced away. But Alfred only smiled at him.
“As we all do. It will be lovely to have Master Timothy home again. Hopefully soon. Although one cannot blame him for taking some time away- it is much needed. Something you all should do, from time to time.” Damian only nodded. “Are you certain you are not interested in breakfast? You have had an appetite, as of late.”

Damian picked up his tea, even as his stomach growled, quietly. He ignored it. “Very certain,” he said, giving Alfred a nod and heading back for his room. He closed himself inside it, heading for his desk and settling at it, opening his laptop, thinking he might do some reading- go through recent police reports, see if there was anything new that Oracle had uploaded to the cave network-

He was met by the article he had left open, when Stephanie had interrupted, the day prior. He took a sip of his tea, mouse hovering over the back button- before he sighed, and began scrolling through it. It felt nearly the same as the previous one- general information about betas and their biology, their ability to express traits of both alphas and omegas. And their low fertility rate-

Damian paused. This one was a bit different.

*While it is very rare, there have been cases of betas successfully carrying children without hormonal aid.*

Damian paused. But this wasn’t Tim carrying a child. He took another sip of his tea, scrolling a bit further.

*Similarly, there have been cases of betas successfully impregnating their partners without hormone therapy.* Damian set his tea down, felt a chill rolling along his spine. There was a link connected to the statement, and he clicked it. It opened a new article, discussing a few documented cases where betas had, indeed, successfully gotten their partners pregnant without help of any sort. It seemed it was simply luck.

Damian felt his fingers shaking, over the keys. *Or a lack of luck.* Still, the chances were so slim- but then again, betas were so rare. It might be more possible than they thought.

Damian pulled his hands back, laced his fingers together and settled them in his lap, trying to get his fingers to stop shaking. It couldn’t be true- he wouldn’t *let* it be true. He stood up suddenly, shoving his chair back and heading for his closet. He grabbed his jacket, moved about his room, grabbing his cell phone, his wallet, keys-

He’d put this demon to rest, this stupid, irrational fear. And then he’d *move on.*

*Damian kept his head bowed in the drug store, walking along the aisles, acting as if he was browsing. Truthfully, he was simply waiting for the couple in the next aisle over to leave. He pushed his sunglasses down, checked the mirrors that lined the perimeter of the store- for security, sure, but they helped his purpose too. When he saw them leaving he moved quickly, rounding the corner of the aisle and into the next, pausing in front of the sexual health section. He glanced around, to make sure no one else was in the aisle, before reaching for a box, plucking it off the shelf and flipping it over, glancing along the writing. He wasn’t sure which test would be best- if it even mattered- and after a few minutes of mulling them over, grabbed three different boxes in frustration.

He pushed his sunglasses back up, heading for the front of the store. The cashier barely looked at him twice, but Damian still felt *embarrassed* over this, couldn’t help but tap his foot, wanting to bolt out of the store. He barely had his bag in hand when he was turning on his heel, heading*
straight for the doors and out into the street.

He was in his car when he realized he’d forgotten to buy a replacement for Stephanie’s tests, and decided *fuck it*, he’d come get them some other time. When he was thinking more clearly. He left the bag in his passenger seat, gripped the steering wheel too tightly as he pulled back into traffic, made the drive back out of the city and to the Manor. It felt like it took forever, like seconds dragged into hours, before he was finally parking his car and heading inside.

Damian was braced to have to cover for his outing- but he found the manor strangely quiet. He pulled his phone from his pocket, found a missed call from Stephanie, and a voicemail. He lifted it to his ear as he headed for the stairs.

“Hey Dami, where are you? Cass and I are going out for lunch. Your dad went with Alfred shopping- he must be sick or have some *bat business* at the grocery store. Anyway, you could have come! Catch you later hotstuff!” Damian glanced at his phone, before stuffing it back in his pocket and heading into his room. Having the manor to himself was relieving.

He tossed the bag onto his desk, pawing through it and pulling the boxes out. Two of them only had one test per box, but the other had two. He opened that one, pulled one out as he left his jacket on his chair, heading for the bathroom, thinking one test and he’d prove his fears all wrong.

But less than an hour later, and he was chucking the last test angrily into the garbage can, glaring at it. He stormed out of the bathroom, sweeping his hand out and knocking the bag and empty boxes to the floor.

It couldn’t be, it couldn’t be, *it couldn’t be-*

It was.

Damian knocked his jacket to the floor, slumping down in his chair. He pressed the heels of his palms against his eyes, saw white bursts against the black velvet of his eyelids, as he rocked, slightly. There was a whine, caught in his throat. Choking him.

How could this happen. How could he let this happen? *How could Tim let this happen?* It wasn’t supposed to be possible- god, what was he going to do? *What was Damian going to do?*

The whine choking in his throat came bursting out, and Damian shuddered, let his hands sink back into his hair, pulling and twisting.

He’d fucked up, he’d fucked everything up- and he had no idea how he was going to fix it.

*  

He ignored it, for three solid days. Pretended the tests hadn’t happened, and every time he felt ill he told himself he was tired. Every time he was hungry he told himself he’d worked *harder* than usual.

He went on patrol. He begged to give his night off up in favor of another sweep of the city. He tried to stay out later. Anything to distract himself. He hit *harder*, when he found trouble. Hit a few extra times, let his frustration ebb out into rage and terror.

Bruce didn’t notice. Damian was thankful for it, and if he was curious as to why Damian didn’t want to take even a night off from the city, he didn’t ask. But Damian had always had *fun* as Robin, so there was no cause for concern.
But when Bruce mentioned Tim, one night, returning from Patrol, that was when it began to sink in again. Mentioned him to Stephanie, who they met back at the cave— that he was hoping Tim would be home soon. It’d be nice to work someone else into the patrol schedule. Be nice to have him home.

“It would. I’ve missed him,” Stephanie admitted, leaning back against a counter. She glanced at Damian, as if about to say something, and Damian was quick to leave the room, to storm out to change.

He didn’t shower, in the cave. He took himself up to his room, turned the water on hot until there was steam flooding his bathroom, and stripped of his sweatpants, climbing in. He hissed, the water stinging— but he needed it. Needed something to ground himself. He scrubbed his hair, his skin rough, until the dark flesh was turning red, until he felt like he had burned a layer of something off.

Guilt. Longing. Fear.

After toweling off and redressing, he headed for his bed. He buried himself beneath the blankets, curled up into his pillows, squeezing his eyes shut. He wanted to sleep, to forget it— but his father even saying Tim’s name was haunting him.

Tim would be home soon. And Damian would have to safe this. He couldn’t ignore it forever— knew that ignoring it wouldn’t make the problem go away, wouldn’t change anything. Even if he hoped, even if in the daylight hours he could pretend he was fine, that nothing was wrong.

It was only a matter of time, until someone noticed. Until he smelled different, until he began to show. He tried to count back to his last heat— and realized he truly had no idea how long it took for one to show when they were pregnant. Knew nothing at all.

He rolled onto his back, squeezed his eyes shut and tentatively trailed his hand down his torso. He pushed his tank top up, rested his hand flat over his abdomen. It felt exactly the same as he remembered— or figured, at the least. The curves of hard muscle beneath flesh, the rise of scars that broke his dark skin. He rubbed, gently— found it soothing, and sucked gently at his lower lip.

There was something inside him. Beneath the flesh and the muscle was something tiny, minuscule. Could he even call it alive, in that moment? Could he look at it as something he and Tim had created, or just a hunk of cells, slowly growing inside his body, beginning to drain his energy.

He rubbed again, and a part of him wanted it to be Tim’s hand, so badly. Wanted the beta curled up around him and telling him it was alright, it wasn’t anything they couldn’t handle. They’d take care of it, they’d find a way— they’d make it all work. He wanted to smell that warm burning scent, the sugary undertones, to have Tim’s lips on his neck, in his hair. Just wanted Tim there.

Wanted to know that someday, things would be alright.

*  

Damian knew he couldn’t stay there. In Gotham, in the Manor, with his family. He knew it when Bruce announced Tim was coming home, in a few days. That he’d gotten through to him— Tim had gone dark, for the sake of truly trying to wind down from the past few weeks. But Damian knew, the moment his father said those words, that he couldn’t stay there.

He wanted to tell him. He wanted to barge into his study and tell his father what he had done— that he’d slept with Drake, that he was pregnant— that he needed help.

But he couldn’t. Couldn’t tell his father, or Cassandra, or Stephanie— or even Alfred. Couldn’t call
Dick and unload on him—couldn’t reach out to Jason. Couldn’t tell *any of them*, because they were all tied to Tim. And he couldn’t tell Tim, not yet. Couldn’t even imagine facing him, in that moment.

There was no one here for him, and Damian knew there was only *one* place for him to go—*one* person for him to run to.

He did it late at night. Left without a bag, simply his jacket, his phone, his wallet. A second ID stashed in there, a fake name, a fake life. Didn’t want anything tied to him. He bought the plane ticket under a different name, and waited until he knew the family had left for patrol, until Alfred was sleeping. He knew the routes his father and sisters would take, knew the city like the back of his hand.

The airport was dead, this late at night. By the time he was through security, Damian had an hour before his flight left. He settled into one of the chairs at the terminal, pulling his phone out and looking at it in his hands.

So many calls he should make. To his father, to tell him he was leaving. To Dick—so that when he heard, he wouldn’t worry. To Stephanie or Cassandra, to remind them to keep an eye on his father—To Tim. If anything, just to hear his voice.

He unlocked his phone, opening his contacts. His thumb hovered over Tim’s name—*and* it was easy, all he had to do was press down. Once it was ringing, he just had to wait. All he had to say was that he missed him, that eventually, they would need to talk. That things were more complicated than they could have been.

Instead he locked his phone again and slumped forward, hanging his head. Feeling a coward, because he couldn’t so much as listen to Tim’s damn voice mail recording. Because he was afraid his own voice would waver if he so much as tried to speak.

It took until passengers began boarding that Damian finally made a single call. *To his father.*

Because if he simply *disappeared*, someone would come looking for him. And Damian didn’t want to be found.

He waited as it rang, knew there would be no answer—his father currently flying high, around the city. When his voice mail finally kicked in, Damian took a deep breath, shifting his weight from foot to foot as the intercom announced his flight beginning to board.

“Father,” he started, glancing out the large windows to the runways, to the dark of the night, the bright lights set so the workers could see. “I know this is sudden, but I find I am in need of some...space. After the stress we have recently all endured, with you being away.” He inhaled gently. Couldn’t let even a hint of his own fear show. “So I am leaving for a time. I do not want you to worry— but I need fresh air. I need away from Gotham. I will be in touch.”

He ended the call before he lost his nerve, shutting his phone off and shoving it into his pocket, before he made his way into line to board the plane.

*  

He slept, on and off. There was a film playing, but he found no interest in it. He leaned his forehead against the closed window and tried to dream of blackness, of nothing at all. But he found he kept seeing Tim’s pretty eyes, and when he woke, each time, it was with an ache in his gut because *Tim was not there.*
He needed him there.

But was too terrified to have him there.

When his flight finally landed, he was blinded by a sun that seemed too bright, felt too hot. He kept his sunglasses on and paid heavily for a ride into land no one wanted to touch- protected land, under a name that was holy in this part of world.

The League of Assassin. *Al Ghul land.*

And when the men Damian met would take him no further, he walked. He knew this layout, knew it wasn’t far- and yes, the sun made his skin feel too tight over his bones, but he could manage. Knew he would be spotted, before long. *That was what he wanted.*

The first assassin to come on him got a broken nose and enough bruises ribs to leave them aching for weeks. The second, a tear in their shoulder muscles. Damian would have dislocated, but he didn’t want to be too severe.

“I am Damian,” he said, looking down at them, “of Al Ghul blood. Perhaps you do not recognize me- but I know you know of me.” It was true, Damian was sure there wasn’t a member of the league that didn’t know of Talia and Bruce’s spawn, of the grandson Ra’s had disowned completely. “And I’ve come to see my mother.”

Hid footsteps felt like the echoed, when they finally reached the halls he hadn’t seen in what felt like centuries, lifetimes. Echoed in ways that were so different, from when he was smaller. He tried to take solace in the sound, but his heartbeat was wild, rabid and mad in his chest and his temples. It felt as if his skull was vibrating with his pulse.

He hid it well. Damian kept his chin up, eyes level, shoulder square. Walked with an *arrogance* he had once embodied, that he was still guilty of, from time to time. Confidence was key- and even if he had to fake it to the point of this arrogance, it was worth it. Besides, his grandfather would have *birthed* the word arrogance- it only supported his claim to be his grandson that he too exuded it.

Damian was led towards one of the many open courtyards of the structure- and found in a whirlwind of precise and well practiced movement, his mother.

*Talia Al Ghul.*

She had a group of what could only be trainees watching her, as she moved about three different assassins. Damian paused, watching from the shade of the building, as she moved with such a grace it was *mythical.* Quick enough to turn and block a strike from one man’s sword with her own, while one leg kicked another barreling towards her directly in the gut.

And still, she was fast enough to drop down to a crouch and avoid the third, allowing him to use his own momentum to run into the first. She stood then, gave her sword and artful twirl and stabbed it into the ground, planting her foot firmly on the back of one of the men.

“Never lose your focus,” she said, looking out at the trainees staring at her. “It will get you killed. Either in battle because you become *sloppy,* or because losing focus will lost you your purpose as well. And without a purpose, you are worthless.”

There was a moment of silence, before one of the assassins that had escorted Damian in stepped forward and cleared his throat. “Pardon, lady Talia- but there is someone here who is requesting an audience.”
Talia turned, frowning. “I am not to be interrupted during lessons,” she pointed out, and there was
fire in those gorgeous jade eyes- eyes Damian had inherited. Her mouth was held in a firm,
disappointed line, and were she anyone but Damian’s mother, he would have let a shiver of fear run
down his spine.

“Apologies,” the other said, and his voice was breathy. Those bruised ribs making everything
painful. “But he claims to be your son.”

Talia’s head jerked up a bit more at that. She glanced past them- and Damian felt her eyes. Saw the
intense, enchanting color- and then the way they softened, the smile that tugged at her mouth.

“We are done for the day,” she announced, flicking her hand to motion for her students to go. “We
will resume on the morrow. I expect you will all be prepared to show me how you can maintain
your focus.” She walked off, leaving her sword for one of the assassins she was sparring with to
grab. The two who had escorted Damian moved away quickly- he assumed to seek medical
attention.

Talia climbed the few shallow steps, her feet hitting the polished stone floors- and she was
crossing quickly, nearly running. When she got to Damian she reached out, gripped his shoulders
and squeezed. “Little love,” she offered, and her smile was the most enchanting thing Damian had
ever known, “habibi, it is good to see you.”

She pulled him into an embrace, and Damian melted against her. He wrapped his arms around her,
clutching at her back as he pressed his face into her shoulder, inhaled the scent of sand and flowers
that had spent centuries under the sun. The scent of home, of his mother- of a safety he had
forgotten.

“Hello mother,” he whispered, as one of her hands stroked his spine, knowing exactly where the
heavy scar beneath his clothing lay. The other reached up, stroked his short hair. “It’s good to see
you, too.”

He was allowed a few more breaths of the sweet affection, something he hadn’t realized he’d
craved so badly until he was falling back into the childhood comfort of his mother’s embrace,
before Talia was pulling back, her hands moving to his arms, gently rubbing his biceps. “What are
you doing here?” she asked, the slightest hint of worry creeping into her voice. “It has been a very
long time.”

Silently, your grandfather will not be pleased.

Damian knew that- but Ra’s Al Ghul had been far from his mind when he realized he needed his
mother right now. When he knew he had no other family to turn to.

“Too long,” Damian admitted, and then, “Can we talk?” Talia nodded, gently taking his arm in her
own and guiding him back into the compound. The hallways felt like ghosts, still- and Damian
heard the echos of childhood with each footstep. He kept silent, by the simple request his mother
gave him- a tight press of her hand to his arm, and her own lack of words. He preferred it this way-
what he had to divulge, he wanted behind closed doors.

He wasn’t seeking judgement from the League, simply the support of his mother.

It felt like endless walking, a maze of hallways and large open spaces, open doorways to the
outside, before the stairs and then more hallways- and finally, Talia’s chambers. Damian kept quiet
as she opened the doors, held his tongue even as she locked the doors behind her and quietly
motioned him to follow. It was only once they were within her bedroom and that door was locked
that Talia turned, facing Damian.

“You may speak.”

“This seems like quite a bit of precautions for a simple conversation,” Damian pointed out, standing perfectly between the doorway and her bed. The room smelled faintly of lilac.

Talia offered Damian a knowing smile. “There is no such thing as a simple conversation,” she pointed out, “And if there were such a thing, you would not have flown across with world without warning to have it with me.”

Damian nodded- and oh, Talia’s wisdom was endless. The amount of adoration Damian had for his mother felt as if it had grown exponentially, over the years. There had been plenty of moments of unrest, yes- but she had proven her love, and even if she still remained in alliance with his grandfather, Damian didn’t doubt.

He did, however, hesitate. Because no matter how many times he had practiced this, in his head, on the plane here, he found himself wordless. He licked his lips, inhaled slowly- tried to still the shaking in his fingers. Felt as if speaking the confession made it real- like as if to this point, it was simply still a misplaced fear- a reality that simply couldn’t come to pass.

When Damian didn’t speak, Talia crossed the room to him. She reached out, let fingertips glide along his cheek, the ridge of his cheekbone which mirrored her own- back into his short hair.

“What has happened,” she spoke in whispers, despite that it felt as if they were utterly alone in the world, “What has shaken you so? Is it your father?”

There was terror, laced under her tongue. Fear for the man she loved from so far away.

“Father is fine,” Damian offered, “It is me, mother. I’m…” he squeezed his eyes shut, felt the tremble in his lungs. And, without looking, spoke in a rushed breath, “I’m pregnant.”

When he opened his eyes a moment later, Talia was looking at him- again with those jade eyes, but there were so many layers to them- love and concern and the look that could only be comfort if Damian could put a word to it.

She pulled him back into her arms, and Damian fell to her, heavier this time. He pressed his face into her neck, her hair, as she squeezed him tightly. “Shhh,” she offered, as he shook openly, clutching at her, “I have you, little love. I have you. You are safe.”

Damian bit back a whine, shaking his head. “I’m not fine,” he whispered. “I’ve made a mistake- I let this happen-”

Talia pulled away then, frowning. “You have let nothing happen alone. It takes two to make a child, Damian. Do not forget that.” Damian said nothing to that, and Talia gestured back, behind him. He pulled away, took the few steps to the bed, sat on the edge and leaned forward, sighing. “Tell me what happened.”

“Father had me put on suppressants,” Damian said, “new ones. They robbed me of my body, mother. I have never felt so disconnected. And despite my protests, it was as if no one cared. I couldn’t stand it- I threw them away. I simply stopped. I did not think- think it would affect me. But I went into heat. And…” Damian paused, a little color rising in his cheeks. “I took Drake to bed.”

Talia’s face changed, at that. Subtle. The smallest widening of her eyes, a shrinking of her pupils, a sliver of space between her lips. Barely noticeable. Damian, in his sudden rush of words, his
gushing confession, missed it.

“I did not even think… think this could happen. He’s a beta, he shouldn’t have been able to create a child. And it was just… mother it was wonderful,” Damian looked up, had his hands resting on his thighs, palms up as if offering the truth, the raw bareness of his wrists, his pulse. “What I wanted for so long, and I had him. But.”

“Damian.” Talia’s voice was stern, hard as steel, had Damian jerking his eyes up to hers. And in that moment, he saw the faint hint of fear, there. “You are having Tim Drake’s child?”

Damian sucked on his lip for a moment, nodded.

“And you are sure?”

“There’s never been another.” Damian sighed. “Only Drake. He’s the only one I’ve ever even desired.” He reached up, raked a hand back through his hair. “He made me feel safe mother. It… it was as if he truly cared.”

The fear in Talia’s eyes ebbed, slightly, and her face softened again. She got down on a knee, reaching out and taking Damian’s hands in her own. “You sound as if you are smitten.” Damian flushed, gently, and Talia raised his hands, kissed his knuckles.

“I had nowhere else to go,” Damian admitted, “I… I couldn’t go to father. To Grayson. To any of them.”

“Then he does not know?” Damian shook his head. Talia nodded, stood up. “We will take care of this, Damian. You have things to consider. But…” Talia paused for a moment, inhaling slowly, “While you are safe with me, you are not safe here. Your grandfather—”

“Has disowned me entirely,” Damian filled in, “I am well aware. I do not fear the demon’s head, mother. Nor am I here to consult him. I’m here for you.”

“I know, habibi. But you must not forget your grandfather’s… proclivity for Timothy Drake.” Damian felt himself paling slightly, and Talia turned away, walking for her door. She ran her fingers over the lock. “I can lock you behind doors, but he has eyes and ears everywhere, my child. You are not safe, so long as you are within Ra’s’s grasp.”

“You are the one that once told me grandfather was everywhere,” Damian pointed out. His belly felt suddenly tight- and he could lie all he wanted, but there would always be a part of him that truly did fear his grandfather. Feared him like he was the devil himself.

“True. And I did not lie. But… there are places harder for him to reach.” Talia turned. “You’re not safe here- but that does not mean I will not find a safe place for you. We will leave tonight. I have… resources my father is not wise to. They are insignificant, but they will suffice. And once you are safe, habibi- we will handle this.” She crossed back to the room, took his hands in her own and kissed his knuckles again. “You are precious to me, Damian. And I will see that you get through this.”

Damian smiled, softly. Because, come the end of things- he trusted his mother.

*  

He stayed silent, lost in the depths of his mother’s room. She had said that word of his arrival would reach Ra’s quickly, if she did not form a distraction, and had left him in order to set about one. He did not ask what, instead he walked the space that had felt like a castle, when he was younger. Ran his fingers over the curtains that kept the heavy sun out, dared to wrap himself in one
and close his eyes.

It felt like silken air, the way it cocooned him. He smiled to himself, remembered hiding in these same curtains, when he was younger. When he thought his mother couldn’t see— in the hopes of surprising her.

She had faked it well, had laughed and wrapped him up in her arms, peppered his cheeks with kisses. Talia wasn’t the monster the world thought her to be— and no matter what she had endorsed him to do, within the year of blood, Damian knew that she had good, in her heart. That she loved him.

There was simply a wickedness that had, for so long, kept demon fingers tangled in her hair, like strings. And strong as she was— no one was above the demon.

Damian let a hand slide down his body, to rest over his belly again. It was relieving, to not see disappointment in his mother’s eyes. He had feared it— couldn’t fathom telling his father because he knew that would be all he would see. As if Damian had gone and destroyed every fiber of his being, without a second thought.

He hadn’t meant for this to happen. He hadn’t thought—

Damian sighed, banished the thoughts. Focused in on how warm the curtains were, against him. From the sun. How he wondered what it might be like, to be in her place— to be the one smiling at childhood eyes, to be the one wrapping up a tiny body, in his arms. Keeping them safe.

Damian sighed, released the curtain and stepped away. He knew there were decisions to be made— quickly, if he was honest with himself. About what he was going to do— and the answers weren’t as clear-cut as he had hoped, as he thought they might be.

He had no idea what he was doing, and that was terrifying.

* 

Damian followed Talia, within the dead of night, after the sun fell and the compound slept. He followed on sure footsteps, a cloak pulled up above his head. She moved like the wind, like breaths of spoken, sure words. With a purpose, a focus.

“You will be safe,” she had told him, in her room as she ad adjusted the cloak, pulled up the hood. “I will rescue you within the small home, and then I will leave briefly. To procure a proper absence, so your grandfather will not be the wiser. And when I return, we shall talk. We shall take care of this.”

He trusted her, endless, as they moved. Talia had his hand clutched in hers, like he was a child again, and the slight dig from her nails was oddly comforting. Grounding.

The rounded a corner, so close to the exit, where Talia had a jeep waiting. It would take them across the desert, into the city. To a plane. He was so close Damian could almost feel the lift of the plane, beneath his body—

So close, until the sound of metal swinging through air stopped them both, the tips of swords pointed directly at them. Damian stared, dazed for a moment— had allowed himself to fall into his thoughts too easily— that by the time he was coming to, Talia was squaring her shoulders, holding herself in front of him.
“You will lower your weapons,” she said, her voice like thunder, “And you shall allow me to pass.”

“I think not.” The moment the voice spoke, Damian felt his belly flip and then drop. He swallowed the dread in his throat as two of the assassins stepped aside, and the shadows gave birth from their inky mirth to Ra’s. He stood with his chin held high, his eyes glancing down at Damian from over his mother’s shoulder, as if he was a smear of ash upon his floors. “You would be well advised to step aside, Talia.”

Talia only tensed, her hand reaching back, squeezing Damian’s arm. “Never.” This was her child, this was the love that had blossomed in her heart and promised to never leave. This was her Damian.

“Then I will make you move.” Ra’s flicked his hand, and the assassins moved. They were fast, but Talia was faster, sweeping a punch low to one’s abdomen, then up to knock into his teeth and nose. The next that moved to her got her foot in his side, sent him flying down into another assassin, moving in from behind them.

Damian fisted his hands, lashing out as one lunged for Talia as she struggled to free the sword from her current attacker’s hands. He threw himself upon him, knocked the assassin to the floor, pinned his arms down and lifted his entire upper body, only to smash it down against the stone floors. The man went unconscious, as Damian picked up his weapon, turning on his toes to block another attack. The scream of metal on metal filled the air, as Damian pulled back, blocked the next attack, over and over again, until he had nowhere to go, until his back was pressed to the stone walls.

“You have lost your skill with a blade,” Ra’s commented, looking bemused as Damian was pinned against the wall. Damian gritted his teeth and flipped the sword, gripping the blade in his hands. It cut into his palm as he swung, smashed it into the man’s skull and sent him staggering back, dropping his sword and reaching up to grip at the blood that would soon mat his hair.

“I simply have different rules now,” Damian commented, ignoring the sting in his palms, the feeling of sticky blood trailing between his fingers. Blocking out the pain. “And blades tend to lead to death, grandfather.”

Ra’s scoffed, folding his arms and watching as Damian spun the sword again, caught it by it’s handle to block another attack. Read smears and a single trickle of ruby ran down the blade, as his grandson gritted his teeth, pressing his back to his mother’s. Talia had her won sword tightly in her hands, her hair falling over her shoulders, into her face. It didn’t seem to matter- she could fight blind.

“You will find your death,” he commented, “the both of you. Submit, and this will be simple.”

“Nothing is ever simple with you,” Talia pointed out, and there was so much venom on her tongue that Damian himself could taste it, could smell it in the air. The stench of true disdain. Ra’s clicked his tongue, before he nodded.

“Take them both.”

The men surrounding them advanced. Damian’s lip twitched as he raised his sword, blocked a hit, ducked down to deliver an elbow up into the hallow of a man’s ribs, before moving to the next. Behind him, he could hear his mother, the sound of her footsteps, her blade, the breaths she took. He moved in tune with it, complimented her in a dance he had learned, long ago.
It had been her who taught him to talk, to run, to fight. The dance was well practiced, but long forgotten, if Damian was honest. He felt clumsy for the first time in years—this wasn’t a dance for robins, this was a beat for snakes, a rhythm of predators—

A life and way he had nearly forgotten.

He felt he could remember, though, as he crouched low, swept a man’s legs out from him, before righting himself and blocking another sword. Like he could relearn— the night was young, he was young—

And then there was the sound of metal falling to the floor, and a glance behind him showed his mother clutching at her neck. There was a dart there, one she pulled at, chucked to the floor. Standing next to Ra’s, a man was readying a second, aiming at her again.

Damian turned on his heel, ready to lunge—when large arms went around his shoulders, pulled him back. Damian thrashed, tried to use his body’s mass against the hold, but there was a sharp sting, the penetration of skin on his neck, as a needle slipped right into the vein. Damian tense, felt his pulse against the metal, before the room began to spin, and everything was going hazy.

His body began to relax, as Ra’s took a few steps towards him. The man looked irritated, a small scowl on his old lips. “Insolent child,” he said, ignoring Talia entirely and staring down at Damian, into his jade eyes. Into his daughter’s eyes placed on this child that could have been so much, if fate hadn’t defied Ra’s. “Do not fight it, Damian. Resist, and I will dose you again, and you risk your life.”

Damian struggled, but his grandfather’s voice sounded like he was in a tunnel full of cotton, and Damian was so dizzy. He went lax, fell back against the hold around him, as his eyes fell shut.

Everything went dark.

Everything went silent.

Everything simply ended.

*

When Damian came to, it was to the scent of dampness, of chill in the wet air. He sucked in a sudden breath as if he had not breathed for years, and felt a rushing, pounding ache in his skull. He grimaced, worked to list his head as it had lolled forward towards his chest, but his muscles felt weak, loose. He groaned, tugged—his arms were stretched up painfully above his head, straining his shoulder sockets.

“You’re awake.”

Damian forced his eyes open, but in the low light he saw nothing but blackness, for a moment. He blinked once, twice, and on the third, could see. Bars, old black metal, and beyond that, his grandfather’s unmoving face.

“Where,” Damian started, and his throat was so dry that words felt like barbed wire, tearing into him. He licked his lips, swallowed, but for once his grandfather granted him reprieve and did not make him finish.

“You are beneath our home,” he offered, “well beneath it. Where you cannot get yourself into any trouble.” Ra’s raised his hand, and a man moved, unlocked the metal door. It was pulled open and Ra’s stepped in, walking towards Damian, who was coming to realize he was chained back, against
the wall. Ra’s gave him a bemused sort of smile as he struggled, despite that his muscles felt sluggish, heavy and weighed down. “It is pointless. You would never have the strength to rip the chains from the walls, even if you were not recovering from your sedative.”

Damian growled, bared his teeth like an animal- a baser reaction to the fact that the ancient alpha before him bled fear into his heart. Ra’s smile dropped away.

“You cannot threaten me like a dog, Damian. I made you.”

“Mother made me,” Damian pointed out.

“And I made your mother. You, just like she, are mine.”

“You gave me up,” Damian pointed out, “disowned me. You want no part of me, grandfather.” The venom in Damian’s mouth was straight from Talia, dripping like he was a snake and his fangs were bared, poised, ready.

“I want no part of you,” Ra’s agreed, moving in again. He reached out, placed his hand against Damian’s belly. “But I want all of what you hold inside you.”

Damian’s blood ran cold. For a moment, he swore his head stopped, and the breath in his lungs went stale. Through the pull of his lips into a smile, Damian could see Ra’s teeth- the tips, seeming too white, too pointed.

“You were a waste,” he commented, his hand still pressed to Damian’s belly. “And I had lost all hope that you would be of use. You did not sway your father in any way to my causes, and you only weakened your mother’s heart. But it seems you are useful, after all.” Damian twisted, tried to get away from the hand on his belly, swallowing the feeling of dread beneath his tongue. “That you ever swayed the young detective to your bed, is a mystery to me. But it is a means to an end.”

Damian bared his teeth again, tore at the restraints that dug into his wrists. The stinging ache in his palms from his hold on the sword earlier was beginning to return- as were the aches his muscles felt from the heavy drug.

“I had always hoped that Timothy would carry my child,” Ra’s commented, “But this will do.”

“What are you talking about?” Damian asked, and Ra’s pulled his hand back, backhanded Damian right across the cheek. The omega winced, face stinging.

“Play dumb again and I will draw blood,” Ra’s growled, “You carry Timothy’s child. You have the mingling of Drake and Al Ghul blood inside you- and I shall have it.” Ra’s turned, heading back for the exit to the cell. He stopped in the doorway, glancing back at Damian. “There is not a force that shall stop me, Damian. Do not give your mother a thought- she is so far from hope she exists on a separate realm. She is taking her own penance elsewhere.” Ra’s paused again, before offering a slightly bemused smile. “You have finally succeeded in giving me something of worth, grandson. You are delivering me the heir I have always deserved.”

Ra’s swept from the cell then, the old iron bars slamming behind him. And in the night, Damian struggled, his heart beating wildly in his throat, as he told himself this was simply a nightmare- that he would wake up, wrapped in his mother’s curtain again, with the smell of lilac in the air, in her hair, as she lifted him up and kissed his cheeks again.

He would be small, insignificant to the world- he would be safe.

*
Tim hefted his bag over his shoulder, walking from his car towards the door of the manor. He took a deep breath as he reached the door, before opening it, stepping inside. It shut behind him, and for a moment there was nothing at all, simply silence-

And then running feet, and a shouted “Tim!” Tim barely dropped his bag before Stephanie was on him, throwing herself against him and wrapping her arms around his shoulders. Tim stumbled back a step, nearly against the door, before he hugged her tightly, pressed his face happily into the omega’s hair.

“Hey blondie,” he said, grinning, as she turned and kissed his cheek. “It’s good to see your face.”

“Likewise birdbrains.” Tim laughed, accept the second kiss she gave him- chaste and sweet, against his lips. “How are you?”

“In one piece,” Tim said, as she pulled back and he lifted his bag again. “Where is everyone?”

“You missed Alfred by ten minutes,” Stephanie said, “He ran to the city. So save a big hug for him for when he gets back. Cass and Bruce are upstairs- c’mon.” She took Tim’s hand, fingers lacing together as they headed for the stairs. “How is Bart?”

“Good,” Tim said, keeping in perfect time with Stephanie’s steps. He wanted to run, to tear away-not to see Bruce, or Cass- as much as he wanted to see them, had missed them-

But there was someone else he needed to see. Someone else who he felt he owed an explanation to.

“He and his boyfriend are adorable,” Tim added, “You met him once.”

“Jaime, right?” Tim nodded. “Yeah, he was a little awkward. Which is perfect for that friend of yours.” Tim laughed as they reached the top of the stairs, turning towards Bruce’s study. Stephanie didn’t knock, she simply threw open the heavy door, grinning as she strode in. “Look what I dragged in!”

Cass lifted her head from where she stood, leaning over Bruce’s shoulder and looking at the papers on his desk. She smiled when she saw Tim, was quick to pull away from Bruce and walk around the desk. By the time she reached the corner, she gave up all pretense and ran, throwing her arms around Tim just as Stephanie had. Tim grinned, lifting her up- the only sibling he had smaller than him- as she laughed, pressing a kiss to his temple.

Cassandra’s laugh was a true breath of fresh air.

“It’s good to have you home,” she said, as he set her down.

“Good to be home.” He glanced past her, saw Bruce had stood from his chair, was walking towards him. Cass stepped aside, and Bruce reached out, squeezed Tim’s shoulder.

“Tim.”

“Bruce.” The two stood, for a moment, in silence, before Bruce smiled and pulled Tim in for a hug. Tim melted into it, tucked up under the alpha’s chin happily. It was brief, but enough, and when Tim pulled back he felt like he had never had a reason to leave this place. “Did I interrupt something?”

“Work on a case,” Cassandra offered, “There’s a new gang that surfaced in Bludhaven. They’re implementing a diluted form of Joker venom. Dick sent us the police reports, asking for help.”
“There’s concern the gang my spread to Gotham,” Bruce said, and Tim nodded.

“Well gimme a minute to put my bag down and fill me in. Oh- and probably say hi to Damian.” Tim reached up, rubbed the back of his neck, adding as if he needed to cover himself, “You know he’ll find a reason to complain if I ignore him.”

Truth be told, Tim simply wanted to run to his room. Wanted to have his hands in the omega’s hair, to kiss the bridge of his nose. To beg him not to hate him for being gone so long- to talk.

They had so much to talk about.

The silence in the room suddenly grew heavy, and Tim glance between the three.

“Damian’s not here,” Stephanie finally said, and Bruce folded his arms.

“He left us a few days ago. I got a voice mail in the middle of the night, while I was on patrol. He, Cassandra, and Stephanie were under quite a bit of stress keeping Gotham under control during both our absences. He… said he needed some space.”

Tim only nodded. He shoved his hands into his pockets, glanced down at the floor. He hoped it was true- that Damian needed space from the city-

And not that he needed space from Tim. The beta bit that fear back- but he could understand if Damian didn’t want to see him. He had run out- and with good reason, but that didn’t change the fact that he had left, and for so long.

He’d never even called. He’d been so wrapped up in saving Kon, in keeping his best friend safe- and then in trying to unwind the tension from his body, to get his muscles to forget the pain they felt from the endless use, the lack of sleep. But he should have called.

“Well then,” Tim said, realizing the silence was dragging- that they were all looking at him. “Let me just go drop my bag, and then you can catch me up.”

“You don’t need to be on this case,” Bruce said. “You just came home.”

“And the best welcome is a fresh dose of Gotham air,” Tim pointed out. “I’ve had some time, Bruce. I’m ready to get back to work.” The alpha nodded, and Tim forced a smile- knew from the small frown that fell on Stephanie’s face she knew it was fake, before he turned, heading back out into the hallway.

He was braced for her to follow, but when there was nothing but silence behind him, Tim breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn’t ready to discuss this with Stephanie- with anyone. He hadn’t told a soul about he and Damian- mostly because he didn’t know how to tell it. Was it just a great fuck? Was he helping his brother out? Was it a once in a lifetime chance to get a taste of the scars that broke Damian’s perfect skin?”

Tim walked past his own room, continued down the hall. He paused at Damian’s door, pressed his palm flat to it. He inhaled, slowly, thought about Damian’s sweet scent behind that door, thought about the way he kissed Tim like Tim was something special- like he’d waited years for him.

Thought about how pretty he was, when he smiled. When there was sleep in his eyes and he curled into Tim with trust.

Tim sighed, pulled his hand back. He turned, heading back up the hallway, for his room.
He couldn’t explain what had happened between he and Damian yet, because he had no words for what he wanted it to be. Didn’t know, deep down in his bones, what this longing truly was- and if there were even words for such a thing.

*  

Damian lifted his head, at the sound of footsteps. He couldn’t be sure how long he had been restrained, didn’t know how long he had been out, before he had come to and spoken with his grandfather. It could have been hours- and now the night could have easily bled into day.  

His brain felt foggy.  

The cell door was opened, and two men stepped in- one was large, lumbering weigh of muscle and solid bone- the other was carrying a small leather bag, eyeing Damian like a lab rat. The omega gritted his teeth, as his grandfather stepped in, after them.  

“Good to see you awake,” Ra’s commented. He stood back as the large man advanced on Damian, checked the restraints on his feet, before he reached up, released Damian’s wrists from the chains above. They were still manacled together, but the fell down and Damian gasped, the ache in his shoulders sharp. He growled, attempted to swing at the man- but he was blocked, got a swift punch to his jaw that had him tasting blood as his lip split against his teeth. Damian groaned, as his ankles were freed, and he was shoved down to his knees, towards the center of the cell. His wrists were connected to a large, heavy ring on the floor, keeping him from moving. He tugged, bug the rusted metal did not give.  

“Now be good for our doctor,” Ra’s said, as the other man moved forward, opening his bag. He pulled out a syringe, lining up with the veins in Damian’s arm. “He needs to make sure you are in full working order, Damian.”  

Damian sucked at his broken lip, copper and salt flooding his tongue- but let the man drag his blood. Didn’t see the point in causing himself harm with that. Once the syringe was pull and capped, but back in the bag, the man reached out, placed his hand on Damian’s belly, feeling the curves of his abs.  

“He’s not showing at all,” he reasoned, “he’s less than twelve weeks along. Blood results will give us a better estimation.” Damian shuddered at the touch, felt filthy over it.  

“Good. I want to know when to expect my heir’s arrival.” Ra’s stepped forward, crouched down to glance at Damian. “You know, this is truly a miracle, Damian. Timothy should not be able to give you a child.”  

“You seem to think you could have put on in him.” Damian nearly spit the words, his lips smeared red. Ra’s only grinned.  

“Do not doubt the demon’s potency.” He reached out, pinched Damian’s chin and forced his head up. “I would have no problems with Timothy. But…you, with your cursed biology. It’s a miracle his seed took. A statement to his own genetics.”  

Damian narrowed his eyes. His grandfather had always expressed disappointment that he had no been born an alpha, like him. Like his mother, his father.  

Ra’s had hoped that, by Talia crafting Damian from the genetics of two alphas, he would come out as some sort of truly compelling creature. As if he would rule the world with a simple glance.  

Instead, born of pure impossibility, Damian held the world in his belly, where he could grow it.
And Ra’s had never forgiven him.

The doctor set the syringe back in his bag, before stepping back. Behind Ra’s, another man entered the cell, offering up what could have been a gift, to Ra’s, in the way he held it.

“I would recommend starting easy,” the doctor said, “Until I can confirm that the child is stable.”

“Oh, he is,” Ra’s said, stroking the leather bullwhip in his hand. “He has my blood, he will remain no matter what we do to the vessel.”

Damian stared at the whip, before tugging on his restraints, getting no where. “What do you think you’re doing?” he asked, as Ra’s moved alowly around him. “You’ll kill the baby,” Damian yelled- and he wasn’t sure if the waver in his voice was fear, or desperation, or something nameless-

The fear that settled in his heart, though, was that he truly cared.

“I will not kill my great grandson,” Ra’s offered, nodding towards Damian. The large man reached forward, tore at Damian’s shirt until it split completely down the back, falling against his arms. Damian tense the muscles in his shoulder, along his back- as Ra’s let the whip fall harmlessly against him, settle like a heavy weight.

“You will,” Damian said, thinking back to everything he had ever learned about pregnancy. How the first trimester was the most common for miscarriages, how enough stress to his body could have him aborting the baby, how-

The thoughts cut off as Ra’s lifted the whip and swung down, connecting with Damian’s skin. Damian choked, head snapping up- but there was another strike, before he could breathe, and the air rushed out of him.

“I will toughen the child before he is born,” Ra’s offered, lining up for another hit. “I will have him strong before he ever leaves your wretched body, Damian.” Another hit, and Damian tried to pull away, a groan escaping him. “He will not be another mistake.”

Another crack.

“He will be worthy.”

And another.

“He will not be you.”

Another crack, and Damian felt skin giving, felt a wetness on his back. He sucked on his lip, blood flooding his mouth from his split lip, clenched his fists- and the cuts on his palms reopened. It was everywhere, it felt like- coating his fingertips and his teeth, cutting across the heavy scar along his spine. Damian squeezed his eyes shut, tried to drift away from this, away from this room and the feel of the leather again as it pelted his skin.

There was no damp air, no desert. There was no blood, no pain. There was his bed, the softness of his sheets, the warmth of his blankets. And there was a body, pressed against his- warm and soothing. A mouth, on his pulse, mouthing lazily, whispering into him.

There was the smell of fire coals, and warm sugar. The scent of a dying fireplace that could lull him into slumber.
There was Tim, and the rest was just a fading nightmare.

He clung to it, even as skin broke again, and he let out a pained cry. Even as he felt his belly tensing with terror, as his grandfather lashed him as he continued to remind Damian how *worthless* he was, how the child growing in his belly would be the only good he ever brought this family.

None of it was real, because Damian was with Tim. He was with Tim and *everything was okay*.

He wasn’t bleeding inside a hell that smelled like damp, dying earth. He wasn’t half a world away from his family. He wasn’t without a sliver of help or hope- *he was safe*.

It was the lie he clung to, until Ra’s had had enough and walked around, crouching down once more and gripping his chin. Damian’s jade eyes stared directly into him when they opened, and Ra’s offered him the devil’s smile.

“I will have a warrior,” he whispered, his long nails digging little crescent shapes into Damian’s cheeks. “And I will skin you alive if it means he will be strong.”

Damian inhaled, bared his teeth, and spit at Ra’s. It was red with blood, and Ra’s simply reached up, wiped it away.

“I will make you worth something,” he added, standing up. “Down to your bloody core, Damian. I will make you worthy of your name.”

When Ra’s turned and left, Damian simply slumped, closed his eyes again. Tried to fall back into the fantasy of his room, of Tim’s mouth and his lazy kisses- of his mother’s room and the smell of lilacs in her hair and her curtains-

Anything except the iron grave he found himself in.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Ra'sTim is my ultimate notp and writing even hints of it was difficult...
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Damian is living a nightmare, day in, day out, under his grandfather's watch. And when Tim hears of his capture, there is not a force on Earth that could keep him from Damian's side. But what he's willing to give up in order to protect Damian is a price far too high for anyone to let him pay.

Chapter Notes

Another huge thank you to everyone reading! Hopefully this update keeps y'all entertained! <3

(Forewarning, there is a lot of Ra'sTim. It's not my cup of tea so I feel I should just brace everyone.)

Tim let his body move like liquid, through the air as if he were raindrops. Foot connecting with one man’s gut, spinning to connect a fist into ribs, then up, into a jaw. Behind him, Cassandra was moving faster, deadlier- swift as a frozen breath and silent as the very core of the night sky.

It was routine- a home invasion they had heard about over the GCPD radio. A few amateurs that thought they could make off with an easy thrill, scare a family half to death. They’d over stepped, slightly- one of the two women who lived in the penthouse was being hospitalized. Their two children were terrified.

Tim whirled in a flash of his cape, grabbed the first man he had kicked and hurled him towards Cassandra. She moved with the smallest glance at Tim, stepped away so he barreled into one of the others, both toppling down to the ground. Without a word she moved forward, pressed her boot into the small of his back- pushing with her small but solid body weight.

“Pathetic,” she offered, as Tim grabbed one of the others off the ground, hoisting him up by his collar.

“Getting your rocks off on terror,” he offered, “They’re just worms.” He tossed the man, his shoulder taking the brunt of his fall as he gave a sharp cry. Cassandra was crouching down, began securing them, as Tim reached up, pressed his com link.

“Red Robin to Batgirl- where you at doll?”

He heard laughter, and then, “Flying high and solo, pretty bird. You and my girl in some trouble?”

“No, just cleaning up the trash.” Tim heard a sharp cry behind him- and figured Cassandra just broke one of their wrists. Good. “Just have to call in a pick-up to Gordon. Where’s the Bat?”

“Called back home. Alf said it was urgent. Left me to finish the city sweep. I’m almost done.” Tim
frowned. It was worrisome if Alfred was pulling Bruce off his patrol for something- and Tim hoped it didn’t have anything to do with the rising gang activity in Bludhaven. As it were, their fear that it might spread to Gotham was only growing more. Dick had his hands full keeping it under control- and if he didn’t have Wally to work with him now, Tim was sure he’d have to have stolen at least one of them, to help keep it under control.

As it was, there was talk of asking Jason to come stay in Bludhaven, until they got everything under control. Tim wasn’t sure he’d accept the invitation, though. What he and Roy did- it was good for them. Freelance work, it let them set their own schedules-

They had a family. They had kids to think about, and Tim really couldn’t see Jason wanting to be away from that for any real length of time.

“We’re about done here,” Tim said, turning around. Cassandra had the men bound, was holding her own com link, calling them in. “Do you need a hand?”

“Nah, I’m good. Wrapping it up. I’ll beat you both to the cave.” Tim grinned.

“It’s a race batbrains.”

*

Tim and Cassandra rode into the cave within the hour. Cassandra had an arm linked around Tim’s waist, her balance perfect on the back of his bike as she hopped off before he even stopped. He laughed, skidding and partially turning, killing the engine. “Show off,” he said, as he climbed off, watching Cassandra saunter past him. “Your girl wasn’t even watching.”

“I don’t need to show off for Stephanie,” she reminded, as Tim jogged to catch up, pulling his mask off and shaking the wind from his hair. He was about to speak when the main room came into view, and he could see Bruce and Stephanie, crowded around the main computer screen.

Something in the air had Tim’s voice staying stuck in his throat. He and Cass picked up their pace, walking over and sliding in with the other two. “What is it?” Cassandra asked, glancing at the screen. Stephanie had lost her mask, her cape- but looked exceptionally pale, as opposed to the soft flush she usually sported, after patrol. Instinctively, Cass slid an arm around her taller girlfriend, and the omega leaned into her touch.

“Bruce?” Tim asked, dropping his mask on the counter. The man’s face was set in stone, eyes almost glaring at the screen.

“It’s Damian,” he finally said, and Tim’s heart lurched up, in his chest. It had been weeks since Damian had left- and while it seemed everyone else was calm about the omega’s disappearance, Tim had felt an unease over it. He hadn’t sent a single word, a message, anything, and Tim found it strange.

He had told himself he shouldn’t, though. That he hadn’t sent word when he was gone. That Damian needed space- and Bruce had told him he was sure that his son was working on his training, his meditation, far away from the place where he needed it most. Tim had bought it, at first, before the worry had crept back in- and honestly, the mess with the Bludhaven gang activity had served as a good distraction, against it.

“What’s wrong with Damian?” Tim asked, the worry blatant in his voice. Bruce glanced at him, before Alfred spoke- and god, Tim hadn’t even seen him.

“Show him the recording, Master Bruce,” he urged, and Bruce reached out, clicked something on
the screen. A file opened, and suddenly a video was playing.

Talia’s face was plastered on the screen. She looked tired- there was color lacking in her dark skin, on her cheeks, and Tim could see on her neck, a bruise that was fading.

“Beloved,” she said, and her voice sounded desperate- scared. Neither were things Tim had ever associated with Talia Al Ghul. “I do not have much time- but I need your help. We are in danger.” Her jade eyes flickered, before she said, “Our son is in danger.”

**Damian.**

“I do not have much time,” she offered, glancing away from the camera. Tim wondered what she heard. “I must go- but please, you must come for Damian. Ra’s will-” she paused, and Tim heard something, footsteps, voices. She shook her head. “Ra’s has our son, beloved. And he will not let him go.” Then, in what could only be a fit of panic in her eyes, Talia added, “He is with child, Bruce.”

The recording ended abruptly, and the screen went black.

Tim felt his insides coiling up, his hands fisting. For a moment, there was silence, there was nothing but the echo of his pulse in his head, and then,

“Why are we standing here?” He turned, stared at the family present. “Why the fuck are we standing here? You heard Talia. Damian’s in danger. We have to do something. Something.” There was an edge of panic leaking into his voice, and Bruce reached up, pinched the bridge of his nose.

“We’re standing here because I am thinking, Tim,” Bruce pointed out, “Because if we rush in hotheaded, we risk getting Damian killed.”

Tim sucked on his tongue, didn’t fight Bruce on that. He was right. He knew it.

“We have to be smart about this,” Bruce pointed out, “We don’t know what is going on. Talia didn’t give us much-”

“Are we ignoring what she did give us?” Stephanie asked suddenly, pulling away from Cassandra. “Damian is fucking pregnant!” The room fell to silence again, and the color was coming back to Stephanie’s face. “Goddamn, the poor kid must be terrified. I know I was. I was younger but- fuck, he’s still young. We can’t leave him like this. He needs us!” There was a passion to Stephanie’s voice that shook Tim to this core, and he wanted to kiss her for it.

Because she understood, good she understood, something that none of them could- the fear of it, of having a child inside you.

Bruce said nothing of it- and Tim knew he was processing it, slowly. In the way that Bruce did-silently. He’d brood on it until he was ready to accept it.

“If Ra’s knows we know,” Bruce pointed out, “We don’t know what he’ll do. He has no love for Damian.”

“Which means he has him for a reason,” Tim pointed out. And then, without hesitation, “I’ll go.”

Four sets of eyes fell to him. “Tim,” Bruce started, but the beta shook his head.

“No, it makes sense. Ra’s… Ra’s has always been interested in me.” Tim fought down at shudder at the implications of that. “He’ll… entertain me. Especially if I’m honest with him. I’ll send word
that I know he has Damian, and I’m coming to speak with him. I can work with Ra’s. At least… long enough to get Damian out.”

“Timmy, you can’t,” Stephanie started, before she was cut off,

“Let him do it.” Alfred, speaking behind them all. He was looking at Tim with those intense eyes that had seen the entire world. “Master Timothy makes a valid point.”

“He’s putting himself at risk,” Stephanie said- but it was more of a plea, there was no anger. None of them had anger to ever direct at Alfred.

“He puts himself at risk every night,” Alfred pointed out, and then, in a voice that sounded broken, “Let him risk himself for our Damian.”

There was silence in the room, a heaviness that settled as not a single soul could object.

*

Damian curled up tighter on himself. He was cold, the damp air settling over his bones in a blanket he could not shake, a chill heavy and disheartening. He pressed his face into the cot he was resting on, hated that everything smell of air and damp earth.

His sleep was fitful at best, in his cage. It left him drained, utterly exhausted. He barely ate- at first it was out of spite, in a hope to discourage his grandfather. When they hadn’t worked, and he finally caved to the hunger aches in his belly, he realized just how little he was being given.

To the point that he had collapsed, and an IV had been forced into his body to get some fluids in him, to bring him back. This had happened three times now, and Damian could still see the marks in his arm, where the needle had been shoved in.

He opened his eyes, glanced across the cell. He needed to get up, to move. Needed to make sure every muscle in him still reacted as he wished. He couldn’t let himself grow lame in here. But it was hard- hard when he was feeling listless, useless, hopeless.

It had been weeks. His only visitors were the same cold doctor, the assassins who shackled him or brought him meals- and his grandfather. There was no word on his mother- he assumed Talia was not dead, but he did not know what state she was in, where she even was-

And there was no help. No family to magically appear and break him out of this hell.

Carefully, Damian sat up. His hissed as his back lit with fire- fresh wounds that, beneath bandages, rubbed as he moved. At first he hadn’t even been bandaged up- he had been left to bleed all over the robes he was given, left to let the fabric stick to his skin as the blood dried, only to have to be torn apart when he moved. But the doctor had finally advised against this- said the risk of infection was a something serious they should not chance.

Thankfully, Ra’s had seen some reason in that.

Damian inhaled slowly, before he leaned back, stretching his legs off his cot. He had to be slow about this- the assassins that walked the halls as guards didn’t care for him making too much noise, getting too into his movements. When he had blatantly spent a day working out in his cell, Ra’s had whipped him so hard the following evening he had passed out.

The muscles in his legs ached, cramped from the way he had curled up so tightly. He gritted his teeth, rolled his ankles before flexing his calves, his thighs. He rolled his neck, his shoulders,
flexed his fingers and his toes. Then he leaned back, pressed his shoulders to the wall and arched his back, felt his spine crack, the muscles coming to life. As he relaxed he reached up, tentatively placed a hand on his belly. He shifted the robes until he could get beneath them, gently rubbed.

The curves of his abs had given way to a small swelling, a gentle, round bump that had chased away any doubt Damian had in his mind. Even after his blood had confirmed he was pregnant, he still held out some sort of strange hope that it was a lie—

No, no hope wasn’t the right word. Because a part of him, now, didn’t want to take this away.

He closed his eyes, and silently, to himself, said get up. Get up and move, so that when his chance came, he would be ready.

Damian pushed off the cot, stretched again, before he began to pace. Pacing was acceptable- and when there were no alerted footsteps to his movements, he dropped to the floor, began lifting himself in rapid push ups. Despite his lack of food, of sleep, he knew his body was capable of certain strain- and he seemed determined to push himself, as much as possible.

His body was his. That had helped to get him into this mess- and it would get him out.

Damian closed his eyes, exhaled through his nose. Remember better times, where he would drop and dare Stephanie to race him. First to fifty won- and how he had yet to lose to her. Remembered times when Cassandra had sat on his back, folded her legs up, and talked him through the extra strain of lifting her weight as well.

Those memories didn’t smell like his cell, didn’t smell like decaying earth and iron. That was his own sweat, Stephanie’s perfume, Cassandra’s soap. The feeling of Cassandra when she leaned over, kissed his temple when he was done. The sound of Stephanie’s laughter as she would challenge him to something else- anything where she could use the legs of her that Damian was sure could take down armies- and he’d lose, then. He could admit it.

Damian felt his arms shaking, and he eased himself down to the floor. A moment passed, two, three- and he didn’t lift up again. He didn’t have it in him. There was nothing left for his body to burn, no energy- and the exhaustion in his bones was weighing heavier and heavier, each day.

And with it all was the sound of his grandfather’s voice, the lectures he gave each time he tore into Damian’s back with a whip, or bled him until Damian was dizzy and faint.

Damian pushed himself up, just as footsteps echoed through the halls. He was on his knees when the door to his cell was opening- and there was Ra’s, eyeing him.

“The floor suits you,” he said, and Damian gritted his teeth. He wasn’t restrained, could lash out- but in his current state, Ra’s could have him on his back in a second. It didn’t help that the assassin flanking Ra’s held a taser in his hands, playing with the trigger so that the electric pulse crackled through the room. “I was going to bleed you today,” Ra’s pointed out, walking around Damian. “To make sure you’re not gaining any of that strength of yours back. But it has been...advised against. That it is too soon, and we risk draining your body too much for the child to sustain.”

Ra’s held out his hand, and Damian watched as his usual bullwhip was not passed over- but a flogger. The end gleamed with metal chunks, and Damian felt a shudder roll through him at the mere thought of how they’d catch in his flesh.

“We will be brief,” Ra’s said, motioning with his hand. The man with the taser moved in, tugged Damian’s robe open, pulled it down until it caught around his wrists, pooled at the small of his
Damian’s back, which had already sported scars, was now littered with them. The bandages were torn off, and the few places where the bullwhip had finally broken skin were still angry red, welled with dried ruby. Ra’s smiled over it, let the whip’s ends trail over Damian’s sensitive skin.

“You are helpless,” he muttered, as the metal rolled over an old scar. “You always have been. Ever since you were a waste of a child at your mother’s hip. I should have had her throw you away. You cannot take the world when you were destined to be a slave to your own body.”

Ra’s pulled back, drew the whip down hard over Damian. The omega gave a shout, arching, biting at his lip.

“No one holds any love for you, Damian,” Ra’s added, testing the weight of the whip in his hand. “Your mother is delusional- she loves the tie you force your father to have with her.” Ra’s grinned. “And your father holds no affection for you- you are a burden, a responsibility.”

“That’s a lie,” Damian said, the words breaking off as the whip came down again. “Father- loves me. Mother-”

“If your father loved you, he would have come for you.” Another crack. “His god forsaken family is better without you, Damian.”

Damian growled, hands clenching into fists, his nails digging crescent shapes into his palms. “Drake loves me,” he forced out- and Ra’s stopped, laughed.

“Do you truly believe that?” His voice was like the rasp of a snake, his laughter fraying the edges of Damian’s mind. Damian had been able, at first, to simply ignore everything Ra’s said- to not even give him the satisfaction of a response. But as days turned to weeks, Damian was worn down. He was broken- and maybe, in his gut, he had begun to believe everything his grandfather said.

“Just because he put a child in you does not mean he loves you.” The whip teased Damian’s broken flesh, the metal warm now- sticky from his blood. The cell smelled of it, that rich, salty-copper scent that had Damian growing dizzy. “Timothy has never held love for you- nor will he. That wretched first son Grayson holds no love for you- the filth your father has taken in, they think less of you than the mud on Gotham’s streets.”

Ra’s lifted the whip, as Damian attempted to say you’re wrong. But the words died as the whip lashed into his skin, and Damian felt his skin slick, hot- the blood rolling down his back from the small tears the metal left in him.

“Why would Drake love you?” Ra’s asked, walking around Damian. He crouched down, pressed the handle of the flogger to Damian’s chin and forced it up, so that Damian was staring at him. “You are worthless, Damian. You can give him nothing. He would regret this baby, you know. He will despise you for it.” Damian said nothing, felt his chest aching. His grandfather’s words were sticking in the hallows of his ribs- and wasn’t that a fear he had harbored? Wasn’t that why he hadn’t run to Tim, when it had happened? Why he ran away.

He feared Tim would hate him. He feared rejection, he feared being cast out- he feared losing the one person he had allowed himself to feel this sort of affection for.

When Damian said nothing, his jade eyes dropping, Ra’s grinned. “You see the truth to my words?” He pulled the flogger away, and Damian let his head drop. Carefully, Ra’s stood, letting
the metal tipped ends dangle down by his leg. “If you are honest with yourself, Damian, this will hurt less, in the end. You will accept your fate, and your penance, for all your failures.”

Ra’s gave him a final look, before turning, heading for the cell door. When he left, Damian remained on his knees, head bowed, his robe open as he bled down onto the floor. He stared down with vacant eyes, and for a moment he was nowhere at all.

*

Tim gripped the controls of the Batplane, glancing at the map pulled up in the corner of his screen. He’d be landing in a few minutes- to a warm welcome, he was sure.

He’d announced himself, a half hour ago. Had sent a message directly to the compound that he was seeking Ra’s, and within minutes had had his response- open arms and the promise of an immediate audience.

No other family member could have gotten that.

Tim sighed, rubbed his thumbs up over the controls. He wasn’t sure what he was walking into, what sort of shape Damian was in- he assumed from Talia’s brief message, nothing good. And there was her to worry about as well- Tim held no ill will towards the alpha.

But his priority was Damian. He couldn’t leave without him.

Tim released the controls, autopilot still engaged, and leaned back. He reached up, ran his hands up over his face. He was ignoring the nagging question, in his mind, his chest, his belly- had ignored it when he first watched Talia’s video because his fear for Damian outweighed it-

But he’d had time, over the hours of the flight. He’d had time to wonder who Damian had let in. There was a lick of jealousy, in his blood, and Tim hated it. Because Damian had promised him nothing, and Tim had disappeared- he couldn’t blame him for moving on.

Tim spoke to himself as if staying would have meant there would be something between them.

And Tim wasn’t even sure he wanted that- but being cast aside, it still left him aching.

He took over the controls again as his map began to blink. He felt strange, flying the Batplane in his civvies- but he saw no point coming to Ra’s as Red Robin. There was no identity to hide- the man knew him, knew everything about him. He didn’t need a mask- to hide from Ra’s, he’d been a new incarnation entirely.

Tim landed the plane, hopped out of his seat, and headed for the exit. He tugged at his sweater vest casually, knew he was over dressed a bit for the heat- but layers were important. Without his utility belt, there was precious space to hide any of his toys.

He was greeted by two silent men- whom he followed without question. The compound was gorgeous, Tim had always thought. Still seemed it, as his footsteps echoed through the halls. The sun filtered in through large, open doorways, the smell of sand and crisp air. He could hear the sounds of metal on metal clanging in the distance, breaths and words in other languages. Tim took it all in, eyes darting every now and then, trying to memorize the walk from his plane, as they finally turned into the buildings. The two men both paused to push open a large set of doors, stood aside holding them open as Tim stepped in.

And down the hall, seated as if he was a king, was Ra’s himself.
“Detective,” Ra’s purred, and Tim swallowed thickly. His stomach felt tight, but he ignored it, kept his chin high, his shoulders squared, firm. “This is quite the gift, a visit from you.” Ra’s beckoned him forward with a curl of his fingers, and Tim walked towards him. “But then, it is expected. You are fully aware that my grandson is being held here.”

Tim paused, and Ra’s smile grew.

“Did you truly think I did not know what that cunt of mine did, Timothy?” Ra’s leaned forward. “Talia finds herself clever, but she is predictable. I was expecting your visit- and I am glad you came hastily.” Tim paused, a few steps from Ra’s, as the man studied him. “But I have faith in you. You would have found where he was without her help. Tell me, was the family even concerned over his absence?”

“No,” Tim admitted. He knew how to handle Ra’s- as much truth as possible. Lie only when necessary. Let him continue to believe he knew everything.

“But you worried, did you not?”

“I did.”

He hummed. “Distraction must have gotten to you, or I would have expected you sooner.” He reached out towards Tim, offering his hand, and Tim took another step in, allowed his fingers to slide along Ra’s’s palm. Ra’s closed his hand, let his long nails dig gently into Tim’s hand as he pulled him forward. Tim didn’t fight the movement, took the last few steps, until Ra’s was sitting upright and Tim was brushing against his knee. “We will have plenty of time to speak, you and I. But I am sure your mind is very distracted. Allow me to put it to ease- shall I show you to Damian?”

Tim fought to keep his face neutral- and from the way Ra’s’s eyes stayed steady, the line of his mouth unmoving, he assumed he succeeded.

“Yes.” Ra’s stood up then, and Tim barely managed a step back, could feel Ra’s’s robes as they brushed against him. He gave Tim’s hand a squeeze, before releasing him and sweeping past him.

“Come then, detective. Let us put this unsavory portion of your visit behind us quickly.” Tim turned, following Ra’s. They moved back through the halls, had a door opened that led down a stairwell-

One that felt as if it was taking them to the very center of the earth. The joy of natural light disappeared, and pale lights instead took over. Tim felt a chill run through him, wondered if they were near water- if the Lazarus Pit leaked into the ground here.

Once off the stairs, Ra’s walked through the hallways. The cells were empty, but Tim was sure there had been a time they had all been full. Didn’t doubt that another time like that would come- the demon’s head was unstoppable.

It made him grit his teeth.

Ra’s paused in front of a cell, offering up a small, cold smile. “I see my men took heed when I said restrain him quickly. Wonderful.” Tim turned, eyes glancing in past the wrought iron bars-

And his heart stilled in his chest.

There was Damian, chained back against the far wall. His arms were outstretched as if Ra’s had crucified him, shackled back to the wall. His legs were free, but he looked as if he was nearly dead
on his feet. He had barely lifted his head at the sound of his grandfather’s voice.

“Damian,” Tim breathed, so softly it was barely audible. Ra’s reached into his robes, plucked a key from there and unlocked the door. It swung open and he swept in, heading straight for the restrained omega.

“Grandson,” he said, “it is time to wake. You have company.” Ra’s reached out, dug his hand into Damian’s short hair- longer now than Tim had ever seen it- jerked his head up. Damian made a small, weak sound in his throat, eyes going wide, staring in front of him-

Finding Tim and locking on.

“Drake,” he whispered, and it looked as if the word pained him. The color to his beautiful skin seemed drained, and he looked ashen. His eyes were glossy, as if they only half saw. Tim felt sick, in the pit of his stomach.

“What have you done to him?” he asked, glancing at Ra’s, who released his hold on Damian’s hair.

“What is necessary,” he said. “The child must experience hardship to become strong. And I will not have an heir sharing my name that is not worthy. Not again.” The thin line of his mouth cracked into a smirk. “But I have better stock, this time. My grandson may be a failure, but the son he will give me will be of optimal lineage.”

Tim furrowed his brow, as Ra’s reached down, tugged open Damian’s robe. The omega struggled then, gritting his teeth, and Tim saw the small swell of Damian’s belly- and it all sank in, that it was true, that Damian really was pregnant.

Ra’s placed his hand over it. “Your blood was exactly what I was missing, Timothy.”

Tim faltered then. “My… what?”

Ra’s chuckled then, as Damian began to look frantic. “You are one of the world’s greatest detectives, Timothy- do not disappointment here. You must have known, down inside.” Ra’s moved his hand gently, and Damian looked as if someone were pulling a knife along his skin. “This baby is yours, Timothy.”

Tim felt his head beginning to spin, and he inhaled too quickly, the oxygen rushing up to his head. He gently clutched his fists, told himself to get in check fast, lest Ra’s notice-

But he had no words. How could it be his? He shouldn’t be able to-

“You have questions,” Ra’s said, pulling away from Damian. “We shall talk, you and I. Tonight. Come now, allow me to show you a room. So that you can think, for a spell. We will have dinner together.” Ra’s moved away from Damian, reached out and wrapped his arm around Tim’s shoulders, turning him.

In the split second of the movement, Tim glanced back at Damian, caught his eyes. Eyes that looked terrified, ashamed- and the moment Tim had them, they were cast back down, towards the ground.

* 

Tim paced the floor of the room Ra’s had gifted to him. Paced because he had to move, had to move because he had to think-
The baby was his.

But Tim didn’t see how- he was a beta, he shouldn’t have been able to get Damian pregnant. Sure, he was in heat, and it had happened before, but it was so rare-

Tim reached up, tugged at his hair. He’d even fucking thought about Damian’s lack of birth control and hadn’t stopped. He’d thought with his cock and look where it had gotten Damian-

Damian, Damian, he’d looked like a ghost. Tim had no idea what Ra’s had been doing to him, but he wasn’t sure Damian could survive it. He was stone, he was polished jade- but everything cracked, given time and effort. Tim knew Damian could break- he’d seen him vulnerable-

“I put him here,” Tim mumbled to himself, hands rubbing down his face now. “I have to get him out.” He moved across the room, slid between the curtains to stare out. The sun was beginning to set, flushing lovely colors along the sky. Tim inhaled, slowly, closed his eyes.

Ra’s was keeping Damian for the baby- he knew that, now. The man had given it away, and even if there could be doubt, Tim was sure Ra’s would fully explain himself, over dinner. He seemed to take a deep seated pleasure in explaining the way his mind worked, to Tim- perhaps because Tim understood the way it did, and Ra’s’s words did not fall on deaf ears.

Tim sighed, leaned his forehead against the glass. He needed something that Ra’s would want more than the child, more than Damian’s baby-

Their baby.

Tim closed his eyes, swallowing the dread rolling up his throat, growing sour under his tongue. He knew what he had to do, had to offer-

He knew there was only one thing Ra’s could ever want more.

*

Dinner was intimate, and that made Tim’s already lacking appetite completely absent. There wasn’t another soul in the small room, and Ra’s, while opposite Tim, felt so close that Tim wanted to shudder.

Instead of eating, Tim nurses the dark wine in front of him. Slowly, but so it at least seemed like he was interested in something.

“I do imagine you have come in the hope of liberating Damian,” Ra’s said, eyeing Tim.

Truth, truths got him farther with Ra’s than attempted lies. “Yes.”

A small smile. “Your honesty is always beautiful, Timothy.” Ra’s reached for his own glass, his long nails tapping against it. “But I will let my grandson go for nothing.”

“You don’t love Damian,” Tim said, working to keep his voice steady. “That’s no secret. You’ve disowned him, you’ve made it clear over the years that you want him dead.”

“He is a stain upon my name. I should have never allowed Talia her affair with the dark knight. Nor her whimsical fantasy of a child with him.” Ra’s shook his head.

“Then let him go. Let him disappear back into a world so you can forget him.”

Ra’s frowned. “Your intellect is failing both of us, young detective-”
“I know you want his baby,” Tim said, and then, because he had to let it sink in, “our baby. You want another chance for your legacy to continue- and you want me for it.” Ra’s frown disappeared, his smirk returning. “But why let Damian dilute it? It’s not just your blood in him, Ra’s. It’s Talia’s, Bruce’s as well. And then mine. You’re getting pretty far from the source.”

“And you have some way around this?”

Tim smiled. It was dark, a quirk in the corner of his mouth that made his tongue taste sour. “I do.” He lifted his glass, took a sip. It was a sour sort of sweet, heavy on his tongue- but he needed a moment, just a sliver of time to steel himself for what he was about to say. And when he set the glass down and spoke, his mouth was heavy with the taste. “Take me instead.”

Tim watched Ra’s eyes go slightly wide, as the man leaned forward. Tim had his full attention.

“Let Damian go. Leave him be, Ra’s. Send me back to Gotham- and I’ll stay.” Tim pushed his chair back, stood up and walked around the table slowly. Ra’s leaned back, as Tim slid in, between him and the table, bracing his hand son the edge and gripping it until his knuckles went white. “I’ll give you whatever you want, Ra’s.”

It was a death sentence, and Tim knew it. He wouldn’t survive this- not emotionally, not mentally. Most likely, not physically.

He didn’t care. He had to protect Damian, protect their child, had to-

Ra’s hummed, the sound bringing Tim back from his thoughts. He reached out, his hand gliding along Tim’s waist, pausing to dig his nails into the curve. Despite his layers of clothing, Tim felt it. “You’re promising a lot, Timothy- especially when science has proven how difficult it would be for you to give me a child.”

Tim hid the tremble in his hands well, told himself he knew how to handle this. He knew how to work Ra’s. “Are you doubting yourself?” Tim asked, voice falling quieter, coming from his chest. He pushed off the table, leaned in and grasped at the back of the chair behind Ra’s, carefully moving to straddle one of his thighs. “Because that is very unlike you.”

A chuckle rumbled from Ra’s throat, and he wrapped an arm around Tim’s waist, held him in close. “I do not doubt myself, Timothy. I can do anything.” He leaned in, pressed his face to Tim’s neck- and in his head, Tim was counting, slowly, telling himself to keep his pulse steady, even as Ra’s pheromones felt like they were suffocating him.

He smelled like the earth, and something acidic beneath it. Tim always thought that was the pit.

“You could have one heir, with Damian’s mottled blood,” Tim offered, as he felt Ra’s lips drag over his pulse, “Or you can have pureblood. You can have me- and I’ll give you an army.” Ra’s made a small sound, a raspy growl at the implication, and Tim rocked down, against his thigh, his other hand grasping down between the alpha’s shoulders. “It’s your decision.”

The arm around his waist tightened as Ra’s straightened up, glancing at Tim with eyes that might have once been jade, like Talia, like Damian- but now seemed too green, infected by use and over use of the pit. “I will consider it,” Ra’s said, “I believe you can give me at least a night to make my decision?”

“You’ve been alive for centuries,” Tim said, “What’s one more night without me?”

Tim saw the flash in those eyes- and knew he had done this right. Ra’s smirked again, leaned in and pressing his mouth to the corner of Tim’s. And Tim- despite that it was the last thing in the
world he ever wanted to do- turned into the kiss, pressed his lips to Ra’s’s. When the man’s teeth nipped at his lip, Tim opened his mouth, gave and submitted to Ra’s’s tongue just as he knew the man wanted.

And when Ra’s pulled back and Tim was short of breath, it was believable that it was some sort of excitement, and not a sickening twist in his gut.

“Take your night,” Tim said, the devil’s smirk growing on his lips. “And when you think you’re ready for me, I’ll be waiting.”

* *

Tim dropped to his knees in the small bathroom attached to his bedroom, shaking. His hand was clamped over his mouth as his stomach rolled. Tim tried to swallow, knew there was no stopping it, and leaned over the toilet just as he vomited. He shook with it, gripped at the seat with one hand until his knuckles went white, coughing as bile and the remnants of wine burned his throat.

It had taken all his self control to keep from reacting like this before he was locked back in his room. Ra’s had taken his time escorting him there, had kissed him again at the door- and Tim had had to play up being into this. Had been forced to strain his control to the point that he felt the wire ready to snap- to act confident, as if he could twist Ra’s right around his finger.

With the right words and looks, Tim knew he could.

He coughed again, spit, before sitting back, taking a deep breath. He felt dizzy, as he slid back along the bathroom floor until his back pressed to the wall. He pulled his sweater vest off, left it piled on the floor, popped a few buttons on his button down. His hair was sticking to his forehead, his neck with sweat, and this shirt clung to his spine uncomfortably.

Tim felt disgusting. He felt like the sweat held a layer of pure filth- earthy grime- to him. Something that felt like it was slimy yet hardening over him, that he couldn’t chisel away at. Despite that his body ached with tension, he forced himself to stand, to move to the shower. He turned the water on, so hot steam began to rise, and stripped down, before stepping in.

It hurt, the water burned at him, but Tim didn’t care. He relished it, needed it- needed something to bring him back. He was falling into himself, into his head, and that was a dangerous thing.

He scrubbed his skin raw, until it was red, and then beyond that until he hissed as the water stung him. It barely seemed to matter- he was filthy. He’d let Ra’s touch him, even if barely.

How was he going to feel when… when…

Tim whined, reached up, pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes, until he saw bursts of white behind his dark eyelids. It didn’t matter how he was going to feel, what it was going to do to him, he had to do it. He had to protect Damian, had to right what he had done to him-

Had to protect their baby.

Tim reached out, turned the water off. He stepped out of the shower, stood dripping and naked before the sink as he reached out, wiped the steam off the mirror. He leaned in, stared at himself, stared into his own eyes.

He put Damian here. He put Damian at risk. He had to make it right.

He would make it right.
Even if it meant never seeing the omega or his family again. Even if it meant never meeting the baby growing inside Damian. Never meeting his own child.

Tim squeezed his eyes shut, gripped at the sink to avoid punching the mirror, if only to feel to glass break his skin. He sucked in a breath, held it inside his lungs to calm his pulse, before he opened his eyes. The blue had gone dark, and his face fell into stoicness.

He was atoning for his actions, he would pay the price for his sins. Self sacrifice wasn’t a new notion to Tim- and the fact that it was for Damian only made it more acceptable.

Tim would do anything to keep him safe.

*

Damian kept still on his cot, at the sound of the soft footsteps. He kept his eyes closed, his breathing steady, heard his grandfather drag his long nails along the bars.

“He’s very weak.” The doctor, that nameless man whom Damian wanted to take his needles and shove them, burning hot, into his veins. “He’s barely fourteen weeks along, the baby won’t make it to term if we keep this up.”

Ra’s clicked his tongue, and Damian hated in that moment that he knew he had gotten that habit from his grandfather. He sucked silently on his tongue to keep from baring his teeth.

“If he is a worthy heir, he will. However, it will not be necessary.” The sound of Ra’s’s nails gently running along the metal bars made Damian want to shudder. “I have the young detective, and he has agreed to remain as my mate, at long last.”

Damian felt his body suddenly go colder- colder than he was. He was hearing wrong, right? Tim would never-

“Congratulations are in order,” the doctor said, and the sound of gentle movement- he was offering a half bow. “How did you manage this, my lord?”

“He has agreed to trade himself for Damian and the unborn child.” No. “If I release the failure back to Gotham, Timothy will remain here, and give me a true heir. Simply my blood and his.”

“He is a beta, though. It may be difficult, take some time-” there was a loud smack, the ringing of skin on skin as Ra’s surely slapped the man across the face. Damian heard slightly labored breathing, and then, softly, “My apologies, my lord. I did not mean to doubt you.” The doctor cleared his throat. “I just… I merely wouldn’t want to see you throw away something valuable to you.”

“I am not actually going to send the boy away.” Ra’s sounded annoyed now, like his night was being soured. “Do you think me an idiot?”

“No, my lord! Oh course not-”

“Then do not act as if I am. Damian shall remain here. His son shall be born. And, in the event that Timothy fails in carrying my children- I will have the heir I deserve. But I have faith in my young detective.” Ra’s paused, and Damian felt his eyes on him, raking over him like nails dipped in acid. “He will not. And Damian’s child can grow up to be the servant they all require. Allow him to bare the burden of his father’s transgressions.”

There was a final scratch of nails on metal, before Ra’s took a step back, nearly silent.
“I will convince Timothy that Damian has been safely taken to Gotham, and then I will have him. And by the time he discovers the truth- because I know he will, the boy is sharp, he will not care. He will be enthralled as he always should have been. Perhaps being heavy with child will be a sufficient distraction.” There was silence, and Damian knew, just knew, that his grandfather was smirking. “Once he has born my children, he will never want to leave me.”

The doctor said something, but at this point Damian couldn’t hear. They had begun to walk away, and only when their footsteps were ghosts did he allow himself any movement. He stretched out from the curl he was in- which released precious body heat, but his muscles had begun to ache- and slowly pushed himself up. He opened his eyes, squinting into the dark.

He wanted to believe his grandfather was lying, wanted to believe it was all a ruse- but he knew Tim. He knew the man from years of working by his side, working with him, fighting him.

Tim would do it. Tim would give himself up to the hell he feared the most, if it meant saving another. And Damian knew how the beta felt about his grandfather. Ra’s’s infatuation with Tim was not something the alpha had ever chosen to hide, and Tim had never once even pretended to have an interest in it.

Damian had heard him say, multiple times over to different family members, that he’d rather be thrown into a vat of acid than let the man touch him.

Damian’s lips tugged into a small little smirk. Part of him wanted to rub in his grandfather’s face that Tim had been overly willing to crawl right into his bed.

But Damian held that in, knew he was in no state to antagonize the man. As it were, he had felt dead within his own skin until seeing Tim earlier. Seeing him had been...hopeful. After weeks of seeing no one except his grandfather and the men that were allowed to violate him- he held it as such, as the doctor nor any of the assassins that laid their hands on him were invited- seeing Tim had given Damian a sudden spark of energy.

He hadn’t been forgotten. The family knew- god he did not know how, but he did not care. And Tim, he had come for him-

And now he was going to kill himself, for Damian. All because Damian had run.

Damian walked right up to the front of the cage, gripped the bars with one hand. The other slid beneath his robe, rested on his belly. He closed his eyes for a moment, leaned his forehead against the cold metal.

And told himself that was not acceptable. He would not allow Tim’s sacrifice for his sake. Not even for their child. While he could not deny that he needed Tim’s help, he would not allow the man to take Damian’s hell from him. It was his to burn in- or to fly from.

His eyes shot open and he glanced along the hallway. There were no footsteps- it had become completely silent. Quiet as the calm before the storm, as the final breath before swallowing down hellfire.

Damian pressed his hand tighter to his belly, and quietly promised himself- promised his child- that this would not be their hell. And that he would not allow Tim to burn.

They would leave together, or they would die within these walls. Become ash and dust to be lost in the sands of time forever.

But he would not leave him.
Tim lay awake late into the night. He counted the moments, the seconds and the hours. He tossed, fitfully. He wanted to sleep, he knew he would need it- needed his strength, his wits about him. Needed everything he had ever been, if he was going to truly wrap Ra’s around his finger and secure Damian’s safety.

Still, he couldn’t sleep. He finally pulled himself from his bed, heading towards the door. He paused at his clothing, left piled on a chair, and shifted through them. Ra’s had laid out clothing for Tim before he left- an array of it- and Tim knew the man was already parading him around. The robe was dark, however, blacks and deep emerald greens, the leggings beneath black as well.

At least he had offered something dark for the cause.

Tim took what few toys he had with him, shifting them about his person. It wasn’t much- but Tim was resourceful, he didn’t need to rely on tech and expensive toys to get a job done.

He moved to his door, shifting a thing pin into the lock. Ra’s had locked him in- and Tim had expected that. He had, however, from Tim’s knowledge, not placed a guard at his door. Tim heard no breathing, no movement.

He was arrogant, and Tim needed to play that up.

It took almost no time for the lock to click open. Tim slid the pin onto a small gauntlet he had put on, beneath the robe’s large sleeves, and carefully pushed the door open a crack. He peeked out, glanced along the empty hallway, before opening it entirely. He slid out, turning to press it shut behind him, waiting until the lock securely clicked again, before turning back around.

He moved silently through the halls. He crept along the walls, made himself as small as possible, pushing flat against it when he heard footsteps, would hold his breath until he was alone again. He made a mental map of the route from his room to other parts of the compound- and most importantly, down into the old dungeons.

There was a set of assassins pacing that hallway, and Tim had to time his movements right. He waited, watched as they circled it once, timed them, and then waited until they were circling again. When they were out of sight he moved quickly, working at the lock. It was much harder than the one to his room, and Tim almost wondered if it was rusting and corroding together- until it finally clicked, and he was bale to open the door.

Tim slid in it, pulled it shut, and hurried down the old stone stairs. His footsteps were quiet but quick, and the moment he hit the floor he was running, past the empty cells-

And stopping when a set of jade eyes stared out through the dark at him.

“Damian.” His heart raced, pushed its way up into his throat, as he pressed up against the bars, reached a hand through. The omega pushed himself off the cot, crossed over in a few quick strides, and took Tim’s hand, clutched it in his own. “Oh my god, Damian.” Tim wanted to say his name, over and over again, until it could be confused with the sounds of his breath.

Damian looked at him, ran his hands along Tim’s. There were scars that Tim could feel that he didn’t recognize, a gentle raise in his flesh along his palms, as if from the bite of a blade. He couldn’t see much else, Damian’s clothing and the dark hid him- but his skin lacked its healthy color, and those eyes had never looked so tired.

“What has he done to you?”
Damian said nothing, lifted Tim’s hand, pressed his mouth to his palm. And for a moment, Tim’s chest simply burst- a rush of affection for the man. He slid his palm along Damian’s cheek, his fingers teasing back into his hair.

“You are not safe.” Damian, finally speaking. Tim offered up a small smile.

“No, I’m not,” he agreed, “But I wouldn’t expect to be. I’m going to get you out of here, babybat. I promise. Ra’s is going-”

“To send me home and keep you instead?” Tim stared, and Damian frowned. “He was here, Drake. Boasting of how you were giving yourself to him. Do not do it.” He pulled away from Tim’s hands, reached up and clutched at the bars. “It is suicide.”

“It’s a reasonable loss if you’re safe.”

“Do you really think he’d send me away?” Damian’s voice rose, slightly. “Drake, he means to keep me. No matter what you give to my grandfather, he is not giving me up. He plans to keep the baby in case you fail to give him one- so that he is guaranteed an heir. And if you do succeed, he plans to use my child as his personal plaything. To inflict all the rage he has ever hosted for me upon it.” Damian gripped the bars tighter. “Your sacrifice will be for nothing, Drake. I will be dead. The baby…” Damian trialed off, and Tim reached up, covered his hands around the bars.

“I’m going to get you out of here,” Tim said, squeezing gently. “I promise. I fucking swear.” He leaned in closer, lifted up on his toes to be level with Damian’s sad, gorgeous gaze. “I needed to buy some time. To think.” He sighed. “I wish I could take you now.”

“We would die.” Damian didn’t sugar coat it. He was a ghost of himself, in that moment. He could hold his own in a fight, perhaps- but not for long. Not as long as it would take. “There is no way we would get out undetected. And I am… a burden.”

Tim frowned. “You’re not-” he sighed, “You’re right that it’d be suicide. We just need help.” Tim licked his lips. He needed help, but the family was out of reach- there would be no way to contact them without Ra’s knowing. Hell, Tim was already truly pressing his luck, being gone so long-

Tim paused. There was someone.

“I have an idea.” Damian quirked up a brow, and Tim just offered him a smile. He let go of his hands, reaching up into his sleeve and plucking two small pins from his gauntlet, handing them to Damian. “Take these. I know you can pick this lock just as fast as I can.”

“When?”

“Tomorrow. I’m going to send Ra’s down to check on you- and you’ll know. I will do my best to make sure he doesn’t touch you.” Damian tucked the two pins away, and Tim reached in again, tangled his fingers with Damian. “This is going to be hell, Damian.”

“When is anything we do not hell?” Tim laughed at that, and he leaned closer, pressed his head against the bars. Damian leaned in, forehead just managing to touch Tim’s, as the beta’s smile twitched.

“You’re gonna be okay,” he whispered, and Damian- he wanted to believe Tim. Wanted to believe him because Tim Drake had earned his trust over the years, had earned his affection-
“I have to go,” Tim whispered, “I have a lot to do. But the moment he is gone tomorrow, get your cell open. You’ll know when it’s time to leave.”

Damian nodded, as Tim pulled away. And there was so much more to say- they both knew. It passed silently, between them, between their eyes- but there was no time. Later, it was a silent promise that they both hoped wouldn’t be empty.

Turning away from Damian was the most painful thing Tim had done- but he did it knowing it was the only way he’d ever get him out of here. Did it because leaving Damian meant saving him.

* 

Tim barely slept the few hours he had before daylight, back within his room. When he woke he took another shower, changed into a robe that was rich reds and golds- made a point to make himself look as appealing as he utterly could.

He had a game to play, a plan to play along with.

And when there was an assassin showing up at his door, Tim followed without hesitation. He was walked through the halls, up another flight of stairs- to a level that made the compound feel like a palace. He saw shown a door, and left to open it himself, allow himself inside-

Was met by streams of sunlight through open windows, casting pretty lights along a large bed- and god, it was Ra’s’s bedroom.

“I trust you slept well.” Tim turned, caught a glimpse of the man as he stood, across the room, in front of a large mirror. He was securing his robe shut, taking a moment to run long fingers through his hair. “Perhaps it was rude of me to not offer up my own bed for you.”

Tim let the door shut and stepped in, smiling. Playfully. Losing himself in the man he needed to become, in this moment. “I would have had to decline,” Tim said, sauntering slowly over towards him. He knew Ra’s was watching him, through the mirror. “I wouldn’t want to give anything away too easily.”

“You seem to have gone easily to my grandson.”

Tim forced his smile to grow bemused, smug. “I know you’ve had an omega in heat before. You know how sweet they are. Who am I to deny that?” It made his tongue bitter, to talk about Damian like he was a piece of meat- but Tim steeled his heart against the meaning of his words. All the truths he had given Ra’s had set him up for this.

The flood of lies.

“Do you feel threatened?” Tim reached out, took Ra’s’s arm and turned him, gently stepping backwards. “Are you afraid you will not measure up to your grandson?” Tim let himself fall back on the bed, tugged- and Ra’s followed, crawling over him. Tim smirked, hooked a leg up around his thighs, as he arched. “Are you going to prove yourself to me?” He tipped his head back as Ra’s leaned down, mouthed at his throat, gave a sigh that he used to disguise the fact that his throat was burning.

“Over and over again,” Ra’s murmured, one hand clutching at the blanket, near Tim’s head. “You will not have a night to yourself, young detective.”

“Loneliness is overrated,” Tim offered- and that, that was a truth. He arched his hips up, ground against Ra’s as the man pinned him down, dragged teeth along his throat. He let his eyes fall shut,
breathing carefully—trying not to drown in Ra’s’s pheromones. The alpha acted as if he was trying to lay claim to Tim in that moment, as if he would sink his teeth into him and attempt to bond.

The act itself would have been questionable, even if Tim had been consenting. So few betas existed that it was questionable how bonding with one worked— and Tim was not about to test theories. Not yet.

“Careful,” Tim breathed, trying to think of anything that would get him hard, get him remotely excited, so Ra’s would think he was interested at least slightly. Thought of how quickly Bart used to ride him, how his thighs moved in the most sinful ways—

Thought of how Kon used to dig his teeth into the back of his neck and fuck him until Tim’s legs didn’t work, until he couldn’t stand and he shook and nearly sobbed with it—

And when neither truly worked, he thought of Damian, and those gorgeous eyes. Damian pressed between he and the wall, clutching at him desperately— the feeling of his body, so tight and wet around him—

Tim gasped, felt his cock twitching, and Ra’s ground down harder into him, mouth moving up to his jaw.

“You are going to need to clear your entire compound,” Tim teased, hanging onto those memories then, “I’m not quiet, Ra’s.”

The alpha chuckled. “Let them hear you, Timothy. I want them to.” Tim tipped his head back, hands clutching at the man’s shoulders. He was trying so hard to keep his disgust from showing, hide the fact that it felt like his skin was crawling.

“I wouldn’t want too much talk,” Tim offered, “Lest we anger your daughter over the fact that she’ll have favored siblings.” Play up your offer Tim reminded himself, play up your faith in his virility.

“I have no love left for that child,” Ra’s offered, “let her hear— I am sure she will. I have kept her close to make sure her rebellion is limited to what I authorize.” Tim kept his face still over that, felt the drag of Ra’s’s teeth again. He lifted his hips in response— and in his head, he was thinking of how sweet Damian smelled, how eager his mouth had been— “She is nothing but a ghost in the walls, Timothy. A tell-tale heart. Do not think of her.”

Tim almost smiled, almost, before he reached up, gently pushed Ra’s away— even as he rocked his hips up once more. “We’re getting ahead of ourselves,” Tim whispered, “You haven’t agreed to my terms yet Ra’s. And I don’t come for free.”

Ra’s hummed, pushed himself off Tim and stood. Tim sat up as the alpha eyed him. “Whatever you ask for, you shall have, Timothy. If you want Damian returned to Gotham- I shall see it done.”

Tim smiled at that. “Good. The moment he is gone,” Tim said, smoothing one hand out over the bed, “I’m yours.” Ra’s smile was something sicked at that, and Tim fought to keep from shuddering. “Perhaps we should celebrate.”

“How so?”

“If I’m giving you an heir, they—”

“He.”
Tim kept his face emotionless. “He will inherit a kingdom. I think you should give me a taste of that kingdom. Entertain me, Ra’s. You’ve always said I could be your princess.” Tim leaned forward. “Treat me like such. I know what your assassins can do- but show me their numbers. Show off for me.”

Ra’s eyed Tim for a moment, before grinning. “Are you asking me to court you, Timothy?”

“Perhaps. Maybe I like a little romance.” Tim pulled himself off the bed, reached out and ran his hand up along Ra’s’s chest. Ra’s took his hand, lifted it and kissed his knuckles.

“Whatver you desire, little one.” He leaned in, kissed the corner of Tim’s mouth. “Give me a few hours, and I will have everything set up.”

“Good. And tonight-” Tim whispered, his voice dropping, pulling from his chest, “I’m all yours.” Tim leaned in, wrapped his arm around Ra’s’s shoulders, pressed his mouth firmly to the alpha’s. “Perhaps before everything begins,” Tim added, “You should check on Damian. Because when we’re done- you will not be given a moment alone.” He rocked against Ra’s, felt a hand go to his waist.

“You are something wicked, Timothy. You hold less affection for the brat than I thought.”

“Damian has never had love for me,” Tim whispered, “I fucked him out of physical desire. I never said I loved him- or that I had love for what was inside him.”

Tim’s chest ached, over the words. **Necessary lies.** Still, he felt like he was sinning against Damian, in that moment.

Ra’s grinned. “Very well. I will see to the brat, and then give you a true look at the kingdom our children will inherit, young detective.”

* 

Damian heard his grandfather’s footsteps before he saw him, and sat up on his cot. He’d been in a state of unrest, waiting for this moment, and couldn’t help but grip at the cot beneath him, leaning out slightly as Ra’s appeared, before the bars.

“I see you are behaving,” Ra’s commented, seemed rather disinterested. “Timothy will be glad to hear of that. I am here at his request- as I will apparently be far too preoccupied later to tend to you.” He traced one sharp nail down along a bar. “So let that sink in, Damian. That tonight while you are rotting away slowly in this hell, Timothy will be warming my bed.” Ra’s smirked, adding, “And know that you will never leave here, Damian. Not while you live.” Damian said nothing- knew his silence was the best thing he could offer in that moment, to get his grandfather to leave.

And when Ra’s did, a moment later, without so much as prying his nails into one of the healing wounds on his back, Damian sighed in relief. And when his footsteps were nothing but silence, Damian was up and moving towards the front of the cell. He pulled the two pins Tim had left him from his robes, sliding them into the lock and carefully wiggling them around.

He hoped Tim truly had a plan- hoped that he was not going to go through with a single promise he might have given his grandfather. Damian shuddered over the idea of Ra’s with his hands on Tim- part of it jealousy, yes-

But most of it knowing how sick it would make Tim feel. How it would kill him, to give so much to a man whom he had no interest in- who he had expressly denied, so many times.
The lock clicked, gave, and Damian pushed at the door. It lifted enough that it appeared closed, but could be knocked open. He shoved the two pins back into his sleeve, careful not to bend his arm too much lest he stab himself with them, as they were simply worked into the fabric. Then he began to pace, wanting to keep his blood flowing, wanting to stretch.

He would be ready. He would not allow Tim to risk his life in vein.

* 

Tim nearly ran down the hallways, which were empty at the present. He trusted that Ra’s wouldn’t hold back in trying to show off the empire he had built with the League- and his trust seemed well placed.

He paused at the doorway to Ra’s’s bedroom, glancing in both directions. Talia was close- he knew it. Ra’s had dropped enough subtle hints, and that was all Tim had needed to know. He rushed down the corridor, glancing at the doors as he passed-

Pausing at the one that seemed the heaviest. It was farther down- at the end, he realized. Tim pressed himself against the door, his ear to it- but it was too thick for him to hear through. He hurried pushed the sleeve of his robe up, pulled his final two needles out, and began to pick the lock. It was rusted just like the lock to the dungeon, and took an extra fifteen seconds to give.

Tim’s heart was in his throat the entire time. He didn’t have time to open every door- or to be wrong entirely. Talia had to be here, in this corridor, behind this very door.

He pushed it open the moment the lock clicked, stepping inside. It was lit by one open window- the glass bared, curtains removed. And sitting beneath the broken rays of sunlight was Talia, folded up with her eyes now open, staring at Tim intently.

She had been meditating, he knew. Recognized the pure focus in her eyes, her posture.

The moment recognition hit, however, her gaze softened, and she said in what could only honestly be shock, “Tim?”

“Long time no see,” Tim offered- and really, when was the last time he had seen Talia Al Ghul? He couldn’t be certain, but it had been so many years.

Yet she looked startlingly the same. Gorgeous eyes that Damian had inherited, eyes that held so much power in a simple stare.

“What are you doing?” She stood up, and Tim stepped aside, gesturing towards the open door.

“Breaking you out. And hoping you’ll help me save your son.”

Talia’s face lit up at the mere mention of Damian. “You have seen him?”

Tim frowned. “I have… he’s not good, Talia. We need to get him out of here. If we don’t Ra’s is going to kill him. I don’t have time to fully explain everything- but I need a distraction. A big one. Damian should have his cell lock picked by now- but he cannot leave until we’ve got chaos. I need enough hell that I can get him to the Batplane and get in the air. From there, nothing can catch me.”

Talia nodded, advancing towards Tim. “Anything,” she said, reaching out and placing a hand on Tim’s shoulder, “For my son.”
“Good. Ra’s is gathering up everyone for me, for a demonstration. You won’t find much opposition.”

“I will kill whoever I do find.” Tim didn’t even think to question that- he didn’t give a shit what Talia did. This wasn’t Gotham, these weren’t Bruce’s rules.

If she wanted to rips hearts from chests, he was going to simply stand away from the blood spray.

“I have an idea,” she offered, and Tim nodded again.

“Good. You love him, Talia- so I’m trusting you. Even if I don’t know why you’ve still been with Ra’s, all this time.”

“The League is meant to be mine,” she said, “and I have remained to continue to have a hand in it, and to quell my father whenever I feel he is overstepping. As best as I can, at least. But I remain to see that my birth right does not elude me.” She squared her shoulders, pulling her hand away. “You owe me an explanation as well, Drake. As to why my son is now carrying your child.”

Tim swallowed, opened his mouth to speak- but the words, they died in his throat. All he could offer was, “It’s complicated,” and Talia frowned.

“It is indeed, for the both of you. There is not time now- but I will come for it, one day.” Talia moved past Tim, into the hallway, before pausing to glance back over her shoulder. “Take care of him, Tim. Damian is strong, he can do things I did not know were possible of a man- but his heart is glass. Do not shatter it.”

She was gone without another word, and Tim paused for a moment to simply take a breath, to give thought to her words. And then, with them cradled in the spaces between his ribs, he was moving again- to await Ra’s to summon him.

*

Ra’s kept his hand on the small of Tim’s back as they walked. He could feel the press of his nails, so like talons that it made Tim think Ra’s would fit in perfectly with that old Gotham nursery rhyme.

Tim moved where he was directed, outside among the ranks of men and women assembled. It was the first he was noticing women, which he thought was strange.

“Didn’t Talia have her own army?” Tim asked, pretending to be interested in the tall stature of one of the men, standing so motionless it was as if he wasn’t real.

Ra’s clicked his tongue. “Once, she did. She proved too rambunctious with it. Loyalty from the League most be first and foremost to me- and not that wicked cunt. Her assassins thought her a savior.”

“All women, correct?” Ra’s made a face.

“Yes. I have learned. The only women allowed within the league now have proven themselves many times over. And are allowed nowhere near her.” Tim glanced towards one of the few women, thinking the rush of his pulse was anger.

Tim was sure that, of all the people he knew who stood a chance against Ra’s- two of the top four were women.
Talia herself, and Cassandra.

What Tim wouldn’t give to have Cass by his side, in that moment.

“I have many of my well trained assassins currently deployed,” Ra’s offered, “Ever busy, we are. The legacy our children receive will be endless active, Timothy.” Ra’s reached out to him, snaked an arm around his waist and tugged him back. Tim allowed it, pressed his back to the alpha’s chest, glancing around.

“Everyone smells...muted,” he offered, and Ra’s leaned down, gently nuzzled Tim’s warm hair.

“Suppressants for the few omegas that have proven they are worthy. I have no time for their lot distracting my well trained assassins.” Tim sucked on his tongue- and Ra’s’s pure sexism was driving his skin to crawling.

Ra’s seemed about to lean down further, to press himself into the crook of Tim’s neck- when the still air was suddenly shaking, the sound of glass shattering and stone crumbling. The explosion had Ra’s tensing, releasing Tim to turn quickly towards the sound.

Tim did, as well, and saw that a large part of the compound now boasted a gaping hole. The fire from it rained down like ash- burning from carpets and curtains. The alpha growled, barking a very loud order in Arabic, and suddenly the masses were moving, like one seething, beating heart.

That is, until a moment later, and there was another sound- this one from across the compound, behind them. Tim whipped his head about, saw the same destruction- and oh, Talia was good. To have simultaneous explosions set up in so little time?

Someday, he’d have to tell her just how amazing she was.

In the chaos, Tim noticed Ra’s had moved away from him, was pointing in various directions as he spoke quickly. Tim didn’t hesitate, took his chance to rush right into the chaos. He ran through the inner courtyard, hopping up the shallow stairs back into the compound. His feet on the stone were rapid but somehow soft, as he ran as if the devil was on his coattails. He was working through a map of the compound, back to the door that led underground-

He rounded a corner and nearly collided directly with someone. For a moment Tim tensed- and then it was Damian’s pretty eyes, the omega planting his feet firmly, ready to fight as if Tim was the enemy.

The recognition crossed his face, and he let his guard drop. For a moment, Tim saw nothing but pure thankfulness in Damian’s face.

“We have to go,” Tim said, “Ra’s will notice I’m gone- might have already. C’mon!” He grabbed Damian’s hand, nearly dragging him as they ran. He knew Damian was weak, exhausted and malnourished and god topping everything off he had to be feeling the affects of pregnancy twice as hard because of it- but he kept up as if this were months ago, and they were out for a simple morning run.

_He can do things I did not know were possible of a man._

Tim rounded another corner, just to find a line of assassins, moving in their direction. They saw him- and behind him, saw Damian- and in that moment, the charged. Four of them, Tim counted, calculating their possible attacks, as he released Damian’s hand. He met them head on, dropping low to the ground and stretching his leg out. He took out one man’s legs, sent him falling down, before he hopped up, undercut a man in the chin. Tim spun, kicked another, as the first was
pushing himself up-

And then another was grabbing Tim from behind, holding him steady. Tim trashed, gritted his teeth- was not going to be brought down now, not when he had Damian, not when they were so close-

And then the man in front of him was dropping down, crying out, and Damian was there, shoulder down and jamming it into another man’s ribs. He fell, and Damian reached for the man, holding Tim. He pulled him off, shoving him up against the nearest wall and cracking his head right against it.

Tim wasn’t sure if the man, as he crumpled down, was unconscious or dead- and he wasn’t concerned enough to question it. He turned to the last, and with a few swift punches, had him lying on the floor as well.

“Impressive still,” Tim offered, smiling at Damian, whose lips quirked up ever so slightly in the corner. Tim said nothing as they were moving again. Once outside the compound again, the sun was hot and heavy over head- but Tim could see the Batplane, exactly where he had left it.

Waiting. Salvation, just a small space-

Tim felt something slice through his arm and gave a shout. He reached up, grasped at the clean slice to his bicep as he turned, stared behind him.

And there was Ra’s, casually tossing a throwing knife, catching it by the handle with each round. The one that had sliced Tim lay in the sand, small dark red droplets leading a thin trail back to the beta.

“She next one,” Ra’s offered, “Goes through my grandson’s neck.” Damian had paused, next to Tim, was glaring at the alpha as if his eyes could throw those same daggers. “Now Timothy, you both amuse and disappoint me. You were being so good. We had a lovely arrangement.”

“You weren’t going to honor it,” Tim spat, squeezing at his arm. Blood was welling up between the cracks of his fingers. “You were going to kill Damian no matter what I did.”

Ra’s chuckled. “Yes, but I would have made you not care, young detective. I had hoped truly that you would come willing- but if I have to take you by force, so be it.” Ra’s flipped the knife again, and Tim saw the tension in his arm, his shoulder. He released his own arm and shoved his hand into the sleeve of his robe, plucking from his small gauntlet a single explosive- so small it looked like a slightly bulky tracker. He pulled it out, tossed it just as Ra’s released the knife. Tim threw himself over towards Damian, but the omega was already moving, already down in the sand, and Tim landed against his back, covering him as the explosive went off, the knife falling to the sand just behind Tim.

“Up!” Tim was screaming, pushing himself off Damian. The sand was hot, made him feel sluggish as he moved. “Up, Damian!” The omega was shoving himself up, getting a better footing than Tim- and he reached down, tugged the beta up. Tim stumbled, glanced over his shoulder to see the explosion had kicked up sand, left a few stones from the compound crumbling-

And Ra’s looking furious. He plucked another knife from an assassin next to them, who was holding a case open as if he were baring a ring at a wedding, was ready to throw it-

Before there was the sound of metal on metal, and it was knocked from Ra’s’s hand. He had just enough time to lean back, avoid the blade that went for his throat, as Talia swung. She continued
the motion, her blade sliding right through the neck of the assassin holding the knives, before he shoved her blade forward, into the man behind him’s chest.

“Mother!” Damian yelled, but Talia did not turn, too caught up in keeping her focus on Ra’s, on the men focusing on her.

“We have to go,” Tim said, clutching Damian’s arm, pulling him towards the Batplane.

“I will not leave her!” Damian tried to pull away, but Tim gritted his teeth, put all his strength into his hold. Damian stumbled after him as he began to run again.

“If we stay, we die.” Tim managed, feet pounding through the hot sand. “We die, her sacrifice is for nothing.” Tim threw himself under the plane, reaching up and pressing his hand to a small scanner. “Red Robin, override code 34-7-B!”

The plane suddenly sounded to life, the seal of the door opening as it slowly extended. The mechanical voice rang out, despite the noise behind them. “Welcome Red Robin. Override code accepted. Lift off in thirty seconds.”

Tim leapt up onto the ramp before it was all the way down, turning and taking Damian’s hand. Damian umped and Tim pulled him the rest of the way, the omega’s feet landing soundly. They hurried up it, and the moment they were inside, Tim was shouting, “Override code 27-H! Close the plane!”

“Code accepted.”

Tim pulled Damian away from the door, which was a feat- the omega was peering down it, trying to catch a glimpse of his mother in the chaos that was erupting.

“Dammit, Damian, c’mon!” Tim pulled him towards the front of the plane, shoving him roughly towards one of the two seats. “Strap in, this is going to be rough.”

Damian flopped down into the seat, listening as he tugged at the belts. Tim was in his seat already, ignoring his own as he flipped a few switches, reaching for the controls.

“Lift off in five seconds,” the computer warned, and Tim gritted his teeth, pulling at the controls. The plane suddenly thrust up into the air, so quickly that Damian jostled in his seat. He reached for the arms of it, clutching them until his knuckles were almost white, as Tim pulled hard, muttering under his breath c’mon c’mon c’mon as the plane pushed up into the air. The screen was flashing, as Tim jerked the controls forward, and the voice suddenly broke out,

“Warning. Not enough clearance to proceed with projected course.”

“Override!” Tim yelled, and then, “Fuck, 98-D-6! Override code 98-D-6!”

“Code accepted. Manual control initiated.”

The plane jerked, and Tim thrust them forward. He angled the controls up, working on gaining altitude, watching the radar in the left hand corner.

If he crashed, they were going to die.

If he didn’t put distance between them and Ra’s, they were going to die.

Tim reached up with one hand, pressing a button before leaning forward, flipping up a cover and
grabbing a small handle. He pulled it back, and the plane shot up suddenly, so fast that he felt the
wait knocked from his lungs. Next to him, Damian made a small sound.

But the boost gave them the altitude they needed, and suddenly the radar, which had been flashing
red, switched over to green. Tim, who had nearly fallen out of his chair with the movement, still
clutched the controls with a white-knuckle grip, but managed out, “Autopilot initiate.”

“Vocal recognition accepted. Autopilot taking over in ten seconds, Red Robin.”

Tim held the control, counting off in his head, and once he hit ten he let go. The plane stayed
steady, the map on the right showing a brief layout of the flight path home.

Tim sighed, felt the tension beginning to seep from his body. He flopped back, leaning his head
against his seat, before he turned his head, glanced at Damian next to him. The omega held his
stare for a moment, before,

“-tt- Are you trying to kill us, Drake?”

Tim paused for a moment, before he burst out laughing. He laughed from his gut, up into his lungs-
laughed so hard it burned. And Damian cracked a smile, the real kind.

“Next time,” Tim offered, “You can drive.”

“I would do a far better job.”

“We’ll see.” Tim leaned forward again, and Damian’s eyes darted to his arm.

“You are bleeding.” Tim glanced at it, shrugged a shoulder.

“No big deal.” He pushed out of his seat, moving between Damian and the controls, reaching out to
unhook his belts. “C’mon, let’s get cleaned up a little. We’ve got a long flight ahead of us.”

Damian didn’t push him away, and when Tim offered his hand to pull him up he accepted it. He
followed Tim back through the plane, to a small bench. Damian settled on it as Tim pulled open a
drawer from the wall, sifting through his medical supplies. He shrugged his robe off his shoulders,
let it pool around his feet on the floor, left him in simply the black leggings he had beneath it.

The slice in his bicep didn’t seem too deep, and Damian watched as Tim cleaned it carefully- kept
a stoic face even as he swapped to disinfectant over it, before carefully bandaging it.

“I could help,” Damian offered, but Tim shook his head.

“I’ve got it. Now...can I…” Tim paused, licked his lips. “Can I take a look at you?” Damian simply
stared at him, and Tim reached up, rubbed the back of his neck. “I know Ra’s...Damian, I know he
did things. I just… I can’t patch you up like Alfred can back home but… maybe let me clean you
up a bit?”

Damian glanced down, reached for the robe he was wearing. His hands hesitated, and he squeezed
his eyes shut.

“I… don’t want you to see me,” he admitted, and Tim frowned. He crouched down, so that he had
to look up at Damian, and reached out with one hand, gently rubbed his thumb over the omega’s
chin. Damian’s eyes fluttered back open-

And Tim’s face was so pretty, looking right at Damian like there was nothing else in this world.
“Damian.” He spoke his name like it was special, and inside Damian’s head he felt that was just wrong.

He wasn’t worth Tim’s time- look at what he had gotten them into-

“I understand if you don’t want me to,” Tim said, “I just… I want to make sure you’re okay.” Damian held his gaze for a moment, before his hands were moving again, pulling at the loose robe. It parted slightly, a sliver of dark skin from his collarbone to chest revealed, for Damian paused.

“You can see my back,” he offered, and Tim nodded- didn’t press, as he stood back up. Damian shifted, sitting so he was facing away from Tim, and pulled the robe open, letting it fall down around the small of his back.

It took all of Tim’s self control not to gasp.

Damian’s back had always boasted scars. The heavy one along the length of his spine had been the most prominent- and Tim could remember how that felt beneath his finger tips- but now it boasted more. Beyond the old, faded ones were wounds that still looked raw- ones that had begun to heal and would surely never leave. Heavy, long lashes from what Tim assumed to be a whip- and now, scattered among them, divots in his skin where it appeared something had dug into Damian, like claws.

“Babybat,” Tim whispered, and Damian’s shoulders trembled.

“Hideous, isn’t it?” He glanced over his shoulder, had a bitter smile on his lips. “Fitting I guess.” Tim shook his head. “No, that wasn’t- that’s not-” he paused, took a breath, tried to regain his composure. “I just… fuck what he did to you.”

“Is over now,” Damian offered, glancing away. Tim nodded, wanting to reach out, to touch Damian- and yet feeling like that could be the most unwelcome thing he could do.

“I need to… clean them. Bandage you up. Is that okay?” Damian nodded, looking forward again, and Tim moved back to his supplies. He wet a gauze pad with disinfectant, pausing as he moved back towards Damian, not touching him yet. “This is going to sting. And probably be cold.”

“I can handle it, Drake.” Tim nodded, leaned forward and gently pressed the gauze pad to one of the rawer wounds. Despite his resolve, Damian hissed, shoulders going tense, and Tim winced.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered, as he carefully worked over each wound. He had to pause, multiple times, to get a new gauze pad, and it felt like agonizingly long minutes to Damian, each careful movement over a raw wound.

He kept his eyes trained forward, his hands fisting in his lap. He tried to keep his shoulders as square as possible, his back straight- dignity. He’d been so stripped of it, that he was desperate to grasp at it where he could.

Maybe that was a part of the reason he didn’t want Tim to see him- to see the small swell of his belly. Because he was ashamed of the mess he felt he had gotten himself into. Was terrified of Tim’s rejection- and even if Tim had seen it, once, Damian felt compelled to keep Tim from actually setting his eyes on him again.

The confidence he had felt, when Tim had first come into his room, when he had challenged him during his heat- it was gone. Dust left behind to fall through floorboard cracks.
Damian felt ugly, hideous down to every bare inch of his body—ugly in his very soul.

“Just have to bandage you up,” Tim offered, moving back to the supplies. As he rummaged through them, Damian lifted one hand, unfisted it and laid it carefully over his belly, glancing down.

There was an ache in his chest, so sharp that he nearly lost his breath. Damian let his hand fall away, as Tim returned.

“I should wrap these around you,” Tim said, “But… I’ll just tape some on. They might feel a big awkward, but that will keep you clean until we get home.” Damian nodded—silently thankful that Tim wasn’t pushing him, was being gentle.

When Tim was done, Damian pulled the robe back up, secured it shut. He glanced back at Tim, who still hadn’t bothered with more clothing, was pushing the medical drawer closed.

He was still gorgeous, with all the scars that cut hard, lean muscle. He was pretty in ways Damian barely understood—and the fact that Tim had ever touched him once felt like a sin, felt like he had torn something from the beta, must have coerced him somehow.

Damian squeezed his eyes shut, kept them closed, and when they opened again, Tim was looking at him.

“It might be good if you ate something,” he offered, but Damian shook his head. He was sure if he put anything in his body in that moment he would not keep it down. His belly was in unrest, and the fatigue that had waited in his bones was hitting him hard.

“I just,” he started, “I am exhausted, Drake.”

Tim nodded. He reached out, offered his hand to Damian, but the omega ignored it as he stood up. “Okay. I don’t know how comfortable the seats are for sleeping but it’s worth a try.” Damian went to move past Tim, and Tim reached out, gently grabbed at his hand. He paused, glancing back, and Tim stared at him, his eyes seeming almost hazy around the edges. “I’m glad,” Tim started, had to pause because his voice felt like it was about to crack, “to have you back.”

Damian said nothing for a moment, glanced down at Tim’s hand grasping his—and wanted their fingers tangled together. Wanted Tim’s hands in his hair, on his waist, his hips. Wanted them everywhere, as if they could make his skin feel right again.

He felt wrong, so wrong.

Tim let go, a moment later, but Damian didn’t move. He simply stared at Tim, for another second, two, three—

And then, very quietly, “Thank you, Drake.” His shoulders trembled, and Damian fought to hold everything in, fought to remain stoic. He had years of training in this—and while perhaps he let his emotions cloud him, perhaps he was rash, driven by them—

He still had the control, down inside him, when he needed it.

And now, he desperately did.

“Thank you for not forgetting.” With that, Damian turned, move back towards the front of the plane. Tim let him go, watched him—

Didn’t whisper how he could never forget, how he truly would have done anything to keep Damian
safe. Didn’t mention that he was sorry, for all he had put Damian through.

Instead, he kept utterly silent, as the omega settled down into his seat, away from him. As if he was locked away, within glass. Tim could see him, but he couldn’t touch- wasn’t sure Damian could hear.

*But his heart is glass-*

Tim made a point to keep himself busy, away from the front of the plane. Gave Damian his space, until he realized- when he headed back up to check on their progression of their route home, that Damian had fallen asleep. He was slightly turned to one side, head nestled down towards his shoulder, breathing evenly. Tim watched him for a moment, dared to reach out, gently brush some of his hair back.

Damian didn’t wake, and Tim couldn’t fathom the exhaustion, he felt. He knew Damian’s sleeping tendencies when he was stressed- how a single breath could rouse him. The fact that Tim could touch him made his heart break.

He glanced down at the way Damian had his hands wrapped around his waist, protectively over his belly, and he pulled his hand back, cradled it to his chest. He wanted to wrap himself around Damian, wanted to beg his forgiveness for this- wanted him to know that he was truly *sorry-*

This was Tim’s fault. He’d take responsibility for it. He wouldn’t leave this on Damian.

He forced himself to turn, to head back into the plane. He slid up a cover on a monitor built into the wall, bringing the computer to life. He touched the screen, began a call to the Cave, waiting as his line requested access.

When Stephanie’s face appeared on his screen, he wanted to kiss her.

“Tim!” she exclaimed, and he noticed she was in her gear. Her cowl was down, but he should see her suit, on her shoulders. The time differences hadn’t even occurred to him. “Oh my god, are you okay?”

“I’m alive,” he offered, “Okay is questionable. But I’m alive. And so is Damian.” He took a breath, glanced back at the front of the plane, at the seat where he knew the omega was curled up, sleeping. Guarded. “We’re coming home, Stephanie. We’re coming home.”

Stephanie grinned, and as she spoke rapidly, Tim felt his heart sinking, not lifting, as it should be. Sinking because he was sure the Damian he was bringing home was not the one he had left, so many long weeks ago. Was not the same boy he had promised to come back to- to talk to. This was someone *damaged-* and Tim didn’t believe he could ever truly understand what Damian must have been feeling, in that moment, as he slept in a darkness that couldn’t be comforting- and yet was better than what he had been used to, all these weeks.

*-Do not shatter it.*
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Coming home should mean healing. But healing is a long road, when coming home first means facing truths and owning up to what Tim and Damian have done.

Chapter Notes

As always, thanks to everyone who waited patiently for this update! I hope the new year treats you well! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Damian came to when the ship began speaking again. He opened his eyes, lifting his head slightly, found Tim had the controls in hand. He shifted, made a small sound, and the beta glanced over at him, offered up the pretty kind of smile that could stop Damian’s heart.

The sort of smile he didn’t feel he deserved.

“We’ll be home soon,” Tim said, looking far more at ease now. “Twenty minutes.” Damian nodded, straightening up. He hadn’t bother to buckle himself back in, and he stretched, arms lifting high as he felt his back muscles moving. It hurt, he felt tender from Tim cleaning his wounds earlier, but he welcome the stretch-

When he relaxed though, he caught Tim glancing away, and instinctively, Damian shifted away, tried to shield himself. Was sure Tim had seen a glimpse of his belly, from the way the robe would have shifted, pressed tighter to him. He closed his eyes for a moment, took a deep, slow breath.

When he exhaled, he opened his eyes. Tim was looking at the screen again, but Damian could see the tension in his mouth, his shoulders. He was sure Tim was begging to say something, but was keeping it to himself.

Damian appreciated that. He knew they had to- had to do something about this. Had to talk about it, really acknowledge it. But Damian wasn’t ready for that to happen, in this moment. All he felt ready for was hopefully stretching out on a real bed and sleeping for a solid week.

When the plane finally descended, sinking down into the cave, Damian was nervous. His heart was suddenly in his throat-

Knowing he had a family to face, with the shame of what he had done. How badly he had fucked up.

He felt frozen, as Tim eased back from the controls, stood up. The beta stretched, before glancing down at Damian, offering him his hand. Damian glanced at it- and despite the voices inside him, voices that sounded so much like his grandfather, screaming at him that he wasn’t worthy of even Tim’s hand, wasn’t worthy of this man who would have sacrificed himself just to get him home- he
took it anyway. Let Tim clutch his hand and gently pull him up, guiding him towards the back of
the plane.

By the time the door was open, there was a crowd waiting. If four could be a crowd. But Damian
had barely taken a step down the ramp with Tim before there was a very loud, “Oh thank god!”
and Stephanie was pushing away from the rest of the family, running for them. She was dressed
down into her civvies, and Damian realized he had no idea what time it truly was, in that moment.

She bounded up the ramp, throwing her arms around both of them. While Tim melted into her, an
arm going around her waist, Damian went rigid. He began to pull away, before he felt her hand on
the small of his back, a calming pressure- and he felt himself falling forward into her, pressing his
face into her hair. She squeezed them both gently, kissing the corner of Tim’s mouth when he
lifted his head-

And Damian’s temple, when he lifted his.

“We were worried sick,” she said, stepping back, walking backwards as they continued until they
hit the Cave floor. Cass moved up next to Stephanie, took her girlfriend’s hand and squeezed it-
and behind them, Bruce was looming.

Damian took a single glance at his father, before he looked away. He couldn’t bring himself to
meet his eyes- and suddenly he wanted to turn, to run back into the plane.

He didn’t feel like himself.

He wasn’t sure who he felt like.

The room fell to silence for a moment, before Alfred finally stepped forward, clearing his throat.
“Perhaps we should get you two properly cleaned up. I am sure you ar every tired.”

“I’m fine,” Tim said, “Damian-”

“Simply wants to sleep in a real bed,” Damian cut in, glancing away from Tim. Tim frowned, but
Damian missed it. However, if any of the family seemed against the idea, they didn’t voice it.

“Very well,” Alfred offered, “Allow me to escort you to your room. Master Timothy made a point
to contact us while you were in-flight, and I had thought you may be hungry. But that can wait.”
He held out his hand, and Damian walked towards him, taking it and thankfully following Alfred
away from everyone else, towards the elevator.

The alpha was quiet on the ride up, and Damian was thankful for that. Alfred had always been
comforting- and somehow, when there was worry about the rest of the family judging him, there
wasn’t for Alfred. As if Alfred could simply be above that.

Damian knew that was absurd- he knew the man formed opinions on all of their actions- but
somehow Alfred made it easy to forget that.

He was a silent presence, all the way to Damian’s room. And when the door opened and Damian
stepped inside, he could have fallen to the floor right then and there.

This was home. This was safety. This was what he should have never been able to have again.

“You must be exhausted, surely,” Alfred said, guiding Damian towards his bed. “But allow me to
at least take a look at you, Master Damian. Master Timothy said your back-”
“Is atrocious,” Damian offered, and then, with a sigh, “As you wish.” Damian worked at his robe, before pausing before he opened it. “Alfred-”

“We know, Damian,” he offered, and it was so tender that Damian felt his fingers trembling. Damian sucked in a breath, before letting it fall off his shoulders, dropping to the floor. He turned away, let Alfred work the bandages off his back, revealing the new healing wounds, the fresher ones.

Damian didn’t need to see Alfred to know the sorrow in his eyes. It was laced at the end of his words.

“Will you allow me to clean these and properly bandage them?” Damian nodded. “Good. I do not believe you need stitches, at least. And I know it may not be the most comfortable thing, but I would like to get some fluids in you, Master Damian. If you can handle an IV?”

Another nod.

“Very well. I will return shortly.” Alfred had barely taken a step when Damian felt his shoulders trembling, and quietly, said,

“Pennyworth?”

The man paused. “Yes?” Damian glanced over his shoulder, his arms wrapped around himself. And he felt it, felt it creeping up in his throat, along his spine- that shake, the tremble in his bones, the stinging in his eyes. Alfred took a step towards him- and something snapped in Damian, something that had barely been holding on, barely clinging to him. He pressed himself into Alfred’s arms, wrapped his own around the man, felt himself tremble.

Very gently, Alfred smooth back his hair, rest his hand at his waist, fingers curling to his back. He was careful to avoid any of Damian’s wounds, old and new. Damian squeezed his eyes shut, felt himself letting go of the control he had felt he needed to have.

He had needed to be okay. He had needed to prove something, in front of the family. Ra’s and his voice were in his head, and he so desperately wanted him gone, wanted to be worth something-

“You are safe now, Master Damian,” Alfred offered, still gently stroking his hair. “Your family will not let anyone harm you.”

“I was stupid, Alfred,” Damian whispered, “I fucked up.”

“You ran because you were scared, I am sure.” Damian pressed his cheek to Alfred’s shoulder, said nothing. “I can only imagine-”

“I was stupid to get myself into this position,” he mumbled, and then, because it was Alfred, because the man was so easy to confide in- because someone had to know, “It’s Tim’s.”

Alfred stiffened slightly, for the barest of moments. And then he was back to smoothing Damian’s hair. “Is that why you ran?” A gentle nod, and Damian felt so small, then. Like he was a child again. “And Master Timothy-”

“He knows, now.”

“I see.” Very carefully, Alfred guided Damian so he was standing straight up. “I have to get you cleaned up now, young sir. You need your rest.” Alfred rubbed Damian’s shoulder very gently. “I will only be a moment.” Damian nodded, watched as Alfred carefully stepped back, heading for
the door of his bedroom. When the door shut, he took a moment to wrap his arms back around himself, wishing he could stop trembling.

*

“He’s not in good shape,” Tim said, still in the cave. Bruce was looking at his arm, gently turning it in the light. He’d told Tim he wanted to stitch it up, and Tim was trying to ignore the needle he knew was coming. “Ra’s had him in a fucking dungeon. His back. He was whipping him. I fucking heard something about bleeding him.”

“There is something seriously wrong with that man,” Stephanie said. She was sitting on the counter, and next to her, Cassandra was sprawled in the computer’s main chair.

Tim was quiet for a moment—wincing when the needle made its first pass through his skin. “I’m…I’m worried about Damian. About what this did to him.”

“I’m worried for a lot of reasons,” Stephanie said, leaning forward. “We’re ignoring one of the main issues, guys. He’s pregnant.”

Tim bit his tongue, made not a sound at the needle’s second pass. His heart was racing now—and he wasn’t sure it was his place—but it felt wrong to stay silent.

“It’s…more complicated than that,” Tim said, glancing away from all of them—finding a spot on the far wall and staring at it. “The baby is mine.”

The room fell to utter silence—until the next pass of the needle through Tim’s skin, which had him gasping. He glanced over at Bruce, who was looking intently at his arm—wasn’t turning to look at him.

Stephanie and Cass, however, were staring directly at him.

“What?” Cassandra asked, pushing herself up in the chair. Stephanie had hopped down off the counter.

“Tim…how?”

“I don’t know. But Ra’s said it was mine—and he was keeping Damian for the baby. So that he had a worthy heir, according to him. With his blood and mine. I… I was going to trade myself, I was going to give Ra’s me in exchange for Damian being sent safely back home. But Ra’s wasn’t going to keep his end of the bargain…” Tim trailed off, and Stephanie’s eyes softened.

“You were going to give yourself to Ra’s for him?” Tim glanced up at her, ignoring the final stroke of the needle through his skin.

“What else was I supposed to do? I got Damian into this. It’s my baby too, it’s my responsibility—”

“Quite right that it is, Master Timothy.” Tim’s head jerked up, watched as Alfred reentered the cave, walking with a purpose. “I am glad this is in the open now—because carrying this secret might have been a bit much for my old bones.”

“He told you?”

Alfred nodded. “He did, before he nearly cracked in half. Master Damian is not in a good place.”
Tim sighed. Bruce was wrapping a bandage around his arm, and when he was done Tim reached up, raked both hands through his hair. “I fucked up,” Tim said, “I know. I just… I want to make it right.”

The room fell to silence for a moment, before Cassandra asked, very carefully, “How can you, Tim?”

“I… I don’t know. Damian and I- we haven’t even discussed it. Like… like it’s not happening.” He hung his head, heard the sound of the chair Bruce was in scraping as it was pushed back and he stood up.

“Talking is not happening tonight,” Alfred said, packing up a small bag. “Master Damian needs rest. You will only tax him to the point of, I fear, passing out completely. I’m going to hook him up to some fluids.” Tim nodded, not lifting his head. Stephanie stared at him, wanting to reach out, to touch his shoulder, his hair, to get her arms around him-

But Bruce was staring at her and Cassandra, and it was a stare she understood far too well. Next to her, Cassandra had pulled herself from the chair, was taking Stephanie’s hand. “Get some sleep,” she offered, “You need it, Tim. Once you’re rested, you can think about this.”

She gently tugged at Stephanie, who followed her wordlessly- but not without another glance over her shoulder, at Tim.

Only when they were on the elevator did Tim sigh, glance up at Bruce. “I’m waiting for you to knock me to the floor,” he admitted, and the man stared down at him. His eyes had gone dark- were unreadable, and Tim was truly convinced for a moment he would need more stitches.

And then, “Cassandra was right. You need to get some rest before we talk about this.” One of his hands twisted into a tight fist- but the other reached out, offered up to Tim. The beta glanced at it before accepting it, allowing Bruce to pull him up. “I’m just glad you’re both home,” he admitted, and reaching out, brushing some of Tim’s long hair back. “I’m glad that you brought him back to us.”

Tim nodded, wanted to curl up against Bruce, if he was honest. Wanted someone to tell him that it’d be okay, that it would all get figured out.

But he wouldn’t ask for that.

“Master Bruce is quite right,” Alfred interjected, now carrying his bag. “Rest. Your mind will not work at its best in your current state.” He reached out, placed a hand on Tim’s shoulder, gave it a firm squeeze. “Regardless of how this situation came to be, Master Timothy, I am sure I speak for all of us when I say, we appreciate what you would have given to bring Master Damian home.”

Bruce nodded in agreement, and Tim exhaled, softly. He offered up the faintest of smiles- and for at least that night, he was willing to forget about everything, and take their advice.

Get some rest. And when he was functioning again- when Damian was ready, they would finally talk.

* 

Damian’s sleep was heavier, but far from silent. He had fallen asleep shortly after Alfred returned, and his dreams were full of the crack of leather against skin, the feeling of his body tearing wide open. Of voices screaming in whispers that he was worthless.
Over and over and over again.

He would wake with a start, gasping, for a moment thinking the dark of the room was his cell, swearing he could smell damp earth- but then the shapes of his desk, the feeling of his bed came into focus- and he was home.

It was a routine of Damian carefully removing the IV from his arm, tearing at his bandages, and managing to drag himself to the shower, to wash the nightmare sweat away. It was endless, every six, eight, ten hours it happened.

He did nothing otherwise aside of sleep. Sleep and dream and silently scream.

Until Alfred came in to help with his bandages, and instead of replacing his IV, set a bowl of soup by his desk. Quietly urged Damian to take his time, but that real food was what he desperately needed.

Damian curled up in his chair, by his desk. He stared at the bowl, as if he couldn’t fathom what it was- when in reality, there was a gentle part of him that said he shouldn’t even be eating, shouldn’t even be alive-

He silenced it with a grit of his teeth, and forced himself to eat the entire bowl. It took nearly an hour. It left his stomach cramping after, and he curled up in bed, clutching at himself and willing it all away. Wanting to fall back into the dreams, even the nightmares. Feeling so listless, so out of himself, it was like his suppressants all over again.

There was a darkness in him he couldn’t shake.

He had his face pressed to his pillow when Alfred returned, coming around the bed to gently rub his back. He was the only one Damian had seen since he came back, after leaving the cave. Felt like the only one he could allow himself to be around- even if a part of him was still screaming for Tim.

Was screaming because of everything Tim would’ve given up for him- and how it had to mean something.

“My master Timothy has been asking about you,” Alfred whispered, “He is concerned about you.” Damian gently turned his head, glanced over his shoulder at Alfred. “He would like to see you, when you feel you are ready. I told him not a moment before.”

Damian inhaled, slowly. And the darkness in him, whatever it was- he knew it had to go. And that it wouldn’t, unless he acted. Unless he did something.

He’d taken his body back, when he refused his suppressants. He could take his mind back.

“I want to see him,” he whispered, and Alfred was silent for a moment, before nodding. He stood carefully, leaving the room just as silently as he always came. Damian didn’t sit up, barely moved. He kept his hand clutching at the sheets, forcing himself to take deep, slow breaths- until the sound of his door opening and closing, again.

The sound of gentle footsteps, moving across the room.

“Damian?”

The omega glanced up, found Tim standing half way between the bed and the door. For a moment, all he did was stare at him, like he wasn’t real- like Damian was dreaming still.
Like Tim was too good to be true.

Carefully, he sat up, leaning back into his pillows. He gave the smallest of nods, and Tim walked around the bed, sitting on the very edge of it, perched as if he was ready to jump away, should Damian not want to see him.

“It’s good to see you awake,” Tim whispered, trying to take in those pretty eyes. “How are you feeling?”

Damian shrugged a shoulder. “Strange,” he admitted, “Not the best.”

“Alfred said you finally ate.” Damian nodded. “Did it upset your stomach?” Another nod. It felt as if his throat was closing, like words simply were not a thing his brain knew. “Makes sense. You… haven’t really eaten much in a while.”

Tim’s eyes flickered, like he was going to look down- but he fought it. Damian instinctively tried to wrap his arms around himself, to lean forward, to hide his belly. The thought of Tim seeing him like that, seeing what he had caused, the shame of it-

“You’re inside your head,” Tim whispered, and Damian’s eyes snapped up to his. “I know. It happens to me. Can you come out?” He flipped his hand palm up, held it out. Carefully, Damian unwrapped his arms from around himself, reached out and gently set his hand in Tim’s. Tim felt the press of the new scar on his palm- but did not ask about it. Instead, “Can you tell me what you’re thinking?”

Damian shook his head, and carefully, Tim lifted his hand. His lips brushed his knuckles, and Damian felt his heart begin to race.

“Please? Any of it. Even if it’s just a few words. I… I want to be here for you, Damian. But you have to let me in.”

Damian blinked, his eyes beginning to burn. And he told himself he had to do this- he had to take himself back. “You can’t see me like this,” he started, and his voice sounded strange. He barely recognized himself. “I made a mistake…”

Tim squeezed his hand. “Damian, you didn’t make a mistake. You ran because you didn’t know what to do- and honestly… I don’t blame you. Talia loves you, running to her… it makes sense.”

“I made a mistake letting this happen,” Damian exclaimed, his voice breaking. Tim squeezed his hand tighter, shook his head.

“I did this to you,” he corrected, “You’re not to blame. I… I am. I know that. It’s my fault, Damian. I just… I want to make this right.” Tim swallowed. “I want to talk about this. But… I won’t force you to, until you’re ready.”

Damian stared at him, flexed his fingers in Tim’s hold. “I won’t ever be ready,” he said, thinking it felt true and yet it felt like a lie. He wasn’t sure of the difference, in that moment.

Tim’s eyes looked shattered, in that moment, and he reached forward with his other hand, let it hover next to Damian’s cheek. Damian leaned into it, sighed as his fingers played back, towards his hair. “Whatever you want to do,” Tim whispered, “I’m going to support you, okay? This is… this is your life, Damian.”

Damian turned, pressed his mouth to Tim’s wrist, the gentle burning scent creeping into his head. It felt… cleansing.
“I barely feel like it’s real,” he admitted, “I… I could barely take it in with Ra’s. I still think it’s just not happening.” He glanced down, and finally Tim’s eyes dragged away from his face, followed his own to the gentle bump his belly had become. “I don’t know what I want to do, Drake. I… I don’t.”

“Okay. That’s okay. You don’t have to know right now.” He slid a little closer, stroked his fingers back into Damian’s hair. “Just… it’s good to have you back.” Tim leaned in closer, and for a moment, Damian’s heart was up in his throat, pounding so hard he was sure Tim heard it. “I was worried about you. I came back and you were gone- and then when Talia got word to us… and seeing you… I just…”

Tim’s words broke off, and suddenly his arms were around Damian. He pulled him in, clutched him tightly, and for a moment Damian was limp against him. Then, he reached up, clutched at his back, turned and pressed his face into Tim’s neck, inhaling, shaking.

“I could have lost you,” Tim whispered, and Damian let a choked sob escape his throat. Tim clutched him tighter, and Damian could ignore the pain in his back from Tim’s hold, as he nuzzled against him, let himself begin to break all over again. His cheeks were wet before he even knew he was crying, his breathing labored- and Tim just held him.

He was just there, when Damian needed him most.

“I’m sorry,” Damian whispered, “Drake, I’m so-”

“You have no reason to apologize,” Tim offered, one hand reaching up to cradle the back of his head, tease his hair. “Babybat I’m sorry. Sorry for putting you in this position. Sorry for it all.” Tim turned, pressed his mouth to Damian’s temple. “I’m supposed to be your family, I’m not supposed to set you up to die.” Damian’s breath hiccuped, and he nuzzled into Tim’s neck again, breathing so deeply he was dizzy with his burning, subtly sweet scent.

His muscles began to feel like liquid, trapped between skin and bones.

When his breathing finally began to calm, Damian carefully pulled back. He leaned back against the pillows, reaching up to wipe at his eyes and looking away. Tim offered up the smallest of smiles for him.

“I think I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve seen you cry,” he said, “And the number of times you’ve apologized to me.”

Damian snorted, covering his mouth and for a moment nearly laughing. “You’re an ass.”

“Mhm. Not the first time I’ve been called that.” Damian’s hand fell away, and Tim sighed. “Your smile is gorgeous.”

That had Damian blushing. “-tt-” He glanced away, and Tim just kept smiling at him, before shifting his hands in his lap.

“Damian?”

The omega glanced back at him. “Hmm?”

“Can…can I?” He glanced down at Damian’s belly- and for a moment, the omega was struck that Tim kept asking before he touched.

He appreciated it more than he could ever voice. Silently, he nodded, and Tim reached out,
carefully pressed his hand against Damian’s belly. His lips parted gently as he slid his palm along the small swell of it, his eyes going a little wide.

“I can’t believe we did this,” he whispered, like it as something awe inspiring.

Damian wanted to have a retort ready, to ask what was so amazing- but he had none. All he had was silence, and a strange ease at having Tim touching him, that he wasn’t recoiling.

A part of Damian had been so sure Tim would pull away in disgust.

Damian leaned back more, beginning to pull away from Tim’s hand. The beta pulled back, but Damian shook his head. “No, don’t stop.” Tim glanced at him, and Damian looked away, at the spot next to him on the bed. “I’m just… tried still. I think I’ll be tired the rest of my life.”

Tim laughed at that, and very carefully he climbed over Damian’s legs. He settled in the space next to him, stretched out on his side so that he could rest his hand gently on Damian’s belly, as he nosed at his jaw affectionately. “Will this help you sleep?” he asked, and Damian nodded, letting his eyes fall shut.

Whatever unrest had been inside him, it felt chased away. And Tim’s scent was lulling him back into a dreamlike state, like he could sleep once again. Lighter, this time.

The darkness in his bones felt as it a layer had been scraped away. Leaving countless others, yes- but one less was still a step.

“I’ll stay if you want,” Tim offered, “Until you fall asleep. I don’t mind.”

Damian smiled over that, reached down and covered Tim’s hand with his own. Their fingers tangled together- and whatever this was, this moment- it was enough. Was enough to give Damian the peace of mind to slip back into unconsciousness-

And to sleep, for the first time, without nightmares.

*

Tim drifted without realizing it- and when he woke, it was with his arm protectively over Damian, his face pressed into his neck. He inhaled, sighed over the sweetness to his scent, that almond-cinnamon spice, his hand moving along the curve of his waist, up over his belly-

The beta opened his eyes, coming to. He sat up, carefully, glanced down at Damian. He was sound asleep, hadn’t stirred when Tim moved. Tim let his hand drift over his belly, eyes softening as he glanced down-

There was a pulling, in his chest, a strange sort of sorrow and adoration he didn’t know could exist. Tim didn’t have a name for it, wasn’t sure there was- but it felt like it was caving his lungs in, twisting the bone around his heart and lungs.

Carefully, he pulled back, climbing from the bed. Damian didn’t wake up- but he did roll to his side, pressing his face closer to where Tim had been laying, his body curling into where Tim’s body heat had been. Tim reached up, brushed his hair back, wanting to curl back up around Damian, to hold him.

But he felt Damian might do best if he gave him space, again. For a moment, just to rest. Tim forced himself to turn, to head for the door and quietly let himself out. He headed through the halls, down the stairs- thinking a cup off coffee might set his head on straight.
He walked into the kitchen, only to find Cassandra sitting on the counter, next to the machine. It was brewing already, low gurgling sounds echoing through the room. She gave him a nod, and Tim offered up a small, hesitant smile. Without saying a word, he moved around her legs, leaned against the counter next to her and folded his arms, content to wait for the machine to finish.

Cassandra leaned forward, and after only a moment, asked, “How is Damian?”

Tim glanced back at her, through the corner of his eye. “How did you know I was with him?”

“Beyond Alfred telling us Damian had agreed to see you? I can smell him on you.” Tim blushed a little, rubbing his hands along his jeans, needing to fidget, to move.

“He’s sleeping,” Tim offered, “I...I didn’t mean to fall asleep with him.” Cassandra’s lips curved into the faintest of smiles, and she reached out, gripped his shoulder.

“I am sure he is sleeping better,” she offered, “He would not have slept if you left him uneasy. You know Damian. Even in his weakened state, his will power-”

“Stubbornness,” Tim added, and Cassandra’s smile grew,

“It’s impressive.” He nodded, and she reached for his hair, affectionately toying some of it around her finger. “Did you speak with him?”

“A little,” Tim admitted, “Just… to let him know that whatever he does, I’m here for him. Whatever he wants to do- I’m gonna support him.” Cassandra nodded again.

“Stephanie finds it shocking that the two of you…” she trailed off, raising her eyebrows- and Tim blushed a bit more. “I am not shocked.”

“Seriously?”

She shook her head. “No. You two have always been… what’s the word…” she paused, thinking, “volatile. Explosive. But you never destroy each other. It was only a matter of time before something happened. Besides, Damian stares at you.”

“He glares-”

“Stares, Tim. Do you really think at this point he hates you?” Tim shook his head- he knew Damian didn’t, knew he hadn’t before this- “He cares. It’s obvious in the way he acts around you. His eyes, the way his body reacts to you. He smells different even with you.”

“Of course you’d see that,” Tim offered, turning more towards her.

“I’m just saying, I’m not shocked. And I think I… understand.” Cass pulled back, straightening her shoulders. “More than you think I do.”

Tim was quiet. He still felt the urge to explain himself, in the pit of his gut- like he needed everyone to know that Damian had wanted him- and how often had the teen ever wanted anything to do with him? That he’d smelled so utterly perfect and when he touched Tim it was all fire and pure desire- it was something Tim wanted to burn his finger tips on. That Damian had fed him fire and he had swallowed it willingly- had asked for more. Hadn’t wanted to stop until he’d burnt, from the inside out.

That while Damian had made his body feel unbelievable, there had been something inside him too, something in his chest, his belly, his very soul- something else that felt just as good, that had Tim
wanting to come back, again and again and again.

The coffee pot was quiet, Tim realized- wondered how long ago it had gone silent. Carefully Cass slid off the counter, grabbing the mug she had pulled down and pouring a cup. Tim watched the way she prepared it, before he cracked a smile.

“For Stephanie,” he pointed out, and she nodded.

“She intends to be out late tonight. I thought I should get a start on her caffeine intake.” Cass smiled, before leaving the mug on the counter and reaching out, offering her arms to Tim. The beta moved into them, leaned down and pressed his face into her hair, hugging her tightly. “You are here for Damian,” she whispered, “And we are all here for you. The both of you. Stephanie and I love you both.”

Tim smiled to himself, pulling back and kissing her forehead. “Love you too, Cass. You… have no idea what this means to me.”

She smiled at him, one last flash of teeth, before she gathered up the mug, leaving him be in the kitchen as she headed off for Stephanie.

* 

Damian fluttered his eyes open, realizing very quickly that he was alone. He sighed, rolled onto his back and stretched, arching his back and letting the his spine crack in a way that felt like a sin. He flopped back, reaching his hands up to run over his face, back into his hair.

Not a single nightmare. Not a hint of the terror that had riddled his sleep, since returning home. He desperately wanted to think it had simply been Tim’s pheromones calming him- the beta tapping into that alpha trait- but he knew it was a lie. He knew it was just the man’s presence alone, the calming affect it had on Damian because, with Tim, he felt safe.

Especially now. Before, during his heat, he had felt like Tim actually cared, like if Damian truly wanted, Tim would take care of him. Now? Now he knew that Tim would have given up everything he was, just to keep him safe.

It was such a startling feeling he could barely grasp it.

Damian reached down with both hands, rested them on his belly. He missed the way Tim’s hand had felt there, missed the way Tim had looked at him like he was something special. He’d looked at him that way in bed, and Damian would have done anything to keep him like that, forever. Wished he could have but blinders on Tim so that he saw only him.

He closed his eyes, rubbed gently. He felt a little sick, but it wasn’t overpowering. Not like it had been, in the first few weeks. And the sickness had felt mostly absent, while his grandfather had him.

He partially blamed it on the real food he had eaten, earlier. Even if he felt truly hungry for the first time in quite a while.

He rubbed again, sighing, letting his eyes fall shut- feeling almost calm. His bed smelled like Tim again and Tim hadn’t rejected him- Tim hadn’t flinched away from touching him. And while Damian had wanted so much more from it, he couldn’t ask for it. Tim had offered his support- and Damian hadn’t even been sure he’d have that.

He felt guilty, that he ever doubted it.
There was a knock at his door, and Damian pulled his hands from his belly, pushed himself up. “Yes?” he called, and the door gently pushed open, Bruce filling to doorway. The calm Damian had felt for a moment began to dissipate, and he swallowed thickly. “Father,” he offered, and Bruce stepped into the room, the door closing behind him. He crossed it, pausing at the edge of Damian’s bed, shoving his hands into his pockets.

“We need to talk, Damian.” The omega nodded, turning away from Bruce and sliding off the bed.

“Can we not do it here?” he asked—partially because he wanted nothing at all to taint the perfect scent of Tim still in his bed—and mostly because this room held too much intimacy for him, now. Too much between he and Tim to discuss where it had gotten them with his father. “I haven’t left since I returned home and… I think I would like to.”

Bruce nodded, pulled a hand from his pocket and gestured towards the door. Damian began for it, talking up step behind him. They stepped from the room, just as Tim began down the hallway, pausing when their eyes met.

“You’re up,” Tim offered, holding two mugs, one in each hand. Damian glanced at them, and Tim smiled sheepishly. “Tea. I thought you might like some.”

Damian smiled at that, not moving as Tim walked towards them, held it out. He curled his hands around it, enjoying the warmth that bled into his hands. He felt strangely cold, colder than he usually did—as if the fire that had once been under his skin was still refueling. “Thank you,” he said, lifting it and taking a sip. Tim nodded, glancing back behind Damian, at Bruce.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt,” he said, and Bruce reached out, placed his hand on Damian’s shoulder. It gripped—but gently, and Damian felt some of his tension beginning to ease.

“You’re not. In fact, I believe you should come with us. I think we all need to talk.”

Tim swallowed thickly, but nodded, falling in step with both of them as Bruce moved past them, heading for his study. The heavy doors moved like ancient walls as he opened them, gesturing towards his desk as Tim and Damian slipped past him. They walked over, and Tim settled on the corner of the desk, leaving the chair for Damian, who sank into it, folding his legs up so his feet dug into the cushion. It was protective, yet he didn’t feel threatened—simply at ease.

He took another sip of his tea as Bruce walked around the desk, settling into his own chair. He stared at the two of them, for a moment, before he finally said, “How long has this been going on?”

Tim glanced back at Damian, who shrugged a shoulder. “It… hasn’t,” Tim said, “I mean, it’s not something going on. It was just…”

“Drake was with me during my last heat,” Damian offered, deciding being direct and honest with his father would be the best approach. Lies would only anger him—and he didn’t doubt he would see through them. “I went off my suppressants. It came unexpectedly—and I asked Drake to stay. He did not decline.” Damian paused to sip his tea, calming his nerves with the warmth. “This was the outcome.”

“You went off your suppressants and didn’t tell me?” Bruce was staring, eyes dark, hard—his jaw set. Tim twisted his own mug in his hands, and Damian frowned.

“Yes. I am not a child, and my body is mine to do with as I please. I told you they were making me ill, and you did not listen. It seemed the only way to take myself back at the time.” Damian didn’t look away, and Bruce reached up, pinched the bridge of his nose. “You are thinking I was stupid.”
“It was not a smart decision,” Bruce agreed, and Damian clicked his tongue.

“What else would you have had me do? You were distracted and not listening to my pleas. I could not continue as I was. My body is mine, father. I will not have it feeling like a stranger.” Damian gripped his mug tighter- knowing that it felt a stranger then, in that moment. Had felt a stranger since he realized there was something else there.

Bruce let his hand fall to his desk, the other reaching up. The folded together, and he exhaled, slowly. “I’m not disagreeing,” he admitted- and that had Damian quirking up a brow.

Not the reaction he had expected.

“I didn’t even think about birth control,” Tim broke in, setting his mug down.

“You knew he was off his suppressants?” Bruce turned his eyes to Tim, and narrowed them. Tim swallowed.

“Uh… yeah. I did. And I just… I mean… I never thought I could…” he trailed off, sighing, hanging his head. “This is my fault. I didn’t stop to think, I just assumed I couldn’t get Damian pregnant.”

“By all accounts, the odds were slim at best,” Bruce agreed, turning his eyes back to Damian. The omega leaned forward, around his legs, setting his mug on the desk.

“You are not taking this as I expected,” Damian said, and Bruce offered him the faintest of smiles- a ghost of a curve to his lips. But it was enough to have Tim’s eyes widening.

“What did you expect?”

“Honestly? Anger. Disappointment. I expected you would think I had failed—” Bruce held his hand up, cutting Damian off, and the omega snapped his mouth closed.

“I’ll be honest- I’m not happy that the both of you made such blatant mistakes. You shouldn’t have gone off your suppressants, Damian. And you absolutely shouldn’t have kept it from me. And you,” Bruce continued, turning towards Tim, “knowing full well he was off them? You should have used your damn head. I expected a lot more from you there.” Tim bit at his lip, and Damian caught a sliver of his eyes- the hurt there, the fact that he had disappointed Bruce cutting in deep. Damian knew that ache, in his bones, so well.

“However,” Bruce said, “I understand why it… slipped your mind.” He leaned further onto the desk, and Tim’s head snapped up.

“Did you?” Bruce nodded. “But you’re…furious with me, right?”

“Not the right word.” Bruce shook his head. “I’m not angry with either of you. I almost lost the both of you. All because I made it too hard for Damian to come to me with this.” He glanced at his youngest son, his eyes softening. “I’ve been thinking on that, since you came back to us. Perhaps I was furious at first, at the both of you- but it’s not reasonable. I’m just happy you’re safe.”

Tim gawked, and Damian rubbed his hands along the arms of the chair. This… wasn’t at all what he expected.

“But I do have a serious question for you,” Bruce added, and Damian knew, knew before he asked- but let him, anyway. “What are you going to do?”
Tim fidgeted, gripping at the edge of the desk now. “Whatever Damian decides,” he said, “I… I’m going to support whatever he wants to do. It’s his body. It’s his choice.” He glanced back at the omega, who finally let his legs hang off the chair. He shifted his shoulders back, the small bump in his abdomen obvious. He licked his lips, waiting a moment as he tried to think of a way to put his thoughts to words, with the other two men staring at him.

“I don’t know,” he admitted, and he hated it, but it was true. “I don’t now what I want to do. I…” he sighed, reached down and rested a hand on his belly. “I barely even felt this was real, until recently. Grandfather felt like a nightmare, and I… I feel like it hasn’t sunk in.” He rubbed gently, glancing down. “But I think it’s starting to.”

And despite everything, despite himself- Damian smiled. Ever so slightly, but it was there. Bruce glanced over at Tim, who was too busy watching Damian to even notice his eyes.

And over that, Bruce smiled.

“You have to make a decision eventually,” Bruce said, and Damian looked up at him. “It won’t be easy, I’m sure. But it is your decision, Damian.” He pushed his chair back, walking around the desk, and got down, in front of his youngest son. He took his hand, rubbed his knuckles gently, glancing down at it- how it couldn’t fit within his own like it could, so many years ago.

If Bruce was honest, the hardest part of this might be simply admitting Damian had truly grown up.

“Whether you choose to have an abortion, or give up the baby- or keep it. It’s yours, and I won’t take it from you.” He looked up, before he pushed himself up, wrapped his arms around his youngest. Damian didn’t move for a moment, staring past Bruce’s arm in shock, before Bruce added, “I’m just glad you’re home, Damian.”

Damian smiled then, reaching up and hugging his father, his arms tight around him. He sighed, closing his eyes- and for a moment, there was nothing outside this. No nightmares, no truths to face, no decisions- just safety. Just acceptance.

Just the fact that his father hadn’t dismissed him as an utter failure.

“I’m glad you’re both home,” he added, looking over his shoulder at Tim. Tim shifted, turning to look at him, before Bruce pulled one arm off of Damian. The beta glanced at the space it created, before he slid off the desk and took the two steps into Bruce’s arm, sliding one around Bruce, the other around Damian.

The omega smiled, leaned in and pressed his cheek to Tim’s chest, allowed them both to embrace him. It was calming, a far better outcome than he had been braced for- and in that moment, he felt utterly foolish for ever running. For ever thinking his father would have passed judgement on his entire existence because of a lapse in judgement.

Still, it reminded him of his own shortcoming in failing to see this, and leaving at all.

“You’ll need to see a doctor,” Bruce said, pulling back. Damian let him, settled back into the chair- sighed softly as Tim reached out, gently brushed his hair back. Was glad the beta hadn’t left his space the moment the embrace had ended. “We’ll have to forge documents so it doesn’t look like your first visit. That would be… difficult to explain.”

Damian licked his lips. His heart rate had picked up, slightly, at the notion- but then Tim’s fingers were in his hair, and he was relaxing. “Okay,” he agreed, and Bruce nodded.

“But… that can wait. Let’s get you feeling a little better first.”
Damian smiled then. “You know, I think I may be rather hungry.”

Bruce grinned at that, reaching out and ruffling his hair, as Tim pulled his hand away. “I’ll go find Alfred. I’m sure he’ll be thrilled to hear that.” He glanced at Tim, holding the smile, before heading for the door. When he was gone, Tim was reaching for the mugs on the desk.

“Your tea’s pretty cold now,” he said, “I can go warm it up, bring it back up to you if you want to lay back down.”

Damian shook his head, pushing out of the chair. “I don’t want to lay down again. I’ve slept enough.” He reached out, took his own mug, if only to have something to keep his hands around something. He knew the conversation wasn’t quite done- that there were still unspoken things between them, things his father did not have a say in. That he did not need to hear. “Drake… can I ask you something?”

“Of course babybat.”

Damian licked his lips, squeezed the mug tighter. What he wanted to say, to ask- it felt like opening his chest, like breaking his ribs for Tim. “You told father this was not something. And I just want you to be direct with me.”

Direct because Damian didn’t have it in him to chase dreams. He may have felt better, in that moment, but he knew what happened when he closed his eyes, when he was given time to sink back into his head.

He wanted to cling to this calm as long as possible- but he always wanted the truth. “Is it nothing at all?”

Tim stared at him for a moment, before frowning, his eyes going soft. “Damian,” he offered, setting his mug aside and reaching out, placing both his hands on his shoulders. “I… I don’t know. This is all really sudden. I’m going to be here no matter what you do but… I haven’t thought about what we are. We weren’t anything before this and I don’t want a baby to be the only reason we’re…you know.” Tim sighed. “I need time. Just like you need time.”

Damian nodded, his breath catching in his throat. He held it back, felt utterly weak and defenseless as his eyes began to sting. He kept his chin still, high, didn’t speak for fear of his voice breaking but thought he was going an alright job of keeping his composure.

Because if he was honest, he wanted this to be something. He wanted Tim to say yes and to kiss him again, like he had months ago. Wanted Tim to smile at him and simply hold him.

“I’m sorry,” Tim added, and Damian shook his head.

“No apology necessary.” His voice had the smallest waver to it, and he cursed it. “Forget I asked. It was foolish.”

“Damian-”

“Can we go downstairs now?” The omega gently pulled his shoulder back from Tim’s hand. “You were right, my tea has gotten cold.”

Tim hesitated, looking at him for a moment, before he nodded. “Sure Damian,” he said, as the omega turned, heading for the door. “Sure.”

*
The days began to take on a structure again, for Tim. He moved back onto the patrol roster, and he could admit that feeling Gotham’s night air in his lungs was cleansing.

Damian began to exist again, outside his room. Began to ease himself back into life. He didn’t say much- but Tim didn’t push.

If anything, he let himself submerge into his work again, to give Damian his space. But the omega’s question rang through Tim’s head, over what they were-

And it was confusing, if Tim was honest.

He couldn’t have fathomed that Damian had truly wanted them to be anything at all- he thought it was physical, and maybe if Tim cared a little bit too much, had the urge to simply care for Damian more than he anticipated- well, that was on him.

But Damian- Damian having that almost hopeful glint in his eyes for a moment- it was too much. It made Tim’s heart ache, because he couldn’t give him the answer he wanted.

He couldn’t say yes, couldn’t agree to be anything more than they were. Because he didn’t know if he wanted it. Didn’t know if he could want it. And he refused to put Damian through the hell of failed love simply because of a child.

That couldn’t be what held them together.

Tim sighed, leaving his room as the sound of late morning rain poured down against the manor. It felt strangely warm for mid November, and if he was honest, he was just glad this wasn’t snow.

He’d barely gotten to the stairs when he heard the sounds of voices, loud, from towards the door. He paused, a hand on the banister, managed to hear,

“You were supposed to call me the moment he was back, goddammit. Why was that so hard?”

Tim frowned, before he began down the stairs. He didn’t need to see Dick to recognize his voice- and sure enough, a few steps later, and he could see him, off towards the corner of the large room, pointing at Bruce as he spoke angrily.

“I was worried sick!”

“He needed time,” Bruce said, and Tim paused at the foot of the stairs. “Dick, he went through hell. He didn’t need this.”

“This is Damian Bruce. He needs me.” Dick tossed his arm down, looking away- before his eyes found Tim. The beta tensed a little, said nothing as Dick seemed to relax. “Thank god, Tim. Where’s Damian? How is he? Bruce hasn’t told me shit other than he ran off and Ra’s had him.”

Tim swallowed. He knew, before he left, that Bruce had agreed to bring Dick into the loop. It felt wrong to keep him in the dark- he was family, and he loved Damian as if Damian was his other half-

But Tim was realizing Bruce hadn’t been completely honest with Dick- and god, worse, hadn’t told him Damian was safe-

Tim knew Dick was in over his head, dealing with the gang wars in Bludhaven, but that didn’t mean he needed to be left in the dark.
“I haven’t seen him yet today,” Tim finally admitted, “He might be in his room-”

“What is going on?” Tim turned, looked up the stairs- and there was Damian. Tim assumed he had come from his room, once Dick’s voice had gotten too loud-

“Damian, thank fucking god.” Dick crossed the room in quick steps, bounding up the stairs- but nearly stumbled, half way up. He reached out, gripped at the railing, pausing to simply stare at Damian-

And Tim felt his throat going tight. The omega’s black tshirt and open cardigan helped to conceal his belly, but Tim figured from where Dick stood, he could tell.

He knew Dick wasn’t an idiot- far from it.

“What the hell is going on,” Dick said, continuing to stare at his youngest brother. Damian’s cheeks tinged, and Tim turned, looked at Bruce.

“You didn’t tell him?”

“Grayson,” Damian was saying, against Tim’s voice.

“He had enough going on.” Bruce now, adding to the chaos rising in the room.

“I’m pregnant.” Damian glanced away- because saying that and looking Dick in the eye, looking at the man who had been his Batman, had been his damn near everything for so long, his best friend and his brother, his almost father- it hurt just as much as facing Bruce with the news.

Tim clamped his mouth shut, hearing Damian’s voice, and Bruce followed.

Dick finally moved then, walking up the last few steps. He placed both his hands on Damian’s shoulders, squeezing gently. “But you’re okay?” he asked, and Damian nodded.

It was a bit of a lie, but passable.

Dick pulled the omega into his arms, held him tightly, reaching up to stroke his hair. Damian fell right into it- no hesitation, no fear- pressing his face into Dick’s neck and inhaling his calming scent, clutching at the back of his shirt.

There was a tightening in Tim’s belly over it, and he had no word for it- the only word that came to mind, he didn’t want to admit to himself.

When Dick finally pulled back, ran his thumb over Damian’s warm cheek, he was looking at him like Damian had been returned from the dead. “I was worried about you,” he said, “When Bruce called- he just said Ra’s had you. Said Tim was going to bring you home- but god, he wouldn’t tell me anything. I almost dropped everything to come after you. Would’ve, if Wally hadn’t stopped me.”

Damian offered up a smile. “So your idiot mate is good for something after all.” That had Dick cracking a grin. “Drake returned me home, as promised.”

Dick nodded, glancing back down the stairs, at Tim. “That he did.” Tim wouldn’t meet Dick’s eyes- his belly still uneasy. He had this feeling, in just a matter of seconds- “But.” Dick turned back towards Damian, eyes going slightly stern. “How did this happen? What happened to you, Damian? This didn’t just… it wasn’t while you were-"
“It was me.” Dick glanced back, again, at Tim, who heaved a sigh. “The baby is mine, Dick.”

And suddenly the ease in Dick’s eyes was gone.

“How the hell did that happen?” He pulled away from Damian, turning fully to stare at Tim. Tim lifted his hands, palm out, wanted Dick to know he wasn’t going to hide anything.

“Damian went off his suppressants, and went into heat. And I… I was with him, through it. I didn’t even think I could do this, Dick. I didn’t think about precautions. It’s my fault.” Tim sighed. “It was just a one time thing, but-”

Damian winced at that, and Tim felt his heart sinking.

“What the fuck were you thinking Tim?” Dick bounded down the stairs, smacking Tim’s hands down. He reached out, grasped at the collar of his shirt. “He’s a fucking kid Tim, for the love of god! He’s your brother-”

“Grayson!” Damian took a step down the stairs, but Dick wasn’t listening.

“You’re supposed to protect him- and you go and fucking knock him up?” Tim frowned, reaching up and gripping Dick’s wrists, squeezing.

“I didn’t plan this! I wasn't thinking-”

“Fucking right you weren’t!”

“Dick!” Tim and Dick both snapped their heads towards Bruce’s voice. He was heading for the stairs now, glaring. “Let go of Tim.”

“You knew and you didn’t tell me,” Dick spat, glaring at Bruce. “You always fucking do this. How about a little inclusion, huh?” He let go of Tim, his glare dead on Bruce now. “Damian’s my family too, I would’ve gone off the face of the Earth to bring him back-”

“Yeah well, no one needed to go through hell except me,” Tim said, glaring. “Consider it me atoning for what I did to Damian.”

Dick glanced back at Tim. “I don’t want to hear it, Tim.”

“You’re fucking going to. You don’t understand what I was going to give up to keep Damian safe, Dick. You don’t realize how bad I feel about this. This is my fault and I know it- and I’m doing what I can to try and make it right. I don’t need your patronizing and your damn judgement.”

“Enough!” Damian was half way down the stairs now, his hands balled into fists. The other three were looking at him now. He was scowling, his cheeks tinged pink. “You are acting like children. Grayson, I am not a child that needs to be coddled. Do not look so alarmed that I took someone to bed.” Dick snapped his mouth shut, grinding his teeth, and Damian folded his arms. “This discussion is over. I am alive, and if your concern was over my well being- well, I am in one piece. Everything else is debatable.” He clicked his tongue. “You all have made me regret getting out of bed this morning.”

Damian turned at that, heading back up the stairs, leaving them there. Tim watched him go, before he turned, stared at Dick. “You don’t know the half of this,” he said, “Try not to just jump to your own damn conclusions before you know the whole story. Oh, and thanks for giving a shit that I’m in one piece too.”
“Why wouldn’t you be?” Dick asked, the annoyance and frustration there in his voice, but the venom leaking out. “You weren’t the one Ra’s took-”

“It’s Ra’s Dick. Fucking put it together. I don’t want to explain myself to you right now.” Tim pushed past him then, heading for the door. He didn’t bother to look back, to see Bruce reaching out for Dick’s shoulder, speaking low- trying to fill him in on what had happened.

He didn’t care, because he was angry- not even at Dick, but at himself. For not being braced for it. He had been lulled by Bruce’s acceptance, it was easy to forget that Dick could be just like him, that Dick held Damian up like some sort of eternal child, something to protect.

It didn’t matter that he knew Dick loved him too, like a brother- he had jumped in without looking and Tim frankly didn’t feel like giving him the time of day, in that moment, to open his eyes.

He headed for his car, pulling his keys from his jean pockets. In that moment, a long, fast drive felt like the only thing he needed, to let the frustration out.

*

Damian remained in his room, the rest of the day. Dick didn’t come up after the incident, and aside of Alfred checking in on him, he was left at peace. He spent the time attempting to draw- attempting to re-acquaint his fingers with the pencil and pages he had been away from for weeks.

But it felt foreign, and every shape he began he felt looked alien. He would push through for a few lines, before giving up, moving on- hating it. Hating all of it.

It was evening, when there was a knock on his door. He glanced up from his desk, setting his sketchbook down next to his now empty mug, as the door cracked open, and Stephanie popped her head in.

“Hey hotstuff,” she said with a smile, “You bored?”

Damian quirked up a brow. “Why?”

“Because Bruce took Cass into the city for some Wayne thing and Tim left early for patrol. Was wondering if you wanted to keep me company while I suit up.” Damian frowned. Tim had left already? He had expected the beta to at least come see him- knew he had stormed out, after Damian had come up to his room.

He pushed his chair back, shrugging a shoulder- decided there was no harm. He hadn’t been down into the cave since his return, and it felt good, following Stephanie to the elevator, riding it down to the depths he knew so well.

“Always more fun with company,” Stephanie said, heading right for the case her suit was in, she opened it, pulling the pieces out and flopping them on a table, as Damian settled in the chair by the computer. “Bruce told me Dick stopped by.”

Damian sighed. “He did. He… was unaware of my condition.” Stephanie rose both her brows.

“Condition? Babybat you don’t have some strange alien disease- you’re pregnant.”

He sighed again, rolling his eyes. “Whatever. He was unaware, and he was not… thrilled. Especially when he realized…” Damian glanced down at his belly, “realized it was Drake’s.”

Stephanie tugged her tshirt off her head, tossing it on the table. She kicked her shoes off, reaching
down to pop open the button to her jeans. She’d never had a problem suiting up or stripping down
in front of anyone. “Well, he’s Dick. He’s protective of you. He loves you.” She glanced over at
him as she squirmed out of her skinny jeans. “He go after Tim?” Damian nodded. “Well… he loves
him too. I hope Tim doesn’t forget that.”

“He really left already?” Stephanie nodded, kicking her jeans aside and beginning the work of
squirming into her suit. Damian glanced away, at the monitors, his hand resting on his belly
without realizing it. Across the room, Stephanie caught the action, and hopped down the stairs
leading to the suits, crossing the room with the top of hers pooled around her waist, her sports bra
showing off the scars along her abs- one jagged one along her ribs disappearing beneath the fabric.

She reached Damian and leaned down, glancing over his shoulder at the idle screen in front of him,
hers hand reaching up to splay over his. “Tim will be okay. And Dick will simmer down. And then
we can all blame Bruce for this, somehow.”

Damian laughed, leaning his head back, and Stephanie kissed his cheek.

“I’m going to pry,” she admitted, “So you shut me up if you don’t wanna talk, okay? But… what
are you and Tim going to do. Are you guys-”

“Together? No.” Damian sighed, let his eyes fall shut. “He has told me we are not. That he needs
time to think. He does not know what he wants.”

“But what do you want?” Damian said nothing for a moment, unsure in the moment of the answer.
He felt Stephanie moving her hand, gently, sliding his between her and his belly, and the motion
was soothing.

“I want Drake,” he admitted, for the first time, to anyone other than himself. “He’s all I’ve wanted
for a long time.” Damian opened his eyes, turned and looked at Stephanie.

She was smiling at him. Smiling in a sweet way that had his stomach diluting. “Okay. So that’s a
start. And what about the baby?”

“I…” Damian bit at his lip. “I don’t know. I can barely focus on it- it doesn’t feel real. I don’t
know if I want a child or not.” Stephanie pulled back, turning Damian’s chair so he was facing her.

“Damian, I’m going to be very honest with you,” she said, “And I want you to just listen, for a
minute. Okay?” He nodded, and she smiled at him, softly. It made her face seem eternally young.
“I understand what you’re going through. Probably better than anyone else in this family does. And
trust me- I wasn’t sure, when I was pregnant. I was younger than you, I was scared just like you-
and I didn’t have the support you’ve got. Didn’t have the privilege.” She let one hand move from
her hip to her stomach, sliding along the curves of her abs, over scars ancient and new. “I made a
decision that I love and hate everyday. But I know my baby is better off, without me. I couldn’t
have done that, on my own. Raised a baby.”

“You think I should give it up?” Stephanie shook her head.

“No. No. I think you should consider everything you have and you don’t, when you make this
decision. You have the support to do it- I couldn’t afford to give a child a good life, then. You can.
You have an entire family that would welcome your baby with open arms- and you also have a
family that will welcome you with open arms, if you chose another option. You’re young, and you
don’t have to do this- but if you want to, you can.” Her fingers flexed, and Damian heard the gentle
waver to her voice. “I just want you to be happy with the choice you made, because you’re going to
live with it. But you do it for you, and not for any of us. This is about you. No one else. Not Tim or
your father or any other damn person on this planet.”

Damian stared at her for a moment, before he stood up. He took the few steps to her, reaching out and wrapping his arms around her. Stephanie hiccuped her breath, clutched at Damian, as he squeezed her tightly. Her eyes stung like fire, the corners wet, and she let out a choked laugh at herself.

“I’m not supposed to be the emotional one,” she said, and Damian chuckled.

“We both can be,” he admitted, resting his head down on her shoulder. In his chest, his ribs felt tight- and he squeezed her harder. “Brown?”

“Yeah babybat?”

“Thank you.” Damian closed his eyes, felt Stephanie running her hand along his spine. Damian left the rest silent- thank you for seeing me, for opening up, for baring what hurts you so much. Thank you for understanding, for explaining- for reasoning. Thank you for being there.

“Anytime,” Stephanie whispered, slowly pulling back. She reached up, wiped at her eyes. “I should probably finish suiting up- Tim’s gonna think I bailed and went to bed.”

“Would you care for some company?” Damian asked, as she headed back towards the rest of her gear, pulling the top of her suit up. “At least until you are in the city? I am not tired. I can remain here.”

Stephanie turned and him and smiled as she tugged her gloves on. “You know what Damian, having you in my ear sounds like a great time, right now.”

Damian smiled, before returning to the chair, bringing the computer to life. He secured a comlink in his ear as Stephanie finished dressing- and could only think that he was allowing a voice of reason into his head, when he heard her test the line before she headed for her bike.

He knew she had a point- he had support, for whatever decision he chose to make.

Chapter End Notes

Don’t worry, Dick is coming back to explain himself and his actions in the next chapter- and get the whole story.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Damian doesn't want to be alone- but he doesn't want anyone to look at him. He can barely keep track of reality- and when he finally comes to terms with it, with what is happening, and makes his decision, he's sure he's crazy.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was such a roller coaster to write. And such a blast.

It was another full week before Bruce broached the subject of a doctor again.

Of all places, dinner seemed like one of the worst choices for the discussion- but Damian had no control over when his father chose to spoke his mind. He had fallen back into a more regular eating habit now, which seemed to please Alfred the most out of any of the family.

For once, they were all together. Stephanie was chattering about some television show she had spent her entire day watching- Damian knew because he’d spent a few hours of that day with her, casually fighting with his sketchbook with his feet tucked up under her thighs. Her voice had Damian smiling, the way she was gesturing across from him was so alive-

And the way Cassandra watched her was so heart warming.

Bruce was on Damian’s right, and as Stephanie continued, he leaned slightly over the table, speaking softer- as if the words were meant solely for Damian. “Damian, we need to discuss something.”

Damian glanced at him, hand pausing on his glass of water. On his other side, Tim had turned- had heard Bruce’s voice. It was only after a moment that Damian realized Stephanie had stopped talking- that they were all looking at both of them.

“Well, I guess we can now,” Damian said, “although you have interrupted Brown’s enlivening reenactment of the fifth episode.”

“You’re ruining the best part Bruce,” Stephanie chided, even as she picked up her glass and leaned back in her chair, going quiet after that. Bruce glanced at everyone, before turning his eyes back to Damian.

“You need to see a doctor,” he said, and Damian felt a little tightness, in his belly.

He knew he needed to- that at this point, it was borderline dangerous that he hadn’t. But seeing one was another step in accepting that this was happening- and was another step towards making a decision he wasn’t sure he was ready to make.

“I’ve gone ahead forged documents, so they won’t think it’s the first time,” Bruce continued, “And
we will work out a story for gaps in your visits. But for your health—"

“I’m not arguing,” Damian said, holding his hand up. “It’s fine. I’ll go. Now, can we go back to—”

“I can go with you,” Stephanie broke in, and next to her, Cassandra nodded.

“I can as well.”

“There will be no need,” Alfred broke in, from the other end of the table, “I will escort Master Damian—”

“I thought I would take him?” Bruce now, and Damian felt like his head was spinning as they all erupted in chatter. He reached up, pinched the bridge of his nose, before raising his voice,

“Enough!” Everyone went quiet, their eyes turning to him. He sighed, moving his hand slowly to rest on the table. “I do not need an escort. I will take myself. This does not need to be an ordeal.”

“Babybat, it’s your first real visit,” Stephanie said, “It might be stressful. Scratch that, it will be stressful. And you’ll get your first ultrasound.” Stephanie paused, leaning her arms on the table and shifting forward. “I just think you might want some support.”

“-tt- I appreciate the sentiment, but I am fine on my own.” He folded his arms, sticking his chin out. “It is simply a doctor. Nothing I have not experience before.”

Stephanie glanced around her for support, mostly at Bruce and Alfred, who both gave her a little nod.

“At least allow one of us to take you,” Alfred said, “For our own peace of mind, Master Damian.”

“It’s not necessary—”

“I should.” Damian turned, along with the rest of the family, looking at Tim now. He was looking down at the table, as if the table cloth suddenly had an intricate story scrawled on it, one that he had to know the ending to. “It’s my responsibility.”

Damian clicked his tongue again. “I am not a responsibility,” he said, curt and bitter. Tim glanced at him, before looking away- and his eyes made Damian feel bad for saying it- but it was true. He disliked Tim referring to him as such, didn’t like the idea that Tim felt like he was required to do anything.

He wanted Tim to choose to do it.

It was perhaps the only reason he could handle Tim denying feelings for him- leaving Damian in a limbo of are we or aren’t we. He could respect Tim wanting anything between them to not be a result of their child.

“I want to,” Tim finally said, after seconds that felt like minutes. He looked up, turning to actually face Damian. “I’d like to be there for you. With you.”

Damian shifted, feeling anxious with everyone watching him. Finally he huffed, offering, “You can drive me there, Drake. But you are not going in with me.” Damian hesitated, before adding, “I want to do this alone.”

The beta nodded, casting his eyes away from Damian. “Okay,” he said, “Fair enough. Thank you.” Damian shrugged a shoulder, before turning back to his dinner. Suddenly, his appetite was gone,
and he simply wanted this little gathering to be over with.

*

The car ride, a few days later, into Gotham was silent. Damian had said little to Tim that morning- and the beta had respected his silence. He appreciated that.

It was cold, and Damian was slouched down in his seat, hands stuffed into the pockets of his coat despite the heat blasting. He hated the cold. It didn’t matter that he ran hot, he had been used to the heat, as a child- and even though he had been in Gotham for nine years now- nearly half his life- he had never gotten used to the winters.

He watched the traffic outside. It was nearing the holiday, and the traffic was heavy with people coming into the city to see family- or leaving. He tried to find something soothing in the rushes of colors, something to distract him.

His belly was cramping with nerves.

It shouldn’t have matter, shouldn’t have been a big deal. It was a doctor. Damian was used to them, was used to all things medical. He’d broken enough bones, required enough stitches- but something about this was jarring, was real. His hands, in his pockets, itched to rest on his belly, protectively. As if he could keep what was growing inside protected from the fact that it was truly about to become a reality.

As if he could keep his baby in fantasy forever.

Tim got off the highway, entering the city, and Damian fidgeted, slowly pushing himself up. His father had assured him he was seeing a private doctor- one that he had thoroughly investigated himself- and that he had nothing to worry about.

But Bruce’s eyes had screamed that he wanted to be there. To be there for his son like he hadn’t, so many times in the past.

Damian swallowed, felt his heart beginning to hammer as Tim slowed the car, his blinker going on. The clinic was in sight- a cute building listing a few doctor’s names, specializing in prenatal care. Damian inhaled, slowly, held it in his lungs until it burned, then exhaled, to keep his hands from shaking.

It didn’t work.

Tim pulled up to the front of the building, putting the car in park. He looked over at Damian, offering up a nervous, small smile. “Are you sure you want to go in alone?”

Yes. No.

Come with me.

Don’t look at me.

A rush of everything, all of it conflicting, and Damian’s heart hurt, in his chest. He forced himself to nod. “I am sure. It’s just a doctor, Drake. Nothing more.” Tim nodded, but held out his hand. Damian pulled one of his own from his pockets, offered it up to Tim to gently grasp, his thumb rubbing along Damian’s knuckles.

Tim’s leather gloves blocked the heat of his hands, the feeling of his finger tips. The edges felt
strange on the scar on Damian’s palm, and he missed his skin. Missed Tim’s skin far more than he was ready to admit.

“If you need anything,” he said, “I’m right out here, okay? I’m not leaving.”

Damian glanced down at their hands again, wished Tim would just take the glove off. Wished he’d give him that little bit of himself. “I won’t,” Damian said, “Need you.” It felt bitter, in his throat—but rolling off his tongue, it felt like a pathetic lie. “Go get coffee or something.”

Tim said nothing, just squeezed Damian’s hand. When he let go Damian pulled away, freed himself from his seat belt, before opening the door, stepping out. He closed the door, shoving his hands back into the pockets of his coat, glancing up at the sky for a moment- trying to take it all in.

Then, with another deep breath, he was heading for the door.

The inside was **crisp**, the floor tiled in white and yellow and pink. The walls were a soft eggshell, trimmed in a pale blue that matched the shades of the tiles, subtlety. It was calming, and Damian tried to focus on the pattern in the tiles, as he walked up towards the front desk.

A young woman looked up at him, flashing a pretty smile. “Hi,” she said, “Can I help you?”

“I have an appointment.”

“Oh, what’s your name?”

Damian swallowed. “Wayne. Damian Wayne.” She turned to her computer, typing without comment, before glancing back at him.

“Found you right here Mr. Wayne. If you could have a seat, someone will take you back for the doctor shortly.” Damian thanked her, turning away and heading for one of the chairs. He settled in it, fighting the urge to tap his foot. He pulled his phone from his pocket, trying to distract himself with it, but couldn’t help but glance up a moment later when the doors opened again.

A woman walked past him, holding the hand of a small child. His arm was stretched up above his head to reach, but he seemed content to keep in step with her. She’d barely gotten half way to the desk before the woman behind it was greeting her by name, asking how she was feeling today.

Damian glanced back at his phone, sifting through his emails. He hadn’t been to the office in what felt like centuries- and to be honest, he didn’t miss it at all. But he knew there were aspects of the company he should try to stay caught up with-

Granted, he could simply ask his father for a briefing, or Tim-

He paused his reading, feeling eyes on him. He glanced up, and noticed the small child that had walked in a moment ago had pulled away from his mother, was looking at him from a few steps away. Damian frowned, unsure what to do with the child, who seemed to be studying him like he didn’t know what to make of Damian.

Before Damian could move though he took the last few steps, reaching out and clutching at Damian’s leg. Damian quirked up a brow, as the boy hugged him, propping his chin up on his knee. He didn’t say a word, but he offered Damian a big grin, and Damian simply didn’t know what to do.

A moment later though he heard a loud, “Sweetie what are you doing?” And the boy’s mother was rushing over. She reached down, managed to get her son to let go of Damian’s leg and very gently
pulled him back. “I’m so sorry,” she said, “I shouldn’t have let go of his hand.”

“It’s… alright,” Damian offered, shoving his phone back in his pocket and leaned his arms on his thighs. He smiled at the boy, who grinned right back at him again.

“He has a pension for male omegas,” she said with a laugh, her hand moving towards her swollen belly. She was so much bigger than Damian, and for a moment he could only wonder if he would get that big. “Guess he likes anyone he can relate to.”

Damian glanced up at her as she spoke, then back down at the boy. “I can understand that,” he said, softly, as the boy fidgeted, looked like he wanted to cling to Damian’s leg again. Damian’s chest felt strange, warm over it all- and he realized the smile on his face wasn’t forced at all. He thought to ask the boy’s name, to offer an introduction, but the door next to the reception desk was opening, and a man was calling out, “Damian?”

Damian stood up, offering the boy a small wave, before heading for the nurse. The man smiled at him, gesturing for Damian to step through the door. He did, before it shut and the man stepped in front to him, guiding him down the hallway.

“Getting cold pretty fast,” the nurse offered, as they rounded a corner. The building seemed larger than Damian had thought.

“Uh, yeah.” He hated small talk, and would have preferred this small walk in silence.

“Never was a fan. You?” Damian shook his head, as the nurse opened a door. “Head on in, the doctor will be with you in a minute.”

Damian stepped inside, and the door shut. He glanced around the room- the walls were painted a lilac color, the floors now tiled in all pale yellow, with small purple polka dots to match.

It could have been a giant nursery.

Damian headed for the exam table, pulling himself up onto it and folding his hands in his lap. He wanted to dig into his pocket for his phone, something to occupy his hands, but there was a knock at the door before it opened, just enough for a middle aged woman to slip in.

“Mr. Wayne?” she asked, glancing up from her clipboard. Damian gave the smallest of nods, and she smiled. “Hi, nice to meet you. I’m Dr. Keller.” She glanced him over once, before holding her clipboard to her chest. “You want to take your coat off and stay a minute?”

Damian blushed, looking away as he unwound his loose scarf, before working on the jacket. He dropped them on a chair near the table, as she walked over, looking down at her chart again.

“I don’t normally see new patients as far along as you,” she said, “Usually by now you’ve got a set doctor.” She continued to scan. “Says you’ve been traveling?”

“I was away for business for a few months,” Damian agreed, the story his father had fed him falling from his lips like it was a truth. “I only just returned.”

“Uh-huh. Looks like we don’t have much to work with.”

“I… only recently realized I was…” Damian waved his hand, and she quirked up a brow.

“Pregnant?” He nodded. She smiled softly, stuffing her clip board under her arm. “Okay. So you had minimal prenatal care to this point. We’re going to treat you like a blank slate, okay? So I’m
going to need to run a few tests.” She set the clipboard down, heading towards the small sink in the room to wash her hands. “For your safety and the baby’s. I’ll keep it all as quick as possible.”

Damian watched her pull a set of gloves on, before she walked over, reaching for his arm. She settled a blood pressure cuff on him, sliding her stethoscope beneath it, and smiled at him again.

“How’s the blood pressure, okay?”

Damian nodded, fought down the urge to retort, and stared at the wall as the cuff tightened, tightened, paused- and then released. She hummed, reaching for her clipboard to jot a few notes.

“Blood pressure is good. You look like you take care of yourself though. Any history of high blood pressure during pregnancy in your family?”

Damian didn’t know how to answer that, considering neither of his parents had carried him- neither even had the ability to do so. “No,” he said, and she nodded.

“Okay, good. Do you smoke?” He shook her as she moved towards the counter, plucking out a few items and setting them on a tray. “Drink?”

“I’m not of age.”

“That wasn’t the question,” she teased, coming back. “No judgement.”

“No. Seldom. Only when it’s expected of me.” Damian thought to the endless stream of galas he had attended with his father, over the years. The taste of expensive champagne that he didn’t truly care for. “I am not a fan.”

She nodded, lifting a syringe and checking the needle. “I have to take a blood sample. I promise this isn’t too painful.”

“Needles do not bother me.” Damian didn’t look away as it slid into his skin, drawing out a small vial. After a moment she pulled the needle away, capping it and setting it down.

“Impressive. How is your caffeine intake?” She walked around the table, and Damian frowned.

“I miss coffee.”

She laughed. “I did too, when I was pregnant.”

And Damian wasn’t sure why, but he suddenly asked, “You have a child?”

“Children, yes.” She smiled, motioning for him to lift his arms slightly. “I have to measure your belly. It’ll help me project a better due date.” She eased the cloth measure around him, glancing at it for a moment before setting it aside and jotting down another round of notes. “Good. See, we’re going fast. Now, before we get to the ultra sound- because I know you’ve had little prenatal care to this point, I’d like to get a sample of your amniotic fluid. That’s in your belly, around the baby.”

Damian glanced down, lifted a hand and finally, finally, let it rest on his belly. “Normally we draw it earlier, to check for various birth defects. I’m going to assume you haven’t had this done, since I have no notes on it.” Damian shook his head. “Okay. It might sound intimidating, but I promise it will be quick. But since it’s unnerving- do you have someone you would like to come in?”

Damian hesitated for a moment, before saying, “No.” She nodded, looking back at her small tray of instruments.
“Alright. If you could lay back for me, and lift your shirt- up to your ribs is just fine. Here, let me help you.” She reached forward, shifting a pillow behind Damian as he leaned back, carefully pulling his shirt up over his dark skin. She ran a swab over a small area, disinfecting it, before lifting the needle. “You don’t have to look.”

Damian didn’t pull his eyes away, but he could admit, something in his stomach turned over as the needle eased into him. The doctor looked intent as she carefully drew out the smallest bit of fluid, before pulling it back out. She pressed a small swab to the spot, to grab the dot of blood that rose, before moving back to her tray.

“I’m going to get this ready for testing, and then I’ll come back for us to finish, okay?” Damian nodded, watched her dispose of her gloves and the tips of the needles, before gathering up her chart and the samples, slipping out the door.

The room fell silent around him, and he leaned his head back, closing his eyes. He pressed his hands to his belly, rubbed gently. He felt strange, in that moment. Seeming something pushing into his skin, knowing it was taking from around the baby-

If he was honest, knowing they were checking to see if something was wrong.

Until that point, despite everything, Damian hadn’t truly thought about something being wrong. He’d yelled at his grandfather, at the men in his employ, that they were going to kill his child before it was ever born- but the words felt like echoes. Like they didn’t actually touch his life.

Now they felt real, and Damian truly wondered for the first time is something could be wrong. If Ra’s had hurt his baby, if Ra’s had killed his child-

The door opened again, and Damian snapped his eyes open, sitting up gently. “Oh, you don’t have to move,” the doctor was saying, heading for a new pair of gloves. Damian relaxed a little, and she walked over, setting her chart down again. “I took another look at your chart- it didn’t hit me how young you were.”

Damian avoided her gaze. “Is there a lecture here about safety?”

She laughed. “Heavens no. I’m not here to judge, I’m just here to make sure you and the baby are safe. Besides, I’ve been in a similar place.”

“Yes, I was sixteen when I had my son.” She sighed. “Wasn’t easy, but it happened. It was just me for a long time- thankfully, my mom was wonderful and helped me out, watching him so I could finish high school, go on to college. Wouldn’t have been able to do it without her.”

The other parent?

“Oh, he split. Wanted nothing to do with me or the baby.” She laughed- and the sound wasn’t bitter. “His loss, to this day. My son is my world. Darling boy, he is. Going to do wonders, I say. He’s off in Europe, finishing up school. Scholarship and everything.” Her smile was proud, and Damian couldn’t help but return it.

“You must be proud.”

“I am, everyday. And it all worked out. We got through the rough times, and I met a wonderful woman down the road, with gorgeous babies of her own.” She reached for the machine, pulling it
closer finally. “It was nice to have someone understand the fear I went through, when I was pregnant. She went through it all as well- just later in life.”

“Is she an omega?” The doctor nodded.

“She is. We never tried for more children- knew there were options but three is such a good number. Her’s are still younger, one is just finishing high school and the other will be in it right when she leaves.”

Damian wasn’t sure what came over him- but suddenly his mouth was moving, and he was admitting, “He’s a beta.”

That had the doctor pausing. “The father?” He nodded. “Really? Well, you’ve got a little miracle in you, then. Not very often I have a patient that even knows a beta. Let alone is having one’s baby. And this wasn’t planned?”

Damian shook his head. “No… I… may have made a mistake. I stopped my suppressants and he was simply there when I… needed someone.”

He couldn’t fathom why he was talking to this woman- other than it felt good to talk. That her smile was lovely and her voice was calming, her eyes sweet. And when she reacted, there never seemed to be a hint of judgement. Only understanding.

“And you didn’t think of any other method of birth control,” she offered, “Because why would you need it?”

“Exactly.” He sighed in relief, tipping his head back. “I should have considered it, though. I shouldn’t have been weak. Heat or not, I have the blame on me.”

“This might be cold, sweetie.” Damian only nodded, giving a little gasp as the jelly to ease the movement on the ultrasound was squeezed onto his belly.

“He tries to take the blame, but I know it is mine. If I hadn’t gone off my suppressants, we wouldn’t be in this mess. Maybe we would have become something.” Damian closed his eyes, and the doctor glanced up at him.

“He sounds as if he’s still in your life.”

Damian paused, inhaling slowly, before, “He is. He drove me here. Did not seem to want me to come alone. He… he has promised support, no matter the outcome.”

She smiled. “Do you want him to come in? I mean, this is your first ultrasound. You can give him a call, I’ll have a nurse bring him back. Plenty of room in here.”

Damian shook his head. “No… I’m sorry. I’m talking.” Which is unlike me. “Can we just continue?”

“Sure thing.” She lifted the sensor off the machine, clicking the box on and settling it against Damian’s belly. He turned, looking at the machine as she slowly moved the sensor along his belly, before pausing, her mouth cracking into a grin. She pointed at a pulse on the machine, moving in a steady rhythm.

Damian felt his own heart suddenly go still.

“That’s our heartbeat,” she said, and Damian felt his own kickstart, the moment she said it. Felt his
pulse hammering in his veins, in his temples, his belly going tight-

His chest, suffocating him. Ribs closing in and gripping everything so tightly, and that was a heartbeat.

That was his baby’s heartbeat.

His baby was alright.

Damian was staring at the machine, and the doctor’s eyes softened. “You alright hun?”

“I… I mean…” Damian inhaled, slowly, felt his voice wavering. “Of course.” She nodded, easing the sensor along his belly again.

“If you look here,” she said, pointing to the monitor, “that’s the head, and here’s our spine-” she paused. “Do you want to know what you’re having?”

“I… I don’t know…” Damian trialed off, was too busy still staring at the pulse of the heartbeat, thinking he could feel it, inside his own. Echoing his own, in the chambers of his heart, spanning out to ring true in the hallows of his bones.

His baby's heartbeat.

And suddenly, so suddenly it knocked the breath from him, Damian didn’t want to be alone.

“Can I…” he paused, swallowed, and god why was it so hard to form words? “Can I call him? I think I was wrong…”

“Of course. Here.” She pulled the sensor off, the machine’s screen going black, and Damian was finally able to tear his eyes away. He turned, gently, reaching for his coat on the chair and digging through the pockets, looking for his phone. Once it was in his hands, he had it calling Tim before it was even near his ear.

It rang only twice, before Tim answered, voice sounding strained, nervous. “Damian? Is everything okay?”

“Everything is-” he felt a tremble in him, fought it down. “Fine. Fine. But will you come in?”

Tim didn’t even hesitate. “Of course. If you’re sure.”

“I am.” Damian ended the call, and the doctor was up, crossing the room and peeking out the door, waving down someone. She spoke quietly, hushed, and Damian didn’t try to make out the words. He stared at the black machine, now, and wanted it to come back to life.

Wanted to see that heart beat again.

And god, this was so real in that moment. After all the months of not believing, of feeling as if this was a dream, a nightmare, a transition from one to the other- a limbo of half truths and fractured lies. But it was real, his baby was there, he had seen it, it’s heart-

The door was opening barely a moment after the doctor had settled back on her stool, a nurse stepping out of the way- and Tim, stepping inside. His hands were in his pockets, and for a moment he simply stood there, looking at Damian, then the blank machine, the doctor-

Back to Damian.
“Drake, I saw it’s heartbeat.” Damian’s voice rushed out of him, excitement laced in with the words that he hadn’t been able to put a label too, moments again. “It’s heartbeat.”

Tim crossed the room, smiling at Damian- smiling so sweetly that Damian’s insides went up in knots, in butterflies, in a sweet honey-fire. He watched Tim pull his gloves off, shoving them into his pockets, before he reached out, rubbed one of Damian’s shoulders. The doctor turned the machine back on, pressing the sensor back to Damian’s belly-

And there it was again, that steady pulsing, and Damian felt his eyes stinging, the corners wet, burning. Next to him, he heard Tim exhale, softly, felt his fingers tighten on Damian’s shoulder.

“Damian,” he whispered, and the omega was smiling, smiling so hard his cheeks ached.

“It looks like a good, strong heartbeat,” the doctor filled in, continuing to move the sensor. “I was showing Damian, here’s the head, our spine,” her finger was tracing the baby’s shape, on the screen, “And I asked if he wanted to know the gender, before he called you.”

Tim looked down at Damian, who glanced back up at him. “Should we?” Damian whispered, and it wasn’t a should I, wasn’t simply him now-

He was including Tim. He was admitting to himself this was his baby too. Tim gripped his shoulder again, and Damian reached up, ran his fingertips over Tim’s knuckles.

“That’s up to you,” he said, eyes transfixed on the screen. Damian looked back at it, before he closed his eyes for a moment, needing to compose himself, needing to remember how to breathe.

“No,” he finally said, looking back at the screen. “No I… I can wait.”

She smiled at that. “Well bless you, not everyone can. For the better, probably, they’re being pretty shy. I don’t think I could give you a good guess.” She smiled, moving the sensor again, before tapping the screen. It blinked once, before the machine made a noise, eased out a small print out. She took it, holding it out towards Damian. “Always fun to show them this, down the road. I still have mine.”

Damian took it as she turned the machine off, pushed it away, He stared at it until his fingers began to shake, and he had to pass it to Tim, who pulled back from Damian, staring down at it. The doctor was across the room now, grabbing a paper towel and heading back, handing it to Damian to gently wipe his belly off. Once he was clean and she was throwing it away, he sat up, pulling his shirt back down.

“Everything looked good,” she said, as Tim glanced up from the ultrasound print out. “We’ll get your tests run as soon as possible, and I’ll call you with the results. But right now it looks like you’ve got a healthy baby in there.” She smiled, and Damian let his hand rest on his belly, thumb moving in small circles. “You’ll need to make an appointment for next month. I expect to see you back- no more lax appointments like you’ve had to this point. I’m going to leave some notes up at the front desk for you as well, things to keep in mind, that I want you to be doing. But,” she glanced at Tim, before turning her eyes back to Damian, “You two take a minute if you need it.” Damian nodded, thanking her, watched her let herself out the room.

The moment the door clicked shut, Tim was making a little noise, before turning to Damian. “Thank you… for letting me in.”

Damian smiled up at him, reaching his hand up. Tim took it, pulled it up to his mouth- kissed his knuckles, his thumb rubbing the scar on Damian’s palm. Damian felt the butterflies flaring to life
again, and reached with his other hand, took the print out from Tim. He stared down at it, felt Tim’s lips on the top of his hand now.

That was his baby-

No, no, that was their baby.

“Drake,” Damian whispered, “I… I don’t know what I’m feeling.” He had to be honest, didn’t have words for the tightness in his chest, the way he wanted to sob and to laugh all at once. Tim leaned over, wrapped his arms around his shoulders, squeezing him gently.

“I’m so proud of you,” Tim whispered, pressing his face into Damian’s hair. The omega felt his heart skip over that, begin to bang against his ribs, and Tim trembled gently, the small tremors sinking into Damian’s skin.

“Drake?”

“You kept our baby safe,” Tim whispered, kissing Damian’s hair, “Through everything Ra’s did. You kept our baby safe.” Another kiss to his hair, his temple-

And Damian felt like it had been like this, forever. Like this was what it should be. Tim’s arms around him, the fact that they had both referred to it as their baby-

Damian glanced back down at the ultrasound again, and Tim whispered, again, I’m so proud of you babybat.

For a moment, Damian believed it. For a second, a sliver of time, he felt he deserved it.

*  

Tim pulled up to the Manor, killing his car’s engine, and for a moment, simply sitting in silence with Damian. The omega had been quiet, the entire trip home, staring down at the pile of papers in his lap. On top of it all was the ultrasound- and Tim had caught Damian, multiple times, tracing his finger over it, as if memorizing the small shape of the baby inside him.

“You okay?” Tim asked, reaching out, gloves fingers playing at Damian’s hair. He hadn’t wanted to stop touching him, ever since he’d gotten his arms around him in the doctor’s office. He’d wanted to carry Damian out of there- which would have been a feat of hilarity, he was sure, the omega being larger than him- wanted to keep him wrapped up tightly in his arms.

He felt affectionate, to a point that his chest hurt- and it was startling. Startling to look at Damian and feel the urge to love, to care for, to simply protect-

He was scared, scared that it was simply because of the baby. Scared more that maybe it wasn’t.

“I am,” Damian finally said, looking up. “I’m… I do not have words.” He reached for his seat belt, freeing himself. “Let’s just go inside.”

Tim bit at his lip, but pulled his hand back, didn’t fight it. Even if there was a warm tingle in his lips, like they needed to be on Damian’s skin all over again.

Tim got out, followed Damian towards the Manor. Their first step inside met with silence- before there was shuffling then, the sound of voices coming from the kitchen-

Alfred, leading the group as he hurried towards the two. “Master Timothy, Master Damian,
welcome home! How did things go?” Behind him, Cass and Stephanie were hurrying as well. Tim smiled, bemused at them, working his coat off and hanging it up, tugging at his gloves. Damian looked down at the papers in his hands.

“Fine,” he said, smiling at them. “Everything was alright. She will call me in a few days regarding some tests she said are normal protocol. I have to go back in a month.” Tim reached out, gently put his hands on Damian’s biceps, and the omega glanced at him, before shifting the papers, allowing Tim to help take his jacket, and then his scarf.

“That is all quite good news,” Alfred said, and Tim knew the man was studying the both of them, trying to read them. Steph and Cass were quiet- but Cassandra’s eyes burned like black fire, into every movement of Tim’s. Noting the way he touched Damian, the fact that he was standing closer.

And then Damian suddenly smiled, plucking the smallest piece of paper and turning it towards the group, offering it. “Look at our baby.”

Tim’s heart went to fire again, heat licking his insides as he felt he might simply burst. Without any thought he reached out, pressed his hand to the small of Damian’s back, a thumb finding and fitting into one of the dimples there perfectly. The omega relaxed- Tim could feel it, could smell it- as Alfred took the offering, staring at it.

He was silent for a moment, completely, as Steph and Cass crowded around him, before, in a shaking voice, “Mast… Damian. Alfred reached up, covered his own mouth as Stephanie plucked the ultrasound from him, grinning. Alfred stood in silence, working to compose himself, before he reached out, pulled Damian into his arms. Damian stepped away from Tim, welcomed the hug, as Alfred clung to him, the smallest sob escaping him with his breath.

Tim stared, before he dragged his eyes away- felt like he wasn’t meant to see this- until there was a hand grasping his arm, and Alfred was pulling Tim in as well, holding onto the both of them.

“Alfred?” Tim asked, smiling, reaching up to rub the older man’s back.

“Just, a moment,” he offered, clutching them tightly- and Tim would be damned before he fought that. When Alfred did release him, Stephanie and Cass were moving in, Cassandra hugging Tim’s arm as Stephanie leaned in, kissed his cheek- before turning and throwing her arms around Damian, hugging him tightly. Damian allowed it, and Tim noticed there was barely any hesitation before he was hugging Stephanie back.

“Where is my father?” Damian asked, taking the ultrasound back from Stephanie. “I would like him to see.”

“Master Bruce is… in the cave,” Alfred said, glancing at both Stephanie and Cass. Tim frowned- he didn’t like the look they shared. “Why don’t you go to your room, Master Damian? I’m sure you have had an eventful morning. I will make you some tea, and Master Timothy can go get your father.”

Damian looked at them, before nodding. Stephanie took his arm, squeezing it. “C’mon hot stuff, I’ll walk up with you.”

They were half way up the stairs when Cassandra touched Tim’s arm, nodding towards the hallway that led to the cave. He looked back at Alfred, before turning, heading towards it, Cassandra falling in step with him.
They reached the clock. Tim reaching out to adjust the time. “What’s going on, Cass?”

“Dick is here.” Oh. Tim only nodded, turning to the wall and flipping up a small case, allowing the scanner to scan his thumb before the entrance to the cave opened. Cassandra rode down with him, and the moment they stepped off, they could hear Bruce’s voice. Calm, shockingly- only a jumbled mix of sounds as it echoed through the cave.

The moment Tim and Cassandra’s footsteps were within range, Bruce’s voice cut out. He was sitting by the computer, in his chair, Dick perched on the counter. Bruce had turned towards the sound, while Dick had lifted his head to follow the man’s eyes.

Tim cleared his throat, shoving his hands into his pockets as he offered, “We’re back.”

“Where’s Damian?”

“His room. Alfred thought he should relax a little. You uh… should go see him. He wanted you to.” Bruce stood up, nodding to Dick, before sweeping past Tim. Cassandra gave Tim a small smile, before turning, following Bruce to the elevator.

Leaving he and Dick alone.

The oldest stared at Tim for a moment, before he settled back on the counter, leaning forward to rest his forearms on his thighs. “Can we talk, Tim?”

Tim nodded, taking a few steps closer. He hated the tension that seemed to have sprung up, between them. He **hated** down in his gut how Dick had reacted- because one of the last people on this Earth he ever wanted to disappoint was Dick Grayson.

He meant too much to Tim.

“Bruce filled me in on some things,” Dick said, “About what happened, with Ra’s. He told me you were going to sacrifice yourself to get Damian home. Said you offered to stay with Ra’s in his place.” Tim nodded, and Dick’s eyes softened, something in them breaking. “You **hate** Ra’s.”

“But I care about Damian,” Tim reasoned, “And I **put** him there, Dick. I did this. I had to take responsibility for it-”

“You **hate** Ra’s. He… the things he **wants** from you.” Dick was looking at Tim like he wasn’t listening, like the cave was washing away into grays, and Tim was fading. “What he’d do to you…”

“Dick?”

Dick choked, reached a hand out to Tim. “Come here.” Tim reached out, took a step, and the moment his fingers brushed along Dick’s, the older man grasped his hand, jerked him in. Tim stumbled, fell against Dick’s chest as his arms wound around him, clutching him tightly.

It took a moment for Tim to realize that Dick was shaking. He opened his mouth to say something, but promptly closed it, clutching at Dick’s shirt and choosing instead to press his face into his chest, to inhale and calm himself with his scent, with the way that Dick **always** had pheromones coming off him, like he was unaware of what he could do to the world.

Dick leaned down, kissed Tim’s hair. “I almost lost you.”

“You almost lost Damian,” Tim corrected, and Dick shook his head.
“Babybird, I almost lost the both of you. And I was too fucking stupid to realize that you were in danger too. Fuckin’ tunnel vision- I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t have acted like I did. I was being an ass.” Tim lifted his head, smiling at Dick playfully.

“You’re good at that,” he said, “Being an ass.”

Dick snorted, reaching up to ruffle Tim’s hair, until Tim was squirming, trying to get away. Dick tightened his grip, “Oh like hell I am letting go of you anytime soon.” Tim rolled his eyes. “But really, Tim. I’m sorry. I jumped to a lot of conclusion and Bruce had to be the one to pull me head out of my ass.”

“Yeah, Bruce took it better than you did. Didn’t expect that.” Dick finally let Tim free, and he hopped up on the counter next to him, sitting so close their thighs were pressed together.

“Which makes me feel like more of an asshole,” Dick added, “But you’re right, from what I’ve seen… well, he’s just glad he’s got you both back here safely. He’s afraid he’ll lose you again, though. Afraid Ra’s will come storming his front door with the entire League.”

Tim nodded. Truth be told, it was something he thought of, expected even- but had to keep in the back of his mind, so the fear of it couldn’t consume him. “If he does, we’ll be waiting,” Tim said, “With the whole fucking army.” Dick smiled.

“I’m proud of you,” he offered, “For going after Damian. You went before you even knew the baby was yours.”

“Rescuing Damian wasn’t about the baby,” Tim said, brows furrowing, “Rescuing Damian was about him. The guilt was all from the fact that it was my fault, sure- but this was all for Damian. He comes first.” Tim leaned back, folded his arms. “He always comes first.”

Dick studied Tim, before asking, very softly, “Can you clue me in on what happened, between you two?”

“You already know.”

“I know the vague facts. I don’t know what you were really thinking. I don’t know your side.”

Tim sighed, closed his eyes as he leaned back against the monitor. “I wasn’t thinking. I was just… reacting. Damian wanted me to stay- and god, Dick, having the kid want me? It felt amazing. Like all the bad blood was just gone. And…” Tim flushed, reaching up to cover his eyes, as if saying this to Dick might tear him apart. “No one’s ever felt as good as he did.”

Dick was silent next to him, and Tim dared to lift his head, let his hand fall away, to look at him. Dick was studying him, those dark blue eyes taking in every trace of color to Tim’s cheeks, every minor motion and tick to his body.

“Would you take it back?” Dick asked, and Tim bit his lip for a moment-

Thought of how it felt to have his arms around Damian, to feel his body heat seeping into Tim like it could warm his bones. Thought of that almond-cinnamon scent to him, the way it burned Tim’s throat so perfectly. Thought of Damian’s lazy, sleepy kissed, and the way he clung to Tim, the way he felt like they fit together like a puzzle-

“No,” Tim whispered, “Not for a moment.”

Dick nodded. “Tim… can I ask… what are you two…” Dick trailed off, and Tim sighed, his
shoulder slumping.

“I don’t know, Dick. I really don’t. Before, when we… when we fucked… I left thinking we had to talk about it, when we came back. I had to know what Damian wanted. Was I just a one off? Was he ever going to want to even look at me again? But… now… it’s just complicated.” Tim inhaled, very slowly, knotted his fingers together in his lap. “I don’t want Damian and I to be something just because there’s a baby involved. That’s not fair to either of us, and sure as hell not fair to the baby. If we’re… if we’re together, it has to be because we want it. And we’d still want it, even if circumstances changed.”

Dick nodded, reaching over to pat Tim’s thigh. “When the hell did you grow up so much?” Tim smiled, laughing under his breath, as Dick returned it. “And have you told Damian this?” Tim nodded. “And?”

“He’s keeping me back,” Tim said, “I know it. I… I don’t think it’s the answer he wants. But I’m afraid of hoping that it’s not what he wants. That maybe he really does want something… he did ask me. And I keep thinking I just dreamt it up, the way he looked at me.” Tim sighed, let his hair fall into his face as he hung his head. “I care about him, Dick. I did before, but it was like how I cared about you, about Jay. About the whole family. But this? When I was in bed with him? It was like falling. Falling so hard I was numb by the time I hit the ground.”

Dick’s hand moved, and his arm went around Tim’s shoulders, squeezed him tightly. “You sound smitten, kiddo.”

“I sound like an idiot. And I’m so scared of it all. I’m scared of what I want.” Tim looked down at his hands. “I’m scared of what it means. I’m scared it will go away- I’m scared it won’t. I’m a fool.”

“You’re human,” Dick chided, “And humans make mistakes. I’m… not going to lecture either of you on how you got here. You know you made a mistake. But it doesn’t have to be the end of the world.” Tim sighed, and Dick squeezed his shoulders again. “Have you and Damian really discussed what you’re going to do, about-”

“It’s completely Damian’s decision. It’s his body” Tim squeezed his hands into gentle fists. “I told Damian whatever he wants, I’ll support him through it. If he wants an abortion I’ll hold his hand the whole time. If he wants to give the baby up I’ll be here for whatever he needs. If he… if he wants to keep the baby…” Tim sighed, felt his throat tightening, “I’ll raise it with him.”

Dick pulled Tim over, so that he was leaning into the man’s shoulder, as Dick gently rubbed his hand along the curve of Tim’s, down to his bicep. “You’re doing right by him,” Dick said, “And you know, if this was going to happen? I’m glad it was with you.”

Tim said nothing for a moment, before, “I saw it’s heartbeat, Dick.” Dick glanced down at him, and Tim had a small, sad smile on his face. “He had his ultrasound. He called me inside- and god, Dick. I saw our baby. And I just…” Tim squeezed his eyes shut, the corners beginning to sting, like heated cotton was pushing up behind his irises. “I’ve never felt so much love. I wanted to cry. I wanted to scream. I wanted to kiss Damian. I just…” Tim trailed off, before turning, looking up at Dick. “I wanted him to tell me in that moment we were going to have a family.”

There was a flash in Dick’s eyes, a softness, an understanding, and Tim carefully sat up, turning to face him. “You want Damian to have the baby.” Tim nodded. “You never wanted kids before.”

“I didn’t think I could have them. In any way. And I just… it was our baby. It’s his. I want Damian and I to be something, and I just…” he reached up, covered his mouth, realized that all the
uncertainty, for a moment, had lifted away entirely. That he was sitting there spilling was should have been clear as the stars above the manor, each night. What he should have known, accepted, despite his fear-

He wanted Damian. He wanted their child. He wanted to have something that lasted.

“So much for uncertainty.” Teasing, but Dick’s voice was still soft, calming. “At least you know what you want, underneath it all. That’s a start.” Tim nodded, and Dick leaned in, kissed his forehead. “I’m hoping for the best for the both of you. If our babybat will be happy with you, with this- then god, I want it more than anything.”

Tim smiled. “Thanks Dick,” he whispered, and Dick gently shoved his shoulder, playfully.

“I’m your brother. I’m here to support you. I shouldn’t have jumped on you, like I did. It’s just… can I be honest?” Tim nodded. “I’m a little jealous. You and Damian, you didn’t even need to try, your baby just happened and…”

Dick trailed off, and Tim didn’t need him to finish. He knew how hard he and Wally had tried, for years, for a baby. How much it hurt Dick that each attempt had failed- that after endless doctor’s appointments, endless hope, it was clear, they were not having children. Wally was sterile, and there wasn’t a thing they could do about it. Tim knew it hurt Dick, too, because Wally blamed himself for it, felt like he had failed his mate, his husband, when all Dick wanted was to comfort Wally and tell him he loved him, to remind him they had other options.

Except those other options never happened, either- and Tim had been thinking, for a while, that it would always just be the two of them.

Such a vast difference between them and Jason and Roy.

“I’m even more of an ass for being jealous of the two of you.”

“You’re not.” Tim shook his head. “Really. I understand, I know how hard you and Wally tried- I know. And I know how much you wanted a family.”

Dick licked his lips, nodded. “I brought it up, a few weeks ago. It’s been a while- but the moment I said adoption Wally shut down, and I just dropped it.” He shrugged a shoulder. “Maybe fate’s telling me I’d be a shitty dad.”

“You’d be a great dad,” Tim said, and then, elbowing Dick, “Maybe not as good as Jason, but none of us can really hold hope to that.”

Dick snorted in laughter then. “Who would’ve thought he’d be the one to end up with the big family. Last time I talked to him, I said I was cutting he and Roy off.” Dick shook his head, but the sorrow was fading from his eyes. “I wanted him to come to Bludhaven for a while. The city is wearing me down to my bones. I need help curbing the gangs, but he and Roy are both so busy.”

“Who has the kids?”

Dick grinned. “Dinah. For a few days, anyway, while they head off to Europe for something. When they come back Jason said they’ve got a rotating schedule so at least one of them is home- which is why he can’t come.” Dick sighed, raked a hand back through his hair. “I need help.”

Tim sucked on his tongue. “I can help, you know. Bruce can handle the city with just Cass and Steph.”
“I can’t take you,” Dick said, “I already stole Babs from him for this. She’s running surveillance on Bludhaven full time, trying to help Wally and I stay a step ahead.”

“At least let me moonlight here and there,” Tim said, elbowing him. “It’ll be like old times. Big bad Nightwing and his little babybird.” Dick snorted again, pulling Tim back into another hug.

“Yeah, alright. I guess Bruce won’t miss you for a few nights. So long as I get you home in one piece.” Tim grinned, returning the hug- feeling so light inside, over the fact that Dick wasn’t disappointed in him, that he was sure he might float to the top of the cave, if not for the man’s arms.

*

Damian opened his door, heading into his room, making a line right for his desk. He dropped his papers there, keeping only the ultrasound, before heading for his bed. Stephanie followed him in, shutting the door behind them and slowly walking about the room.

Without a word Damian flopped down on his bed, holding the ultrasound up. He couldn’t stop looking at it- wanted to have the image imprinted in his mind-

“I promise it won’t change if you look away.” Damian glanced up, saw Stephanie had moved to his desk, was sifting through his papers. He might have felt angry about it, were it anyone else-

But with Stephanie, he almost wanted her to look. Because she understood.

“I know,” he said, “But I… I just can’t stop.”

She smiled to herself, glancing along one of the printed hand outs, detailing a list of things he should and should not do. “I know. I understand- I remember.” She glanced up at him, as he finally set it aside, on his nightstand. “Did you look these over?”

“Quickly.”

“You should read them. It’ll be helpful- and if you have questions, you can come to me. Don’t forget that.” Damian pushed himself up on his hands, nodded, as Stephanie turned, heading back for the door. She was reaching for it when he said, “Stephanie?”

Not Brown, but Stephanie. She paused, glancing back at him. “Yeah babybat?”

He licked his lips, “I feel crazy.” She frowned, turning away from the door, heading over for his bed. Once she had sat down, she asked,

“Why?”

Damian inhaled, slowly, and then, “I… I felt elation when I saw it’s heartbeat. I was barely aware I was feeling dread that perhaps… perhaps grandfather had hurt my baby, until shortly before the appointment. And then… knowing it was alright… seeing that…” Damian glanced down at his belly, sitting up properly so he could rest a hand on it. “I felt like I was in love.”

Stephanie smiled, sad and sweet, reached out to rub his shoulder. She didn’t say a word, simply watched the way Damian looked down at the small swell of his belly with pure adoration, before he finally whispered,

“I want to have my baby.”
Stephanie gripped his shoulder then. He looked up at her, moving to fold his arms around himself. “And I feel crazy for wanting to.”

She shook her head, reached out with her other hand. She tipped Damian’s chin up, forced his jade eyes to meet hers. “Damian, you’re not crazy. If that’s what you want, that’s what you’re going to do.” Damian exhaled, shallow and shaking, and Stephanie could see his lip quiver. He hated that it did, but he couldn’t help it.

He wanted this. He’d been so unsure for so long, barely able to recognize that this was reality. He felt disjointed, disassociated with everything—

Until he saw that heartbeat, and the world crashed down on him. And yet, he felt unharmed.

“I worry with Drake will say,” he admitted, “What father will think.”

“Bruce is gonna have to just deal with whatever you decide,” she said, “Don’t give him a second thought. Besides, he’s your father, and he loves you. And Tim… well, he promised to support you, and left this decision up to you. If this is what you want, then I don’t doubt he’ll stick to his word.” Damian nodded, and Stephanie let go of his chin, covered his hand with her own. “I fell in love with my baby too, Damian. I understand what you’re feeling.”

“I was not braced for it,” he admitted, his eyes beginning to tear up, “But I just… I…” he clamped his mouth shut, having no words, and Stephanie smiled, pulling him into a hug. She stroked his hair and he embraced her back. “I find myself suddenly worrying now,” he whispered, into her collar bone as he rest his head, “That somehow my grandfather still hurt the baby. That I have done something unhealthy.”

“The doctor said everything was fine?” Damian nodded. “Then it is. You did just fine, Damian. And your baby— god, it’s you and Tim, it could probably survive us all before you even have it.” Damian laughed at that, nuzzling into Stephanie— enjoying her warmth, the soothing stroke of her fingers. “You’ve got a miracle in you, Damian. With Tim being a beta… with what you went through with Ra’s… I’m sort of glad you want to have it.” She shrugged a shoulder, and then, quietly, “I think you and Tim will be good together.”

“We’re not together,” Damian corrected, and Stephanie rolled her eyes.

“Yeah well. I know Tim. And I think you both would be good together. Will be good together. Give him a little time. He doesn’t like to rush- you know him and over thinking.”

“At least someone in this family thinks.” Stephanie laughed at that, the vibrations echoing with her heartbeat in her chest, into Damian’s ear. He found he liked it, loved the sound of her voice as she tipped her head back. It drowned out the sound of his door opening, as Stephanie squeezed him tight.

“Did I miss something?” They both turned towards the door, found Bruce filling it. Behind him, Alfred was glancing around him, holding a small tray. Stephanie pulled back from Damian, tussling his hair before crawling off his bed.

“Just Damian actually making a joke,” she said, before glancing back at Damian. “I’m gonna go find my girl and see if she wants to kick my ass down in the cave. You need anything, you come right to me, okay? And I mean anything.” Damian nodded, and Stephanie slipped past Bruce and Alfred, leaving them to walk into the room. Alfred walked around the bed, offering Damian his tea, who took it happily, wrapping his hands around the warm mug. Alfred gave a glance to his
nightstand, smiling at the ultrasound again, before excusing himself to give he and Bruce privacy.

“Tim said you wanted to see me,” Bruce offered, settling on the edge of the bed. Damian lifted his mug, took a sip and sighed over the utter warmth.

“I thought you might want to know how my visit went.” Bruce nodded, and Damian tipped his head towards his desk. “There are papers there the doctor sent me home with. Lists of common questions, things I should and should not do.” Bruce stood up, walked over and began looking through them. Damian continued to sip his tea, scooting back until he was sitting in the pillows, feeling like his whole body was relaxing. “Everything looks good. She said there were a few tests, she had to run, that normally would have been run at an earlier appointment. I should get a call within the week, about them.” Another sip of his tea, and his throat felt like velvet fire, his eyelids feeling heavy.

He hadn’t realized that he was even tired.

“She was pleasant,” Damian added, his father flipping to another paper. “I… enjoyed her. I have an appointment in a month. I would like to continue going to her.”

Bruce glanced up over the papers. “Whatever you want, Damian.” Damian nodded, watching as Bruce set the papers down. He glanced over at his nightstand, and then-

“There is one more over here, that you should look at.” Bruce crossed the room, and Damian hid behind his mug as he sipped, watching his father paused, before picking up the ultrasound. The room felt utterly silent, as Bruce stared at it, before Damian lowered his mug, to hold it in his lap, and said softly, “That is your grandchild.”

Bruce gripped the print out tighter between his fingers, sitting down heavily on the edge of Damian’s bed. His face was stoic, unreadable- and Damian held his breath, wasn’t sure what to expect- And then Bruce was looking up at him, studying him with eyes that had seen so much, yet could never see enough.

“I…I want to have my child,” Damian said, setting his mug aside, where the ultrasound had been. “I want to keep my baby.” He folded his hands together, was bracing himself for whatever his father might say- Instead, Bruce set the ultrasound aside, on the bed, reaching out as he leaned in. His hand went to the back of Damian’s head, guiding him forward as he kissed his forehead, Bruce’s eyes squeezing shut.

“Father?” Damian whispered, as Bruce hesitated, a little sound escaping him. He pressed his forehead to Damian’s, dared to open those startling eyes, staring at him.

“Will that make you happy?” It was an honest question, spoken not only from Bruce’s mouth but in the rawness of his eyes. Without hesitation, Damian nodded.

Couldn’t get the dizzy feeling from his head, from seeing the heartbeat.

“Yes,” he whispered, and Bruce gripped the back of his head.

“That’s all I want.” He pulled back, hand moving to the back of Damian’s neck. “You deserve to be happy, Damian. After everything you’ve been through.”
And there was so much there, so much guilt and sorrow and pain that Damian wished he could take it all from his father, have him forget it. Years had patched their relationship, had allowed it to grow- but there was so much agony that would never be erased.

“You are not disappointed?” Damian asked, and Bruce shook his head, offered an honest, small smile.

“Never. You’ve handled this better than I would have. I’m proud of you.” Damian smiled over that, and Bruce picked up the ultrasound again, looking at it. “Did the doctor tell you what you are having?”

“I did not want to know,” Damian answered. “I… I want to be surprised.” Bruce smiled at that, and Damian added, “She also said it was being shy, so she could not give a proper guess.” Bruce laughed at that.

“At least someone in this family is.”

Now Damian grinned- and it was playful, a little wicked. “If we were, I wouldn’t be in this position.” Bruce choked, a little color rising in his cheeks, and Damian’s grin grew- couldn’t help enjoying flustering the man who seemed like stone-

Before he could add another retort, there was another knock at his door. It cracked open, and Tim popped his head in. “Oh, didn’t mean to interrupt,” he said, “Dick is leaving, I just wanted to let you know Bruce. And check on Damian.”

“I’ll see him out,” Bruce said, handing the ultrasound back to Damian and climbing off the bed. He gave his youngest a final smile, as Tim opened the door, stepped aside so Bruce could walk past. As he did he glanced at the Beta, before reahcing out, giving his shoulder a squeeze, and then heading for the stairs.

Tim stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. “How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” Damian admitted, “I have a feeling Alfred offered me tea in the hopes I would sleep for a bit.” Tim smiled, walking over to the bed and crawling onto it, sitting right next to Damian. The omega leaned his head against his shoulder, his hand gently rubbing along his belly.

“Probably not a bad idea,” Tim agreed, “I mean, today was… eventful.”

“Very much so.” Damian glanced down at his belly, at the ultrasound now in his lap, and took a steadying breath. “Drake?”

“Hmm?”

“I want to have our baby.”

Tim glanced over at him, and whatever Damian was braced for, it wasn’t the sudden, enthusiastic really? that left Tim’s mouth. His belly felt alive then, fluttery and nervous and happy over the tone of Tim’s voice.

Damian nodded, carefully flipping his hand, resting on the bed, palm up. Tim’s own hand slid over it, their fingers lacing together, as he felt the scar on Damian’s palm pressing to his skin.

“You’re okay with this?”

Tim nodded, staring across the room, a smile growing on his face. “Yeah.” He sighed. “Can I be
“Always.”

“...I wanted you to say that.” Damian lifted his head, glanced at Tim- and his face was so gorgeous, with the way his lips cured, the perfect pull of his cheeks, the crinkles around his eyes. “When I saw that heartbeat... god Damian. I’m just...” he paused, inhaled. “I fell in love.”

Damian wanted, so badly, for that statement to end with with you- but knew it had simply ended.

He covered the sting of it with, “Me too.” His hand rubbed the swell of his belly again, as Tim shifted back, into the pillows. He pulled from Damian’s hand, gently guiding him until he was leaning back, against his chest. Damian didn’t fight it- sighed openly as he settled against Tim, as Tim’s hand reached down, resting just above Damian’s. “You’ll stay, right?” Damian asked, and Tim leaned down, kissed the top of his forehead.

“I’m not leaving you again, Damian.” Tim’s hand traced the curve of his belly, and Damian’s eyes fluttered shut, a sigh escaping him. “I’m here for whatever you and the baby- our baby, need.”

Damian wanted to tell Tim what he needed was him, was the affection he had shown him months ago. That he wanted Tim to look at him like he was truly the center of everything, that the sun rose and set in his jade eyes-

What he wanted was Tim’s love.

But for now, his simple support would have to be enough.

“What I need,” Damian whispered, teasing. “Is for you to stay right here and not stop this.” He carefully guided Tim’s hand back up the swell of his stomach. “So that I can get some truly good sleep.”

“Whatever you say, gorgeous.” Damian shivered, knew Tim felt it, and Tim was kissing the top of his head again. “You go to sleep, and I’ll be right here.”

“It was a joke,” Damian said, even though it truly hadn’t been. But Tim only shook his head.

“Too late. I’m pretty comfortable now. Just get a little rest, okay? I’ll be right here.” Damian nodded then, letting his eyes fall shut as Tim continued to gently rub his belly, as he smelled like a warm sort of home, with that soothing ghostly fire scent that Damian was sure he’d smell, even in his dreams.

He would find, very quickly, that he was indeed right.

*

“It’s not every night,” Tim said, watching as Bruce adjusted his gauntlets. “But Dick really needs the help, Bruce. Anything he can get. And if we don’t step up, his gang trouble is going to become our gang trouble.”

Bruce sighed, glancing at Tim before he pulled his cowl up. Behind the both of them, Damian was sitting in the computer chair, Cassandra in her full suit settled on the counter.

“He’s run ragged,” Tim continued, “He’s barely sleeping. He’s got enough going on, Bludhaven going to shit is just making it worse. It’s just he and Wally, we’ve got so much more manpower.”
“He has Barbara,” Bruce pointed out.

“I know. Add if he didn’t he’d probably be dead at this point.” Tim frowned. “Are you honestly saying no?”

Bruce shook his head. “No, I’m not. I don’t want to see you run yourself to the bone, though. You can’t, now.” He glanced back at Damian, who folded his arms.

“If you are looking for my help, father, I’m afraid I won’t stop Drake from doing whatever he pleases.” Damian lifted his chin, “But I will remind him to come home in one piece.”

Tim turned over, grinned at him. Tim felt a giddiness, inside him, over the fact that Damian seemed to be opening up to him again. “Promise I will, babybat.”

“If you two are done,” Bruce said, resting his hands on his hips, “We’ve got Patrol. Damian, you should-”

“If you say go to my room, I will throw a tantrum like a child.” Damian pulled the chair closer to the computer, clicking through the various surveillance cameras they were wired into, in the city. “I cannot stand how often I sleep now. I need something to keep myself busy. And as I know you have no intention of letting me join you on patrol-”

“Absolutely not.”

“.Then I shall at least be of use here. Besides,” he reached for a comlink, securing it to his ear, “You have lost Gordon for the time being. At least allow me to be an extra set of eyes.”

Bruce sighed, but didn’t fight it, and Tim only grinned.

“I like the idea of having him whisper in my ear,” he said- before his cheeks tinged. On the counter, Cassandra laughed, reaching up to cover her mouth- and Bruce frowned.

“I don’t need to know what got you two into this situation,” Bruce said, “Keep it clean.”

Tim blushed more, and Damian was laughing- an honest, true laugh that sounded so good Tim was melting, from his bones out, slowly. Cassandra was still laughing as she slid off the counter, just as the elevator doors opened and Stephanie was rushing at them, her hair thrown up in a messy bun. She had her tablet in one hand, and the look in her eyes had Tim pausing, furrowing his brow.

“Steph-”

“You guys need to see something before you head out.” She walked right up to Bruce and Tim, turning her tablet and shoving it at them. She held it as Tim glanced at a picture of Damian, taken just the other day-

Tim recognized it, outside the clinic.

And then, the headline below-

Young Billionaire, absent for some time, seen outside prenatal clinic.

Oh fuck.

“What is it?” Damian asked, frowning at them, as Cassandra folded her arms, waiting. Stephanie pulled the tablet back, turning it and clearing her throat, before she began reading,
“Damian Wayne, who has been absent for some number of weeks from Wayne Enterprises, was seen just yesterday outside a prenatal clinic within the city. While it’s hard to tell, we can only speculate that perhaps his absence has been due to a little unplanned pregnancy.” She paused, glancing up at Bruce, and Tim, before looking back at Damian, whose frown had turned to a scowl.

“Fuck,” Tim muttered, sweeping a hand through his hair. Of course the paparazzi had been around.

“We knew we’d have to deal with the public about this eventually,” Bruce said, lifting a hand to keep his children calm. “And we will. But not right now. Stephanie—thank you for bringing this to my attention.” Bruce glanced at Tim, then over at Damian. “We’ll discuss this in the morning. It will keep for the night.”

Tim nodded, didn’t follow as Bruce turned, heading for the Batmobile. Cassandra moved past him to follow, as Tim walked over towards Damian. He reached out, stroked his hair affectionately, as the omega looked up at him.

“We’ll take care of the press,” he offered, smiling— even if his belly felt tight over it. Damian smiled back, trusting and sweet, and Tim wanted to lean down, kiss the smile until it dissolved into his own mouth, so he could carry it with him.

Instead he left it at the gentle caress of his hair, pulling his hand back.

“Don’t talk my ear off,” he teased, and Damian rolled his eyes.

“Get your ass out there,” he said, “Before I say damn my father and take your place.” Tim laughed, turning away and heading for his bike, yelling back,

“Pretty soon you won’t even fit in it!”

“Fuck you!” Damian yelled— but god, he was laughing, and it made Tim feel so good to hear him laughing again.

* 

Damian shifted, tapping his foot on the polished floor, as his father stood talking with a woman in a hushed voice. Beyond the room they were waiting in, he heard the loud murmuring of the press, the shutters of cameras.

He folded his arm, his cell phone in one hand. His father had advised that the best way to handle the press was to simply come forward—which Damian would see the merit in. They were going to find out, when he began to show more, he knew— and unless he planned on not leaving the Manor until after his baby was born, he may as well have control over the situation.

He was about to call to Cassandra, who was pacing, impatient, when his phone began to buzz in his hand. He sighed, turning away from the small chaos that was his family, unlocking it and lifting it to his ear. “Hello?”

“Hi, is this Damian?”

Damian frowned. The voice was familiar— “Dr. Keller?”

“Hi sweetie. I hope this isn’t a bad time.” Damian glanced over his shoulder, knew they were supposed to address the crowd in a moment. But the objection died on his mouth when she said, “Your lab results are all back.”
Suddenly, he didn’t care if the damn paparazzi had to wait.

“You’re not interrupting,” he said, trying to take a few more steps away, but the room was small. “Is everything alright?”

“As alright as anyone can hope for. No abnormalities in any of the results. Looks like you’ve got one healthy baby.” Damian sighed in relief. “Have you been feeling alright.”

“Yes.”

“And you haven’t had any questions pop up?”

“No.” He smiled. “I’m just relieved to know everything is alright.”

“I’m sure you are.” The smile in her voice was evident. “I’ll see you in a month then?” He agreed, thanked her, before ending the call, shoving the phone into the pocket of his skinny jeans. Which, if he was honest- were not fitting the way they one had. The bump in his belly, despite his black shirt and black cardigan, was noticeable, and he was coming to the realization- and acceptance- that he’d need new clothes soon.

“Damian, come on.” Damian turned, and his father was holding his hand out, beckoning to him. Damian noticed Cassandra already waiting to walk on stage with them- and Tim, now at her side. He hurried over, let his father wrap an arm around him, a hand resting on the small of his back. “Who was that?”

“My doctor.” Bruce paused, and Damian felt three sets of eyes on him. “Everything is fine. She was simply calling to let me know my test results showed nothing of concern.” He glanced down at his belly, before smiling. “My baby is healthy.”

Bruce exhaled, smiling, and Tim reached out, took Damian’s hand, squeezed it in his own. “Good,” Bruce said, “That’s all good. Now, remember, I’ll handle most of the talking. We’ll make this brief.” Damian nodded, and after a moment to compose themselves, the family headed for the small stage.

Bruce stepped up to a small podium, greeting the press that had come out. Damian stood directly on his right, Cassandra, his left. Tim stood next to Damian, close enough that Damian could smell him, found that Tim was trying to keep him calm with the pheromones he could feel rushing into his system. It made him smile.

“We will keep this brief,” Bruce said, “And we will not be entertaining questions after. I find it a little ridiculous I have to hold a press conference concerning members of my family, when there are far more important issues we could be discussing.” Bruce frowned, and Damian almost laughed. There was a certain joy to be taken from watching his father chide nearly all of Gotham’s press. “However, it has come to my attention that there is a rumor about my youngest.”

Bruce glanced over at Damian, who held his father gaze for a moment, before nodding. He knew, from the rapid succession of shutters clicking, that the crowd was already taking quite a number of photographs of him- that they no doubt noticed his stomach, the subtle curve of it.

“And yes, Damian is indeed pregnant.” There was a sudden rush of voice from the crowd, but Bruce held his hand up to silence them. It was like magic, a black art, the way Bruce seemed to control them. And Damian could admit to himself, he was always in awe of it. He had no handle for the press, as he didn’t for the business.
Well, if he was accurate, the *people* aspect of the business. The numbers were easy for him, but he abhorred the meetings, the business men and women alike his father and Tim handled with an ease that was unsettling.

“And while ti is truly no one’s business except that of my family’s,” Bruce continued, “We wanted to make everyone aware, before another story is run without our consent.”

The crowd went up again, voices all asking multiples questions. *Bruce, how do you feel about this?, Bruce is he keeping the baby?*

And, the loudest, *Bruce, who’s the father?*

Bruce gritted his teeth. “I said no questions.” His voice was booming, resonating through the room. “I have nothing more to say.” He turned to leave, but Damian did not follow- instead, he walked right up to the microphone, staring out at the sea of flashing lights, questioning voices.

To hell with them all, if they wanted answers, he’d give them to him.

“*Yes I am keeping my child,*” he said, one hand gripping the podium to keep himself steady. “*While it is no concern of anyone except my family and myself, I fully plan to have this baby.*”

There was another rush- comments now, about his age, and again, the resonating question of who the father was. Damian gritted his teeth, frustrated that these strangers got such entertainment value out of his life- and couldn’t imagine how his father had dealt with them, for so long. For his whole life.

There was a hand on the small of his back, and he expected Bruce- but instead Tim was leaning in, smiling at the crowd. And, without hesitation, and still with that charming smile, he simply added, “The baby is mine.”

If the crowd had been loud before, they were deafening now. Damian allowed Tim space to speak properly into the microphone, the beta’s hand falling from Damian’s back to tangle their fingers together.

“*Mr. Drake, Damian is your brother,*,” one man said, a woman shortly after,

“*Are the two of you having an affair, Mr. Drake?*”

And then, “*Mr. Drake, you’re a beta- are you positive the child is yours?*”

Tim kept his smile, and Damian could see when he looked at him was all shapr edges, venom and bitterness and rage turned almost seductive. Tim had a charm to him, even when he was angry- which was ridiculous, considering Damian knew him to be blundering, fumbling, clumsy-

And yet, his heart was racing, just looking at him.

“*Yes, Damian is my family,*” Tim confirmed, “*Bruce has been my father for longer than I have ever deserved. But there is no blood between us. And no, we are not having an affair. The circumstances of our baby’s conception are for *us* and not the public. We are not your entertainment.*” For a moment, there was an echo of Bruce, in his voice- a control picked up from watching Bruce handle the media far closer than of the other family, save perhaps Dick, had. “*And yes, I am well aware of my own status. And I am well aware that whatever happened to allow for this conception is some sort of damned miracle. But if Damian says the child is mine, then it is. I won’t have his honesty questioned.*”
Tim’s smile was a snarl, feral but controlled in all the right ways, and Damian shivered, felt heat pooling in his belly in a way that it hadn’t in quite some time. He squeezed Tim’s hand, part of him wanting to tangle his fingers in his hair, pull him in for a kiss, in that very moment.

If the fucking paparazzi wanted a show, he might be willing to give it to them.

But Damian kept his desire reserved, contained. He and Tim were doing well, and he feared pressuring him, having the beta pull back. Feared that if he tried to take too much, what Tim was willing to give would become scarce.

As it was, there was still nothing between them. But it was a heavy, complicated, tangible nothing.

“I plan to stand by Damian’s side and raise our child with him,” Tim added, “And yes, we will be keeping our child. Now, if you have had enough of scavenging through our lives for your feeble entertainment, we’d very much like to move on.” Without another word, Tim turned away, despite the questions now being openly shouted. Standing a few feet back, waiting, Bruce was looking at him with a smile on his face that could only be pride. Cassandra, next to him, smiled too- the pretty kind that showed she agreed with every subtle punch Tim pulled on them.

Damian followed Tim, still feeling that heat over how controlled he was, the sharp yet subtle edges to his smile, the resonating anger in his eyes. And Tim must have noticed, somehow- must have smelled something on Damian, before the moment they were off the stage he glanced over at him, blue eyes flashing dark.

Damian exhaled, audible, choking on his breath, would have killed an entire army to have Tim’s hands on him, in that very moment.

He hadn’t felt like this since before leaving the city. Hadn’t felt like this since before Ra’s had him- Tim pulled away a moment later, swallowing thickly- and Damian could see the control returning. “Hopefully that will sustain them,” he said, tearing his eyes away from Damian to look at Bruce, Cassandra. “Sorry to ruin your whole plan, Bruce.”

“You know- and don’t bring this up later- but I think your plan worked better.” He reached out, squeezed Tim’s shoulder, before slipping his arm around Damian, pulling him in. “I’m proud of the both of you, you handled that well.” Tim and Damian both smiled, before Bruce looked over at Cassandra. “And we owe you for standing through this bullshit.”

She waved them off. “Family solidarity.” she reminded them, quoting Bruce’s words earlier, when he’d asked her to come with them, to stand as the silent sister.

To show that the family wasn’t broken.

“Still, thank you,” Damian offered, and her smile for him was soft. She reached her hand out, pulled him away from Bruce to hug his arm, walking in step away from the stage.

“Thank me at home, over lunch,” she told him, “Stephanie and Alfred must be going crazy, waiting for us.”

Damian laughed, and knew the ride home would be anything except quiet. Alfred would want to know how it went- but Stephanie, who was waiting in the limo with Alfred for them, would demand every detail, and have her own commentary, surely, on everything that was said and done.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Sometimes all it takes is a little movement in life, to open up your eyes. For Tim, it takes a gentle kick.

“On your six, Red!” Tim jerked at Dick’s warning, holding up his bow staff as a girl’s knife clunked right against it. He smirked, shoving her off with the staff before turning it, smacking it into the crook of her shoulder so hard she dropped the knife. Another hit to her side, and she was teetering, enough that a kick sent her down to the ground.

Tim turned, lurching his staff out and catching another man, right between his shoulder blades. He jerked, fell- revealing Dick, escrima sticks poised. He straightened, grinning at Tim.

“Nice hit.”

“Nice call.” Dick winked, and Tim could just tell from behind the lens of his mask, before moving to plant a foot on the man’s lower back, securing his arms behind him. “You wanna call it in or have me?”

Dick reached up, pressed the comlink in his ear, answering Tim indirectly. “Oracle? Got two more for a pick-up. Need my location?”

“Got you on radar Nightwing. Patching into the Bludhaven PD right now. Staying with them?”

“Negative.” Dick straightened up as Tim finished securing the woman. “We’ve got a little time before I have to return Babybird. I plan to take advantage of that.” Tim grinned, securing his staff to his back and following Dick, back towards his bike. He climbed on behind him, an arm wrapping around his waist and holding tightly as he reached up with the other, pressing his own comlink.

“Flash, where you at?” He grinned when he heard Wally’s laugh- and it was easy to see why Dick loved him, from that sound alone.

“Downtown, attempted robbery just got called in. You birds on your way?” Dick grinned in front of Tim, the bike suddenly speeding up.

“Give us a few minutes babe,” he said, as Tim wrapped his other arm around Dick now, pressing against his back, “And don’t have all the fun.”

“No promises beautiful.”

It took an alarmingly short amount of time to get into downtown, but it was easy to spot the chaos. Bludhaven police had the store blocked off, mulling around with their guns drawn as if they truly had not a clue what to do.

Tim wanted to blame them, but he knew everyone was worn thin here. Which made him feel even better about tonight- they’d gotten a lot of the gang members off the street. Hopefully enough that the daylight hours would be dull.
Hopefully enough that they would start to loosen the gang’s hold on the city.

“Wanna fill me in?” Dick asked, walking up to one of the officers, who began talking. Tim listened to bits. Five members, heavily armed- yes, definitely from that clown themed gang going around. No name, all they did was plaster sloppily spray painted clown faces on everything and hahaha when there wasn’t enough time for a stupid clown.

At first, there had been a fear that they might actually be linked to the Joker- but the clown had been missing for quite some time now, and after months of Dick dealing with them, they seemed independent of him. They were hopped up on a distilled version of Joker Venom- gave them one huge ass hallucinatory high, according to Wally.

Which, when Tim translated, meant they were dealing with drug-addicted individuals who were coping with the affects of their narcotics, and in their minds, could probably justify every action they were taking.

There was a sudden round of gunshots, and Tim was moving, hurtling over a barricade and heading for the building. Behind him, Dick had reacted a second slower- was yelling at Tim to stop for a second, to wait-

But his brain was already calculating, telling him to drop just before a spray of bullets broke the store’s large window. He hopped up, let loose a round of curved, red throwing blades- and mentally, told himself next time to bring actual Batarangs. Put a little fear in their hearts.

He jumped over the broken wind, wincing as broken glass managed to cut through a worn spot in his glove. Still, he reached for his staff, pulled it out, poised and ready-

The one shooter who had shot at him was on the floor, trembling and bleeding. She looked like she was having a bad trip, with how small her pupils were. And around her, the other four were already knocked out and restrained.

And standing in the middle of the mess, Wally had a grin on his face.

“Too slow,” he teased, as Dick volted over the broken window, glancing around. “You guys need a faster bike.”

“You could wait for backup,” Dick chided, as Tim knelt by the trembling girl, trying to get her attention. She didn’t look at him, couldn’t seem to see him. Frowning, Tim secured her hands.

“As if you ever wait,” Wally said, rolling his eyes at his husband.

“Bitch it out later lovebirds,” Tim said, standing up, “Let’s get the police in here. And medical, for her. She looks like shit.” Dick glanced at the girl, before nodding, mouth going to a tight line.

Once the police were taking over, the paramedics moving in, Dick and Tim were back on his bike, clearing the area. They rendezvoused with Wally a few blocks away, where the sirens were just a mild echo and the streets were sleeping.

“Haven’t seen it this quiet in a while,” Wally admitted, hands on his hips. “Nice to have you around, Tim.” Tim smiled at him.

“Hey, happy to help. Wish I could more.” He went to fold his arms, to guard against the cold December wind picking up, and noticed his hand was still bleeding. He frowned, but chose to ignore it- it would stop soon. He’d clean it up shortly.
He'd spent a few nights, here and there, in Bludhaven, helping Dick, Wally, and Barbara play crowd control over the gang activity. And it really showed, having a third person on the streets. As it was, the city was already quieter than it had been in months.

It might have helped a little that the city was pushing a lot of new anti-drug campaigns, focused on the recreational joker venom that seemed to be leading to a rise in the gang activity. Barbara had run a number of diagnostics on it, showed that it was causing people to hallucinate to such a degree that they were probably operating in a reality so different from their own it wasn’t even comprehensible.

Namely, something like the joker’s own mind.

Tim wanted to point out maybe it was a good thing Jason was too busy to help out.

“Why don’t you head home, before it gets too late?” Dick suggested, “You’ve probably got someone waiting up for you.”

Tim’s cheeks tinged at that, more so over the grin that suddenly cracked Wally’s face.

Damian had taken to staying up, every night Tim was out. Which was most of them- nearly all of them. If he wasn’t on patorol in Gotham, he was hiking it to Bludhaven to help out before crawling back at ungodly hours.

And he always found Damian waiting in the cave. Occupied, as if to disguise that he was even waiting for Tim- but Tim knew.

“You sure?” Dick nodded. “Yeah, alright. I’m pretty exhausted. He had another doctor’s appointment today.”

“And?” Dick was looking at him like he was offended Tim hadn’t brought it up sooner.

“Everything’s fine. It was just routine. But I got to go in this time.” Dick chuckled at that, walking over and clapping his hand on Tim’s shoulder, squeezing. “She offered a second ultrasound, if we wanted to know the baby's sex. Damian is adamant about not knowing.”

“No a lot of surprises in this world,” Wally said, walking over as well, leaning up against Dick’s shoulder. “Can’t blame him for wanting one.” Tim nodded.

“I need to come see him,” Dick added, sounding a little guilty. “It’s been a while. How big is my little prince now?” Tim laughed, moving his hand out to imitate the curve of Damian’s belly. Dick only grinned over it, and Wally’s smile was genuine.

“Well, get back to him before he gets cranky,” the speedster warned, “I’ll make sure this big idiot gets to bed before dawn.” Dick glared playfully at his mate, and Tim nodded his thanks, giving them a wave goodbye.

His hookshot carried him by rooftop the few blocks to his own bike, and then he was en route back towards Gotham- towards the Manor. His hand stung when he gripped his bike, but he ignored it, too intent on getting home to truly care.

When he pulled into the cave, killing the engine of his bike, it felt quiet. Peaceful. He hopped off, walking through the large corridors- and there was the Batmobile. Bruce and Cassandra had beaten him home.

Yet the only person still in the cave was Damian. He was sitting at the computer- where Tim
always found him working. Or at least keeping busy.

“You’re up late,” Tim teased, pulling his mask off. Damian pushed his chair back slightly, turning it and watching as Tim tugged his cape off, leaving it all on a pile on a small table. Damian stood up, pausing to stretch- and Tim was guilty of watching, the way his shoulders rolled, his head tipped back.

Damian was still pretty. God, he was still gorgeous, and it made Tim swallow thickly, made him hate himself that he could still think of him in that way, with everything they’d been through.

“Someone had to make sure you came home,” he teased, walking over as Tim pulled one glove off. He looked down at the broken one, carefully pulling it off his hand, wincing as the cut was exposed, as it began to bleed again. Damian frowned, reaching out and taking Tim’s hand in both of his, lifting it for him to look at. “-tt- And apparently someone has to stitch you up.”

“It’s nothing,” Tim said, but he didn’t pull his hands back. December in Bludhaven, like in Gotham, could put a chill in your bones that was hard to shake. And Damian’s hands were so warm. The omega sighed, gently guiding Tim away from the discarded pieces of his suit. He sat him down, looking through the medical supplies that never seemed to be put away.

There was no point, not a night went by that someone didn’t need to get patched up in some way.

Damian poured disinfectant onto a gauze pad, before working it over Tim’s cut. He hissed through his teeth, but didn’t pull away. Damian didn’t say a word, didn’t glance at him, simply cleaned the cut before he began wrapping a bandage around Tim’s hand. Tim smiled at how carefully Damian’s fingers moved- the fact that he was being far more gentle than most would think he could even be.

“Thanks babybat,” Tim offered, and the omega rolled his eyes.

“No thank me. Just do not lose a hand out there.” He glanced at Tim, who cracked a smile.

“I’ve got another.”

Damian snorted, choking on a sudden, brief laugh. “You need them both, Drake.”

Tim lifted a brow, before reaching out, carefully settling his hands on Damian’s hips. He squeezed, guided him in, and Damian slid between his spread thighs, reaching out to grasp at Tim’s shoulders with both his hands. He glanced down at Tim, jade eyes so pretty and slightly confused, waiting-

“Do I now?”

And god, what was Tim doing?

Damian’s lips parted, and Tim’s thumbs moved gently, sliding along the curve of Damian’s belly, soothing little motions that had the omega sighing.

If Tim was honest, Damian made some sort of noise nearly every time he touched him.

It only made him want to touch him more.

“You should get to bed,” Tim said, trying to diffuse the situation- trying to distract himself.

Damian’s hands slid along his shoulders, his head cocking slightly as he looked down at him.

“You need your rest.”
“You act as if I am made of glass,” Damian teased, “I get plenty of rest. Now,” Damian pulled back, stepping away from Tim’s hands, “Go shower. I can wait. We will go up together.”

Tim swallowed, pulled himself together long enough to stand up, to walk away from Damian. But instead of the sound of his footsteps, all he heard was an echo, a warning from a woman he knew he owed so much to-

Talia’s voice, reminding him, *His heart is glass, do not shatter it.*

*

Damian pushed his bedroom door open, not bothering with a light as he crossed the room, heading for his bed. Behind him, Tim lingered in the doorway for a moment, leaning against the frame. He still smelled of soap, shampoo, but he didn’t radiate heat.

His shower had been cold- Damian knew, from the brush of his hand, in the elevator.

“How do you need anything?” the beta asked, and Damian told himself not to look at him, not to answer with *only you.*

As badly as he wanted to.

“No,” he lied, reaching down to work his jeans off his hips. Tim nodded, said nothing as Damian partially undressed, kicking his jeans away and crawling into bed in his underwear and tshirt. It was only when Damian was facing away from the door, fretting with his pillows, that he finally heard Tim moving across the room.

“Here, let me help.” Damian turned as Tim leaned around him, adjusting the pillows until Damian was laying back in them. Tim smiled, leaning over him, before he moved closer, letting his lips ghost against his forehead. “You sure you don’t need anything?”

Damian nodded, as Tim reached up with one hand, brushed some of his short hair back. Damian reached up with both of his own hands, grasping Tim’s and holding it between them.

“You’re freezing,” he pointed out, watched the color begin to rise in Tim’s cheeks.

“Don’t worry about it. Winter, you know?” Damian frowned, carefully working his hands along Tim’s, rubbing heat into it.

“Lay down with me.” Damian’s heart began to race, as the words left his mouth. He squeezed Tim’s hand, to hide that his fingers were shaking. To hide that he wanted this so badly.

He’d wanted Tim in his bed, if only to fall asleep against him, for so long now. The few moments he had gotten, where Tim would let Damian rest against him during the day, doze off in a cat-nap, they were the most restful sleep he got. There was something about Tim, his scent, his skin, his very existence, that was soothing.

And yet so exciting.

Damian tried not to think about that aspect of it- of the feeling he’d gotten when Tim had taken control of the crowd when they had announced Damian’s pregnancy. Of the ferocity in those pretty eyes that he had seen, so many times. Tried not to remember Tim’s hands on him- even if his dreams refused to let those memories go silently.

“Damian,” Tim whispered, “I shouldn’t.”
“I’m just asking you to lay down,” Damian forced out, “Not… I’m not expecting anything from it.” Damian’s chest tightened up, and he worked hard to ignore it, ignore the sudden ache in his heart, the empty spaces between his ribs. Tim hesitated, before he gave a nod. Damian released his hand as Tim crawled over his legs, took a moment to situate himself before he lifted an arm, and Damian turned, laid against him. He draped an arm over Tim’s waist, sighing as Tim rubbed his lower back. “You feel too good,” Damian admitted, before he could stop himself, his head resting on Tim’s chest. He could hear his heartbeat, the gentle spike in the rhythm at his words, and responded with a rush of pheromones before he could stop himself.

Tim inhaled, his hand stilling, and then, in a voice that sounded strained, “I just don’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“I’m not now,” Damian admitted, letting his eyes fall shut. “But you are still cold.” Tim laughed at that, the tension beginning to diffuse. “Do not take a cold shower next time.”

And just like that, it was thick again.

Tim didn’t say anything, and Damian didn’t expect him to. He wasn’t blind to Tim’s reactions, but the fact that Tim so adamantly against them- well, it brought back voices, from the empty hallows of his bones. Voices that reminded Damian he wasn’t worthy of Tim’s affection, of his intimacy, his attention.

He tried to silence them, but at night they could be so loud it was impossible. And when he was alone, there was nothing to distract him from their screams.

Damian nuzzled closer to Tim, let one of his legs drape across Tim’s. Tim reached his other hand up, gently rubbed Damian’s belly, had the omega nearly purring. “You cannot leave now,” Damian warned, feeling his body beginning to relax, “I will never get this comfortable again.”

Tim laughed- breathy and pretty. “You really want me to stay?”

“Of course.” Damian clutched at Tim, tangling his tshirt in his fingers. “I always want you to stay.”

It was honest, and honesty was dangerous, left Damian open, left him up for rejection. He anticipated it, expected it- but Tim was quiet, before tipping his head down, kissing Damian’s hair so gently it was as if the wind simply skittered through his dark locks.

“Okay,” Tim agreed, and Damian lifted his head, looking up at him.

“Really?”

He nodded. “I want you to sleep well. Besides… I’m pretty comfy myself.” He laughed again. “And you’re warm as all hell, you little demon.” Damian scrunched up his face, let go of his grip on Tim to smack his shoulder. The beta continued to laugh, as Damian rolled onto his belly-grunting slightly because it wasn’t the most comfortable position- reaching up to playfully tangle his hands in Tim’s hair, tugging. Tim gasped, choking on his laughs as he got his hands on Damian’s waist, trying to pry him off. “Trying to drag me to hell by my hair?”

“Shut up!” But Damian was grinning. Tim’s laugh was so infectious, and he couldn’t help but tug again, continue to grin until his cheeks hurt. He was laying on top of the beta, who pushed at his waist, Damian shifting and pressing the breath out of him.

“And now you’re trying to suffocate me,” Tim added, and Damian pouted.

“I swear to the heavens Drake if you are calling me fat I will toss you directly out my window.”
Tim’s laugh was so loud, for a moment Damian thought he might wake the entire manor. “Never,” he said, hands sliding down to Damian’s hips, squeezing them. Damian rolled his eyes, was ready to retort, to smack Tim’s shoulder playfully again, because god his hands felt so good, his laugh made Damian’s stomach alive, fluttering-

Moving.

Damian froze, eyes going a little wide, as he felt the gentle motions in his belly, before his heartbeat began to pick up, to sound like a drumming rhythm inside his veins, his skull. It must have shown on his face, in his eyes, because Tim stopped laughing, his smile falling away.

“What’s wrong?”

“Shh!” Damian hushed him, grasping at Tim’s shoulders and pulling himself up, until his shoulder dug into the pillows. He pressed his own hand to his belly, closing his eyes for a moment- and there it was, subtle movement, the smallest of shiftings, of kicks against his palm.

“Give me your hand,” Damian said quickly, his eyes fluttering open. He grasped one of Tim’s hands, pressed it to his belly, moving it gently until he felt it again, knew where to press Tim’s palm. And the moment the baby kick, Tim’s eyes were going wide, his mouth falling open.

“Oh my god,” he breathed, and Damian grinned.

“Our baby,” he whispered, and Tim leaned in closer, gently rolling Damian more onto his back so he could sit up, press both hands to his belly. Damian arched, slightly, and Tim eased them both under his tshirt, pressing directly to warm flesh. Damian bit at his lip, fought down the little sound in his throat- was flooded with what it meant, to feel Tim’s hands on bare skin again.

“They’re moving so much,” Tim whispered, “Does it hurt?” Damian shook his head, tugging at his tshirt so he could rest his hands directly over Tim’s. Tim glanced up at him- his pretty eyes all awestruck, blue and disbelieving and shining like the constellations fresh in the winter sky.

Damian held that gaze, for a moment, before Tim slid their hands towards the sides of his belly, and carefully leaned down, pressed his lips to the top of it. “Hello baby,” he whispered, and Damian had to squeeze his eyes shut, the flood of affection in his chest overwhelming.

Tim kissed his stomach again, was smiling into his skin, and Damian could barely breathe, his head was spinning- so much need in his chest, so much affection, adoration, excitement-

And a sudden crippling fear that left him choking.

“Drake,” he managed, and Tim glanced up, smile falling away. “Drake- can you- here-”

“Hey, hey, it’s okay.” Tim pushed himself up, stretched out along Damian’s side. He reached up, cupped his cheek and turned his face, so that when his eyes opened he could see Tim, in the dark of his room. Looking at him-

Looking at him like there was nothing else.

“What’s wrong? Talk to me, Dami.” His thumb gently stroked Damian’s cheek, and the omega turned, nuzzled his palm, kissed above the bandage, towards his thumb. Tim watched, before his eyes narrowed slightly- not in anger, but in an unspoken sadness- “Are you having second thoughts.”
“No.” Damian couldn’t say it fast enough. He reached up, grasped Tim’s hand, held it to his cheek because he was afraid of losing it, that contact, that little tie between them. “No, I- I just. It’s… there’s so much…” He could barely think of the words, let himself tremble then. Tim leaned closer, pressed his forehead to Damian’s.

“Shhh, it’s alright babybat. I’m right here. Are you happy?” Damian nodded, and Tim kissed the bridge of his nose. “Are you excited?”

Another nod- because god, Damian was. He felt like his heart was racing straight out of his chest, bursting into the air- felt like his reality had opened up again. He had felt his baby move.

Their baby.

A kiss to the tip of his nose now.

“I am too,” Tim assured him, “I’m so excited. I’m so proud of you.” Damian choked, a tiny sob, and he wondered if Tim knew how badly he needed to hear that, how loud his doubts could be, in the dark.

Tim inclined his head, slightly, level now with Damian’s lips. Damian could feel each of his breaths, as Tim’s hand slid back, into his hair, and then down, to cup the back of his neck.

“You’re amazing,” Tim whispered, and suddenly he wasn’t cold- to Damian, he was fire. He was life, he was a hum in his veins. “Damian, I-”

He cut off, so close, every breath a ghost on Damian’s mouth, and the omega wanted him to take that final push, to slide his mouth against his. Wanted Tim to kiss him like he had just looked at him-

Like Damian was the center of everything, the end-all, be-all. Like he mattered and no one would ever change that.

But the hesitation lasted too long, and Tim was leaning back, his hand sliding from Damian’s neck to his shoulder, before he let his arm hook around him, pulling Damian into his chest. The omega allowed it to happen, pressed his temple to Tim’s chest and closed his eyes, as Tim held him, like Damian needed so badly.

“I’m happy,” Tim finally said, and Damian wasn’t sure it was what he meant, what had originally been clinging to his tongue. “I really hope you are too.”

Damian hesitated, pressing his hand to Tim’s chest. His fingers traced small, tiny patterns in his tshirt, as Damian thought about it. As Damian took the word happy apart, rolled it over in his mind, silently on his tongue.

He didn’t have everything he wanted, he knew. The way Tim was holding him now- it was a phantom of what he wanted, the affection a glimmer of what it could be.

But he was holding him. He was in his bed, with his heartbeat singing to Damian like Talia had, when he was a baby. With his hands on him like he wanted to keep Damian from slipping away, into the shadows.

And Tim was happy, happy to be there, happy about their baby-

“I am,” Damian finally whispered, closing his eyes. And while he knew there was so much more he wanted, that happiness was fleeting, a finicky and temperamental thing- he would grasp it, in
that moment. And for a night, he would allow himself to truly be happy. To pretend this was everything he wanted, and that perhaps when he woke, he would be in an endless loop of just this night.

Of Tim’s affection and joy, of the hypnotic sound to his laugh, the intoxicating beat of his heart-and the heavy calm that came with the touch of his hands, the way Damian felt as if the world couldn’t touch him, when he hid in Tim’s arms.

*

Tim woke to the smell of Damian’s skin, that sweet cinnamon-almond scent, to his heat was he lay across Tim’s chest, one leg stretched up over Tim’s, his hand clutching at his shirt. He woke to a burst of affection in his chest as, without thought, he tightened his arm around Damian, and the omega snuggled tighter to his chest.

It took a moment to realize where he was- that this was Damian, this was Damian’s bed, and that, for the first time since they had created the child in Damian’s belly, he had spent the night in it. He felt his gut twisting, a rush of nerves-

But that feeling of terror, it died when Damian made a small sound, before sighing, still sleeping against his chest. Tim lifted his head, glanced down at him, rubbed his hand along his back and got another sound from the back of his throat. His lips quirked into a smile, and Tim could only think Damian was gorgeous, sleeping as he was.

He was open- there were no walls when he didn’t consciously throw them up. There was just Damian, just the way he fit so well in Tim’s arms, the way he warmed Tim up like he was on fire, like his flames were catching Tim’s skin, the marrow in his bones.

Tim reached up, stroked at Damian’s hair. He wanted to see those jade eyes, how they could peer through thick lashes. How they would be sleepy, pupils so small, how they were a work of art that could make his blood burn through his veins, his bone.

Tim tangled his fingers in his hair, studying him. It was hard to see his face, at this angle- but Tim knew the perfect curves of his cheek bones, the pink of his lips, the flush that came so easily to his cheeks. He knew that Damian looked so much like his mother now- which was always amusing, considering how much like Bruce he had looked, when he was younger. But he’d grown into the grace his mother had given him, and Tim couldn’t look at Damian without seeing the pieces of the puzzle Talia had hand crafted.

For a moment, Tim wondered where she was- if she had escaped herself. He knew Damian had fretted over it, after their return- had heard Bruce denying him his requests to go back for her.

It would have been suicide, to go back anywhere near Ra’s. It would have nullified any sacrifice Talia had made.

Tim hoped she was alright- he owed her a great deal. He owed her Damian’s life, twice over now. Once for creating him, and once for saving him.

He owed her his baby’s life.

Tim let his hand slid back down from Damian’s hair, along his spine. He pushed his tshirt up, felt warm skin under his hand- the heavy scar along the curve of his spine, and now the littering of new scars as his palm and fingers traced half way up his back. Damian moaned- and for a brief moment, Tim felt a rush of heat in his belly, a tightening, and the sound was so close to those he
He inhaled, slowly, calmed himself. As if he wasn’t dealing with enough, trying to figure out if he could really build something with Damian- and being so afraid of the possibilities- he didn’t need to add on the excitement the omega still caused on him. Or that he knew Damian felt it, too. He could smell it on him, and it took all of Tim’s willpower to turn away, to bite his tongue and remind himself there were more important things at hand than wanting to drive into Damian’s body, to get him to moan again the way Tim knew he truly could.

Tim sighed, continued to run his hand along Damian’s back, to lose himself in calmer things- his heat, his scent, the way he clutched at Tim like he was afraid, in his sleep, to let go. To think again of his face, the pieces of Talia that Tim saw in him-

He wondered who the baby would look like- would it have Damian’s jade eyes or Tim’s crystalline? Damian’s perfect dark skin or Tim’s marble complexion? Tim’s mouth or Damian’s-

The ideas were endless, and for a moment there were flashes in Tim’s mind, girls with Damian’s eyes and skin smiling up at him with a smile he saw in the mirror- boys with his hair and eyes and Damian’s cheek bones and thick lashes. And each one, every single possibility, was beautiful-

“Drake?” Tim blinked, dragged himself back to reality, found Damian had lifted his head, was looking at him. His eyelids were still heavy, his eyes sleepy, but so pretty that Tim’s heart began to race.

“Morning,” he offered, smiling, “You sleep okay?” Damian nodded, pressing his face into Tim’s neck to stifle a yawn. Tim didn’t push him away, just wrapped his arms around him, hugging gently as Damian shifted, trying to get comfortable again.

“Mhm. Much better than I have lately.” He inhaled slowly, sighing in content as Tim rubbed both hands along his back, his shoulders. “Thank you for staying.”

“No problem.” When Damian lifted his head Tim turned, dared to kiss his temple affectionately- wanted to pepper his cheeks with them, to get the corner of his mouth, to drag one of those pretty smiles he knew Damian had inside him up to the surface.

Wanted to see him happy- but happiness that wasn’t fleeting, wasn’t a second and then gone, forgotten. Tim feared that was all he could ever offer.

“You were thinking about something,” Damian said, watching him. “What was it?”

Tim chuckled. “Was I spacing?”

“A little.”

Tim smiled. “Just… wondering what our baby might look like.” Damian pushed himself up, and Tim sat up, offering a hand to Damian to help him. The omega only rolled his eyes, ignoring it and settling on his knees, straddling one of Tim’s thighs. Tim tried not to think about it. Damian had his hands down on his belly, cradling it gently and smiling to himself.

“And what were you hoping for?”

“I don’t know,” Tim admitted, “Every option was… beautiful. Always looked a lot like you.” Tim flushed at that, watched Damian’s eyes flash- and was that disbelief, in the turn of his lips, the corners of his eyes? Was that fear, lingering in his irises?
Tim reached out, carefully placed his hands on Damian’s belly. He remembered the movement from last night, the way it had felt to have the baby kick his palms. The spike of excitement, in his chest, over it. The rush of pure love in his heart.

“We’ll have a little prince, or princess,” Tim said, letting one of his hands move towards Damian’s, letting their fingers tangle together. “That much I know.”

Damian smiled at that, nodding his agreement. He looked down at their hands, gently squeezed Tim’s fingers, and Tim leaned in, kissed his cheek. Damian turned, as Tim was pulling away- and for a moment, their lips almost touched, but the ghost of a breath still stood between them, and Tim felt his heart pounding up, into his throat.

“You hungry?” he asked, needing to change the subject, before he grew too comfortable- before he let himself get too intimate. Damian hesitated, before accepting the change, and nodded. Tim grinned. “Let’s head downstairs and see if anyone’s up and wants breakfast. Brunch. Lunch. I have literally no idea what time it even is.”

Damian chuckled at that, carefully pulling himself from Tim’s lap and climbing out of bed. Tim watched him grab his sweatpants off the floor, stepping into them, before he stretched, arching the curve of his back- before he had to glance away, unsure about the strange mingling of heat and affection in his chest and belly.

Tim discovered it was indeed far closer to- or past- lunch than anything else. But when the two emerged into the dinning room to find Stephanie and Cassandra chatting over food, they didn’t seem particularly bothered by their late appearance. After all, Tim had been the last to return the night before, and Damian had waited for him.

That still left a coil in Tim’s chest- Damian waiting up for him.

Tim let Damian sit at one head of the table, taking the seat next to him, across from Cassandra. Tim hadn’t even had his chair pulled out when Alfred popped in, as if he had simply sensed they were up- and he was suddenly placing a warm mug in front of Damian. Damian smiled at him, thanking him and taking the tea- and Tim simply stared for a moment.

He’d never understand how Alfred was that good.

“Are you two hungry?” Alfred asked, “I will have lunch prepared shortly.”

“Starving,” Damian admitted, and then, glancing down at his tea. “...Does it have to be lunch?”

Alfred smiled. “What are you thinking, Master Damian?”

“Pancakes.” He didn’t hesitate, and Tim quirked up a brow. He couldn’t even remember Damian ever asking for pancakes.

“Pancakes it is,” Alfred said, lifting his head. Stephanie grinned from where she sat, on Cassandra’s other side.

“Finally getting some cravings?” Damian said nothing, hiding behind his mug as he took a sip. “I wish mine had been as normal as freakin’ pancakes. Call me when you want pickles dipped in peanut butter kid.”

Damian suddenly groaned. “Why would you say peanut butter.” Tim laughed at that, shoving his chair back and standing up.
“I’ll tell Alfred.” He turned, heading for the kitchen before Damian could stop him, found Alfred with a mixing bowl, whisking up the batter. Tim grinned, heading right for the blissfully full-coffee pot, and pouring himself a mug.

“What are the odds you can slather those in peanut butter?” Tim asked, as he fished his creamer out of the fridge. “Stephanie made the mistake of mentioning it in front of Damian and I think he’d possibly go head-to-head with the Joker for a jar of peanut butter right now.”

Alfred chuckled. “That can be arranged.” He set the bowl down, moving to the stove, as Tim took a sip of his coffee, enjoying the heat, the rush of caffeine. “If perhaps you would be so kind as to take miss Cassandra and Stephanie their lunches?”

“Sure thing.” Tim shifted his coffee, managed to hold one plate and clutch the other between his arm and chest.

“I hope you are alright eating the same as Master Damian.”

“Alfred, pancakes for lunch sounds like heaven. And as long as Damian doesn’t start craving anything bizarre, I’ll be easy to please.” He grabbed his coffee. “Thanks again for doing this.”

Alfred’s smile was so large, so genuine, it could have made absolutely anyone smile, Tim was sure. “It is my pleasure.”

Tim made his way back out to the table, setting his mug down and then passing Stephanie and Cass their plates. He settled down, shifting his chair a little closer to Damian and sipping at his coffee, listening in on the conversation. Cassandra was discussing a drug bust she and Bruce had done, the night prior- with Damian interjecting to help catch Stephanie up.

Tim was glad he didn’t just sit in the cave and idly wait for him- he knew Damian hated being sidelined. At least interacting and helping as mission control in the cave gave him something to do, something to help occupy his mind. To give him an outlet.

“I missed a good night,” Stephanie said with a laugh, “I was passed the fuck out like fifteen minutes after you guys left. Slept great though.” She stretched, shaking out her blonde hair, before leaning her elbows on the table- and Tim was so glad Alfred wasn’t watching- and looking down at Damian. “How are you sleeping? I know it can get awkward, when you’ve actually got a cute little tummy.”

Damian flushed, narrowing his eyes. “-tt- I do not-”

“If you finish that sentence,” Stephanie warned, “I will personally see to it that your child is addicted to the most obnoxiously loud cartoons, toys, and the most repetitive songs I can find. Do not test me.”

Damian clamped his mouth shut as Cassandra snickered, and Tim full on laughed. He had to clamp a hand over his mouth, trying to contain himself.

“I sleep alright,” Damian admitted, “The baby hasn’t kept me up- but perhaps soon.” He leaned back in his chair, and as if on queue, Tim saw his eyes light up a little. He looked down at his stomach, before resting a hand on it, smiling. “It’s started moving.”

Stephanie was up so fast her chair toppled over, crashing rather loudly on the floor. Tim jerked at the noise, as she ran the few steps up to Damian, nearly bouncing on her feet.

“Like right now?” Damian nodded, and Stephanie gave an excited little sound. “Can I-”
“Of course,” he cut her off, reaching for her hand and placing it on his belly. She squealed excitedly, as Alfred suddenly emerged from the kitchen.

“I heard a rather loud noise, is everyone-”

“Alfred the baby is moving!” Stephanie said it in a single quick breath, her hand gliding along Damian’s belly. Tim watched his face split into a grin.

“What’s going on?” Bruce now, looking rumpled and exhausted, holding a mug of coffee, emerging from the kitchen. Tim wondered if he had slept even later.

“The baby!” Stephanie hadn’t pulled away, looked to be utterly glowing- and Tim could only smile. Damian huffed, rolling his eyes.

“I feel like a circus attraction,” he said, before Stephanie finally pulled her hand off.

“Oh we should call Dick!”

Another groan, and Damian reached up, covered his eyes. “Please do not call Grayson over this. I swear you are all reacting more than we did last night.” Tim knew that was a lie- but he didn’t mind it. Their moment had been intimate, special- and he wasn’t, if he was honest, interested in sharing all of it with the family.

“First movement is so exciting,” Stephanie said, “I’m shocked you’re not freaking out more.”

“I had my own excitement last night. We must have woke the baby up.” Damian glanced at Tim, as the room fell silent.

And then, Stephanie, looking at Tim, “You were in his room last night?”

Before Tim could answer, Damian said, “-tt- He slept with me.”

Oh, those were the wrong words. Tim felt the entire room’s eyes shift to him, and he raised his hands. “It’s not what you think,” Tim said, “He didn’t mean it like that.”

“Uh-huh,” Stephanie teased, straightening up and placing her hands on her hips. “Sure. You know we get you had to get down and dirty to get to this point, don’t try and hide it.”

Tim’s cheeks were burning, and he could see the same blush covering Damian’s as well. “Really, Stephanie, it wasn’t like that.”

Even if a part of Tim had wanted it to be like that. Even if he could tell Damian had wanted it to be like that.

“Well why the hell not?” Stephanie threw her hands up. “Jeez, if I was Damian I’d be jumping your damn bones every two seconds.”

Bruce suddenly cleared his throat, and Tim glanced back at him, could see he was gripping his coffee mug rather tightly. “I think that’s quite enough.” Tim could have laughed, over the slightly horrified look in his eyes- not that he could exactly blame him. Bruce turned his eyes to Tim. “Go get yourself showered and dressed, we need to be in the city in an hour.”

Tim sighed. He’d forgotten there was a board meeting today. He pushed himself up, grabbing his coffee. “Shit. I forgot. Gimme a few to shower and wake up.” Bruce nodded, as Alfred disappeared back into the kitchen- Tim was sure to get Damian’s breakfast.
Tim paused, before, instead of turning towards the exit, he turned for the head of the table. He walked over to Damian, reaching down and laying his now warm hand on his belly. Damian’s eyelids fluttered, and he leaned his head over, towards Tim, rested his temple against his ribs as Tim gently rubbed, felt the baby kicking his hand.

“You two behave,” he said, kissing Damian’s hair, before forcing himself to pull away, heading towards the kitchen- dodging Alfred with his plate of Damian’s pancakes, currently smelling like an entire jar of peanut butter- and could feel all the eyes in the room on him. On the tiny show of affection.

Somehow, it made him smile. Made him feel a little warmer, inside.

*

Damian clutched at the tall champagne glass in his hand- which boasted some sort of carbonated juice- glancing about the large, bustling room. He had never cared for the large events his father required him to attend, hated them almost as much as he hated board meetings and all the high society bullshit he had to put up with because of his family name.

It had been bad enough, before. He simply didn’t know how to act around these people- he didn’t have the flare for this that Dick had, the poise that Tim possessed. Damian was simply, for once in his life, inept at something.

It was only made worse that everyone that passed by him looked now. They’d glance, look away- and then glance back, a moment later. They’d whisper, as if he wouldn’t know it was about him.

He cursed his hearing, tonight. Cursed that he could hear the small comments, he’s so young, unbonded, not married, with his brother, you know?-

Damian felt sick over it.

To make it worse, he was alone. His family was scattered, playing their parts well. Bruce had left the city to Stephanie for the night, so he could force his three children to attend the new years eve gala with him- and Damian knew that if Bruce could have wrangled Dick into this, he would have.

He swallowed, scanning the room for a hint of familiarity, somewhere to escape. Tim had been swallowed up into the crowds immediately, and ever the somehow well poised socialite, he hadn’t fought it. Cassandra was the only other one who might understand what Damian was feeling, but she kept close to Bruce, who of course, was making his rounds around the whole damn event.

Damian sipped at his drink, the bubbles tickling his nose. He scrunched it up, pushed it away- it tasted terrible, on his tongue. He remembered liking it when he was younger, and his father had dragged him to these, before Dick had snuck him champagne and Bruce had turned a knowing blind eye.

He was considering his sudden change in tastes one of the most annoying things to come with his pregnancy.

He swept his eyes around the room again, before finally catching sight of someone that meant safety, and hurried towards her. Cassandra was making her way carefully through the room, away from the crowds, and Damian caught up to her just as she was declining a glass of champagne from a waiter.

“Where have you been?” he asked, setting his own glass aside.
“Where have I not been?” she asked, and she sounded exhausted already. There had been nearly two hours of this already, which meant midnight was coming fast- and Damian prayed not much after that. “Bruce has, I swear, talked with every person in this room.”

“Father would consider it a failure if he did not.” Damian folded his arms, noticed another glance from a woman, her arm hooked in that of her date’s. He frowned. “If one more person stares at me tonight, I will begin taking eyes.”

Cassandra followed her stare, setting her face in a scowl. “I’ll help,” she added, folding her arms and cocking her hip. “These people have to judge everyone.”

“I’ve heard everything under the sun at this point,” Damian said, heaving a sigh. “Comments about my age, about the fact that Drake and I are not together, nor married, nor bonded. That he is my… brother. And that they do not believe it’s his child.” Damian rolled his eyes, as Cassandra’s stare hardened out on the crowd. “I am going mad. And they do not even say it to my face.”

“That’d take guts. No one here has that.” Cassandra reached up, rubbed Damian’s shoulder. “We’ll get out of here soon. Let your father make his big new years toast and you and I can split. We’ll leave him and Tim to deal with these guys after midnight.”

Damian smiled. “That’s a plan I like.” He let her take his hand, lift it up and kiss it affectionately. Couldn’t help but always feel protected with Cassandra.

She had always been his equal, even when he was young, stubborn, arrogant. She could best him and he knew it, welcomed it. She was a wonder- and even if he never spoke it, he was glad she had found some comfort in Stephanie.

He had a lot of love for the two women.

“I see your father,” Cass said, pointing- and as if on queue, Bruce turned, saw them, and motioned them over. Damian sighed- knew it was no use trying to escape- and followed a step behind Cassandra as they moved through the crowds. Bruce welcomed them over, placing a hand on Cassandra’s back and introducing the both of them to the small group he was talking to- names Damian knew he had heard before, filed away in his mind- but he did not remember. He couldn’t keep them organized like his father or Tim could.

“Your oldest did not come,” a woman said, lifting her champagne.

“No, Dick is busy. That’s what happens when they grow up.” Bruce sipped his own champagne, and the same woman glanced around.

“And your other? Where is Timothy? I haven’t seen him since he gave my lawyer that dreadful tongue lashing at last month’s meeting.” She chuckled, and Bruce grinned.

“I am sure he is quite busy charming someone somewhere.” Damian glanced at his father, before turning back to the crowd- catching one gentleman looking away, the moment he did. Carefully, he curled one hand into a fist at his side, needing to put the tension somewhere.

“He is charming. Such a wonderful boy.” She glanced at Damian then, and her smile- it was forced. Damian knew. “What a lucky one you are.”

“We are not together,” Damian said, and god, everything tasted bitter and vile now. “There is no luck here.” If he sounded dejected, he didn’t care. He was sick to death of it being commented on- it was bad enough that he wanted Tim to a level that scared him, felt like he needed him, down in his very core-
But to have everyone else comment on how they were not a couple— it simply made Damian feel as if every flaw he boasted was worn on his sleeves, scratched into his arms like claw marks. Made him feel as if he wasn’t good enough, not for Tim— and everyone else, they saw it.

“But you are having a child with him,” she pointed out, “that is something. Unless you are not keeping the child.”

There was judgement in her eyes, and Damian knew his answer didn’t matter— she would have venom under her tongue no matter what he said. “Yes,” Damian said, one hand pressing down to his belly, his open cardigan falling away. He had at least escaped the need for a suit, and his father had been far more lax on whatever Damian chose to wear. “I am keeping my baby.”

She lifted her champagne glass, peering over it. “Hmm. Well, that is something then. I would imagine Timothy would’ve wanted that. After all, I can barely believe he managed to make a child. It should be impossible.”

Damian narrowed his eyes as she sipped her champagne. Next to him, Cassandra had gone tenser, her dark eyes glaring. The omega inhaled, a steady breath, before, “Should be, but I guess we did something right. Quite a few times.”

He watched her choke, and could only smile— smug over it. Let her mull over all the ways Tim could have had Damian, all the ways Damian could have taken Tim’s breath away. Let them all choke on the images, for all he cared.

He wasn’t lying. This child was Tim’s. And if one more person insinuated that Damian had been unfaithful to Tim, that he could never have convinced the beta to bed down with him, that he was off giving himself to every person who looked his way like he was desperate—

Damian exhaled, turning away. “Excuse me,” he said, escaping the group without another word. He felt Cassandra turn, as if to chase after him— but Bruce gently grabbed her arm, kept her in place. Damian didn’t wait to see where the conversation would go— he had had quite enough of it all. He was beyond what he could take, and in that moment felt so empty, so hallow, that he simply needed away from everything.

They were up on one of the buildings higher floors, and Damian found the doorway to the balcony unlocked. He peeked out it— and to his delight, found it completely empty. He slipped out, shutting the door behind him and heading for the railing, leaning his arms on it. The air was cold, and there was a layer of fine snow, dusting everything.

He would survive the cold for a few minutes, if it meant silence, solitude— and escape.

Damian closed his eyes. There was a maw, open inside him— bottomless and dark, gnawing at him now. That everyone could believe he didn’t deserve Tim, that there was no way he could have ever had him, been attractive in his eyes.

It hurt. Damian didn’t want it to, wanted to be above it— but he wasn’t and it did and it made it hard to breathe. He bowed his head, still not opening his eyes, the voices from inside mingling with his own demons, with his grandfather’s voice and the string of ghosts that had always haunted him, always whispered in his ear come dusk. He didn’t deserve Tim, it had been luck that had brought him to his bed, and what he was doing, keeping the baby—

“Damian?”

Damian’s eyes snapped open and he lifted his head, glanced over his shoulder. Tim was peeking
out from the door. He offered the omega a smile, stepped out onto the balcony, closing the door behind him.

“Hey.” Damian nodded his greeting, turning back to look at the city around them. Tim walked up next to him, folded his arms and looked out as well. “As shitty as this city can be at night, it really is gorgeous.” Gotham was lit up like an alter, offering her welcome to the new year. Bustling with those celebrating.

Damian nodded, not disagreeing. Next to him, Tim turned from the city to study him.

“She’s not as gorgeous as you.”

Damian chuckled, bitter and short, in his throat. “Do not patronize me, Drake.” Tim frowned, reaching out, gently touching Damian’s shoulder.

“I’m not.”

The omega only shook his head. “You do not have to lie.” Tim squeezed his shoulder then, gently trying to straighten Damian up. The omega allowed it, stood up to turn and face Tim, to lean his hip against the railing.

“I’m not lying. Listen… Cassandra pulled me aside a minute ago. She told me what people have been saying. I don’t want you to believe them.” Tim reached out, let his hands brush against Damian’s- who did not offer them up. “You know how Gotham families are. How disgusting they can be.”

“They are not wrong,” Damian said, and Tim furrowed his brow. “What they say, some of it… I can understand their shock, that you would even look at me.” Damian inhaled, slowly. “I don’t deserve you. I don’t deserve everything that I want the most, I haven’t earned it. I’m not worthy—”

“Damian. Stop.” Tim reached for his hands again, and this time Damian allowed him to take them, to squeeze them, rub his thumbs along his knuckles. “You deserve everything in this goddamn world.” Damian lifted his eyes, glancing at Tim, who squeezed his hands again. “You’ve done so much that none of these people fucking know or understand. You’ve proven just how brilliant you are time and time again. How much you care. You deserve to be happy. No one needs to earn that, but god if anyone ever has, it’s you.” Tim gently pulled him in closer, let go of his hands to reach up, to cup his cheeks, devoid of their normal warmth from being out in the winter air. “I’m lucky you let me come around, I’m lucky you asked me to stay. I’m lucky—” Tim paused, and when he spoke again, his voice was shaking. “I’m lucky you wake up everyday and want me in your life, in our baby’s life.”

Damian swallowed, thickly, his heart beginning to skip, to make his chest ache. Tim was looking at him again, like he had in his bed- and that was twice now, two separate occasions, that Tim’s pretty eyes had seemed to melt for him, had looked at Damian like nothing else mattered.

“I feel like I am forcing you to be with me,” Damian admitted, and Tim shook his head.

“You’re not forcing me to do anything. I’m around you because I want to be- because I like you. I’m glad you wanted to do this- that you want to keep the baby. I wanted it this way.” Damian’s eyes widened slightly,

“You did?” Sure, Tim had said it once, but it still shocked Damian, jarred him, to hear him admit it. That Tim could want anything to do with him- it was hard to believe.

Tim nodded. “Yeah. I… I don’t know. I saw that heartbeat and I just fell in love. With everything.”
His thumbs rubbed along Damian’s cheeks, and the omega could feel his breath, trapped in his lungs, snagged in his throat. His belly was in knots, and it was just like in his bed, when Tim had been so close, when all he had wanted was for the beta to close the gap, to kiss him like he mattered-

Behind them, there was a sudden commotion inside, cheering, and Tim smiled. He lifted up, leaning in and hovering over Damian’s mouth.

“Happy new year.” Damian was about to question him, but the words, the mere thought that words could even exist, died when Tim’s mouth pressed to his.

His lungs twisted inside his body, choking him, and for a moment he couldn’t move, as Tim gently kissed his lips. But when he was closing his eyes, tipping his head- and everything was combusting, going alight inside his mind. There was warmth and a fluttering like a torrent of winged creatures was inside him, trying to erupt from his stomach, up into his ribs. His heart felt like it was simply going to explode, to beat so fast it shut down-

Damian reached up, grasped at Tim’s jacket, kept him close as Tim inclined his head more, deepened the kiss. Damian made a small sound, in the back of his throat, and one of Tim’s hands slid back, into his hair, tangled there, as the other moved down to cup the back of his neck. He was getting dizzy, realized he had barely breathed at all- and when Tim pulled back, glanced up at him with those blue eyes, through dark lashes, Damian didn’t think he’d ever breathe again.

“I should have done that a long time ago,” Tim admitted, and Damian could only nod.

“You should have.” Tim cracked a smile then, soft and pretty.

“Forgive me?”

“I could,” Damian whispered, feeling a breath of confidence, suddenly. “If you kiss me again.”

Tim grinned, and suddenly Damian was pressed back against the railing. He grasped it tightly as Tim leaned up, pressed his mouth to Damian’s, tore a sound from him within seconds as his tongue traced his lips. Damian let him in, let Tim have his breath and every sound in his throat, let him have the sharpness of his teeth and the warmth of his own tongue. Tim took, but Damian wouldn’t have had it any other way-

Because when Tim took, it felt like Damian actually had something to give.

Tim’s hands found his hips, squeezed, and Damian pushed forward, Tim leaning into him- until his belly was pressing against Tim, and the beta was suddenly giggling, into his mouth. The kiss broke and Tim bowed his head, pressed his forehead against Damian’s shoulder. The omega huffed, rolling his eyes- but there was a smile, on his lips, one that felt so true, true like when he had felt his baby, for the first time.

“I’m sorry,” Tim whispered, giving Damian’s hips another squeeze.

“I guess you’re forgiven,” Damian teased, as Tim turned, nuzzled his neck. “But if you take me home, consider it forgiveness for the next mistake.”

Tim grinned at that, pulling back and taking Damian’s hands, pulling him up off the railing. They were cold, and there was color to Damian’s cheeks, his nose. He would have given nearly anything for heat, in that moment.

“That’s something I can do,” Tim said, and his hands were so warm, so full of promise, that
Damian believed him.

*

They left the gala without Bruce or Cassandra. Tim hadn’t given Bruce the option of saying no- had simply found him and told him he was taking Damian home. Bruce hadn’t fought it- and there must have been something in Tim’s eyes, in Damian’s behind him- before he nodded and wished them well.

The manor, when they arrived, was silent. Alfred had turned right back around to drive back to the city, to await Cassandra and Bruce’s departure, leaving them with just the shadows, just the ghosts.

Tim followed Damian up the stairs, turning down the hallway and heading for the omega’s room. Damian opened the door, before hesitating, glancing back at him.

“Will you come in?” Tim nodded, had no intention of leaving Damian yet. Not when his kiss was still fresh on his mouth, not when he had seen the fractures in his eyes and yet seen him smile. Not when he wanted him to heal.

Damian walked inside, tugging off his sweater and tossing it on his chair. Tim reached up, worked at his bow tie, sighing when it was undone and he’d popped the first button on his shirt. He glanced over at Damian, who had paced towards his bed, seemed hesitant.

“You’re thinking something.” Tim offered, wanting to coax it from him. Wanting Damian to speak. Wanting the kid back who had challenged him with his eyes alone-

It was easy to forget that Ra’s had broken Damian, but moments like these only reminded Tim that even the strongest of them could shatter.

And Damian, he was glass. Blown in fire and sand, masterfully sculpted- but glass.

“I’m thinking that I want you to stay,” Damian admitted, “But I do not want to ask.” Tim flashed him a smile, shrugging his jacket off, tossing it to join Damian’s cardigan on the chair.

“Then let me.” Tim walked over to the bed, hopping up onto it and shuffling towards Damian, on his knees. Damian bit back a chuckle, as Tim reached out, took his hands. “Can I sleep with you tonight? I’d probably freeze if I went back to my room.”

Damian huffed and Tim pulled him in, leaned up and kissed him lightly. And god, it felt good, it felt like it should have, all this time. It felt like Tim’s heart was exploding and his chest was resonating with the aftershocks.

It felt like falling. It felt like jumping. It felt like landing and being alive.

“If you swear to hold me.” Damian lifted his chin, and there was that playfulness Tim knew was inside him. He hummed, squeezing Damian’s hands.

“That can be arranged.” Tim flopped back, tugging at Damian, who gave a shout, being tugged down to the bed. He caught himself, like Tim knew he would, awkwardly sprawling on Tim.

“Drake,” he laughed, and yes, it was a laugh, musical to Tim. “Careful.”

“You’re okay,” Tim reasoned, “I’ll always catch you.” Damian stared at him, for a moment, and Tim felt his heart slowing, slowing-
Stilling, as Damian reached up, cupped the back of his head and held him still as he kissed him. It was slow, methodical and yet lazy, the kind Tim could have let go on forever. He reached up, ran his hands along Damian’s waist, down to his hips, before very carefully easing Damian off him, rolling him to his back, pushing him into the pillows—

And kissing him, again. Like he’d wanted to, for so long. Like he’d wanted to through the bars when he’d first found him, like he’d wanted to when he saw their baby’s heartbeat, like he’d wanted to when he’d confessed to Dick, in his moment of clarity, that he wanted this, wanted Damian, wanted the baby—

“I could kiss you forever,” Tim admitted, and Damian was hooking his arms up around his neck, clutching at the back of his shirt.

“I won’t stop you.” Tim smiled, moved to kiss the bridge of Damian’s nose.

“You could probably use some sleep,” Tim reasoned, “I’ll just have to pick this back up in the morning.” He pushed himself up, sitting and working at his cufflinks, the buttons of his shirt. Damian lay there, watching him, and as Tim eased the shirt off his shoulders, revealing muscles and scars and lines that told endless stories, Damian asked,

“Is this really happening?” Tim glanced back at him, watched as Damian pushed himself up, sitting back in the pillows. “Or am I going to wake up in the morning without you?”

Tim’s eyes softened, and he tossed his shirt away, turning to face Damian. “It’s whatever you want. I can disappear in the morning, if you want—”

“No.” Damian shook his head. And then in a moment of honesty that seemed to shatter the stone of his eyes, “All I’ve ever wanted is you.”

Tim hurt, behind his eyes, behind his soft smile. Hurt because he wasn’t doubting Damian- hurt because he could have given him everything he wanted, if he hadn’t been weak to his own fear, his own self doubt. Doubt that was still there, in the quite whispers in his veins- but doubt that he could not let rule his life.

He wanted Damian. He wanted to want Damian, even if they weren’t having a baby- and while he still feared this was all because of the baby, he’d been dwelling on the excitement he’d felt over Damian, that first night. Dwelling lately over all the affection and pure joy he’d gotten from him before—

And that if this hadn’t happened, he wouldn’t have wanted Damian to tell him that those few nights were all they had. That even if Damian hadn’t been pregnant, he would have wanted to pursue him, would have wanted Damian to welcome him back into his arms, his bed, his chest again.

He would have wanted Damian then- and wanting him now seemed exactly what should happen.

He leaned in, pressed his forehead to Damian’s. “If that’s really what you want,” Tim offered, “I’m all yours. Already was, even if I was too chicken to say it.” He tangled his hand in Damian’s hair, felt Damian’s hands on his bare sides, holding onto him.

“There’s only ever been you.” Damian’s voice was choked, and Tim kept his smile, inhaled in a shaking breath.

“I know. I never doubted you.” Tim knew what people were saying- claiming the baby couldn’t be his. That he was a beta and the odds were too far against him, that Damian had to be lying, that he must have slept with someone else- “And I never will.”
Damian squeezed his eyes shut, tipped his head back, just slightly, just enough that Tim could kiss him softly, so sweetly he could feel their breaths exchanging- Damian’s seeping down into his lungs, his own clutching at Damian’s throat.

“I’m sorry,” Tim whispered, around another kiss, before he pulled back. “I’m sorry I made you wait. I just want to be good to you, Damian. Good for you. You deserve it.” Carefully, Tim eased himself down, to lay on his side, pulling Damian against him. “You deserve something amazing. The whole damn world.”

Damian glanced down, before grabbing Tim’s hand, placing it on the curve of his stomach. Tim pressed carefully, let Damian’s hand cover his. “You’ve given me the world,” he admitted, “Everything else is simply the stars.”

Tim nuzzled his cheek at that, kissed tenderly. “I’ll give you those too,” he whispered, “If you’ll smile again and mean it.”

Damian did smile, in that moment, and Tim felt his chest opening up, as if he could take the entire city into his ribs, cage them forever for any of the slander they had dared to speak about the man in his arms. The man who was giving him a child, who was giving him a sign that maybe life could be more than he’d ever dreamed.

He’d cage them all, for ever making the man he loved doubt that he was worthy of happiness.
For the first time in what feels like lifetimes, Tim can say that he's happy. And he's hoping against hope that Damian can say the same thing- and that he can keep him happy. Because he knows, down in his gut, he has no intention of ever leaving Damian again.

You're all so wonderful for your comments and your continued support! Thanks as always for reading! <3

Damian eased himself down into a chair in the cave, glancing over the incoming video feed from the city. His father had yet to make it down to the cave to prepare for patrol that evening- was holding Tim captive in his study as they discussed a meeting from earlier that day. Damian had considered listening with them- before he had decided he’d find more entertainment in the cave. More useful ways to spend his time.

He clicked a stream from a security camera in Arkham, watching idly as an orderly wheeled a cart down the halls. He leaned his chin on his palm, sighing to himself, before across the room he heard,

“You seem a little bored kid.” Damian jerked his head up, turning his chair- caught sight of a smug grin, as Jason made way across the cave, holding his helmet under one arm.

“Todd?” Damian asked, staring. He hadn’t seen the other omega in months, not since well before he had taken Tim to bed. “What are you doing here?”

“Can’t I stop by and check in on the old fam?” he set his helmet aside, looking down at Damian. “You know, I don’t know how many times Dick had to tell me you were pregnant before I believed him. Seeing you though? Makes me think I really didn’t.”

Damian blushed a little, his mouth setting in a line. “Are you going to lecture me like a child?”

Jason snorted. “Fuck that. You’ve probably gotten enough of those.” He shoved a few things on the counter aside, hoisted himself up to sit on it. “You feeling alright?”

Damian nodded. “Yes. Better as of late.” Better because he woke up with Tim tangled around him.

Jason smirked at that, folding his arms. “So, you and babybird…” he quirked up a brow, and Damian’s cheeks flushed.

“Working things out,” he admitted, “But… if you are asking about a relationship of sorts… yes.
Now.” Damian felt his stomach knotting up over it, could still barely believe that the memory of Tim’s kiss wasn’t months old- it was just that morning, when he’s woken up again with him there, when Tim had kissed him so slowly Damian had felt utterly undone, melting under the press of his hands.

Two weeks of this, and he was finally beginning to think he wasn’t dreaming.

“Well, good for you two. Not gonna lie- I wondered if all that bad blood was going to lead to something.” He winked, and Damian’s cheeks continued to burn red. “Just a little pent up tension, maybe?”

“Todd.”

“What? You can be honest with me kid. You’re looking at the guy who wants to punch his husband about every other damn day. And then jump him the days in between.” Damian rolled his eyes, and Jason leaned back more. “Speaking of jumping someone’s bones-”

“Todd-”

“-hey, I just want to make sure he’s taking care of you.” Damian clicked his tongue. “It’s not your business,” he reminded, “But Drake and I are not… intimate, right now.”

That had Jason pushed himself forward, unfolding his arms and clutching at the counter. “What?."

“-tt- Did I stutter?”

Jason shook his head. “No but… damn kid. Not gonna lie, every time I’ve been pregnant I’ve basically been attached to Roy, in all the best ways.” Damian groaned, reaching up to cover his eyes, not needing this sort of information. “And fuck if Roy wasn’t always more than willing.”

“Drake and I are just now working things out,” Damian admitted, “And it is not that I do not want him, but that he has shown considerable… restraint.”

“Unlike before, I’m guessing.”

That had Damian snorting, hand moving to cover his mouth as he smiled, tried to hide it. But Jason knew, and he was grinning.

“Maybe I’ll have to have a talk with him,” Jason said, sliding off the counter now, stretching. “Looks like it’s just he and I and Bludhaven tonight.”

Damian let his hand fall away. “I was wondering why you were even here. What happened to Grayson? Drake said he has asked for your help, but you’ve been… busy.”

“When you’ve got four kids, Damian, you’re always fucking busy.” Jason settled his hands on his hips. “And Dick’s gonna be tied up for the next day or two. Wally went into heat. He called me frantic for help- actually wanted to try and come out tonight for a bit too.” He shook his head. “I told him to go fuck his husband senseless and leave the damn city to Timmy and I. We can handle it. I flew in earlier, grabbed a bike from Dick and spent a few hours reacquainting myself with his city.”

Damian nodded, letting a hand rest down on his belly. He wasn’t sure if he felt better or worse about Tim spending the night with Jason, and not Dick and Wally.
It wasn’t that he didn’t trust Jason- it was the opposite, if he was honest. Jason had seen things that Damian understood, that no one else in the family did. Jason was talented, he had to be to survive the shit he pulled-

But he could be reckless. And how long had it been, since it had been just he and Tim-

“I won’t get your boytoy killed,” Jason said, snapping Damian from his thoughts. He opened his mouth to speak, but Jason cut him off. “Don’t even bother, I can see it on your face. I’m not as reckless as you seem to think I am. Remember- I’ve got a lot of people waiting for me at home.”

Damian clamped his mouth shut, nodded, as Jason leaned over him, squeezed his shoulder gently. “And Tim would get himself out of any shit I put him in. You know that.”

Damian did. Oh, Damian knew- and for a moment, he had to push back all the memories of his grandfather, of Tim and what he would have given up, just to bring him home.

“Damian, you down here-” Stephanie, her voice echoing as she stepped off the elevator. It cut off when she saw Jason, and Damian glanced over his shoulder, saw her face had split into a grin. “Jaybird!” She ran across the cave, tossed herself up against him, arms locking around his neck.  

Jason returned her grin, spinning her around and returning her embrace.

“Hey pretty bird,” he said, carefully setting her down.

“What are you doing here?” she was bouncing excitedly, and Damian relaxed back into his chair, rubbing his belly gently.

“I’m here to pick up Tim,” he said, wrapping his arm around her shoulders. “Bludhaven belongs to the two of us tonight.” He gave her a squeeze, glancing back at Damian. “And I was catching up with our little dad to be here.”

Stephanie smiled at Damian, and he couldn’t help but return it. “Harassing is a better word,” he teased, and Jason waved him off.

“Just telling him to get a little action is all.” Stephanie laughed, turning and pressing her face into Jason’s shoulder. He gave her another affectionate squeeze.

“Don’t rush it,” she said, “The two finally got their heads out of their asses.”

Damian huffed, folding his arms, before the elevator opened again, and the cave suddenly filled with Tim and Bruce’s voices. They were still chattering about their day, Damian could tell, and didn’t bother to turn his chair, to face them. He knew their faces, when the talking ceased. Knew the way his father’s eyes would stare at Jason in silent disbelief.

It really had been too long since he was home.

“Jason?” Tim, and then he was crossing over, moving in for a hug- on Jason’s free side. Stephanie had yet to move. “What are you doing here?”

“Picking you up for a night on the town.” He ruffled Tim’s hair. “Dick’s stuck at home.”

“Everything okay?” Jason nodded, grinned.

“Oh yeah. Wally’s in heat- so I’m sure Dickiebird is doing just fine.” Tim blushed a little, and Damian thought it was ridiculous and gorgeous and-

His thoughts cut off when his father came into view, and Stephanie and Tim were pulling away
from their well missed brother. Bruce stood in front of him for a moment, before reaching out, clasping his hand on his shoulder, squeezing.

“It’s good to see you again,” he offered, and Jason smiled- sweet, genuine. The kind that showed just how far he had come, how many years he had endured before he could show Bruce that kind of affection. The smile held, before Jason chuckled, moving in and wrapping his arms around Bruce.

“Yeah, good to see you too B,” he offered, as Bruce hugged him back. He leaned back a little, shifting around in his pockets for his phone, before he turned Bruce away, walking towards the cases their suits were held in. “You ready for a catch-up on all your grandkids?”

Stephanie hurried after them, eager to see the pictures, and Damian watched as Tim lingered back, turning to him and smiling. He returned it, welcomed the affection when Tim leaned over him, kissed his temple. “You know you don’t have to wait up,” Tim offered, reaching out to settle his hand on Damian’s stomach. As if the baby knew, Tim felt a small kick, and his smile grew. “You should get some sleep.”

“I’ll be up with father and Brown anyway,” Damian pointed out, “and besides. I do not like to sleep without you.” Tim nodded, moved to kiss Damian- and the omega still saw stars, with the gentle glide of his lips, the heat of his mouth. Still felt like someone was breathing fire and adrenaline into his veins.

“I swear I’ll be home in one piece,” he said, and Damian rolled his eyes. Silently, he appreciated that Tim understood his concern, that he didn’t take it as a slight against his own skill-

Damian simply worried. Simply feared a world without him.

He leaned in for another kiss, enjoyed the gentle hum Tim gave him, against his lips, before across the cave he heard Jason yell, “Timmy! Get your ass in your gear, we’ve got trouble to get into!”

Tim pulled back, let his hand linger for a moment longer on Damian’s belly, before he took his hand, tangled their fingers together. Squeezed.

His eyes said everything he wasn’t, and Damian accepted that. Accepted that Tim’s silence was a part of their steps, towards making this right. The fact alone that he could call Tim his was enough.

 Asking for words that were already expressed in gestures, that could wait.

* 

Jason cracked his neck, grinning beneath his helmet. Tim didn’t need to see it to know, as he collapsed his staff, securing it back to his back. “As impressive as ever, replacement,” he said, pulling it from his head and shaking his curls out. He raked a hand back through them, as below the city street lit up with sirens, flashing red and blue lights.

Tim smiled, rotating his own shoulders, feeling alive. “And you’re not rusty. Impressive. Figured you might be a bit out of shape.”

Jason snorted, fishing into his jacket and plucking out his cigarettes. “Fuck you pretty boy,” he said, as he pulled one from the pack, held it between his lips.

“Well, you know, wasn’t sure if you’d lost the baby weight.”

Jason’s helmet went flying towards Tim a moment later, who barely caught it before it smacked
into his face. He kept grinning as Jason lit his cigarette, took a long drag as he tucked the lighter back away.

“Expected the city to be more of a mess than it is,” Jason pointed out, between drags. Tim glanced over the edge of the roof, watched the cops gathering up the gang members they’d dropped minutes earlier.

“It has been,” Tim admitted, “Guess Dick’s work is finally paying off.”

“Or they got one sight of the Red Hood and went running.” Tim glanced at Jason, grinning. “Careful or I’m going to ask if you’re taking your reputation to dinner after all this.” Jason snorted, as Tim walked over, tossing his helmet back to him. Jason caught it, cradled it under one arm. “Dick’s been working his ass off, don’t take this from him.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it. I know wonder boy’s been busy.” Jason took a final drag, before dropping his cigarette, smothering it with his boot. “Sort of glad Wally went into heat and he had to take a night off. From what I heard, it really hasn’t happened.”

Tim shook his head. “It hasn’t.” He folded his arms, continued to study Jason. “We really could use you, Jay. Around here. Back home.”

“It’s home to you,” Jason pointed out, “It’s only partial home to me. Home’s with Roy and my kids, Tim. Home’s pretty far from here.” He let his arm drape over Tim’s shoulders, gave him a squeeze. “You’ll understand that soon enough.” He paused for a moment, before, with a soft smile, asked, “How’s it feel knowing you’re going to be a dad?’

“Surreal,” Tim admitted, not pulling away from Jason’s hold. He rather liked how it felt to be against the larger omega, how Jason was solid and smelled like smoke and gunpowder and the brown-sugar sweet scent that was all his own. “I never thought it’d happen.”

“I don’t think any of us ever did,” Jason pointed out, both of them watching the lights flashing against the buildings across the street. “And with Damian, no less. Not that I’m incredibly shocked.” Tim glanced up at him, and Jason’s smile softened. “I told the kid that. All that bad blood? It was leading up to something. Honestly I’ve had my suspicions about him for a while, harboring some sort of cute crush on you. Strike a point for the Jaybird.” He gave Tim a squeeze, and the beta leaned against him.

“That’s surreal too,” Tim pointed out, “I’m not gonna lie, I wake up and sometimes worry Damian’s going to drop me right to the damn floor for being in his bed. But he just… doesn’t.” Tim smiled to himself, so many images of Damian in the morning flooding him, those gorgeous half smiles, his tired, groggy eyes. The way he was warm like fire, like everything inside Tim was personified in his very being. “He’s gorgeous in the morning.”

Jason hummed, smiling to himself. “It’s good to see you two happy.”

“It’s good to be happy,” Tim admitted, “There’s been too much of the exact opposite in this family.”

He didn’t need to elaborate. Didn’t need to mention all of the hell Jason had gone through, in his life. Didn’t need to mention his own turmoil, the struggles he still felt. Didn't need to ever bring up the time he fell and would have been fine not getting back up.

That felt like lifetimes away, yet it was a shadow, mingling in with the rest of his. Would be, forever.
Jason nodded. “You know,” he started, “If you wanted to call it an early night… I could handle this place on my own.”

Tim glanced up at him. “What? No way. I’m here for the night.”

Jason shrugged a shoulder. “I’m just saying… if you wanted a little time with Damian, I got this. If what we’ve seen so far is all this place has, I’ll be bored in two hours.” Jason cracked a grin, cocky and gorgeous and well earned, but Tim was still shaking his head. Jason sighed. “Let me spell it out for you, then. Go home and fuck your damn boyfriend, Tim. I’m going to watch the city.”

Tim pulled away, cheeks going red. “What?” his voice cracked, and that had Jason chuckling. He reached out and smacked his arm. “Shut up. First off…” Tim trailed, already. Boyfriend? He hadn’t put a word to Damian yet. Hadn’t used a label, not with how everything still felt like they were testing the water. But… “- okay, maybe you’re not wrong with the boyfriend bit,” Tim admitted, smiling without meaning to. Smiling until his cheeks hurt, before he forced himself to look serious, to continue. “But we’re not sleeping together.”

“Well you fucking should be.” Jason turned, staring at Tim with those grey eyes. Concrete, the haze of smoke in the dusky sky. Hard and yet not uninviting. “He’s probably going crazy. I know I was a mess each time. Sometimes I swear I wanted Roy more when I was pregnant than I did when I was in heat.”

“I so don’t need to hear this,” Tim pointed out, squeezing the bridge of his nose. “We’re just figuring it all out, Jason. I don’t want to mess it up.”

“But you do want him.” It wasn’t a question, it didn’t need to be- and Tim took a deep breath.

“Yes. Fucking yes. Pretty much all the goddamn time.” He shook his head. He hadn’t admitted that, to anyone. Not to Stephanie during their late night talks on patrol, when the city was quiet and they could sit on the rooftops. Not to Cassandra during their sparring. Barely, to himself.

“And he wants you.” Again, not a question. Again, it didn’t need to be. Tim knew Damian did, even if the omega was good at keeping himself in check. He saw the little cracks-

And they made it all the harder to resist.

“...Yeah,” Tim admitted. “But it’s complicated.”

Jason rolled his eyes. “Pfft, Timmy, babybird- it’s not like you can knock him up again.” Tim blushed, eyes going a little wide- and Jason was grinning like he could see the irises, behind Tim’s mask. “You’re making it complicated. It doesn’t have to be. It could be easy. It could be the two of you fucking to your damn heart’s content.”

“It’s more than that,” Tim said, loudly- nearly shouted, if he was honest. “It’s so much more. I care about him, Jason. I care about him in ways I haven’t cared about anyone ever. Damian breathes and I swear the world just gets a little brighter. It’s not just physical. I want him, I want to be with him. I love him.”

Tim stared, watched as Jason’s mouth curved into a smug little smile. The kind that told Tim he had baited him- had gotten exactly what he wanted.

And god, Tim had said it, said the word he’d mulled over in his head, but didn’t dare think out loud, didn’t dare voice-

He loved him. He loved Damian.
“So what’s the problem?” Jason asked. “You just said it. You love him—”

“I… I just…” Tim reached up, tugged at his hair with both hands. “He’s not who he was, Jason. Damian’s not himself, still. The things Ra’s did to him- I can see it in his eyes. Hear it, in his voice. He questions things he never used to.” At least, never out loud. Tim couldn’t be sure just how deep Damian’s self-doubt ran. He wasn’t sure he wanted to know. “I’m afraid of giving something and taking it back. I’m afraid of doing something wrong. Of hurting him.” Tim shook his head, hair wild from where he had pulled. “He means too much to me, Jason. He means everything, now. I don’t know how this even happened.”

Jason reached out, gently squeezed Tim’s shoulder. “I’m going to say something, Tim. And I want you to listen.” Tim nodded, swallowed, and Jason’s smile had fallen away. He was serious- but those grey eyes were still kind. “You know how it happened. You know because it’s taken you over six months to get here. Because something pulled you in in the first place. Whatever caused you to stay with Damian that first night- that never went away.” Jason licked his lips, his eyes looking as if he was pleading something, then. “And your fear of hurting Damian? That’s hurting him, Tim. It’s hurting him because it’s holding you back. And if everything you’ve said is right, then you know he thinks you’re holding back because you doubt him. Not because you doubt yourself.”

Tim opened his mouth to speak, but Jason just shook his head.

“I’m not done, Tim. I’m not asking you to go home and profess undying love to the kid. I’m not asking you to go home and marathon fuck the night away. I’m asking you to go home and open up to him like you haven’t yet. I’m asking you to be honest. You’ve stuck by him so far- you’ve made us all pretty damn proud with it.” Another squeeze to his shoulder. “You love him. You just said it. Stop being afraid of him, stop being afraid of it.”

“And what if it changes?” Tim sounded desperate, his voice strained. “What if I’m wrong? What if I love him now and then I don’t? What if he realizes he doesn’t love me-”

The fear had crept in, and Tim bit back the rest of his words. Before he could say anything else, Jason was tugging him in, wrapping his arms around him. Holding him, and Tim didn’t fight it, pressed his face into the omega’s chest and clung to him.

“Neither of you control what happens tomorrow,” Jason admitted, “But if you think Damian doesn’t love you, you are the worst detective in this fucking family.” Tim glanced up, but Jason wasn’t looking at him- he was looking off, into the city. “His eyes lit up when you walked into the cave. He didn’t even need to turn around- but it was obvious. He was relaxed with you.” Tim sucked on his tongue, remembered Damian’s last kiss, before Tim had climbed onto the bike, to clutch at Jason. Remembered his soft mouth and the way he felt like he melted, how he smelled like calm, like sweetness and something that made Tim’s muscles go to water. “You know he’s never relaxed.”

Tim nodded, couldn’t argue that. But… “I don’t ever want to lose him. If I don’t let myself have him, I can’t lose him.”

“That is the worst reasoning I’ve ever heard,” Jason said, squeezing Tim. “And he’s already got you. You’re just making it harder on yourself, now.” Tim swallowed, and Jason let him pull back. “Just trust me. I didn’t want to just give everything to Roy, at first. I was terrified, because so much shit had gone wrong in my life- and if I got invested, this was bound to go wrong too. But look now. Look how wrong I was.” Jason smiled, soft and loving- the kind he got every time he talked about Roy, at the mere mention of what they had built, over the years. How far they had come. “Just trust me- don’t waste this time. You know how easy it is for us to run out.”
Tim bit at his lip— but nodded, slowly. Nodded because Jason was right. Because Damian already had him, heart and soul— swore the omega had had him that first night, with those pretty eyes and the challenge in his voice.

Tim had never truly left his bedroom. Not whole. He’d left something with Damian, something he’d never get back. Something he didn’t need, if he had Damian.

And if had learned one thing, from all of this— from seeing Damian broken and bound, from thinking that he was signing his life away to Ra’s— it was that time was fleeting, that every second was something he could never have back, that he might never experience again.

And god Jason was right.

“You know I’m right,” Jason said, his smile soft for Tim now, for the brother he loved more than he could admit— for the Robin who had made him proud, who had earned his colors. “I can see it on your face.” Tim said nothing, and Jason pulled back entirely, going so far as to take a step back. “Go home. Take the rest of the night off. Go remind Damian that he’s worthy of the damn sun—” Jason held his hand up again, when Tim opened his mouth to speak, “I see it in your eyes, kid. I know. I can handle this place— Dick’s done some good work. Remind me to admit that to his face before I head home.”

Jason lifted his helmet, secured it back on, and his voice was almost mechanical when he spoke now, through the filter.

“Take the bike. I can lift one of golden boy’s spares. He’s easy to take from.” Tim knew Jason was grinning, and reached down towards his belt, freeing his hookshot.

“Thanks Jaybird,” he said, lining it up with the neighboring building. “It’s scary how right you can be.”

“I’m right a lot,” he pointed out, as Tim fired off the hook. “Just no one ever wants to admit it.” Tim grinned, tugging on the line, before he dropped off the building, swinging, pulling the line free and firing off again. Moving like the air, heading for where they had stashed the bike.

Heading for home. And he realized that Jason’s words were already making sense, beginning to ring true in his mind.

Home was where Damian was. Home would be where their baby was.

Home would be their family.

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Damian leaned his head back, bored of the silence over the comlink, the sleeping streams from the city. Gotham was quiet, his father was watching a new patient transfer from Blackgate to Arkham, and Stephanie was silently gliding along patrol. There was nothing for him here.

He stretched, could have considered leaving all of this and getting a good night’s sleep for once— except that he knew it would not come. Not with Tim still out in Bludhaven. Not without his warmth.

He was spoiled, already. The past few weeks proved that— had shown him the kind of sleep he could get when Tim was wrapped around him. Had shown him again what it felt like, to feel truly safe.
His head jerked at the sound of a bike entering the cave. He turned his chair as he heard the engine give, waited- it couldn’t be his father, or Stephanie, and Cassandra was sleeping her night away-

So when Tim came into view, Damian simply stared. “What are you doing here?” he asked, glancing at the clock. Not quite midnight. Normally when Tim went to Bludhaven, it was after three by the time he was finally home. Some nights, later.

Tim didn’t say anything, simply crossed the room, reaching up and tearing at his mask. He tossed it away, leaning over Damian and sinking his hands into his hair, guiding his head up, back-

And kissing him, in a way that had Damian’s mind going to bursts of fire. The omega was tense for a moment, before he reached up, grasped at Tim’s wrists, held on as he kissed him back, made a little sound in his throat as his body went to fire, heat pooled in his belly, between his legs-

Tim hadn’t kissed him like this since their first night.

“Drake,” he managed, when Tim pulled back, staring down at him with eyes so blue they were inhuman, were pools Damian had stared into as a boy, while holding his mother’s hand-

Were a reflection of heaven, as it stared down into the maw of hell.

“I missed you,” Tim whispered, his breath warm against Damian’s mouth. “Jason has Bludhaven under control. He doesn’t need me.” Tim stroked his hands down Damian’s cheeks, the curve of his neck, and the omega let his eyelids flutter, hands dropping to his lap. “Let Bruce and Stephanie have Gotham tonight.”

Damian stared at Tim for a moment, wasn’t sure what he was seeing, in those eyes. But the curl of his fingers, the curve of his mouth- it had Damian wishing so badly he would add let me have you to his speech.

He would have. Damian would have let Tim have him however he liked, whenever he asked. He was well beyond denying himself those thoughts- even if he did not voice them, if he kept them within his chest.

Tim leaned in, wrapped his arms around Damian, nuzzled into the curve of his neck. “Come upstairs with me,” he whispered, and Damian could smell him then- sugar-fire and the wind and the city and sweat and everything that made his blood hot. “I want to talk.”

And just like that, the fire was dying.

“Father and Stephanie may need me,” Damian said, trying to pull back. Tim pulled back, glanced at the screens, frowning.

“Gotham looks like a dead zone,” he said, placing his hands on his hips. “Please, Damian?” Damian bit at his lip, before he nodded. Tim smiled, leaning over and kissing his forehead. “Thank you. I’m going to jump in the shower. Meet you up there?” Another nod, and Tim was turning, walking away, a sway of perfect hips, the movement of his cape almost mesmerizing.

Damian swallowed, closed his eyes and willed himself to keep the fire in him dead. Willed the ache in his body to dull again.

He had done it countless times, around the beta. He could do it again.

Damian stood up, reaching up to press on his comlink. “Batgirl?”
There was a moment, and then, “Yeah Robin?”

“I’m going offline.”

“Everything okay?” She sounded concerned, and Damian silently thanked the stars again for Stephanie.

“Yes. Just… tired. More so than usual. The city is dead, you and Batman have it under control.”

“Alright babybat. Rest up, I’ll let daddy Bats know it’s just the two of us.” Damian smiled and thanked her, before pulling the piece from his ear, leaving it by the computer. He made his way to the elevator and upstairs, to his room. He left the light off, began tugging at his clothing before Tim could make his way upstairs. He pulled his shirt off, flexed his shoulders and felt everything shift- knew the scars that littered his back now. Had seen them in the mirror.

Had stared at them. Reminders of the hideous thing inside him, the doubt, the unworthiness-

Damian bit his lip, silenced himself, and found a well worn tshirt, slipping it over his head. It was one of Dick’s, which had at one point belonged to his father- but it was soft and comfortable and did not cling to the swell his stomach was becoming-

And Damian couldn’t bare the thought of Tim seeing his scars. Not yet. Not more than he had to.

He made his way to his bed, in just his boxer briefs and the tshirt, crawling into it. He had just settled back when his door opened- and Tim was slipping in, pushing it closed and making his way over.

He hadn’t even been aware the beta could shower that quickly.

“That was fast,” Damian said, folding his arms, letting them rest against his belly. Tim smiled, and in the light from outside, from his open curtains, Damian could see it. The beta crawled into the bed, sat cross legged looking at Damian, studying him- to the point that Damian had to glance away, sighing. “What?”

“You’re gorgeous.” It was quiet, it was nervous, and Damian huffed.

“You’re lying.” Tim frowned, reached out and managed to take one of Damian’s hands, forcing his arms to unfold. He gently rubbed his knuckles, before flipping his hand, tracing the scar along his palm with a single finger tip. Damian shivered.

“Never,” Tim whispered, watching his own finger move. “Not to you. Damian I’ve been…” he paused, inhaled. “I’m sorry. For a lot.”

Damian felt his belly dropping, knotting up. Felt nerves rising in his chest. And for a moment, the contentment, the calm he felt around Tim was gone- and there was an ugly voice, in his head, telling him Tim was sorry for ever thinking this could work, for ever giving in, for kissing him, for coming to his bed-

“I’ve been terrified of hurting you, thinking if I give too much that maybe… maybe I won’t be able to keep giving. Maybe it’d be better if I kept it all controlled.” He clasped Damian’s hand, squeezed. “I’ve wanted to control all of this. I’ve wanted to control how I feel, how we act- when all I feel around you is an utter lack of it.” His thumb rubbed the scar, and Damian hated that it was soothing, to have Tim touch his scars. Hated that it had been, that first night, those few together. Hated that he wanted Tim’s fingers to map every mar of his skin, to learn them, know them-
Never forget them.

“I took so long coming to terms with how I feel about you, about all of this, that I hurt you, Damian.” Damian frowned, opened his mouth, but Tim was shaking his head. “It’s okay. I know I did. But I’m done... I’m done keeping you back. In any way. I want you to have everything, Damian.” He glanced up, pretty blue eyes seeming dark- and the doubt was leaving Damian, the fire coming back. “Whatever you want from me, I’ll give it. I mean it this time. Anything.”

There was an implication there, one that had Damian squeezing his thighs together- flashes of Tim’s mouth, of the feeling of arching off the bed, with Tim between his thighs. Memories that could keep him up at night wanting.

He’d never wanted, before Tim. Didn’t think he’d ever want after him. It was that strange connection he felt to him, the affection, the adoration he had never admitted when he was young, that bred it. That gave it life, breath, fire-

Tim was moving, then, letting go of Damian’s hand. He got on his knees, leaned over him, traced the fingers of one hand along Damian’s cheek, back into his hair. The omega sighed, tipped his head back, and Tim was kissing him, very gently, softly. Each movement banishing a string of bad thoughts, of self loathing-

“Do you want me, Damian?” The words were whispered, and Damian swallowed them down with his breath. His eyelids felt heavy, and he stared up at Tim in the blue-cast light of the stars, the moon, through his lashes, with his heart beating up into his throat. Because yes, yes, he wanted Tim. He’d wanted him for so long, in every way he could have him. In his heart, his body, his very mind- he wanted the fibers of Tim’s being there, a constant warm tug, the forever feeling of having him wrapped around him.

He wanted Tim like would never want anything again.

And he couldn’t find the desire in him to lie about it anymore.

“Yes,” he whispered, reaching up, tangling his fingers in Tim’s hair. “Gods Drake, yes.” He tugged, gently, and Tim bowed down, kissed him again, drank down a new set of worries, an old set of doubts. Left Damian feeling not yet fully cleansed, but a step closer.

“I’ve been so afraid that what I feel won’t be around, come morning,” Tim admitted, “Like what I give you tonight, I won’t be able to give tomorrow.”

Damian let his eyes fall shut, inhaled slowly. He slid his hands from Tim’s hair down over his collar bone, to his chest- clutched at his tshirt. And then, very carefully, whispered, “I’m not asking you to love me, Drake.” Because he couldn’t, he wouldn’t- that had to be given freely. The gentle affection he was learning to ask for- but love? There were no words for that, no way for Damian to pull that from Tim untainted.

It had to be given, or to be considered lost forever.

“I’m just asking you to make me feel good.” Because god, it was true. Damian wanted to forget, when he was with Tim- wanted to forget the doubt and the hate and the feeling that sometimes, he barely deserved to breathe at all. He’d done so well, overcoming it on his own- but with Tim it was easy, when he looked at Damian like he had been, lately. When he stayed in his bed the whole night through.

When he felt him, like he was a barrier to every evil thought Damian had ever whispered to
himself.

Tim’s eyes softened- and then, in the dark, they cracked. They looked at Damian like Tim had done the worst thing imaginable- like Tim had broken something precious. Damian glanced away, still clutched at Tim’s shirt, unable to will himself to let go.

“I care about you, Damian,” Tim whispered, his voice wavering. “I care about you so much. You took something from me, when I first… when we…” he paused, inhaled, tried to collect himself. “No. I gave you something. I left a part of me with you. I’ve never felt like that, with anyone. Sex was never…” he shook his head. “I sound crazy. But it never meant something, like it felt like it did then. Like it would now.”

Damian worked to keep his fingers from trembling, twisting Tim’s shirt in his hands. Told himself he wasn’t dreaming, told himself Tim was here, he was saying there was something, that it had meant something, what felt like lifetimes ago. Had meant everything Damian had wanted it to-

“You’re not crazy,” Damian whispered, dredging up courage from his gut, like he’d never needed before. Never like this. “I wanted it to mean something. I never wanted you to leave.”

Tim smiled, fingers still stroking along Damian’s cheek. “What we have, I want it to last,” Tim whispered, “No matter what happens. I’ve been so afraid that we both feel like we have to be together to realize just how badly I want it… how badly I want you. And I know we’re trying, and I just…” Tim leaned in, kissed Damian’s mouth briefly, sweetly, in that way that had Damian’s head spinning, had him short of breath. “I’ll try until I die for you, Damian. This started the moment I walked into your room six months ago. It’ll end only when we say it can.”

Damian grabbed at Tim then, pulled him closer, leaned up to kiss him. He kissed him with every ounce of desire he’d held inside him, with every moment he had wanted Tim and never had him, with every bit of doubt he’d harbored-

He kissed Tim with his entire being, and couldn’t give a damn if Tim never gave it back.

But the beta held him, rolled them onto their sides so he could wrap an arm around Damian, tangle their legs together, He traced his mouth his with tongue like Damian was a temple, and he was begging to see the treasure at the heart of him- and Damian gave, would give forever, if Tim asked it of him.

He trusted that Tim wouldn’t.

He whimpered as the arm around him tightened, a hand pressing to the small of his back. Arched towards Tim when teeth dragged along his lower lip.


Damian grasped at Tim, rolled him onto his back. He was on him with a speed he hadn’t felt as of late, straddling him, leaning over him with his hands braced on his shoulders. And, staring into those eyes that saw everything, that refused to believe, that feared, that loved-

Staring into them, Damian whispered, in a fit of pure honesty, “I want to feel like the center of your world.”

Tim’s hands were on his hips, squeezing, his head lifting up to meet Damian’s in another kiss. It felt different, from the sweet ones he was given, before he fell asleep. Different from the lazy morning kisses that almost promised something-
Different from everything, except for the kisses that had gotten them here in the first place.

Damian nipped at Tim’s lip, before Tim’s tongue was in his mouth again. He moaned around it, grinding down against him out of instinct- and Tim lifted his hips, met the movement with an eagerness Damian had missed so much.

Tim’s hands on his hips played with the waistband of his underwear, fingertips slipping beneath it. Damian moaned again, his skin aching with just a brush of Tim’s fingertips, before Tim rolled him back onto his back. Damian didn’t fight it, only arched when Tim tugged at his underwear, guiding them down his thighs, until he could toss them off the bed. Damian’s tshirt was still intact, the edge of it brushed Tim’s cheek as he spread Damian’s thighs, leaning down to kiss a line down the inside of one. Damian bent his knee, whining when Tim nipped near it, as he fist his hands in his sheets.

“You leave me like this,” he gasped, panted. He felt desperate, sounded it- didn’t care. He was, if he was honest. And as Tim’s fingers traced along his overly slick hole, Damian was sure he was falling into insanity. He spread his thighs more, felt Tim kiss his hip, before moving his mouth to the base of his cock, placing slow kisses there. Damian tossed his head, before one of Tim’s fingers slid into him, and he let out a moan, pushing towards it, meeting the thrust.

“Drake- can’t- you have to-” Broken words all over again, just like when Damian had been in heat, and Tim pulled off his cock, his pretty pink lips going dark, wet.

“Have to- slow down,” he whispered, “Or I’ll- I’ll-”
rubbed right along Damian’s prostate. The omega gave a shout, and Tim kissed beneath his cockhead. “You can come whenever you want to. I’ll make you do it again if you want. I’ll touch you all night. Whatever you need.”

Damian closed his eyes as Tim sucked him back into his mouth, reached down to tangle his hands in Tim’s hair. Tim began massaging his prostate, making Damian’s insides feel so utterly alive, and his mouth was so good, so perfect-

Damian gave a wordless shout, and didn’t fight it, didn’t fight the rush his body needed so badly. He thrust up, over Tim’s tongue- came hot and bitter-sweet against his throat. Tim sucked gently, milked him through it until Damian was falling against the bed, panting.

When Tim pulled off, he licked his lips, and Damian caught it, staring down through his thick eyelashes. He shivered, and felt Tim press hard to his prostate again- gasped, spreading his thighs more.

“I can stop,” Tim whispered, his other hand moving up, rubbing along the swell of Damian’s belly, pushing his tshirt until it pooled around his ribs. “Or I can fuck you. It’s whatever you want, baby boy.”

Damian shuddered then, eyes rolling over the pet name- body clenching tightly around Tim. The beta chuckled, whispered, “you like that?” and Damian was nodding.

“I want more of you,” he managed, even as his mind felt listless, warm and soft and melting, within his skull. He did whine when Tim pulled his fingers from his body, but didn’t fight as he pulled Damian up, stripping him of his tshirt entirely. It fell to the floor, left Damian completely naked under Tim’s stare- and the omega felt a tinge of color, rising in his cheeks. A bit of heat.

“You’re beautiful,” Tim whispered, reaching for his face, cupping it sweetly and kissing him. Damian could taste himself on his tongue, and it had his hips lifting, wanting something back inside him. “You make my heart stop,” he added, before pulling back, kissing down Damian’s neck. The omega tilted his head back, and Tim grazed his teeth over his pulse, before pressing down, hard-

And Damian felt something, tugging inside him. Something in his mind, asking to open, He almost gave in, then, almost wished for it- but Tim was moving, licking at his collar bone, before moving to his shoulder, nipping at an old scar.

“And Damian knew that. He’d seen them, he’d help to stich them up. He had known his back before his grandfather’s lashes- and it had already been a road map.
But these felt different. They were an engraving, bringing to life all those endless whispers, that
came in the dead of night.

“No,” Tim breathed, as Damian lifted his head, glanced over his shoulder. Tim’s eyes were soft,
gorgeous in ways Damian didn’t have words for- staring at him like he had asked-
Like Damian was it, was all the world had to offer.

“They’re beautiful,” Tim whispered, running his hand along Damian’s back, fingertips rubbing
along the new scars. “You’re beautiful. Nothing will ever change that.” Tim’s other hand was on
his hip, holding him steady as he gently rocked against him- and Damian could feel the head of his
cock against his pliant, wet hole.

And it truly hit him how badly Tim wanted it.

Damian looked away, bit at his lip, as Tim eased into his body, the thrust slow. Damian was soft
around him, relaxed from his first orgasm, but Tim still felt the need to be gentle. Damian was
thankful for it, already choking on the renewed stimulation-

But mostly, on the fact that Tim could touch his scars, could feel the hate, the agony of the voices,
and still found him beautiful.

Tim bowed over him, grasped at both his hips when he was fully inside him. He exhaled, slowly,
before he laughed to himself. “You feel like heaven,” he whispered, and Damian clutched at a
pillow, spread his thighs more- to the point that his hips ached.

“Make me hell,” Damian whispered, heard Tim groan, before he was pulling back, thrusting into
him. Damian gave a cry, squeezed his eyes shut and pushed back to meet every thrust, loving the
way Tim’s breaths came in pants, the way he clutched at Damian’s hips desperately.

Like he was losing himself, all over again. Like he had, when he gave in, months ago- when he first
came to Damian’s bed and for a moment, made every dream Damian had ever had come true.

“Drake- Drake,” he gasped, feeling his cock swelling again, already. It was terrifying, the affect
Tim had on his body. Like he was in heat all over again- like his body would have died, just to get
Tim to touch him for another minute.

Tim moaned a wordless response, rubbed his hands up from Damian’s hips to his back, over the
dimples in the small of it, up along his scars, until he was bowed over him, squeezing his
shoulders, pulling him back. Damian gave a shout with one particularly hard thrust, the juncture of
his thighs burning.

“Can you- can we- move- please.” The words tumbled from Damian’s mouth, and Tim was
listening, pulling from his body and leaving Damian so empty he gave a broken sob over it. The
beta rolled him onto his back, before he shoved his thighs open and was inside him again, before
Damian could even breath. Tim helped to lift his thighs, up along his hips.

“Can you get them around me?” he asked, and Damian did without another thought, squeezed onto
Tim as he found a rhythm that was hard, had Damian jostling along the bed and desperately
clutching at it. He opened his mouth, cursed out in words Tim did not understand, but felt the beta
squeezing his thighs. “You’re so perfect,” he whispered, watched as Damian arched, as the
omega’s insiders were lighting fire, blazing his sweet scent into the air, that fire catching,
spreading through Tim’s own body. “So. Fucking. Perfect.”

Each word was punctuated by a thrust, and Damian found he was believing it. Found that between
his own moans and pants, between Tim’s groans and rushed words, there was no room for the dark whispers that lived at night.

There was room for nothing except the two of them, in this moment.

Damian tried to reach down, for his neglected cock, but Tim’s hand was there faster than his own, wrapping around it tightly. He stroked in rhythm with his thrusts, had Damian seeing stars behind his eyes, his back arching until he felt he could have broke, his bones could have shattered-

And then Tim was whispering *baby boy* again, was babbling that Damian was gorgeous, that he was everything, that he was heaven, that no one had ever felt like this- and it was the string of praise that left Damian falling again, left him screaming for Tim as his body clench him so tightly, so rhythmically, that Tim barely dared to move. Damian came over Tim’s knuckles, and Tim didn’t fight his own orgasm, let Damian’s body milk it from him.

Damian could barely feel his body, was aware of a static running through his veins, out to his fingers and toes- but everything else was barely there, barely real. But when Tim pulled out of him, he felt the emptiness, whined over it, until Tim was stretching out next to him, pulling him into his arms, so that his temple pressed to his chest.

Tim was panting, the race of his heart music to Damian, making him sluggish. He smiled, lazy, left his eyes closed as he ran his fingers along Tim’s arm, draped over him now, keeping him close.

“You’re amazing,” Damian whispered, without meaning to. His filter was gone, forgotten. Tim chuckled, the vibrations sounding in his ear.

“That’s you, Damian.” He gave a gentle squeeze, before the hand on his waist moved up, along his belly. “I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

Damian cursed again, the Arabic sliding off his tongue with ease. “The opposite, Drake.” Tim laughed again, still rubbing Damian’s belly- and the omega couldn’t ask him to stop. It was soothing, had him sighing, snuggling closer to Tim. “That was well over due.”

Tim laughed a final, breathy laugh, before leaning down, kissing the top of Damian’s head. “Honestly? Fucking yes it was.” Damian laughed then, sliding his hand back up Tim’s arm, over the curve of his shoulder, to hook behind his neck. He tipped his head up as he guided Tim’s down, caught him in a kiss that was warm, slow.

Satiated in a way neither had been, in quite some time. One that Damian would let linger, until he was slipping from consciousness, allowing himself to be pressed to Tim’s chest, dissolving in the warm comfort of his scent, his hold.

Falling asleep completely and utterly satisfied, without a single want, for the first time in his life.

*  

Tim woke first, with Damian pressed back against his chest. His face was pressed to the back of his neck, his arms locked around him. One hand had protectively fallen to Damian’s belly, and against his palm, he felt movement, a shallow kick and then shifting. Tim smiled to himself, kissed the back of Damian’s neck, before he glanced down over his shoulder, rubbing his stomach gently.

“Good morning,” he whispered to the silence of the room, fighting down the urge to simply *laugh* over the feeling against his palm. Every time the baby moved, Tim felt his heart soaring from his chest, felt an elation he hadn’t known before. “Careful, you’ll wake Dami up.”
The baby stilled, and Tim carefully slid from behind Damian. The omega mumbled in his sleep, rolling to his back, stretching in his sleep- arching up slightly, pressing his belly tighter to Tim’s hand. The movement picked up again, and Tim giggled quietly, tugging the blanket down so it rested just below the swell of Damian’s belly. He leaned over, kissed gently, easing down along the underside of his belly, before nuzzling Damian’s warm skin.

He felt the omega shift, heard him yawn, and Tim peeked up over his belly, watched Damian push himself up on his elbows, looking down at him with sleepy eyes. “What are you doing?”

“Just saying good morning,” Tim offered up, sitting back up. “The baby’s awake.”

“Oh I’m well aware.” Damian reached down, rubbed his belly himself. “What do you think woke me up.”

Tim laughed, watched the way Damian’s lips curled when he did. He reached out, covered Damian’s hand with his own. “Hush little one, let your daddy get some sleep.”

“Baba,” Damian corrected, and Tim glanced up at him. “I would have referred to father as baba when I was young, were he present. That is what I want our child to refer to me as.”

Tim nodded at that. “Okay. Then, let me rephrase.” He cleared his throat, folding his arms, and when he spoke, his voice was such a mockery on stern that Damian had to cover his mouth instantly to keep from laughing. “You will cease this ruckus this instance so that your baba can get some sleep, young lady… man… child.”

Damian lost it then, dropping back to his pillows, his hand falling away as he laughed. Tim grinned, his heart beat picking up over the sound, and he leaned over him, kissed the corner of his mouth as he continued to laugh.

“You are completely ridiculous, Drake,” he managed, and Tim nuzzled his hair, reached down to rest a hand on his belly again.

“Oh, I know. But it did get you to laugh.” Tim rubbed his nose along Damian’s, dragged a sweet smile up to his pretty lips, before there was a sudden, sharp knock at Damian’s door.

Tim straightened back up, as Damian reached down, grasping at his sheet, attempting to pull it higher up, over his belly now. “What?” he called, and the door opened a crack before he could warn against it.

Stephanie leaned in, a hand dramatically lifted, palm out, blocking her vision of the room. “Are you two decent?” she asked, and Tim furrowed his brow, pulling the sheet up around his waist. “Or at least are you Damian? I’ve seen Tim’s ass enough times it doesn’t matter.”

“Well good morning to you too,” Tim yelled, and Stephanie lowered her hand, pushing the door wide open and resting her hands on her hips. Her hair was an utter mess, mostly falling out of a messy bun, her sweatpants low enough on her hips to show the final curves of her abs.

She raised a single brow, grinning at the two of them. “Looks like it was a good morning for you two at least.”

Tim flushed, and Damian sat up, resting his forehead in his palm, not even looking at the other omega. “We can explain,” he started, and Stephanie was shaking her head.

“Oh please, like I care. If anything I’ve been waiting for you two to get nasty again since the whole thing started.” They both flushed more, and she added, “And please don’t deny it. Cass
came by to check on you, before we came bac from patrol. Got an earful. Do we know."

“Cassandra heard us?” Damian, loud, before he let out a groan, burying his face in both hands. Tim sighed, tipped his own head back.

“God forbid anyone gets privacy around here,” he muttered, and Stephanie giggled.

“Yeah well, it’s not like any of us care. If anything we’d rather have you two stop playing at the whole tension thing and get on with it.” Both Damian and Tim glanced at Stephanie, and she added, “You’re not subtle. Either of you.” She pushed some of her hair from her face, before adding, “I just came up to see if you guys wanted breakfast. Alfred ran off to the city already and Cass and I were going to have a cooking adventure. Always more fun when someone aside of us gets to eat our monstrosities.”

“By the heavens,” Damian muttered, “Let me find some clothing, I will help. That way neither of you burn the manor down.”

“That’s only when Tim cooks, babybat.”

“Excuse me.” Tim glared, and Stephanie winked at him, before waving her hand, offering up a take your time, before she turned, closing the door tightly behind her. Tim flopped back, rubbing his hands over his face, sighing. “Well, we’re not going to hear the end of this anytime soon.”

Damian nodded, and Tim heard the sheets rustling, felt it being pulled off his body. Suddenly Damian was straddling his hips, a pleasant weight that had Tim letting his hands fall away, so he could look up, see the fire that suddenly seemed to be playing in Damian’s jade eyes.

“I’m not sure I care,” he admitted, and Tim smiled.

“Mmm, yeah. Okay. I don’t think I care that much.” He pushed himself up slightly, tipped his head back to keep his eyes locked on Damian’s.

The omega gave a playful smirk, reaching out. He took one of Tim’s hands, pressed it to his thigh.

“She did tell us to take our time,” he reasoned, as he guided it up, until Tim took over, sliding it between Damian’s legs, pushing up and finding him pleasantly slick. He lost his breath, watched as Damian’s eyelids fluttered at the sweet, subtle pressure.

“She did,” Tim reasoned, “Maybe we should work on waking up a little more before we go down there.” His smile was wicked, and Damian bit at his own lip, nodded, letting out a held breath as Tim eased a finger back into him.

Tim had absolutely no desire to rush from that bed, in that moment. Not when one moment he had Damian laughing, and the next had him squirming in his lap, gorgeous and wanting.

Not when the world had given him something so perfect, and had let him keep it, the following morning.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Damian didn't know life could be this good. After so much time spent hurting, he wasn't sure he'd ever feel content again. And happy? It seemed like it was an impossibility. But with Tim- everything is possible. And the sudden appearance of love so possibly lost gives Damian the final reassurance he needs to know that he deserves to be this happy.

Chapter Notes

Text seen in /'s (ex. /text/) mean a character is speaking in Arabic :) 

Tim pushed his door open with his hip, walking out into the hallway with his arms full of clothing, heading down it towards Damian’s room.

His room.

Their room.

Whatever he was supposed to think of it as now.

He couldn’t remember the last time he had slept in his own bed- and honestly, felt far more comfortable in Damian’s now. When he was there, especially.

And what was the point, having to constantly trudge down the hallway, sometimes half awake in the morning, just to get clothes?

It wasn’t like the room wasn’t big enough for the two of them.

“Need a hand?” Tim paused, glanced over his shoulder, and Cassandra was watching him, paused towards the top of the stairs. He nodded, attempting to swivel his body towards the door.

“Can you grab the door?” She was moving before he finished it, pushing it open so Tim could stumble in, dumping the clothes out on Damian’s bed- which already hosted a mess of his clothing, a few of his gadgets. There hadn’t been a rhyme or reason to his move- he’d simply started grabbing things.

From the doorway, Cassandra surveyed the mess. “He’s going to love this.”

“I’ll have it cleaned up before Damian gets back,” Tim reasoned, looking at the mess himself. At least, he hoped.

Damian had gone into the city for his monthly doctor’s visit. Tim had wanted to take him, but Stephanie and volunteered, had pointed out nothing spectacular would happen at this visit, and that it’d be good for her to get to take Damian out. Get some lunch after, some fresh air-
And Tim knew how invested in Damian’s health, Stephanie was. How well she understood things he didn’t. He was endlessly thankful for her, and figured the time without his boyfriend would be good for attempting to migrate his things from one room to another.

It still felt strange to think of Damian as his boyfriend. As if the word wasn’t fitting.

“I’m not so sure you will, if you simply keep piling things on the bed.” Cassandra pushed off the door frame. “Are you simply emptying your closet?” Tim nodded. “You put this away, I’ll go get more.”

Tim smiled at that. “You’re a life saver.”

She rolled her eyes. “Thank me later with a good workout.” She turned, heading back for Tim’s room, and he headed towards Damian’s walk in closet. Half of it was now empty- everything condensed, to fit Tim’s own clothing. It had taken Damian barely any time at all, that morning while Tim had showered.

Tim began hanging things up, feeling strangely elated over the domesticity of it all. Over the fact that it was like they really were a couple, like this wasn’t all a patchwork they had thrown together out of circumstances that should have never even come to pass. Like everything was planned.

Not a damned thing in their life was planned, and Tim didn’t think he’d have it any other way.

He walked out of the closet, hoisted up his laptop from the bed and carefully settled it on Damian’s desk. He glanced at the sketchbook left out on it, before picking it up, carefully flipping through the pages. He was smiling to himself, until he paused, and the smile turned into a pure grin.

Damian had drawn his first ultrasound.

Tim wanted to reach out, trace the lines, the white of the paper showing through the heavy black graphite Damian had used to cover most of the page. But he was too afraid of smearing a single line, ruining even a thread of it. Instead he just stared at it, as if he had never stared at the original, as if he hadn’t memorized it.

Beneath the drawing was writing, perfect curves in a language Tim didn’t know- and in that moment, he hated that he didn’t. Felt like he was missing a whole piece of Damian.

Was reminded of the correction Damian had given him, that their baby would call him baba.

Silently, Tim wondered if he could learn Arabic. He’d learned languages before, and while he knew this was not an easy one to learn, he would love to have a clue of the things Damian whispered to the baby, when he thought Tim couldn’t hear.

Of the curses Damian gave up when Tim had him thrown into a state of hyper-sensitivity in bed.

Of the words scrawled elegantly on this page.

Tim set the sketch book down, sitting down in the chair and opening one of the drawers of Damian’s desk. Tucked away, but plainly visible, was the original ultrasound. He pulled it out, looking at it in the light, studying it again. Smiling to himself.

“Taking a break already?” He glanced up as Cassandra walked into the room, dropping an armful of clothing onto the bed. She walked over, leaning against the back of the chair, smiling herself when she saw the ultrasound in Tim’s hands. She reached out, over his shoulder, traced the shape of the baby’s spine. “You know, you’re going to get to meet this little guy soon.”
Tim swallowed, nodded. Had a hard time believing Damian only had about two months to go. Had a hard time believing that in that time, he could be sitting here, with the baby in his arms, and not a picture.

He choked, had to set the ultrasound down on the desk. Cassandra straightened, turned the chair and settled herself right into Tim’s lap, wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged him, let him cling to her, clutching at her back.

“Tell me this is excitement,” she whispered, and Tim nodded, squeezing his eyes shut.

“It is,” he reassured her, “Oh god, so much of it. But it’s just...I can’t believe it.” Cassandra played her fingers through his hair, lovingly, and Tim closed his eyes, fell into her comfort.

She was the most subtle alpha he had ever met. She smelled like nothing at all at first, as if she was a ghost, a phantom of pure thought. But when she relaxed, when she tried to calm him, or Stephanie and he was close, she smelled like rain. She smelled like water and earth and crisp, wet leaves, clinging to the late spring branches.

She was nature, and Tim desperately needed a breath of fresh air.

“It’s hard to believe I ever got here,” Tim admitted, thinking of Damian’s pretty, lazy smile that morning. Of the way he let his head fall to the pillow while Tim nuzzled into his neck, the breathy laughter he could drag from him so easily.

The fact that Damian seemed happy- and over the past few months, Tim hadn’t been sure the omega would ever be happy again. That he’d ever be happy again.

“It’s just hard to believe things could go right.” Cassandra nodded, her lips ghosting his temple, before she gave him a final hug, then climbed from his lap, extending her hand. Tim looked at it for a moment, before taking it, allowing her to pull him up.

“Play house later,” she said, waving her hand at the mess they had created. “Come clear your head with a little movement.”

Tim smiled. “You know,” he said, following her towards the door, “I think that sounds like a great idea.”

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Damian was pouting, staring across the table at Stephanie as she giggled, covering her mouth to contain herself. He had, a moment earlier, leaned across the table to reach for her phone, to look at something she had wanted to show him, and his belly had bumped the table, gotten in his way. She seemed to find this completely hilarious.

“-tt- Enough Brown.” He huffed, picking up his fork and toying with the salad in front of him, moving pieces about but not eating them. “It was not funny.”

“It was adorable. Babybat, you are just freaking precious right now.”

“Right. Precious.” He rolled his eyes. “Precious that I have to have a whole new wardrobe to get through these last two months, and that I seem unable to judge my own size.”

“You’re honestly not even big,” she said. “You’re all belly and I love it.” He shook his head, skewering a number of vegetables on his fork and popping them into his mouth. They weren’t
exactly what he wanted, but in that moment Damian didn’t have words for what he did, so they would suffice. “And you know, two more months and you’ll be all done anyway.”

Damian nodded. It felt strange, to be thinking about that. His doctor had mentioned it, during his visit. Told him that after his next visit, she’d be seeing him every two weeks- and it was time to really start thinking about having things ready for the baby.

That felt like a joke. He had literally nothing.

“Are you excited?” Stephanie asked, grabbing her brightly colored lemonade and taking a sip. Damian hadn’t even paid attention to the fruits mixed in with it- had shuddered at the idea of something cold going into his body. The end of January was bitter, and he was not thrilled in the slightest over it.

He hated the cold. More than he had words for.

“That is one thing I’m feeling,” he admitted, lifting his mug of tea and cradling it in both hands, absorbing the heat. “I am… nervous.” He sipped at his tea, savoring the heat on his tongue.

“I was too,” Stephanie said, softly. “I understand. You’ll feel a lot of things. It won’t all be good. Even after. There’s so much no one tells you. But it’s all okay. Just cling to the good… acknowledge the bad, but reason through it.”

Damian smiled at her. “I hate you but in moments like this, I truly do love you.”

Stephanie grinned, pressing her hand to her chest dramatically. “Damian Wayne, did you just confess your love to me? Why, how will Tim react? What a scandal!” She lifted her hand to her forehead now, tipped her head back. “We’ll have to meet in secret. A moonlight get away. No one can know- oh gosh the baby! Tim will come after us for his child!”

Damian had to set his mug down, laughing so hard he covered his mouth to stifle it. “Ridiculous,” he managed, “You are utterly ridiculous.”

She kept her pretty grin, reaching for her fork. “I know. But you love that too.” She winked, taking a bite of her lunch, giving Damian a moment of silence, before, “So, have you and Tim talked about a nursery?”

Damian shook his head. If he was honest, they had talked about little. The past few weeks had been a whirlwind of Damian simply falling, letting himself fall, letting Tim catch him. Of feeling alright, truly alright, for the first time in so long it was utterly foreign.

It felt wild enough that Tim was moving into his room, giving up the pretense that he would ever sleep anywhere else.

“We have talked about nothing,” he admitted, “I guess that needs to change?”

Stephanie nodded. “You bet your cute butt it does, babybat. It’s not like that house doesn’t have enough rooms, pick one and slap some cute baby-friendly colors on it. Oh! When you go crib shopping can I come? Hell I’m coming with you for all your baby shopping. You know, we should throw you a shower-”

“Heavens no.” Damian shook his head, poking at his salad again, but looking intently at Stephanie. “No… anything. I do not want this to be an ordeal.” Stephanie rolled her eyes, dropping her fork and knitting her fingers together.
“Fine, fine. If you promise that when we get home you’re actually going to get Timmy’s brain working on baby things.” Damian nodded. “Good. Now, next important question- do you have names lined up?”

Damian’s cheeks tinged slightly, and still cradling his mug, he whispered, “I may have put some thought into it.”

“Well thank god, you’re on top of something. Is it a secret?”

“I haven’t even discussed it with Drake yet.”

Stephanie smiled. “Dami, you could tell him you wanted to literally name your child Batman and he would let you. He’s very whatever you want about this, if you couldn’t tell.” Damian’s cheeks flushed darker, as he thought back to Tim whispering in his ear, the night prior, that he’d do whatever Damian wanted, give him anything-

Not thoughts to be indulging in when out to lunch with Stephanie.

“It is nothing ridiculous,” he said, setting his mug down and placing his warm hands on his belly. “But… for the moment, I would like to keep it to myself.”

Stephanie smiled then, her eyes going soft. Adoring. “Okay Damian. I understand.” She reached her hand across the table, and when he looked up he lifted one hand, let their fingers tangle together. “Last question, I swear. I know you don’t want to know the gender- but do you have any guesses?”

Damian smiled to himself, nodding. “I do.”

“Is that a secret as well?” Another nod, and Stephanie squeezed his fingers. “Okay.” She glanced away from him, at his barely touched salad, and let her smile turn to a grin. “You know what? I’m suddenly not really feeling lunch. There’s a really cute bakery down the block. Let’s settle this and run- I think I want a giant red velvet cupcake.”

Damian jerked his head up- and he could admit that god sometimes Stephanie simply had the best ideas.

*

Tim heard the sound of the elevator, as he held his arm up, blocked Cassandra’s kick. He winced as the impact, his feet sliding on the mat as he held his other arm up, deflecting her punch. His lungs were burning- he’d lost track of time, of how long they’d been going at this. But he’d tossed his tshirt away long ago, could feel beads of sweat rolling down his spine as he dropped low, swept his leg out in an attempt to cut her legs from beneath her.

She jumped, landing in a crouch and grabbing his leg, jerking him towards her. Tim lost his balance, sprawling on the mat, and with a grin Cassandra stood up, pressed her foot into the small of his back.

“My girl kicking your ass, Timmy?”

Tim rolled his eyes, but smiled. “Of course she is. Whose ass doesn’t she kick?” Cassandra eased
her hold off him, and Tim pushed himself up, standing and shaking out his hair. When he glanced back at them, Damian was watching him, his eyes having flashed to something-

And Tim felt this strange pull in him, like he could almost feel the excitement Damian got, seeing him like this.

Cassandra had already hopped off the mats, was heading for the two of them. She took Stephanie from Damian’s arm, leaned up to kiss the corner of her mouth, and the omega smiled, wrapped an arm around her neck and held her still for a proper kiss. Tim hopped down himself, his tshirt in hand, walking over towards them.

“Everything go okay?” he asked, and Damian nodded.

“Yes. After my next visit I need to go every two weeks.” Tim smiled at that, his heart throbbing because that meant they were close.

Nerves, excitement, a plethora of every emotion he could feel, was turning inside him, stringing up along his ribs and tight, around his heart.

“I want to go to those,” Tim offered, slipping his arm around Damian’s shoulders and kissing his cheek. “If you’re okay with it?” Damian nodded, still glancing at him, and Tim chuckled. “I need a shower if you’re going to look at me like that.”

That had Stephanie laughing, Cassandra snickering under her breath, as Damian shot them a glare, before looking back at Tim. “Come upstairs for that.”

Tim nodded, gave the girls a glance, and Stephanie waved them off. “We’ll be down here if you two need anything. I’m hoping Cass feels up to kicking my ass a little.” She squeezed her girlfriend, and Cassandra took her hand, pulling her towards the mats. Tim watched them go, before tangling his fingers in with Damian’s, heading for the elevator.

They headed upstairs, into their room- their room, Tim mentally repeated to himself. Damian paused, surveying the current mess on the bed, before he folded his arms.

“-tt- What in all hell happened?”

“I was cleaning up, I swear,” Tim said, heading for the bathroom. He dropped his tshirt on the floor, turning the shower on. “Cass just… suggested a little break. And sparring with her- it always clears my head.”

Damian couldn’t disagree with that, but he still frowned. “Did your head need clearing?”

Tim sighed. “Not exactly. Just… had a moment.” He turned, flashed Damian a smile. “Nothing to worry about, baby boy. I promise.” Damian shiver gently, his folded arms moving to properly grasp himself, as Tim hooked his thumbs in his shorts and underwear, stripping of everything in one fluid motion. He didn’t need to look back to feel Damian’s eyes, traveling along the curve of his spine, lower still-

Tim laughed as he pulled the shower door open.

“Are you staring at my ass?” He chanced a glance back, and Damian was grinning.

“Would you blame me if I was?”

“Not in the least.” He winked, playful, before stepping into the shower, pulling the doors shut. Tim
submersed himself beneath the stream of water, grabbing Damian’s shampoo to work into his hair. While the suds were rolling down his shoulders, he could see Damian, distorted through the glass, stepping into the bathroom, leaning against the sink. Watching, even though Tim was nothing but a blur of blue-tinted flesh behind the heavy glass. “Is something on your mind?”

Tim was getting better at reading Damian- and knew that if he had followed him into the bathroom with something more intimate in mind, it would have happened already. Damian wasn’t subtle, now that Tim had cracked his shell. Not when Tim openly flirted him, courted him like he was trying to win over the heat in Damian’s belly.

He was given nothing but silence for a minute, before, “We have nothing ready.”

Tim dipped his head beneath the water again, rubbing the conditioner out of his hair, eyes closed. When he pulled back, he pushed it all off his forehead, blinking water away. “Nothing…”

“For the baby.”

Oh. Oh.

Tim inhaled, slowly, swallowed. “You’re right,” he admitted, reaching for the soap, popping the cap open. “I guess we need to change that.”

Silence, again. Tim tried to make himself feel like this wasn’t a big conversation, convince himself it was just an everyday thing. But as the last of the soap suds rinsed off his body, his denial did, as well.

He turned the water off, pulling the shower door open- stared at Damian, watching him. And those pretty jade eyes, they stared back, level with Tim’s, not once wavering.

“Let me get dressed,” he said, feeling each water droplet was they rolled down his neck, his chest. “Then we can really talk.”

It took a few minutes, but once Tim was dry, back in the jeans he’d started the day in, and settled on a clear corner of the bed, he was thinking a little clearer. With more focus.

“Talk to me Damian,” he urged, as Damian paced- unable to sit still. “Tell me what you’re feeling. Are you upset?”

“That is not the right word,” Damian admitted, pausing to glance out his window. The ground around the manor were still frosted in white snow. “I am… anxious. Nervous.”

“About what? Tell me why.” Tim knew if Damian opened up, his every thought process made sense- every thread, inside his head. It was just getting him to that point.

The omega huffed, folding his arms. “I am… anxious over what will come. I am nervous about everything. Nervous still that…” he trailed off, glanced down at his belly. “That perhaps something is wrong, and it was not caught. That what my grandfather did- that it had last affects.”

Tim pushed himself off the bed, taking the few steps to Damian. He reached out, pressed his hands along the sides of his belly, radiating heat through his shirt, causing the omega’s eyelid to flutter, once. He leaned up, pressed his forehead to Damian’s.

“Damian,” he whispered, “I want you to listen to me. Your baby- our baby, it’s okay. Your doctor has said so countless times. Everything is healthy. Whatever Ra’s did- our baby is stronger than that. It’s got your blood, after all. Probably will be just as stubborn.” Damian smiled over that, a
single, breathy laugh escaping him, warming Tim’s heart. “Whatever you or I could survive—our baby will survive more. Neither of us are weak, Damian. And our baby isn’t either. And soon enough, it will show you.” He rubbed his hands gently, smile so soft it was like velvet, over Damian’s eyes. “And doesn’t it wake you up, some mornings?”

Damian nodded, slowly.

“They’re just trying to remind you that everything is okay.” He leaned in, kissed the tip of Damian’s nose. “That they can’t wait to meet you.”

Carefully, Damian lifted his arms, wrapped them around Tim’s neck. “I would be lost without you,” Damian admitted, and Tim only smiled, shaking his head softly.

“No babybat, you wouldn’t. You’d be doing just fine. You’d manage, like you always have. Like you always will. You don’t need anyone else.” He kissed Damian’s cheek softly. “But I’m glad you’ll have me. Glad you ever wanted me.”

Damian squeezed him tighter, and Tim let his arms gently encircle him, nuzzled into his omega’s neck and inhaled softly. Their skin smelled similar now, and it was only his natural scent that told them apart.

Something about that Tim truly loved.

“We really do have nothing planned,” Damian admitted, and Tim giggled into his warm skin, kissed his pulse. When he straightened up, Damian was smiling.

“I know. We’re terrible. We’ll fix it. I’ve got a board meeting tomorrow— but I’ll clear my schedule for a few days after. We’ll go baby shopping.”

Damian snorted, dropping his head and burying his face into Tim’s neck. “We have no idea what we’re doing,” he said, laughing. “This is ridiculous.”

“What a marvelous start.” Tim grinned, reached down and playfully smacked Damian’s ass. The omega jumped, turning and nipping at his neck. “Bastard.”

“Your bastard,” Tim pointed out, letting his hands slide down to Damian’s hips, squeezing affectionately. “Don’t forget that.”

Damian sighed, turning so his cheek rested on Tim’s shoulder, refusing to move from the beta’s embrace. He let his eyes fall shut in comfort, quietly responding, “I never could.”

* 

Damian worked the door to the manor open, rushing inside out of the cold, the sounds of Tim’s laughter behind him echoing, as the beta hurried after him, bags looped over his wrist and arms.

“Get back here,” Tim called, stooping for a moment to let the bags gently spill to the floor, before chasing after Damian. He grinned, rushing towards the stairs, grabbing a hold of the railing and turning just as Tim reached him, watched as Tim lifted up on his toes, but because of the step Damian was standing on, was unable to reach his lips for the playful kiss he tried to deliver.

It landed barely on the corner of his chin, had the omega laughing freely. Tim huffed, wrapped his
arms around Damian’s waist, towards his hips, and tugged him closer—careful to not disturb his balance.

“I don’t get a kiss?” he asked, smiling at Damian so sweetly that the omega felt butterflies, in his chest. Felt shifting, in his belly.

“Mmm, I suppose,” Damian offered, reaching up to run his hands along Tim’s biceps, leaning over him. “Can you ask nicely?”

“Please, baby boy?”

Damian smiled warmly, letting it bubble up from his chest. “Okay,” he whispered, leaning down, gently pressing his mouth to Tim’s. It was sweet, and Damian was sure he would never get sick of kissing Tim like this, as long as he lived.

But a moment later there was the distinct sound of someone clearing their throat. Damian pulled back, he and Tim looking up towards the top of the stairs, finding Bruce standing there, watching the two of them.

Partially dressed, as if he were going out. His bow tie was still undone and he lacked his jacket, but he was otherwise ready to step into the flickering lights of Gotham city cameras.

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“Father,” Damian offered, as Bruce glanced past them, at the mess of bags all over the floor now.

“I take it today was a success?”

“With how long it was? I hope so.” Damian sighed, and Tim pulled back, smiling.

“Well, I had fun,” he offered, and Damian glanced at him.

“You do not have a child inside you that decides to move nonstop at random times!” Tim smiled sheepishly.

“Fair enough.” Above them, Bruce was shaking his head, but smiling, opening his mouth to say something-

But cut off, when there was a sudden, “Good, you’re back!” Clark now, appearing from the hallway, fumbling with his own bow tie. “I was worried we’d miss you two completely.”

Damian and Tim exchanged glances, before Tim offered up a smile. “You two have some secret League dinner-date or something?”

Bruce glared at them, but did not need to say a word. He had never once but any sort of label to he and Clark’s outings, to their strange on-and-off affair. And he didn’t need to. It was obvious, especially with how Bruce turned to Clark, batted his hands away and reached up, worked on his bow tie himself.

“I was gifted tickets to the opera,” Bruce said, “And as Cassandra is on patrol with Stephanie tonight, and I knew it was a lost cause to attempt to separate the two of you— I invited Clark.”

“Heavens forbid you go alone,” Damian pointed out, leaning against the railing and smiling. He didn’t say it— wouldn’t admit it, at least not to his father and his friend-partner-and-sometimes-lover, but he was found of Clark. Found of the way his father smiled, when he was around and Bruce thought no one was looking. Found of the fact that he was sweet to the entire family.
Bruce shot his son a glare, before turning back to Clark, straightening the bow tie. “You look good,” Clark called, smiling down at Damian. “How are you feeling?”

“Currently? Tired.” Behind him, Tim had finally begun gathering up all the bags he had dropped, in order to playfully chase Damian. “But well.”

A warm smile, before Clark was turning back to Bruce. “We’re going to be late,” Bruce pointed out, gently pushing past him. “Where is your jacket?”

“On the bed- er… uhm. Somewhere in your room where it was obviously originally waiting for me.” Bruce huffed, saying nothing and heading down the hallway, and Damian smirked, giving the Kryptonian a knowing look. “Wasn’t smooth, was it?”

“Not even the slightest.” Clark shrugged a shoulder- just as Bruce reappeared, tossing his jacket at him, his own already pulled on. Clark began sliding into it, as they hurried down the stairs.

“We’ll be back after,” Bruce offered, and Tim only nodded, watching them head out the door quickly. The moment it closed, he turned to Damian, laughing.

“It’s a date,” Tim said, and Damian rolled his eyes.

“As if I was not aware.”

“Wish he’d just sort of admit it. Bruce is stubborn.” Damian rolled his eyes as Tim climbed up the first few stairs, before he began up after him.

“If you are just realizing this about father now, you are blind.”

“Oh I’m not blind. I can see how gorgeous you are, every morning.”

Damian’s cheeks tinged pink, as they reached the top of the stairs. “-tt- blind and tacky.” Tim smiled at him, and then, holding up all the bags,

“If you want to go lay down, I can drop these off…” he trailed off, and Damian reached out, managed to take a few of the smaller ones from Tim. He shook his head, and followed Tim down the hallway, opening the doorway to the room that had, at one point, belonged to Jason.

It had been emptied out, now hosting boxes still unopened. Tim stepped into the room, settling the bags on the floor and looking around it. He’d mentioned before that he wanted to paint it- something colorful but not loud. Damian hadn’t seen the point- but then he remembered the sweet, mutated colors at his doctor’s office, and he hadn’t put up a fight. At all.

After all, decorating the nursery with Tim felt… intimate. And he was eager to start.

“The crib will be here next week,” Tim said, “And the dresser. The changing table. We should probably paint before that happens.”

“Whenever you are ready to,” Damian offered, leaned his arms up on Tim’s shoulders and resting his chin there. Tim smiled, folding his arms and glancing around the room.

It felt calm, the room, in that moment. Damian had been unsure, at first- but Jason’s old bedroom was close enough to his own that it would be easy to get to, in the early morning. And the window held such a great view of the grounds behind the manor-

And if Damian was honest, there had just been something about looking at that room and thinking
his baby would be sleeping here. Playing here. Growing up and creating a space, here.

It wasn’t as if Jason cared, in the slightest. Damian had listened when Tim called him, the beta joking that it only seemed fitting since he had the most kids and all that his room also go to a kid.

It had made Damian laugh.

So much made him laugh now, if he was truly, deeply honest.

“It’s going to be perfect,” Tim offered, and Damian said nothing at all. He simply closed his eyes, felt the baby shifting in his belly again, moving as if it knew exactly where Damian’s stomach pressed to Tim’s back, and wanted to be closer to the both of them. With his eyes closed, he could picture the winter long gone- something he could not wait for- the sound of small laughter, unformed words- and pretty eyes, changing from jade to blue, back to jade, moving like water, looking up at him.

Loving him, without being asked. Trusting, because the baby didn’t know doubt or disappointment.

“Yes,” Damian whispered, smiling to himself. “It will be perfect.”

* *

Tim smiled to himself, stroking back Damian’s short hair, the omega settled between his legs, back to chest, on their bed. He was reading, silently, Tim enjoying the sweet silence around them, glancing at words over Damian’s shoulder now and then, but having no objections to simply letting his mind wonder.

Outside, it had begun to storm, a wet mess of snow and rain mingling together. He was sure it would have Cass and Stephanie miserable, on patrol- and momentarily, he worried for Bruce and Clark, still in the city.

“You think very loudly.” Tim inclined his head as Damian glanced back, before he smiled at the younger man.

“Just worrying about everyone out there.” Damian hummed, settling his book in his lap and gently rubbing his stomach.

“I believe the baby senses your worry- please stop.” He gave a breathy laugh, adding, “It will not settle.”

“No?” Tim reached down, moving his hand along side Damian’s, smiling softly as he rested his chin on his shoulder. “Hush baby, we know you’re excited- but you’ve gotta relax.” Damian gave another laugh, and Tim couldn’t keep from smiling- not with that music, not with the warm buzzing feeling between them, as if something was crackling in his veins. “Give your baba a break, darling.”

Damian closed his eyes, sighing as Tim continued to gently move his hand- humming to himself, the sound falling into a gentle rhythm. Musical. Tim smiled more.

“Are you about to sing?” he asked, teasing, and Damian opened his eyes, carefully elbowing Tim.

“I remember songs my mother used to sing to me. I guess it’s becoming a habit.” He flushed a little. “I do this a lot, when you’re not around.”
“What, hum old lullabies?” Damian nodded- and Tim simply beamed. “You’re precious, you know that right?” Damian opened his mouth to protest, but Tim had both arms around him now, hugging gently, silencing him. “You’re going to be the perfect dad.”

He felt Damian tensing. “You think so?” Tim nodded, moving to kiss the back of his neck. “Absolutely.” Damian was quiet for a moment.

“I worry,” he admitted, “That I will not.” He placed his hands over Tim’s, both on his belly now. “And I am glad you are here, for when I… I do not measure up.”

Tim squeezed him gently, Damian’s words not lost on him. The omega was never one to even dare say that he would not measure up- think it, believe it internally, yes, Tim knew- but say it aloud? Let someone else know that fear?

It was rare- more common, with everything that had happened- but this felt different. This was different. This was Damian trusting Tim with his fears.

“The baby is going to love you,” Tim assured him, “Just like I do.” He nuzzled Damian’s neck, swore he could feel the omega’s heartbeat pick up.

“Drake?” His voice was quiet, it was wavering, and suddenly he smelled different- suddenly everything felt different, and Tim was clutching him tighter, as if Damian might disappear. He gave a quiet hmm as the omega squirmed, until he was finally letting go, and Damian was shifting, getting up on his knees and turning to face Tim. He leaned in, pressed his forehead to Tim’s. “Did you just… admit you love me?”

Tim glanced up at him, and felt his own heart skip a bit. “I guess I did,” he whispered, smiling. But god, he’d loved Damian a long time.

He’d loved him when Damian was a child, and there was nothing but hate. But beneath it, he’d loved the kid who had been his brother, who had been his family.

The love was just different, now.

Damian smiled, leaning in and kissing Tim, very softly. “I love you too,” he whispered, into Tim’s mouth, reaching up to run his hands back through his hair, tangle his fingers in it. He peppered Tim’s mouth with small kisses, and Tim tried to return them, feeling so light that he was sure if Damian wasn’t holding onto him, he would have lifted into the air, floated up to the ceiling.

This wasn’t supposed to be his life- this sudden burst of good. But god, he was so glad it was.

And he didn’t even need Damian to say the words- hearing them, it felt wonderful- but he had known. In the pit of his stomach, he had known. Just like he knew his own love. In little glances, small gestures- in the way Damian relaxed into nothing against him. The way he smiled softly at the barest touch of Tim’s fingertips.

Damian pulled one hand from Tim’s hair, reaching down to grasp one of Tim’s own, pressing it to his belly. Tim felt the baby’s movements, smaller now, and Damian smiled more. “It is calming down.”

“They just wanted us to have another sickeningly sweet moment,” Tim offered, and Damian chuckled. “You know… we can’t call them it forever. Eventually we need a name-”
“I have one.” It came so quickly that Tim jerked his head up, found Damian’s eyes watching him—very clear, in that moment. He was blushing gently, before he said, again, “I have a name.”

“Oh?” A nod, and then, a very hesitant,

“That is, if you… trust my judgement.” Tim smiled, leaned up and kissed Damian’s forehead.

“Always. I trust you with my life.” Damian shivered, over that, and Tim added, “Is it a secret? Do you have a guess as to what we’re having?” It was almost a silly question for Tim to ask, considering he knew there was no hold as to gender and sort of anatomy his child was born with— but he had to ask.

Damian’s smile was small, almost secretive. “I simply have a… feeling. But I want to keep the name to myself.”

Keep it locked up tight, safe in his ribs, echoed only in his own mind. Not for the tongue, yet.

Tim wouldn’t push— he only nodded. “Okay. This is whatever you want, baby boy. I’m sure it’s beautiful.” Damian kept his smile, and Tim leaned in, kissed him gently— thought to get his hands in Damian’s hair, thought that his boyfriend was raw, in that moment. Open.

And whenever Damian was open, Tim wanted to fill him— with praise and purpose so there was no room for doubt. To worship him, to show him he was a god, that he was perfection in all the right and wrong ways.

He was all Tim had ever needed, and he was so glad he could see it now.

But he was just tilting Damian’s head, licking gently at his mouth, a subtle sound showing his intention— there was a door slamming, echoing through out the whole manor. And a moment later, the loud wail of the security alarm.

Which meant the locked door hadn’t been properly *unlocked*, and the security code never entered.

Someone without a key was inside the Manor— and, presumably, someone who definitely *shouldn’t* be.

Damian had pulled off of Tim at the first sound, wincing at the ache it caused his overly sensitive ears. Tim hopped off the bed, hurrying for the door. “Stay here!” he yelled, tossing open the bedroom door and rushing into the hallway, not bothering to look back and see if Damian listened.

He knew Damian. He knew he wouldn’t— at least not for long.

It could have been Bruce, he reasoned. Could have gotten tipsy and lost his keys and maybe he had Clark fight with the lock. Forgot to put in the security code not having a proper chip-encrypted key required.

Except that was absurd, because Tim knew that Clark had a key to the Manor. *And yet Bruce denied there was any sort of romantic feelings between them.*

He grabbed the railing of the stairs, hopping down a few, his muscles having gone tight. He was in his pajamas, didn’t have a single gadget on him— but it didn’t matter. Unless this was a real attack on the cave below, working its way down, he could handle anything that came through that door—

“Well, good to see your reaction time is still impressive, Drake.”
Tim paused, staring at the open door. The alarm was still wailing, the wind from outside echoing into the Manor, snow and sleet making everything outside static.

And standing there, staring at him, arms folded- was Talia.

“You’re alive?” he said, gripping the railing, standing half way down the stairs. Talia tossed her hair, damp hair falling off her shoulders.

“Of course. Now, can you turn that wretched noise off? My skull is going to shatter.” Tim nodded, feeling almost dumb, as he rushed down the rest of the stairs. He shut the door, flipping open the security code pad and punching in a few numbers. The wailing died off, and Tim sighed.

“What are you doing here?” he asked, turning, watching as Talia brushed water, melting snow from her hair. “How are you alive?”

“I have survived my father longer than you have been alive,” Talia reminded him, “Do not seem so shocked. As to why I am here- you know.”

Tim nodded. Of course he did.

_Damian._

As if the mere thought had summoned him, from the top of the stairs Tim suddenly heard, “Mother?” He glanced past Talia, who turned, her face splitting into a large smile when she saw her son. Damian stared for a moment, before he returned the smile. “You’re alive!”

Talia rushed for the stairs, leaving Tim to trail behind, bounding up them and reaching Damian before Tim was even half way up. She wrapped her arms around her son, pulling him tight to her, fingers locking in his shirt, against his back, as if she would never let go.

“Of course I am, little love,” she whispered, “I would not dream of leaving this Earth when I know you still need me.” She pulled back, just enough to kiss Damian’s temple, as Tim reached the top of the stairs.

“We had no idea what happened to you,” Tim said, and Damian broke in,

“I wanted to come back for you, mother. But father… he advised against it. Everyone did.”

“For his safety,” Tim pointed out- but Talia continued to smile. She brushed some of Damian’s hair back, looking at him like she had not seen him in millenia- like this was the first time she had seen her baby.

“I cam glad you did not,” she said, “It would have been fool hearted. Suicide. Besides- I do not need rescuing.” She glanced at Tim, adding, “Just perhaps a hand, from time to time.”

Tim smiled at that as well. “You’re soaked. How about we-” he cut off when the door opened again, this time with the proper key- and before he could turn, he heard Bruce’s laughter. Real laughter, the kind he kept reserved for Clark, Tim knew. Knew Bruce had a different laughter for everyone.

It died when he glanced up, when Talia turned, smiling down at him. “Hello beloved.”

“Talia.” Bruce’s face had dropped to seriousness, mouth a stoic line. Next to him, Clark was watching as well, his smile having fallen away. “You’re alive.”
“You boys really need to have a little more faith in me,” she reasoned, folding her arms. Next to her, Damian was stepped closer- hovering so close his shoulder was nearly brushing hers. “Timothy here hosted the same doubt. Even my own son.”

“Shock, mother,” Damian corrected, and Talia held her hand up, silencing him for a moment. She stepped away from Tim and Damian, eased her way down the stairs- and she was coincidence, pure and unadulterated. Tim saw it in the natural movement of her hips, the firm high hold to her chin, her shoulders.

He saw ghosts of this, in Damian. Used to- hoped to, again.

“It was rude of me to just drop in,” she admitted, as her feet hit the floor. She closed in towards Bruce, reaching out and running her nails up his chest. “But I have missed our son since he left me. Worried about him. I trust he has been in good hands.”

Bruce narrowed his eyes- but the anger, it was fake. Tim could see it, from so far away. He could only imagine how easily Clark saw through it.

“Does Ra’s know you’re here?” The distrust, however, in Bruce’s voice was genuine. Talia frowned.

“As far as my father is concerned, I am sand lost in the desert. I have kept him preoccupied for quite some time, beloved. The burden was finally lifted from my shoulders, and I took the opportunity to become a phantom. He has no idea where I am. Nor shall he.” She glanced back, towards Damian, and her eyes were the same soft jade Tim saw, when Damian looked down at his belly. When he talked about the baby. “I just want to see my son.”

Bruce’s eyes softened, and with a heavy sigh, “Tim told me what you did. We worried you had died- and I owe you some thanks, for protecting our son.” Bruce reached out, gently squeezed Talia’s shoulder. “It is good to see you again.”

Talia nodded, reaching up to cover Bruce’s hand on her shoulder, to squeeze it gently. “It is good to see you too, beloved.” Another squeeze, and her eyes were soft again- a softness Talia reserved for very few in her life. “It has been too long.”

*

Damian sighed, his hand sliding along Tim’s side, his face pressed into the beta’s chest. He was breathing steady, heart beat sound- asleep.

Damian wish he could be so lucky.

Very carefully he pulled back, holding his breath as he sat up- but Tim simply rolled onto his stomach, reached a hand out for Damian’s pillow and clutched at it. As if he needed to touch something of the omega’s, at all times.

Damian climbed from the bed, pausing to stretch. It took a moment in the dark for him to locate his sweatpants, but one he had them- and had adjusted his tshirt, which had ridden up to his ribs while he had twisted around with Tim, tangling together in an attempt for sleep. Once this was taken care of, he headed for the door, slipping out into the hallway.

The Manor was quiet- unless one listened. As Damian eased down the hallway, he could see a light, shining from his father’s study. If he were to strain, he could hear the hum of voices- words inaudible, but still there.
They were still awake, both his father and mother. He couldn’t tell, from so far away, if Clark was present or if he had left the two of them alone. When Damian had crawled into bed with Tim, earlier, the three of them had been in there.

He turned away from the door, pressed open another and stepped into the silent would-be nursery. He left the door open, dodging a box, a bag, pausing in the middle of the room. He glanced around, in his mind imagining the boxes clearing away, color plastering the walls, shapes taking up space—the crib, the dark cherry wood dresser Tim had loved.

Everything, ready. Waiting.

Waiting, just like he was.

“You are awake.”

Talia smiled over the switch, nodding. “Yes.” She leaned over, kissed his temple. “We had much to discuss.” Damian gave his own nod, and Talia added, “As I feel you and I do, as well.”

“You want to ask me about Drake,” Damian said, and Talia said nothing. Her silence was answer enough. “What do you want to know, mother?”

“I want yo know you are happy, habibi.” She moved from his side, stepping in front of him to stare into his eyes, her own irises seeming alive, like serpents entangled around her pupils. The ouroboros chasing itself endlessly. “I want to know that you are safe, that you are fulfilled.”

Damian thought to Tim, sleeping in their bed. Thought of the sweet sound of his heartbeat, the way in his sleep he clutched at Damian, always tried to keep him close, closer, so far inside his bones that Damian was caged.

Caged, but always with the key, always able to leave. A single word, and the world was open to him.

“I am,” Damian finally said, glancing down at his belly. He placed a hand on it, felt his chest going tight. “I did not now I could be this happy, mother. I have Drake, in ways I had only ever dreamed. He loves me, mother.” Damian glanced up, and in the dark, his eyes were dancing. And quietly, to himself, a ghost of a whisper, “He loves me.”

Talia smiled at that, reached out and cupped his cheeks, stroked her thumbs over them. “You are the world, habibi. Everyone should love you.” Her smile was so soft, a reflection of one Damian knew from his childhood. From nights when he could not sleep, and Talia sat up with him, watching the night outside her open windows. When she stroked his hair back and Damian felt small, felt alright with that. “And how do you feel, about your child?”

“Excited.” There was no hesitation, not now. “Perhaps this is not how it should have happened, but it has and I- I would not change a thing. Not a moment.” Talia’s smiled grew, and she glanced down.

“There is so much ugliness,” she whispered, “in this life. In the world out there. There is so much
you could destroy, right outside your door. But- habibi- my little love- you have chosen something so much greater. You are creating love.” Talia pulled him into her arms, held him, and when Damian rested his head down on her shoulder, she gently rocked their bodies, as if he was a child again. “I am proud of you, Damian. I am endlessly proud of what you have become. Of what you have done- what you will do.”

“It is not what you made me for,” Damian said, and Talia hushed him, squeezed him tightly.

“I was naive. I was blinded by fruitless desires. Whatever you were made for, Damian- it was lesser than this. Than what you are. You were made simply to live, my son. Anything else is simply a lie. And living-” she paused, smiled, “That is something you are doing just fine.”

Damian smiled to himself, smelled lilacs in her hair, honey blossom in her skin. Sandalwood, in her bones.

“I have to tell you,” she continued, “Even though I hope it is obvious. Your grandfather’s displeasure- it is not my own. You have outgrown every hope I held for you, little love. You are a far greater man than I thought you could ever be.” She rubbed her hand along his spine, and beneath his shirt, Damian’s scars felt like fire, under her touch. “You are a good he can not understand. But you are worthy, Damian. You are so worthy of your blood.”

Damian bit at his lip- choked- because he needed this, needed her love, her words- her approval. Needed it, because even though his grandfather was so far from the path he had chosen to follow, he was still blood. He had disowned Damian over his choices, over his decision to give up his ties to the League in order to remain with his father, in order to do good instead of seek the power the Demon’s Head thirsted for-

But he was family. He was blood. And the rejection, years ago- it had hurt. Even now- even knowing all Ra’s had done to him, even with the desire to snap his ribs from his body with his bare hands- It hurt. Because Damian never wanted to disappoint.

Talia pulled back, forced Damian to look at her. Her eyes were wet, shimmering pools over jade, over stone, dancing serpents whispering so many secrets for only the two of them. “You will do so many great things,” she whispered, “As you have. You will be an amazing father, little love. I have no doubts.”

Damian exhaled, slowly, and in his belly, felt his baby kicking, moving softly. Waking up- as if agreeing with its grandmother, over these words.

As if trying to tell him that already, he was loved.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Tim can't remember if he's ever laughed the way he does with Damian. If he's ever felt as happy as he does, when Damian smiles. He can't remember if life was ever this good- and he doesn't want to. He was made for this, made for him, and nothing else matters. Only that Damian keeps on smiling.

Tim narrowed his eyes, stretching on the small step ladder as he worked the tape up along the edge of the wall, blocking it off. He had his hair pulled back into the smallest of pony tails, paint smeared all over his tshirt, his jeans. There was a spot of it even, on his cheek.

“You are a mess,” Damian said, through a bemused smile. He was holding the paint roller, impatiently waiting for Tim to finish.

“Uh-huh.” He pulled back, and content the tape would stick, climbed down the few steps. He turned back at Damian, who had not a drop of paint on him, and added, “That’s what happens when you actually do something.”

The paint roller flew at him almost faster than Tim could realize, and he clutched it to his chest, Damian laughing as it smeared paint all over Tim. “You deserve that,” he pointed out, as Tim pulled it away, dropping it in a tray and heading for one of the countless rags he had lying around to wipe the paint off his hands.

“I was joking,” Tim pointed out, “Not like I’m letting you climb anything right now. Your center of balance is probably way off.” Damian huffed, planting his hands on his hips.

“I should throw you into the wall.” Tim laughed at that, tossing his head back, before, “Please no it just dried, it took us hours.” And despite the jokes, it was an us. Tim didn’t think there was a way for it to ever be singular again.

He didn’t want it to be.

Damian chuckled, walking over to Tim and brushing a few strands of his hair back, helping to tuck them behind his ear. “You are a mess, beloved,” he whispered, and Tim shrugged a shoulder. “Perhaps we should have had this done professionally.”

“Please, I can paint a room,” Tim said, turning and kissing Damian’s wrist as he continued to toy with his hair. “Besides, this is more fun.”

At this point, nearly all of the walls had been repainted- a soft lilac, which Damian had chosen and Tim had not-so-secretly adored. Tim’s goal, now, was to paint the remaining wall, the one the crib would be against, a soft powder blue- and then add in large polka dots, matching the lilac.

Damian thought he was crazy for that, considering how much trouble he had had, up to this point. Tim still seemed convinced he could do it.

“We could ask for help,” Damian pointed out, “Grayson would help.” Truth be told, Dick was just
looking for any excuse to show up at the Manor now, to see Damian. Tim knew it- and he had every intention of giving Dick those excuses. Especially now that Bludhaven seemed to be calming down.

Tim had stopped his visits, chose to stay home those nights now with Damian. They’d done so much over the past few weeks, getting ready for the baby- as the furniture covered in drop clothes proved in the room. But Tim swore the moment they finished one thing, two more popped up.

But another reason for Tim wanting to remain home- “I like us doing this together,” he said, reaching down and placing his hands on Damian’s belly. Could barely keep them off him, now.

A few days marked the beginning of his eighth month- and Tim didn’t want to be away from him. Damian had had his last monthly visit, a few days ago, and it had truly sunk in for Tim that at any point, he could expect to see their baby-

He would be damned if he’d be away from Damian, if he needed anything.

Damian smiled at him. “I do too.” He kissed Tim’s nose, got the beta laughing, before he pulled away, looked around the room. “But I still believe you are insane for wanting to put polka dots on the wall.”

“Once it dries,” Tim said, “Er...once I paint it and it dries, I just slap those giant stencils I bought up and go to town. It won’t be that bad. It’ll be cute.” Damian shook his head, keeping his affectionate smile as he stepped away, carefully avoiding the mostly empty paint trays. Tim took the chance to just look at him, to simply smile because he really did think Damian was breath taking, always would be-

And because as of late, it felt like the old Damian, the kid he’d first stayed with, those months ago-like he was back. Like whatever darkness in Damian that had been taking hold, had been tearing him apart, it was truly fading.

Tim wanted to thank Talia for it- her presence seemed to have lifted Damian’s spirits even more. She hadn’t left, after her sudden appearance- said she would not leave, until she knew her grandchild was safe in Damian’s arms, until she knew her son was alright. She wanted to be there-she wanted to be the mother Damian deserved, that he needed.

Tim respected that. And he respected that Bruce was allowing it to happen, allowing the woman who he had loved- may still have loved- roam the halls of his home. The woman he had fought and distrusted, who had never seen eye to eye with him-

And yet she was there. And Damian, he was here because the two of them, once, saw something in each other. Damian was there because they broke what was expected of nature, and Talia had her son created, from the two alphas.

It wasn’t exactly unlike what had happened, between them. Damian wasn’t so different from the baby growing inside him- who shouldn’t have even come to be, either.

“Drake, you are staring.” Tim blinked himself back to the present, realized he was. Damian was watching him with inquisitive eyes.

“Sorry, just thinking.” Damian hummed, before grasping a hold of the arm of the rocking chair in the room- which moved slightly before stilling- and began to shift. “What are you-”

Tim cut off as Damian eased himself down onto the floor, settling comfortably on the carpet.
“Damian, baby, there are chairs!” Tim held his arms out, looking distressed, while Damian furrowed his brow. “You are eight months pregnant don’t sit on the floor.”

“Why not?” Damian leaned back against the rocking chair, grinning teasingly. “It’s rather comfortable. Do not act like I am going to break.” Tim tugged at his hair, huffing, before Damian added, “You may, however, have to help me up.”

Tim laughed at that, before he crossed over to Damian and dropped down onto the floor next to him. “We can take a break. Are you hungry? We can get something to eat. Or you can sketch, and I can finish this. Or lay down. Whatever you—”

Damian held his hand up, and Tim cut off, clamping his mouth shut. “Drake, hush.” He leaned over, placed a gentle kiss to Tim’s cheek. “I do not need anything.” Tim sighed, nodding, turning into Damian’s kiss and stealing another, on his lips this time.

And then another, when Damian reached out, clutched at his shoulder, his shirt. And another, when Damian leaned into him, making a small sound at the back of his throat. One more, when he reached out, got his hands on Damian’s hips as the omega managed to shift, nearly leaning into Tim’s lap now. Tim smiled to himself, as Damian nipped at his lower lip, squeezed his hips.

“And I do need something,” Damian corrected, and Tim swallowed thickly, thought it was obscenely insane how quickly he could react to Damian wanting.

“Okay, well, we can—” Tim cut off when Damian kissed him again, rough, messy, the kind that had him coming undone, had him wanting to pin Damian down, to suck the breath from his lungs. He was gentler, now- but someday, someday, he’d have him against a wall again. He’d make his pretty boy scream again.

He’d remind Damian how they got to this exact point.

“-Go to our room,” Tim finished, when Damian pulled off his mouth, panting lightly. Damian frowned.

“We are in a room, Drake.” Tim’s eyes widened a little.

“We- we can’t. Not, like, right here.” He shook his head. “Besides, I don’t want to hurt you- and the floor? Not the best place. We’ve got a bed Damian—”

Damian huffed, before he pushed at Tim gently. The beta fell back, sprawling on his back on the floor, and Damian glanced down at him, with those eyes, so dark, wanting, and—

“Okay.” Tim breathed, tossing his self control so far away he wasn’t sure he’d ever get it back. “If you’re on top of me it might be easier.”

Damian’s eyebrows rose for a moment, before he offered a wicked smirk. “And that’s just not what you want, beloved? That’s for my benefit?” Tim pushed himself up on his elbows, as Damian reached forward, popped the button on Tim’s jeans.

“Oh, it’s partially for me,” Tim admitted, returning the smile- feeling so light, in his stomach, in his chest. Damian chuckled, unzipping his jeans and tugging at them, and Tim lifted his hips, let Damian guide his clothing down over the swell of his ass to his thighs. Without a word he reached
out, wrapped a hand around Tim’s cock and stroked him, and Tim fell back onto the floor with a gentle thud, staring up at the ceiling.

“And you’re worried I’ll get hurt,” Damian mumbled, still smiling, looking positively happy as Tim’s hips rose gently to meet each of his hands movements.

“Yeah,” Tim managed, licking his hips. “I am.” He let his eyes fall shut for a moment, lost himself in the warm feeling of Damian’s palm, the break in skin that was shockingly soft by one of his scars, until he heard Damian shifting a little, could smell his scent growing sweeter and sweeter with each passing second.

Carefully, Tim pushed himself up again, sitting and reaching for Damian. He tipped his chin up, kissed him as Damian’s hand stilled, the only movement his thumb, playing over the head of Tim’s cock. The beta gave a little groan into Damian’s mouth, and the omega smirked over it.

He didn’t need to say that he liked how much Tim reacted to him- Tim knew, by now. Knew that it simply reaffirmed to Damian that Tim was attracted to him. And while Tim could tell him, a thousand times, that he was beautiful- he knew there was merit in showing it.

He cupped Damian’s face, moved his kisses to the corner of his mouth, up to the bridge of his nose. “You sure?” he asked, and Damian nodded, pulling his hand away- and Tim bit back his whine over it, released Damian and leaned back, tugging his tshirt up over his head and tossing it away.

Damian reached down, working his leggings down off his hips. Tim, with Stephanie’s help, had convinced him that they would be far more comfortable, and now Tim was realizing Damian was going to be hard pressed to ever give them up.

He would be the last to complain about that.

Damian shifted, glancing about, had his clothing pooled down his thighs, before he sighed. “This may not be as easy as I expected,” he admitted, fully realizing he had to get them off completely. Tim laughed, reaching up and covering his mouth with one hand, holding the other out in apology. The omega only glared at him. “-tt- Drake.”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Tim managed, pulling his hand away and taking a deep breath. He shifted up onto his knees, hooking an arm around Damian’s waist. “Let me help you.” He helped ease Damian back down to the floor, grasping at his clothing and guiding it off his legs, letting it pile next to them. He smiled, bending down and gently kissing the start to his inner thigh, glancing up to see his boyfriend tipping his head back, sighing.

Tim trailed his mouth higher, dragged kisses along hot skin, felt Damian reaching down with one hand, brushing his hair back, his other arm bent, elbow pressed to the floor, supporting him. Tim paused to kiss the base of his cock, wished he could be pressing his tongue into Damian in that moment, could smell how wet he was and knew how much the omega loved it-

But he didn’t think he could comfortably get Damian’s hips lifted enough for that, was afraid the bend might hurt him- and somehow that had him laughing again, bowing his head and turning, pressing his forehead to Damian’s thigh.

This was ridiculous.

Damian was pregnant, and they were going to fuck on the damn floor.

“What?” Damian huffed, and Tim shook his head, carefully lifting himself up.
“You’re pregnant,” he said, “And we’re on the damn floor like we’re kids in heat and I just… this isn’t ridiculous to you?” He was grinning as he said it, couldn’t remember if there was a time he had smiled so much during sex- or even leading up to it. Couldn’t remember if it had felt this way, with anyone else.

Care free. Silly.

Damian paused, before his own small smile slipped over his lips. “Perhaps a little,” he admitted, and Tim reached for him, helped to pull him back up to his knees. Damian leaned over him, kissed him slowly, and Tim let his breath be taken, let himself smile into Damian’s kiss with every bit of love he had in his body. When Damian pulled away, he gave Tim a gentle push, and the beta didn’t fight the motion, landed on his back for a second time. Damian carefully maneuvered over him, and Tim reached up, got his hands on his hips, working to guide him.

Damian eased down onto his cock, tipping his head back and exhaling as his body stretched, as Tim filled him so perfectly. The beta sucked on his lower lip, fought the urge his hips had to jerk up, to bury as quickly as possible in Damian’s wet body. Instead he let Damian settle on him, watched as the omega didn’t move, slowly lifting his head again, eyes half lidded.

“You okay?” Tim asked, and Damian nodded, inhaling slowly, deeply.

“You just,” he started, stopping as his body clenched tightly around Tim, and Tim groaned, fingers tightening on Damian’s hips. “You make me feel so good.”

Tim smiled, lifting himself up slightly, holding himself bent as he helped Damian rock his hips, gently. His abs burned with the held position- but god, he wanted to see Damian. Loved all the colors that seemed to bloom in his jade eyes, loved the way his mouth fell open- when he mouthed words Tim didn’t know. Loved every sound he made, the flush on his cheeks-

Loved him, exactly as he was.

Tim helped to lift his hips, keeping Damian’s movements steady. The omega reached down, pressed his hands over Tim’s, forcing his grip tighter as Damian tried to move faster. His body did not want to cooperate with his desires, though, and each lift felt like it was too much, left his muscles and bones rioting-

“Hey,” Tim whispered, squeezing Damian’s hips until he stilled. Damian whined, frustrated, and Tim leaned up more, nuzzled just under his chin. “Shhh, it’s okay. We’ll get you there.” Tim let himself lay back, slowly, sighing when the fire in his stomach finally subsided. He reached for one of Damian’s hands, gently pulling him forward. One hand splayed on the beta’s abs, while another reached up, gripped his shoulder tightly. The new angle let Tim thrust up into Damian, gave Damian support as he pushed back.

He tossed his head back, giving a sharp cry as Tim hit every nerve inside his body, his thighs trembling. Tim smiled, looking up at Damian and holding his stare, until the flush on Damian’s cheeks deepened.

“You’re- ah!” Damian broke off, gasping as Tim pushed deeper into him, left him pushing down against him, his blunt nails digging into Tim’s shoulders. “Staring, Drake.”

“You’re gorgeous,” Tim whispered, for the countless time in his life now, he was sure. “I can’t help it. I just.” He paused, inhaled, lifted his head and ghosted his mouth against Damian’s. “I just love you, Damian.”
The omega smiled, softly, sweetly, and Tim lifted himself slightly, nuzzled against his neck and reached down, managed to grasp at his cock. The stretch wasn’t the most comfortable thing, but he didn’t care. Not when Damian was still clutching at him, when he bucked up into his hand- and he knew Damian was close.

It was shockingly easy to bring Damian off, and Tim had no idea if that was a testament to his own talents, or to Damian’s attraction to him.

Either way, it had his belly in knots.

“You’re so perfect,” Tim whispered into his pulse, rubbing his thumb over the head of his cock. “You’re beautiful in every way.” Damian trembled, and Tim nipped at his throat, dragged his teeth along hot, dark skin. “You’re mine, baby boy. You’re- all- mine.”

Damian shuddered then, gasping out again, and Tim leaned up higher, one arm keeping his balance against the floor as he stroked quickly, driving up harder into Damian.

“Perfect- mine. My perfect darling-” Tim broke off when Damian gave a loud cry, body clutching him so tightly as Damian came, up onto Tim’s abs. Tim shivered, gasping, panted out Damian’s name over and over again, as the omega’s orgasm subsided and Tim could thrust again- drawing out loud cries until his hips were stuttering, then stilling, as he came inside his body, had Damian gripping his shoulder over the liquid fire that seemed to burn him in the most pleasant of ways.

Tim eased himself back down to the floor, panting. Carefully, Damian pushed himself back up, straddling Tim without a hold on him again, tipping his head back slightly and taking a deep breath-

And then, without a word from Tim, laughing. Laughing like Tim always wanted to- like so many people would not have been able to, with all he had gone through.

Tim only smiled, reaching out to rub his thighs. “I love when you laugh,” he whispered, and Damian smiled down at him.

“I’m not sure I have ever laughed as much as I have lately,” he admitted, “You’re to blame.”

“Mm, such a shame. I think I can live with that burden though.” Tim pushed himself up, sitting, wrapping his arms around Damian and pressing them flush together, Damian’s belly tight to his own stomach. He peppered Damian’s neck with small kisses, had the omega squirming, playfully pushing at him with absolutely no intention of driving him away. Tim smiled into his skin, chuckling himself-

It was impossible to not smile, not laugh, when he felt more love in his life than he ever had.

“I can’t believe we did that,” Tim said, splaying his hands on Damian’s back. He pressed his forehead to Damian’s shoulder, biting back at giggle, and the omega simply grinned.

“We could have done it in a worse location,” he offered, and Tim snorted.

“Oh god, I guess.”

“We could have been in the cave.”

“Damian.”

“Timothy.” It was mocking but playful, and Tim laughed so hard, so sharp, that his lungs ached
with it, his ribs feeling tight.

“You’re the worst.”

Damian quirked up a brow. “You know, I vaguely recall you believing I was perfect. Thus, I cannot be the worst.” Tim raised his head, turning and kissing Damian’s warm cheek.

“You’re a spoiled brat,” Tim whispered, “And I swear to god, I just want to make it worse.” Damian hummed his approval reaching up to affectionately stroke Tim’s hair.

“I will never object,” he whispered, pressing his warm lips to Tim’s forehead. “Your attention alone is more than I could hope for, beloved.”

Tim smiled over that, rubbing his hands over Damian’s scars- and deciding he really didn’t feel like there was a rush to move. That for the moment, the two of them could be locked in this sweet little moment- and the world outside them could once again simply dissolve.

*

Tim’s fingers moved over the keyboard, the sound of the Batmobile leaving the cave echoing around him. His mask was next to him, on the counter, as he moved quickly through the security feed, from the city cameras.

Bruce had taken Cassandra and left to reach the city before him. He was simply looking for activity, to guide them, before he left himself- for a shorter patrol, if he was honest.

He’d told Bruce he wasn’t going to leave Damian’s side all night. Nor was he willing to leave the omega waiting up for him, all night. Not now. Not when it took Damian enough time just to get comfortable enough to fall asleep.

Not when Tim worried if he was gone too long, something would happen.

He shifted from camera to camera, checking traffic cameras and security feed from various buildings. Everything seemed quiet, which would be the last thing Tim would complain about.

“You seem to be keeping busy.” Tim turned his head, found that Talia was standing a few feet behind him, watching the screen. Tim turned his chair fully, back to the screen, finding her stare and holding it.

“I was just leaving,” he said, “Just wanted to look the city over, before I got out there. Do you need it?” He jerked his head back, towards the computer, and Talia nodded. She had been keeping tabs on her father since her arrival- to make sure her own absence as a thorn in his side had not yet been noticed. Tim knew she was determined to keep Damian safe- and if her presence at the manor were deemed as endangerment, she would be the first to remove herself from the house.

Until then, however, here she was. Looking at Tim with those steady, focused eyes.

“The city will keep for a moment,” she offered, folding her arms. “Perhaps we can speak, Timothy.”

Tim swallowed, nodded, pushed himself up from the chair. He knew it had to be coming- he hadn’t forgotten their last conversation, alone.

He owed her an explanation. He owed her what he felt were thousands of them.
Tim strode up to her, and she gestured towards the expanse of the cave. “I prefer to move while I talk,” she offered, and Tim nodded, kept in time with her steps as they began to pace the cave. “You owe me words.”

Tim inhaled, slowly. “I don’t know what you want me to say, Talia.”

She glanced at him, from the corner of her pretty eyes. “What I want has changed, greatly. When I first found out about my son, and the child you placed inside him, I wanted to know what the hell he had done to you. I wanted to know what you seemed to think he had done to deserve the pain you were creating for him- to give him not only the suffering of having your child alone, but the gentle reminder everyday of you, when he looked at the child. When he saw you in them.” She glanced away, paused near the stair that led up to the memorial cases. “I wanted to know what hell you thought Damian had brought to your life that you would curse him with eternal suffering, knowing he had had you for a night, and never would again. That he had tasted love and would now die of thirst.”

She leaned back against the railing, reaching up to rake her hands back through her thick, dark curls.

“And now,” she whispered, “I want to know how you ever found my son, and how you ever graced him with the smile I have seen on his face.”

Tim felt his heart, which had been hammering, banging, throwing itself against his ribs suddenly skipping, and then stopping. For a moment, he didn’t have breath. He was dead, a standing shell- And Talia was looking at him with affection in her eyes.

“You saved him,” she whispered.

“We both did,” Tim corrected, “I wouldn’t have been able to escape Ra’s without you, Talia. I’ve owed you a hell of a lot of thanks since I last saw you.”

Talia smiled, small, the slightest curve to her lips. “I do not speak of that. I mean, you have saved Damian from a fate I would never wish upon him.” She glanced away, off into the depths of the cave- and whatever ghosts she was seeing, they were hers, and hers alone. Nothing but shadows to Tim. “I understand the ache he would have felt. My son does not love so freely, Tim. But when Damian loves- it is with his entire being, his very soul. And he has loved you. I could see it, in his eyes, when he came to me. It was not just a spark, not a flame- it was a wildfire, it was catching from his eyes to the very air around him.”

Tim still said nothing, watched as Talia’s eyes continued to dance, and she would not look at him.

“To see that his soul was not extinguished- that you can love him in return. He deserves it.” She turned her head, slowly, inclining it to study Tim. “Damian deserves the entire world. I wanted to give him that, and I failed. Perhaps you will not fail him in the ways I have.”

“You haven’t failed Damian.” Tim took a step closer, hovering then, as if he wasn’t sure he dared to take another. The space around Talia was electric.

“I have failed him in many ways, Tim. I loved him, but I did not always think of him, despite it. We have had many years of uncertainty. I am just… I am happy that he came to me. I am sickened as to what befell him, but I am overjoyed that Damian sought me out, when he felt he had nowhere to go.”

Tim nodded. “He loves you, Talia. You’re his mother. Of course he went to you.”
“I could have been a better mother.” She turned her hands, palm up, as if offering herself, exposing herself. Vulnerability. “I hope to be a better mother, now. I would not be here, if not for my son. It is… not easy, to see my love with another.” She glanced away again- and for a moment, Tim thought maybe he did see something, beyond the shadows.

Maybe he did see her ghosts, in the shapes of herself, of Bruce, of things left in the dark, done under moonlight where no eyes but their own ever bore witness. Of things forgotten and left to molder, to decay.

To live in on sour agony, within Talia’s ribs.

“It is why I am so happy Damian will not experience this. The heartache- it is physical, Tim. It is something you feel in your bones, everyday. Distance allows me to forget- but I do not have the luxury now.” She glanced back. “I have left Damian without my support for too long. I will be here as long as I can be, for whatever he needs. For whatever my grandchild will need.”

This time, Tim really did take the final step. He closed the gap, reached out and took Talia’s hands in his own. “I know it means the world to him,” he offered, “You being here. He loves you- he thinks you are the world. Your approval, Talia… it keeps him from shattering.” Tim glanced down at the hands he held. “You told me he was glass, Talia. You told me not to shatter his heart.”

“And you took my advice.” Tim glanced up, shook his head.

“But not right away. I let him crack. I let those tears run deep. I kept Damian at arm’s length because I was scared of what I wanted. But you asked me for an explanation. And I still owe you one.” Tim took a deep breath. “I can’t tell you how this started. I can’t tell you everything that aligned to have me check on Damian, to have him ask me to say. I don’t know if it was luck or fate or a sign from something, but having him look at me like he wanted me? It was everything I’d ever wanted, and had no idea.” He inhaled, slowly, smelled ghosts of flowers off Talia, a strangely soothing scent. “I would have been a fool to say no. I had no idea… we’d end up here. But knowing now what I do, having seen Damian like I have…” He trailed off for a moment, thought of the way the omega’s face lit up when he laughed, the dancing shimmer in those jade eyes, the sweet way his mouth moved, when he said Tim’s name, “I wouldn’t change a thing. Not a moment. I never want to lose this, to lose him. I love him, Talia.” Tim squeezed her hands again. “He’s not going to feel what you do, about Bruce. I’m not Bruce, and he’s not you. This isn’t your fate, it’s ours.”

Talia was silent, so much so Tim wondered if she even breathed- and then she gently pulled him towards her. Tim fell gently into her, let go of her hands as her arms wound around him, as she leaned her cheek into his hair.

“You, Tim Drake,” she whispered, “Are the spirit my little love deserves.”

“He’s more than I deserve,” Tim whispered, not fighting the embrace. Talia was warm, like Damian- though she smelled so different. The sweetness he found in Damian was Earthy, in her, but subtle for an alpha. Calming- and he didn’t believe she was doing it on purpose. “There’s so much greatness in him, Talia. He’s… he’s unbelievable.”

“I know,” she whispered, stroking her fingers along Tim’s cape. “He amazes me, every day.”

“You were right when you said he can do things none of us can.” Tim closed his eyes, could feel each scar on Damian’s back, under his finger tips. The old and the new- the ghosts and those that still held claws deep in his veins. “He’s amazing.” Tim tipped his head up a Talia lifted her own, found her eyes again- found the origin of Damian’s eyes. “But it doesn’t matter that he’s glass. He can crack, Talia- but Damian can never break. Glass is strong. And Damian? He’s stronger than all
of us.”

She smiled again, soft and pretty and so unlike the fierce creature Tim knew she was. And she leaned down, pressed her lips to his forehead, letting her own eyes fall shut.

“I am so glad you found him,” she whispered, “And I am so glad you see him for who he is, Tim. For the miracle my son will always be.”

Tim smiled, said nothing because he had not a fiber of disagreement in his body. Damian was a miracle- and Tim counted his lucky stars that the miracle was his now.

*

Damian reached up, pushing the book above his head properly back onto the shelf of his father’s library. He swore that somewhere in this mess there was a book on fairy tales. He knew his father had a pension for keeping books on urban mythos and mythology, considering it seemed there was always a character in their lives that liked to utilize such ideals.

Damian simply wanted to glimpse through it. Wanted to grasp at ideas of stories he could tell his child, when it lay awake looking at him. Stories to lull it to sleep, to entertain- to make it love the sound of his voice-

“There you are hot stuff!” Damian jerked back, the new book he was reaching for tumbling down. It crashed against his shoulder, before tumbling to the ground, a few others following. He turned, glaring at the doorway, and Stephanie offered up a sheepish smile. “Uh, sorry. Didn’t mean to startle you. Figured you heard me like, rooms away.”

“-tt- I was in thought,” he reasoned, turning back to the shelf and realizing this one did not hold the book he desired either. He sighed, glancing down at the books on the floor, as Stephanie crossed the room quickly.

“I’ve got ‘em, no worries.” She crouched down, gathering them up into her arms before straightening up. “Don’t even try bending down like you are.”

Damian huffed, hands on his hips. “You all act as if I am huge.”

Stephanie snorted, hopping up and shoving one of the books onto the top shelf. “Oh Dami you’re not. But it’s so awkward, I know. I remember. And you don’t realize things you can’t exactly do that easily until you’re trying to do them.” She shoved the last two books back, before she turned, reached out and placed her hands on either side of his belly. “You’ve still got the cutest belly I’ve ever seen!”

He scowled, but Stephanie only laughed, finding it cute.

“Come downstairs and have some lunch,” she said, “I don’t want to eat alone.”

“I was looking for a book,” he reasoned instead, glancing towards another shelf. Stephanie took one of his hands, gently turning him towards the door.

“Books will wait! You’re eating for two babybat! C’mon now!” She reached behind him, smacked his butt playfully with her free hand, and Damian jumped, staring at her. She only grinned. “I think I see why Tim likes your ass so much.”

“Brown!” She only smiled, leaning into his arm as they moved into the hallway.
“Oh relax, I’m not about to ask for a bit of the action. You’re all his. And I had my chance at Tim-trust me he is *all* yours babybat.” She gave his arm a squeeze before she tugged him towards the stairs, Damian following.

It was easy for him to forget that Tim had ever been with Stephanie. It felt like it was so long ago-and truly, it was. In days before he had even come to the family, when they were young. When Tim was Robin and Stephanie was still Spoiler, and they were only the beginnings of the two Damian knew as his family now.

For a moment, he wondered what it had been like. Was Tim like he was with Stephanie as he was with Damian? Did he tune into a piece far more alpha- did he sink into ways more omega?

Damian realized Tim had been both, in various relationships of sorts- and wondered what Tim preferred. If he did at all. When he was with Damian, it was as if both parts of him were in sync- he claimed Damian in ways like he was all alpha, all hot blood- but there was always a softness to him, always something soothing that did not leave Damian feeling overwhelmed, as if he needed to fight back- that did not leave him unnerved.

Damian wasn’t sure if it was just a disinterest in alphas- or the fact that he had never found anyone sexually appealing, like he did Tim. Had never hosted feelings for anyone else that could cause such an attraction- but regardless, he was thankful for Tim, for the fact that he was what Damian craved and also what he *needed*. That he was alpha and omega, all in one perfectly wrapped, rare package.

Stephanie was talking, he realized, as they reached the end of the stairs, babbling about lunch, and Damian tried to tune in, as she pulled him down the hallway- but not towards the kitchen or the dinning room. Instead she detoured, into one of the large parlors, stepping in and turning, grabbing both of Damian’s hands and tugging him inside-

“Surprise!”

The chorus of voices rose up, and Damian froze, looking around the room. “What is-”

“I know you *said* no baby shower,” Stephanie offered, pulling him another step into the room, “But well… fuck if I was listening to that! It’s nothing big but-”

“We had to celebrate!” Dick, pushing up from a chair across the room and hurrying across it, around Stephanie, to get his arms around Damian. Damian melted against him instantly, pressing his face to the alpha’s chest and inhaling, snuggling in close. With the chaos of Dick’s life, Damian had seen so little of him, and his sudden appearance was enough to have him grinning.

Stephanie smiled at them, folding her arms. “Jason wanted to be here,” she reasoned, “but he just couldn’t get away. You know. We can Skype him in a bit though.” She grinned, “But for now c’mon, sit down, we have presents for you!” She grabbed Dick’s arm, tugging him so that he would let go of Damian, step back. She took Damian’s hand, had him sit down on one of the couches, next to Cassandra, who was smiling at him. The only other two in the room were Alfred and Wally- both offering up warm smiles to Damian.

“But why?” he asked, as Stephanie circled the room, grabbing a bag and turning quickly to drop it in his lap.

“Because you are having a goddamn baby and we’re all excited!” She threw her arms out, staring at him. “I don’t get how you don’t get that, babybat. You’re having your own little bird-bat baby. And we want to spoil it. Now.” She gestured towards the bag. “Open that.”
Damian rolled his eyes but smiled, plucking at the issue paper. There were far more than just a few gifts, he realized, a Stephanie kept pushing them onto his lap. Though he could admit, he was thrilled to open a book of childhood rhymes and fairy tales from Stephanie- which nullified his entire hunt through his father’s library-

Various toys, books- things he and Tim had not purchased much of yet. Silly clothing that actually had him laughing- onesies with phrases on them that were ridiculous but he could not help but smile over.

And one patterned like the original Robin suit, which Stephanie said had been Dick’s idea. The alpha had grinned over that, leaning into his mate’s side- Wally sitting on the arm of the chair.

“I felt it was fitting,” Dick pointed out, as Stephanie dropped another little box on Damian’s lap and he began opening it, watching Dick. “You know, since you both-”

“Oh, I quite get it,” Damian said, smiling. Approving. He lifted the lid on the box, glanced down- and snorted, covering his mouth. “Did father set someone up to this?” As if the Robin onesie wasn’t enough, one sporting the Bat symbol now sat in his lap.

“Nah, that was all me.” Wally grinned, tossing his arm around Dick’s shoulders. “Figured your dad put a damn bat on everything, there oughta be one on his grandkid.”

Damian laughed, tipping his head back and holding it against his chest. Next to him Cassandra leaned over, hugged his arm sweetly. When he managed to compose himself, she was smiling-

In fact, the entire room was smiling. And it was so different, suddenly, from when they had first realized Damian was pregnant. When there had been so much concern for him- when Dick had been angry.

And he was smiling, smiling at Damian- and it made his heart doing things that left him pleasantly dizzy.

He was still reeling in it, when the front door to the manor opened and he heard rushing footsteps- then a set behind, slower- and suddenly Tim was bursting into the room, hair wind blown from the air outside, his tie bunched up beneath the jacket of his suit.

“Sorry, sorry,” he said, glancing around the room, “traffic is hell today.”

“Drake?” Damian furrowed his brow. “Did you and father not have meetings today?” Tim grinned at him, walking into the room and leaning over, kissing his lips softly.

“Uh-huh,” he said, standing back and popping the button of his tailored suit jacket. “And we cancelled them all. We wouldn’t have even left, but we wanted it to be a surprise, and well,” he looked back at the doorway as Bruce suddenly appeared, supporting a cake with both arms. “We had to pick something up.”

“I told them I could have baked,” Alfred pointed out, shooting Bruce and Tim a look, but Stephanie was waving them off.

“Yeah, yeah, we know. But you don’t have to do everything.” She turned back to Damian. “Now c’mon, you get first dibs on the cake- but I am so claiming second!”

* 

The afternoon waned to evening, and the focus shifted from Damian to just general family catching
up. He didn’t mind—indeed, he welcomed it. He did excuse himself when Dick and Tim began talking about Bludhaven, and the subject became work.

Not that he wasn’t interested, but it was a conversation not completely meant for him. Besides, he had the excuse that he needed to try and get everything up to the baby’s room. He was gathering up bags when, very quickly, someone was suddenly next to him, picking things up.

“Lemme help you out kid.” Wally smiled at him, and Damian only nodded. When his arms were fairly full, he headed for the stairs, the speedster keeping in step with him. He led Wally into the nursery, heading for the dresser and setting the bags down, where he had collected the majority of the clothing he’d been given. He opened one of the drawers—and realized what a good thing it really was. He and Tim had purchased the bare minimum for clothing.

Wally set the boxes down he was holding, glancing around the room. Damian heard him whistle.

“You guys did a good job.”

Damian smiled, folding one of the onesies and settling it in the drawer. “Thank you. Drake… did most of the work.” He added another to the drawer as Wally said,

“He actually painted a wall polka dot?”

Damian laughed. “That was a… thrilling adventure.” He thought back to Tim cursing, to the stencils he had taped up like a second wall falling on him. But he’d succeeded in the end—Damian could admit, it was cute. It made the room very charming. “He was very adamant about it.”

“He’s invested. That’s good.” Wally stuffed his hands into his pockets, walking around the room, slowly. Glancing at the crib—and oh, that had been an adventure putting together—every piece of furniture, every picture on the walls—even the gauzy curtains, hanging over the large window.

Damian closed the drawer when he was done, turning and watching Wally, a hand going to his belly.

“You two are lucky,” Wally said, standing by the curtains. “I know you guy didn’t plan this but…it’s a good thing, I think. From what I’ve seen, and Dick’s said.” Wally glanced back at him, smiled. “You two are going to be so happy.”

Damian said nothing for a moment. He knew this wasn’t easy for the other omega to say. Knew that, somewhere inside him, he wished it was him. Knew that Wally harbored guilt, over he and Dick’s lack of a child. Misplaced guilt, but still guilt.

“We’re already happy,” Damian offered, walking towards him. “We’ll just be… happier.” He reached out, gently rubbed Wally’s arm. “But thank you. Thank you for coming. I know Dick prefers it when you are here.”

Wally’s smile was sad, but it was there. “Wouldn’t dream of being anywhere else. We never really got to do this for Jason, and that killed Dick. He’s thrilled he gets to celebrate you adding to the family.”

“Still. Thank you.” The I know it’s not easy was left silent, but there. Damian didn’t need to say it, and Wally didn’t need to hear it. It was simply understood.

Wally only acknowledged it with a small nod, before, “We should head back downstairs. You’ll be missed pretty fast.”
“So will you,” Damian said, as they headed for the door, “if Grayson can stop talking for a single moment of his laugh.”

Wally laughed, covering his mouth- and that, it was real.

* 

“It’s a shame you couldn't be here!” Stephanie, speaking far louder than was needed, looking at the laptop they had set up on the dinning room table. On the screen, Jason smiled at her.

“Yeah well, I’m there in spirit.”

“You missed cake little wing,” Dick teased, holding up his plate, and Jason scoffed, dramatically placing his hand to his chest.

“No! I will be on a plane in five minutes!” The moment he said it there was suddenly a very loud dada no! before a blur was moving in the screen, a child sprawling up on Jason’s lap. The entire room laughed, Damian leaned his chin onto his palm where he sat, center of them all, as Jason fussed with one of his younger, tugging the girl up properly so she could wave at the screen. Her ginger hair was all over the place, and before she could speak Lian was leaning into the camera, grabbing her sister and tugging her away- babbling something about not being done yet.

“Seems like it’s a zoo over there,” Tim offered, his arm draped over the back of Damian’s chair.

“Just the usual.” He shrugged a shoulder. “Trying to keep everyone in one piece until bed time.”

“Where’s Roy?” Stephanie asked.

“Workshop. You know, making something big.”

“Jayjay, can we watch a movie now? You said daddy would come up for a movie.” Lian had her arms folded, could just be seen at the corner of the screen. Jason turned to her, smiling.

“Sure thing princess. Why don’t you go drag his butt up here. Just remember be careful down there- don’t touch anything Lian.” The girl waved her hand, disappearing off screen, and Dick broke in,

“I can’t believe how big she is.” There was a round of nods. Lian was twelve, plenty older than her siblings, and showed promise to be rather tall, if she kept growing the way she had been.

“Don’t remind me,” Jason groaned, shaking his head. “They grow up to fast.” He focused on Damian, smiling. “You’ll see soon enough.”

“My kid’s not even born yet,” Tim offered, leaning in and grinning at Jason, “Don’t jump the gun Jaybird.” There was a round of chuckles, a few more minutes of sweet conversation, before Jason left to go spend the evening with his family.

It served as the catalyst for the night to begin- Dick and Wally left, after the alpha gathered Damian up into his arms and showed promise of never letting go. Cassandra and Stephanie made their way down to the cave to prepare for patrol- Bruce heading down with them, only to check on Talia, who had gone out earlier that day.

Damian would have liked for his mother to be there, but she was following a lead on information
about her father, and he knew better than to ask her to ignore that. After all, she was only there as long as she could keep herself invisible to him, and he would take her missing this silly family moment in order to there when the baby was born.

The notion that that was soon left Damian’s head reeling.

Alfred stayed behind to clean up— and despite Tim insisting he could help, the two were shooed off for the evening. Damian had no objections when Tim took his hand, leading him upstairs, towards their room. He was tired- he felt like he was always tired lately. Like he had been when his suppressants had been too strong- except with this, at least, he knew it wouldn’t last.

And that the outcome would be worth it.

“How are you feeling?” Tim asked, as he shut the door. Damian reached behind himself, rubbing the small of his back, frowning.

“Sore,” he admitted, “Tired.” Tim nodded, taking the two steps to him and kissing his cheek gently.

“How about we get you relaxed and get some real sleep tonight? Go to bed early and everything.” Damian quirked up a brow, folding his arms.

“You, sleeping early? Who are you? Where has Tim gone?” Tim laughed, gently wrapping his arms around Damian, leaning in to kiss his neck sweetly, humming into his skin.

“I like when you say my name,” he admitted, as Damian eased his hands along Tim’s waist, to gently grasp at his shirt. He smiled, tilting his head as Tim continued with the soft, silken kisses. And silently, Damian rolled it over his tongue again. Because if he was honest, he liked saying it.

“But really,” Tim finally whispered, forcing himself to pull back. “Let’s get you relaxed baby boy.” Damian shivered, couldn’t help it— every pet name, every bit of affection, everything Tim showed him made him feel so alive, like his skin was buzzing, his blood was rushing through his veins.

He never knew one person could affect him like this.

“I’m gonna run you a bath,” Tim decided, pulling away from Damian, “that’ll help.”

“You do not need to,” Damian said, but Tim was already walking away, heading for the bathroom. Damian heard the water running, and folded his arms, trying to think of the last time he had even used the tub. It simply wasn’t practical- a shower saved time and seemed a far better choice if the purpose was to get clean.

But something about the idea was oddly appealing.

Tim appeared a minute later. “I’ll be right back,” he said, hurrying for the door. Damian shook his head as his boyfriend rushed out, walking into the bathroom. He leaned over, carefully dragging his fingers through the warm water as the tub continued to fill, felt the baby suddenly moving.

He straightened up, laughing to himself and resting his other hand on his belly. “Hush habibi,” he whispered, “I cannot tell if you are excited about this prospect, or if you miss your father.”

Damian had noticed recently that when Tim left him and returned to him, the baby would act up. He wasn’t sure if perhaps he was simply noticing it more— or if it truly knew when Tim was not
there. If it could miss him, already.

Or if somehow, the child knew when Damian missed him. Which was every moment, if the omega was honest. Every moment he was not there.

Damian bent over again, turning the water off, just as Tim walked back in. “Babe, I’ve got that,” he said, and Damian glanced over at him, rolling his eyes.

“I believe I can handle a faucet,” Damian offered, glancing at the various bottles in Tim’s arms. “What are those?”

“From Steph’s room. Trust me she won’t mind. I used to steal her stuff all the time when I needed to relax.” He set them down on the sink, popping one bottle open and offering it to Damian. “You have to like how it smells or honestly this won’t be nearly so enjoyable.”

Damian straightened up and rolled his eyes, but took the bottle, inhaling softly. It was soothing, familiar to him- lilacs, like his mother’s hair. He passed it back to Tim, shrugging a shoulder, but the tiny smile on his face, he knew it must have given him away. Because Tim only smiled back, before leaning over the tube with the bottle, letting some of the oil slid out into the water.

“I didn’t think you’d want bubbles,” he admitted, “As cute as that would be.”

Damian smacked him playfully. “You are ridiculous.”

“Maybe,” Tim admitted, setting the bottle aside. “But you love it.”

And Damian smiled. Because he did- oh, how he did.

He stripped, and with Tim’s help, climbed carefully into the tub. The water was so warm it made him shiver, once- and he leaned against the back, sighing as he left his eyes fall shut. It smelled so strongly of lilacs it was as if he was a child, and his mother was holding him, rocking him on a sleepless night, with his face buried in her hair.

He didn’t open his eyes as he heard Tim moving, dropping down onto his knees behind Damian’s head. The beta reached out, sleeves rolled up, and eased his hands along Damian’s shoulders, rubbing gently. Damian gave a small moan, tilting his head to one side as Tim leaned over his shoulder, eased his hands down his arms, gently rubbing over his skin.

He loved when Tim touched him, in any way. Even the barest of caresses was enough to have him sinking into comfort or fire, depending on the circumstances.

In this moment, he was sure he was no different from the water around him.

“I do not know how you do it,” he mumbled, as Tim’s wet fingers moved up into his hair now, hot against his scalp and making him nearly purr.

“Do what, hun?” He ran his fingers through his hair again, and Damian exhaled slowly.

“That. You feel good, no matter how you touch me.” Tim chuckled, quiet, the subtlest vibrations from his touch, before he was kissing the top of Damian’s head.

“Maybe I was just made for you.”

Damian felt his heart flutter, and he reached up, tipped his head back and sank his wet fingers into Tim’s hair. The beta didn’t fight when he was pulled down for a kiss, leaning over Damian and
smiling against his mouth as it moved slowly. Lazily. Sweetly.

“I love you,” Damian whispered, felt like he had said it a thousand times- and yet, like this was the first. He wondered if this feeling would ever stop-

He hoped not.

He hoped he always felt like his body was a cage for endless winged creatures, when he was around Tim. That his blood was alive humming with warm static. That his skin always begged for even the barest of touches.

He had never experienced this before, in his life. He never wanted to, with anyone else, except Tim. He wanted this to be forever, to be his end-all. And as Tim continued to kiss him slowly, as if knowing exactly the sort of contact Damian wanted, the sort of affection he needed, he believed it truly could be.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

If there had ever been a sign that life could truly work out, Damian and Tim could both agree— it was a pair of dark jade eyes and the promise that despite everything they had endured, there was some good to come of their agony.

Chapter Notes

Because I’m sure someone will ask, if you’re curious here’s a little diagram regarding male omega anatomy.

“I could have gotten that for you,” Stephanie pointed out, as Damian shifted about the kitchen. “You could be sitting down.”

“I cannot get comfortable,” Damian said, frowning. “I haven’t been comfortable for a week. I would rather move than fidget on a couch for hours.” He reached up towards his tea stash, grimacing over the pain in his lower back, pressure and hot needles— until Stephanie reached out, rubbing it gently.

“I know,” she soothed, her touch firm enough that it helped to ease the pain. “I know you’re miserable. Kinda the time for it. I remember.” Damian sighed, glancing down at his belly, wincing again. He had been cramping since early morning, and his back had ached for two days now—

He felt like he wanted the bones removed from his body. It was infuriating, the never ending ache—

His thoughts cut off when his stomach seized up, and he nearly knocked over what he was reaching for as he pulled his arm back, wrapping them around himself. He cursed, silently, and Stephanie jerked closer, hovering around him.

“Damian? Dami? Honey, talk to me.” Her hand was still on his lower back, but he could barely feel it. His groaned, trying to focus on his breathing— but the air was caught in his lungs, and only when the pain subsided could he exhale in a rush, inhaling sharply as his head spun.

“I’m fine,” he offered, waving his hand, but Stephanie was frowning.

“Maybe,” she started, pulling her hand from his back, reaching for his hand. “Maybe we should take you to the hospital. You said you’ve been hurting all morning, they might be minor contractions.”

“I am fine,” he stressed again, but, as if to appease Stephanie, “Maybe I will go sit down.”

“Okay,” she agreed. “I’ll make you the tea. Want a hand?” He shook his head, pulling away gently and walking, far slower than he would have liked, out of the room.

He felt more uncomfortable than he had ever, in his life. The subtle aches, and then the sharp pains
when they came, the inability to get comfortable. Even with Tim in bed he found he tossed most of
the night, slept moments here and there, but mostly he stared up at the dark, felt the baby moving
restlessly. Stephanie had commented that over the past week she swore the baby had *dropped*, as
she put it- standing lower in his stomach, which made everything all the more frustrating, even
moving-

Damian was just settling down onto the couch when the cramps came again. He gasped, gripped at
the arm of the chair tightly, his knuckles going white. He tried to breathe again, got a breath in, but
let it rush out too quickly, and sucking a second in burned.

He had a better pain tolerance than this, he kept trying to tell himself- but it didn’t seem to matter.
His other hand pressed to his stomach, trying to will the pain away- and it was just subsiding, when
Stephanie walked in,

“I wasn’t sure, did you want that pomegranate tea Alfred picked up or-” she paused, frowning, and
Damian glanced over at her.

“I’m fine,” he said again, before she could say anything. But she shook her head.

“That was like, four minutes Damian. How long did it hurt for?”

He shrugged a shoulder. “Thirty seconds?” She hummed.

“Forty-five to sixty seconds is usually the contraction length when it’s hospital time, but I think
you are close enough. C’mon, we’re going to the car.”

Damian wanted to shake his head, and started to- but she had his hands, was helping to pull him up.
And god, maybe it was happening.

No, no it wasn’t.

“It’s a waste of time,” Damian pointed out. “It’s not- I’m not-”

“Damian,” Stephanie said, staring him directly in the eyes. “You’re having a baby today. Now,
c’mon. I’m gonna get you in the car. Where’s Alfred? He can grab your bag, we’ll get you to the
city-”

“But,” Damian started, as Stephanie steered him towards the door, calling for Alfred as they
walked. “Tim is-”

“Going to get a phone call on the way,” Stephanie said, pressing her hand against the small of his
back and guiding him towards the door as Alfred appeared. She smiled at him. “Alfie, can you
grab Damian’s over-night bag? I think we’re going on a little sleepover.”

“Certainly Miss Brown,” Alfred said, glancing at Damian- and smiling, excitement showing in his
face. He was off, towards the stairs- faster than Stephanie or Damian had seen him move in *years*,
as Stephanie opened the door. It was early April, the air was warm enough that she didn’t bother
with a coat, or helping Damian with one, just kept guiding him towards her car.

“But what if-” Damian started, as she opened the door.

“Hold all the *what ifs*. I’m gonna call Timmy and he’s going to meet us there, just like we all
agreed. We’ve talked about this Damian. You’re not doing it alone.” She squeezed his hand as he
settled into the car, the door shutting as she rushed away, back towards the house.
And the thing was, she wasn’t lying. They’d all discussed it, with how close Damian was to his projected due date- but that was next week, he thought maybe he had a few more days, at least-

He winced, the pain picking up again, and dropped his head back, gritting his teeth and riding it out. Stephanie had been more than happy to stay with him, during the days, while Tim was in Gotham with Bruce. And the nights, Tim stayed home- had given up patrol completely for the time being.

Damian was never alone, at least, never without someone in reach. And he knew that Tim kept his phone on him and turned up very loud, should anything happen and he wasn’t there-

But there was a fear in him, still. A fear of doing this alone. The pain he wasn’t worried about- although he was beginning to second guess that lack-of-worry- but the idea of simply not having Tim there, of doing this alone, of hearing his baby cry and not having Tim smiling with him-

He shut those fears up. Shut them up even though it was one of the hardest things he had ever done. Tim loved him. Tim would be there.

Stephanie was rushing back, opening her door and tossing Damian’s bag into the back, over her seat. When she dropped in, she was still holding her phone.

“He very well might beat us there,” she pointed out, dropping her phone and starting her car. Damian smiled at that, letting his eyes fall shut as he worked through the end of the contraction. “And once I know he’s there with you, I’ll leave, just like we agreed.”

Damian nodded. He hadn’t wanted to sound ungrateful for the help- but if he was honest, he didn’t want his entire family there. Not right away, anyway. And he had been blatant about that, when they had discussed everything. He loved them, he did, but this was for he and Tim. He didn’t want Stephanie to stay, or either of his parents to be haunting the hospital hallways, waiting for a chance to see him and the baby.

He wanted his moment with his child, with Tim, with their family, before he let the rest of them in.

“Thank you,” Damian whispered, as Stephanie sped the car up. She slit his eyes open, looked up through his lashes, and she was smiling, pretty and happy and excited.

Not a hint of fear. Damian wanted to leech that from her, wanted to be like her, in that moment.

“Don’t thank me hot stuff,” she offered, glancing back at the road. “Just keep that baby in until we’ve got you all situated and Timmy’s there for you to scream at. Oh- and make sure your baby doesn’t forget I’m their favorite aunt.”

Damian laughed. God, despite the fear, he laughed.

* 

Stephanie made it to the hospital a little too fast, but Damian was impressed. She tried to help him out of the car, but he insisted on doing it himself. She carried his bag, walking with him inside- and Damian felt silly, for a moment. Despite the general aches he’d boasted, he felt alright, in that moment, and maybe he just needed to go home-

“Hi,” Stephanie said, smiling at the woman at the desk, “My uhm,” she paused, licked her lips, “My brother here, I think he’s in labor.”

Oh, Damian definitely felt silly.
The nurse looked at him, smiled. “Okay, we’ll get him into a room. Name?” Stephanie continued to answer the questions, and Damian fidgeted, glancing around. Stephanie had claimed she thought Tim would beat them there, but he didn’t see him.

Damian sucked on his tongue, drowning when a wheel chair was brought out. He lifted his hand, shaking his head. “No, really, I can—” he broke off as another wave of pain hit him, his insides contracting so tightly he felt dizzy. Stephanie was there, grabbing his arm and keeping him steady as he leaned against her, letting out a low whine- but biting back the rest of the noises, biting back reacting to the pain.

“Damian,” she said sternly, when his breathing began to even out. “Get in the damn chair.”

He didn’t argue her a second time.

Stephanie passed off Damian’s bag to a nurse, gave his hand a squeeze and told him she could bring Tim up the moment he was there. The nurse gave her the room number, and Stephanie thanked her, before giving Damian a final smile and telling him, “Keep that baby in there a little longer- Tim would never forgive himself if he missed this.”

Damian nodded, pressing his hands to his belly. He felt almost nauseous, as he was wheeled towards an elevator, taken up to a different floor. Sick because he was alone now-

He almost wished Stephanie had stayed with him.

The nurse wheeled him into a room, settled his bag by a chair and helped him up, onto the bed. “You sit tight,” she offered, “I’m just going to get you a gown and check on the status of the doctor. I’ll be right back.” She gave him a warm smile, before hurrying out of the room.

Leaving him alone.

And it seemed like the moment she was gone he was cramping again. He hissed, squeezed his eyes shut and let himself admit that it fucking hurt, because there was no one else there. No one to think he couldn’t handle this.

“Hush,” he tried to whisper, but it came out strained. His hands pressed to his belly, as if he could soothe the child in him. He murmured a curse in Arabic, and then, “Please, please. Not until your father is here.”

Each passing second filled Damian with coiling dread that Tim wouldn’t be there, wouldn’t get there in time, wouldn’t-

“No, no it absolutely was not happening yet, not if Damian had anything to say about it-

But he didn’t. He let her help him into the gown, hating it already and wishing he could pull something up over his legs. Instead all he could do was drop his head back, close his eyes and try to remember to breathe.

It felt like agonizingly long minutes before the nurse, who left him again briefly, came in with the doctor. Not Damian’s regular doctor- was much as he wanted her, she had been unavailable for the entire month, and he had had to accept that someone else would be touching him, would be guiding him through this.
“Hello there,” the man said, offering up a smile. Older, fifties perhaps? Damian wasn’t sure he could properly judge. “How are you feeling?”

“Terrible,” Damian admitted, and the doctor nodded, walking over and sett his clipboard aside. He gave his hands a thorough scrub before pulling on gloves, heading to the foot of Damian’s bed.

“That could be a good sign,” he offered, “Can I take a look?” Damian appreciated that he asked and nodded, guided his legs apart as he was instructed. He hated the feeling of the gloved hands on him- but he hadn’t enjoyed that during his appointments, either. The doctor hummed, as Damian stared up at the ceiling, counting the seconds between his breaths. “Your birth canal is definitely open,” he said, “You’re pretty far dilated. We’re too far along for an epidural. We’ll just try to make this quick, okay?”

Too far- “How far?” Damian asked, and the man stood back up.

“You’re a good 7 cm dilated. We’re about ready to get this show on the road. Do you have someone here with you?”

Yes. No. “He’s not here yet,” Damian said, trying to keep his voice from sounding frantic. But it wavered, and he knew his panic was seeping in. “We can’t- I can’t. Not without him-”

“But baby boy, you can do anything.” Damian jerked his head towards the door, felt his heart lurching in his chest as Tim rushed in, right up to his side, reaching for his hand. He was smiling at Damian, the sleeves of his button down and sweater rolled up so that when Damian clutched at his hand, dragged his fingers along his wrist, all he felt was skin. Was Tim’s heat.

“Tim.” His name felt like a prayer, on Damian’s tongue, and the beta leaned over, kissed his forehead.

“I’m right here,” he whispered. “I’m sorry.” He glanced over at the doctor, keeping his smile steady. “I’m here with him. Are we-”

“Pretty soon,” the doctor admitted. “He’s got to dilate a little more. But not much. I’m going to check on another patient, and then I’ll check back in. If anything becomes severe, alert the nurses and I will come running. And see if you can time your contractions.” Damian nodded as the man hurried from the room, nurse in tow, leaving the two alone.

“I’m so sorry,” Tim whispered, turning so he could brush Damian’s hair back. “I got Stephanie’s call and I left, but there was an accident, and traffic- I was about to ditch my car and run here.”

Damian would have laughed, if the pain wasn’t flaring up again. He winced, and Tim dug into his pocket, pulling out his phone.

“Tell me when it’s over,” he offered, “I’ll time the spaces between them. And squeeze my hand.” Tim gave Damian’s hand a little squeeze. “Break my bones if you need to babybat. I’ll heal.”

Damian sucked on his tongue, didn’t say anything as the pain felt sharper, had him giving a little grunt. He did, however, gently squeeze Tim’s hand, feeling a bit of tension ease from him at the pressure, the contact. He breathed through it, until it felt faint enough that he thought it was done. He gave a nod, and Tim started the timer, setting the phone on the bed and reaching out to stroke Damian’s cheek again.

“Stephanie wanted me to tell you she believes in you,” he said, smiling at Damian- and that smile,
it made the nausea in him begin to give. The terror easing, because Tim was there—because Damian wasn’t doing this alone. “And that now that I’m here to get it over quick, because she wants to meet the baby.”

Damian finally did laugh—but it made him wince. He inhaled slowly, easing the cramp, and Tim was kissing his temple now.

“I do too,” he admitted, giving Damian’s hand a squeeze. “After all this waiting, Damian. After…everything.” He sighed, nuzzling his hair. “We get to meet our baby.”

Damian smiled over that, and for the first time that day, felt a bit of elation building in him. Tim was right.

His smile cut off as the pain hit, and Tim reached for his phone, hitting the timer. “Not even three minutes,” he whispered, as Damian squeezed his hand. “You’re okay Damian. I’m here. I’ve got you. Breathe through it.”

Damian tried, managed—but felt like they were stronger, like the pain was overwhelming him. Despite all he had endured, despite his training, his conditioning, this was still unlike everything.

It continued—a rhythm of him clutching at Tim’s hand and breathing through the pain, of Tim’s hand stroking his hair back, of the sweet names he whispered to him, told Damian he was alright—

Until it felt like too much, until Damian had to tip his head back, and Tim was trying to pull away. “I’m getting the doctor,” he reasoned—but Damian clutched his hand tighter.

“Do not,” he managed, before wincing. “Do not leave me, Drake. Please, do not—”

“I’m not,” Tim reassured him, flipping Damian’s hand so his thumb could stroke one of the scars on his palm. “I promise baby boy. But I’ve got to let the doctor know—”

“Know what?” The voice came from the doorway, as thankfully the doctor came back in, heading to scrub up and glove up for the second time. “How are we doing?”

“He’s in a lot of pain,” Tim said, as the doctor settled back in at the foot of the bed, adjusting Damian’s gown. He nodded, before he gave Damian’s thigh a very gentle pat.

“Seems so. He’s fully dilated—”

“Already?” Tim sounded shocked, and Damian tried to think back to what his doctor had told him about this process—but his mind was clouded, and all he could do was clutch at Tim’s hand.

“Your partner has probably been having contractions all day,” the doctor reasoned, “he seems like he has quite the pain tolerance. And some just have a quick labor. Now,” he turned to look directly at Damian. “I want you to take a deep breath, and I’m going to tell you to push. We’re going to count to ten, and at ten, you can stop, okay?”

Damian nodded, inhaling slowly, squeezing Tim’s hand as he pushed. He gasped, the pain spiking, and Tim was squeezing back, standing so close it was as if he was going to crawl onto the bed with Tim. “You’ve got this Damian,” he said, as Damian felt heat rising in his cheeks. “You’re okay. I promise.”

“Ten.” Damian stopped, inhaled sharply, giving a little whine. Tim pressed his other hand over Damian’s, sandwiching it between both of his as the omega shook, felt his insides were tearing, searing. “Another deep breath.” Damian inhaled again, pushed at the doctor’s command—felt sweat
on his back, over old and fresher scars, felt his teeth digging into the inside of his cheek as he let out another little whine- still trying to internalize the pain.

“Damian,” Tim whispered, “It’s okay to admit it hurts. God you don’t need to prove yourself.” Tim squeezed his hand, as Damian let his breath rush out, stopping again. His fingers were trembling in Tim’s grasp, as the doctor motioned for the nurse to move closer. She was holding a large towel, and stepped closer.

“Another good push, Damian,” the doctor said, “ready?” Damian inhaled, nodded- and when he pushed this time, he gave a loud, pained groan, squeezing Tim’s hand.

He could almost feel something from Tim, something in his chest, in his head. A mingling of comfort, of Tim trying to soothe him- and his own ache, his own apprehension.

Damian wasn’t entirely sure how he felt it, how he knew- but he did.

“Keep going Damian,” Tim murmured, squeezing his hand. Damian returned the motion, giving a little cry and wincing, squeezing harder. He missed Tim’s own grimace over the ache in his hand- but the beta never said a word.

“Let’s go again,” the doctor said, just as Damian sucked in a breath, trying to calm him. “You’re almost there.”

Damian whined, but squeezed Tim’s hand again, not even waiting for the doctor to begin to count. A few seconds in, and he gave a loud shout- the scream he wanted to give stuck in his throat, caught, and he was blinded for a moment, felt like his every nerve was alight, was burning him up until he was nothing but aching ash and dust-

And then there was a sudden, sharp cry. Not his own. Damian tried to sit higher, but winced- couldn’t, and fell back against the pillows piles behind him, as the cry came again. He glanced over at Tim-

But Tim was staring. Staring away with wide, crystalline eyes- his mouth parted in awe. Like he was looking at something unreal, like a myth, coming to life.

And then there was a gentle weight on Damian’s belly, stretching up to his ribs. He heard the doctor, in the background, congratulating him-

But all he saw, all he registered, were the dark eyes look up at him. The nurse was placing a towel very gently over the baby, to keep it warm- but she moved, when Damian reached down, ghosted his finger tips over its head. There was the finest dark hair there, just enough to plaster to its head.

He felt his eyes aching. He felt his chest expanding, everything inside him swelling-

“She looks healthy,” the doctor said with a smile, as the nurse reached out again, carefully turning her to began wrapping her in the blanket. She gave a wail, and the doctor chuckled. “We like to hear that. Now,” he turned to Tim, who, like Damian, was still simply staring. “Would you like to cut her umbilical chord?”

Tim swallowed thickly, and Damian released his hand, nodding for him. He took the few steps down the bed, hands shaking as the doctor guided him. Damian barely noticed- not until the nurse was lifting the baby, fishing swaddling her, and then leaning over Damian, offering her to him.

“Feel up to it?” she asked. “It’s okay if you don’t. Plenty of people are too tired after.”
“No, I-” Damian started, before the words caught, choked, dissolved. He opened his mouth again, but nothing came out- and all he could do was nod. The nurse kept her smile, gently settling the baby in his arms-

And the moment she pulled away, the moment Damian realized the full weight in his arms was his baby, was the child he had held inside him so long, that he could have died for- that shouldn’t have even been given the chance to exist-

The moment it happened, the wetness in his eyes was rolling down his cheeks. He clutched her close, felt a hand on his shoulder, Tim leaning over him, kissing his temple, peering at the baby in his arms as she squirmed slightly, before settling down.

“Damian,” he breathed, and there was awe in his voice- there was the realization of something so unbelievable-

They had done it. Against everything, against the odds of conception alone, against Ra’s and what he had wanted for the baby, for the both of them- against the personal fears, they had done it.

They had a baby, snuggled into Damian’s arms.

Tim dared to reach out, to touch the top of her head, the fine dark hair there, before the nurse was reaching out.

“We just have to check a few things,” she offered, “A couple times over the next few minutes. You’ll have her right back.” Damian nodded, let the nurse take the baby from his arms, taking her over to a table to examine. The doctor had since left, leaving for a moment just Tim, right by Damian’s side.

Right where he had promised to be.

“I’m so proud of you,” Tim said, taking Damian’s hand again, lifting it to kiss his knuckles. “So, so proud.” He turned it, kissed the scar on his palm, his lips quivering. Damian inhaled slowly, turning as the nurse came back, only pulling away so he could take his daughter back in his arms.

“I’m going to give you two a minute,” she said, “I’ll be back in about five for another round of tests.” She gave them a nod, collecting Damian’s chart and a few other things off a table, and heading out.

Tim sat down on the edge of the bed, turning so he could look at Damian as he held the baby. Damian glanced at him, before looking back down at her. Her eyes were closed now, and she seemed calm- content in his arms, nestled close to his body heat.

“She’s beautiful,” Tim whispered, and then, his grin growing, “Oh my god, she. I have a daughter. We have a daughter.” Damian glanced up at him, watched as Tim reached up, wiped at the corner of his eye.

Damian hadn’t bothered with his own tears. For once, he didn’t feel the urge to hide them. “Beloved?” he whispered, and Tim leaned over the baby, kissed his forehead, the bridge of his nose- the tip of it.

“I love you,” Tim whispered, his lips trembling. He pressed his forehead to Damian’s, took a shaky breath. “I love you so much, Damian. You’re the best thing to ever happen to me.”

Damian felt his chest clenching tightly, his heart thumping painfully. He pulled his baby closer, and Tim glanced down, adding,
“You’ve given me the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. You’ve given me the world.” He kissed Damian, softly, quickly, before pulling back. Damian inhaled, trying to steady himself, could feel a tremble building in him.

“Do you,” he started, then paused, licked his lips, changed his mind, “Will you hold her?” Tim nodded, before Damian was even done, reaching out and gently cradling his arms beneath the baby. He lifted her from Damian’s hold, pulling her to his own chest to cradle her, smiling down at her.

Damian knotted his fingers together, worrying his hands and he tried to keep his breathing steady. It was so much- he could barely sort out everything he was feeling, the excitement and the rush of affection and the love and just-

He was sobbing, before he even realized it.

“Damian,” Tim soothed, sliding closer and leaning over. He rested his shoulder against Damian’s chest, his head on Damian’s shoulder as he shifted the baby, keeping her close. He couldn’t hold Damian, with his arms full- but Damian appreciated the touch, the connection- the closeness of it all.

He could smell Tim soothing him, pheromones like crackling fire, burning wood and smoke and sugar, and he was relaxing, the sobs still silent. “I just cannot believe this is real,” he admitted, and Tim smiled.

“I know,” he whispered, “I can’t either.” He sat up slowly, the baby making a little noise, before giving a tiny grumble, turning her face towards Tim’s chest. Damian inhaled slowly, watching as Tim bowed his head to watch her- watched the way his eyes lit up, the smile on his face. After a moment, Tim quietly said, “We have to name her.” He glanced up, towards Damian, who finally reached up, wiped at his eyes, trying to compose himself.

“Ayah.” Damian spoke it aloud for the first time to anyone but himself, and the baby, when she had been nestled inside him. It felt like music, rolling off his tongue, had his heart skipping a beat. “Ayah.” Tim repeated it, and this time, Damian’s heart didn’t skip a beat- it stopped completely.

The beta glanced down at his daughter, whispering softly, “How do you feel about that? How is Ayah, princess?” The baby made a little noise- and Tim simply grinned over it, glancing back at Damian. “I like it.”

Damian nodded, shifting his arms- was so glad that Tim understood, as his boyfriend passed the baby back to him. Damian held her close, whispering down to her words he knew Tim didn’t understand- but he felt like he was losing the ability to speak, as time went on- and not gaining it. The Arabic rolled of his tongue easily, blinded him to everything else, until he heard footsteps, coming back into the room.

“How are we doing?” The nurse again, smiling. Tim was returning her smile, and Damian gave a little nod. She leaned over, took the baby carefully, proceeding to give her another quick examination. “She looks healthy as can be,” she offered, even as the little girl gave a wail. “Listen to the lungs on her.”

Tim laughed at that. “She gets that from her fa- her baba.” He glanced over at Damian, took his hand and gave it an affectionate squeeze. Damian felt his cheeks heating up. He didn’t miss the joke.

He wanted to slap Tim. He wanted to kiss him. He wanted to lay down in bed with him and simply
exist in this world where it was the two of them.

The three of them.

“Have you two thought of a name?” the nurse asked, as she swaddled the baby up again, carefully handing her back to Damian, who nodded. “Want to make it official? I have the paperwork.”

Damian glanced at Tim- but Tim only nodded. Had not a word, not a breath of objection.

He had left this completely up to Damian, just as he promised.

“Ayah,” Damian said, as the nurse picked her clipboard up.

“A-y-a-h?” she asked, and Damian nodded. “And a last?”


“Ayah Wayne. Lovely ring to it.” She smiled, holding the clipboard to her chest. “Like I said, everything looks good. We took a blood sample when we cut the umbilical chord- don’t worry, that’s normal.” Damian realized something must have shown as his face, because she reassured him the moment she said it. “Just to make sure everything looks good. I’ll let you know the moment the results are back- but I wouldn’t worry at all. You’ve got one healthy little alpha girl on your hands.”

“Alpha?” Tim asked, glancing at her, She nodded.

“Yup. We do a hormone test when we take the blood and run the others. That way you don’t have to wait.” She shifted her clipboard. “I’m going to give you two a bit to relax, before we move you to the room you’ll be staying in tonight. If everything goes right, you can take her home tomorrow.”

She left them without another word, and Tim turned back to them, reaching out to brush her hair back again. Ayah was settled content, held close to Damian.

“You didn’t include your name,” he whispered, and Tim shrugged a shoulder.

“I did. I’m a Wayne, even if you always did want to fight me on that.” He smiled, and it was teasing. “Besides, someday… we could just be the Waynes.” He shrugged a shoulder. “You know… down the road.”

Damian didn’t miss the implications- and if anything, he squeezed his baby closer, smiling up at Tim and feeling his heart racing.

“So,” Tim continued, looking as if he wasn’t ready to have that full discussion yet- and Damian didn’t blame him, didn’t push. Didn’t need to take more than Tim had given him- because he didn’t doubt now, Tim was giving him everything, would continue to do so. “Where did you get her name? Does it mean something?”

“It does,” Damian said, watching as Tim stroked his finger tip down over her plump cheek. “It means clue, or, more importantly, sign.” Damian rocked her gently, glancing down at her. “To be literal, it can be translated as a sign of god’s existence or greatness- or a verse, in the Qur’an.” Damian lifted her up, gently kissed her forehead, as Tim said with a chuckle,

“Didn’t peg you as religious.”
“-tt- I am not,” Damian pointed, glancing up at him, “She is a sign of so much to me, Tim. She’s a sign that things… things can work out. That perhaps there is good out there.” He glanced back at her, felt his heart strings tugging, tangling around the organ as it beat a steady, heavy rhythm. “A sign that there is hope for you and I. A sign that there is love.” He exhaled, slowly. “A sign of all we can overcome- all I can overcome.” He glanced up again, felt his eyes stinging slightly. “She is strength.”

Tim was watching him, before he smiled, soft and hopeful but almost sad, and leaned in. He kissed Damian again, slowly, sweetly, before bowing down, kissing Ayah’s forehead. “You are strength,” Tim clarified, glancing up at Damian. “And all her strength is coming straight from you. You’re a wonder, Damian. You’re a miracle.”

Damian doubt that- doubted he was rare enough for that. But the three of them, together- the circumstances that had led them to this point, and that they had found their way here at all? That was a miracle, he had no doubt.

It was a sign. A sign that things truly could be alright.

*

Tim was smiling, as he pulled his car up to the manor. He had one hand stretched over to Damian’s seat, clasped tightly in the omega’s, Damian’s thumb rubbing along his knuckles. From the corner of his eye he caught Damian glancing back to the backseat countless times, on the drive home. Glancing at the little sleeping bundle, secure in her seat.

He knew Damian wished he could have held her, for the drive home. He knew Damian was hard pressed to put their little girl down. His brief stay at the hospital had been mostly spent cooing softly at the child, whispering to her as she slept, words Tim didn’t know, couldn’t know.

Tim took his hand back, just to park the car. He glanced over at Damian, smiled at him softly.

They both knew, waiting behind the manor doors, was an entire family buzzing with excitement to finally meet their newest addition.

Damian had decided, a few hours after the birth, that he didn’t want any visitors. They had already agreed with the family that no one was to come to the hospital until Tim called them. And Damian, upon being settled in the room he’d be staying in for the night, and rocking Ayah gently as she slept, had looked at Tim and told him he didn’t want to share this, with anyone. That he wanted it just to the three of them.

Tim hadn’t argued- it wasn’t his place to, and he didn’t have a fiber that disagreed. He loved his family, and he knew Damian did too- but he wanted at least this one night with his boyfriend and their baby. One night to establish this new family, before having to share it with the rest of the world.

Tim had been thankful that everyone understood- and more thankful that, despite the attention Damian’s pregnancy had originally attracted, they managed to escape the hospital today without incident from the paparazzi.

It was going almost too smoothly.

“Ready?” Tim asked, and Damian nodded. They climbed out of the car, Tim opening the back door and reaching in, brushing at Ayah’s head. She had a tiny purple cap on, covered in little yellow stars- matched the blanket she was wrapped in. Tim smiled at her, finger tips touching her
cheeks. “Are you ready, princess?”

“I want to carry her in,” Damian said, standing at Tim’s side.

“Okay baby boy.” Tim reached for the buckles on the carrier. “Whatever you want. You take the princess, I’ll get her carriage.”

Damian chuckled as Tim lifted her carefully from the carrier, holding her to her chest as she made a little noise, but didn’t stir otherwise. He leaned down, kissed the top of her little cap, before passing her to Damian, who held her to his chest, cradled in his arms, as if he had been holding her all his life.

Tim grabbed Damian’s bag and the carrier, shutting the door with his hip and leading the way towards the manor. He didn’t even have a foot inside it when he heard hurried footsteps, and from another room a, “Miss Brown! Allow them to get in the door!”

Stephanie appeared as Alfred’s voice rang out behind her, pausing in the middle of the room and quite literally bouncing on her feet.

“I have been waiting all day,” she said, as Tim pulled the door shut, setting the carrier and the bag down, shielding Damian from her. He was only teasing, but he took one last second to look down at his daughter, before he motioned Stephanie over- who ran, skidding to a stop and clutching at Tim’s arm, peering at the little bundle Damian was holding.

And her face, it was blank for just a moment, before her eyes lit up.

“Oh my god, guys,” she whispered, her voice so quiet suddenly, the softest whisper. “Guys look at her. She’s beautiful.”

“Oh, we know.” Tim smiled, glanced at Damian, who returned it.

“Do you want to hold her?”

“Is that even a question?” She stared at Damian, who chuckled, carefully passing her the baby. Stephanie rocked her once, smiling down at her like she was holding the sun in her arms. But her eyes, that pretty blue- they had darkened, to something else. Something subtle, something sad-

And Tim reached out, gently placed his hand on her shoulder, squeezed.

He could only imagine what this was doing to her. What this was reminding her of.

“You might not get her back,” Stephanie said, kissing the baby’s cheek. “Oh my god she has that new baby smell, I am going to cry.”

Tim laughed at that, covering his mouth, and Damian leaned into him, still smiling. Like he couldn’t stop- and Tim hoped he never would.

“You’re gonna be such a spoiled little princess,” Stephanie said, as Ayah sighed, shifting about a bit. Stephanie didn’t adjust her hold- knew exactly how to keep her secure even as she moved. “Just like your- what was it Damian?” She glanced up at him, and Damian said, sliding an arm around Tim’s waist and clinging to him gently,

“Baba.”

“Baba,” Stephanie said with a nod, “little princess Ayah.” Tim felt his smile turning to a grin, as he
hugged Damian with one arm, hearing someone else say her name. Sure, the staff had said it at the hospital- but this was family. This was family reaffirming that the baby was real- that Ayah wasn’t just a dream, that Tim was indeed awake, alive, breathing.

That good things truly could come to him.

“Where is my father?” Damian asked. “And my mother?”

“In the cave with Cass. I think they’re working out their impatience. I’ve just been pacing. I wanted to be right here when you got home.” She kissed Ayah’s cheek again, watched as her eyes finally opened, and gasped. “Her eyes.”

Dark, darker than Tim’s by far- but that gorgeous jade that Damian boasted. Tim had expected light- he had heard baby’s eyes could darken, as they grew. So to have such a deep, black like jade staring at him was startling- but it made his heart stop. They were Talia’s eyes, darkened by the deep inky-blue Damian had in his genes from Bruce.

If Tim was honest, he saw a lot of Damian, of Talia, in their baby. Her skin was as dark as Damian’s, and there was something in her face, maybe it was Damian’s nose, it was Talia’s cheek bones-

He wasn’t sure he could even see himself at all. He didn’t even care. As far as he was concerned, Ayah was better off looking like Damian.

“How are you feeling?” Stephanie asked, glancing at Damian, who stayed close to Tim.

“Tired,” he admitted, “But alright. Happy.” She smiled at that, leaned in and pecked the corner of his mouth affectionately, before carefully passing Ayah back into his arms, once he had untangled himself from Tim.

“Miss Brown, have they arrived safely-” Alfred had finally appeared, pausing in the entrance way to the room. Tim smiled at him, and he hurried over, glancing them over to assure they were in one piece- before smiling like Tim hadn’t seen him smile in a long time, looking at the baby in Damian’s arms. “Good heaven,” he whispered, his voice cracking a little. “Master Timothy, Master Damian… she is wonderful.”

“Do you want to hold her?” Tim, as he squeezed Damian’s waist. Alfred looked awe struck at the idea, before he carefully shook his head.

“I fear these old hands are shaking too much for that,” he offered, “I thought I was adequately braced. I was not.” Tim smiled at that, reaching up to clasp his shoulder.

“Later then. I promise, she’s not going anywhere.” Alfred nodded.

“Yes, later. Would you like me to help you take these things upstairs? And fetch the rest of the family?”

“I’ve got them,” Tim said, “But maybe call everyone up? It’s her first day home, I think the cave introduction can wait until day two.” That got him a round of laughs, and Alfred nodded, hurrying off to gather the rest of the family, Stephanie bouncing behind him, giddy as if the baby were her own.

Tim gathered everything up, and he and Damian made their way upstairs, to the nursery. Tim left Damian’s bag and the carrier out of the way, as Damian walked Ayah around the room, gently whispering to her. Her eyes were still open, and she was glancing around, seeming to follow
Tim flopped down in the rocker for a moment, sighing and tipping his head back, listening to Damian’s oddly soft footsteps. He closed his eyes, before he heard them getting closer, smelled Damian’s subtle scent as his boyfriend leaned in close, kissed his cheek. Tim let his eyes flutter back open as Damian passed the baby into his arms.

Tim didn’t say a word, simply straightened up as he rocked gently, looking down at his little girl. She stared up at him, looking like she was fascinated- and Tim wanted to believe that was a smile, curving on her lips. Even though he knew this young, she didn’t really smile.

He wasn’t sure his heart would be able to handle the day she could.

Damian was fussing with the crib when the footsteps approached, the door opening. Tim glanced at it, smiling as Bruce filled it first, studying the two of them. Behind him, he could see Talia, silent and observant- Cassandra peeking around them both.

Behind them all, Stephanie he was sure, corralling them all in.

“Come in guys,” Tim offered, “Come say hello before we lay her down.” Damian turned then, moving as Tim stilled the chair, standing behind him as they filed in.

For a moment, there was only silence, as the three stepped in, Stephanie staying back at the door, having had her moment. Silence, as they glanced down at the little girl in Tim’s arms-

And then, in a voice that held wonder, Talia whispered, “Habibi, she is beautiful.” Damian smiled, his mother turning to look at him, before taking a step in. Damian moved away from Tim, into her arms, and Talia held him, stroking his back, kissing his temple.

Smiling, like she was proud.

Tim knew she was.

Tim glanced up at Bruce, while Talia clutched at her son, and asked very softly, “Do you want to hold your granddaughter?”

Bruce was silent, gave the smallest of nods, and bent down, very gently taking the little girl from Tim’s arms. Tim watched as she seemed so small compared to Bruce- had felt small in his own arms, but now? It was as if she was a single speck of stardust, against the night.

Bruce said nothing, looking down at her, as Cassandra leaned up, gently touching his arm to steady herself and get a good look at the baby. Talia turned herself, still holding Damian, studying the little girl for a moment.

And then suddenly, Bruce offered, “She has your eyes.” He glanced at Talia, Damian, and Talia smiled softly.

“No, beloved. She has our eyes.” Bruce glanced back down- and didn’t argue it, only smiled, ever so softly. Ayah made a little sound, squirming, beginning to fuss- and Talia was suddenly taking her, holding her to her chest and hushing her, sweet, soft Arabic rolling off her tongue. The baby squirmed, before settling, and Damian was leaning in, adding his own voice to his mother’s.

Tim stood up, but before he could reach out, Bruce had an arm around him, was pulling him in. Stunned, Tim fell against him, stood limp for a moment as both of Bruce’s arms went around him, holding him tightly.
And then, quietly, he heard, “Thank you.” Tim glanced up, and Bruce was studying him, with those dark eyes, pretty deep-oceans, and just like the seas, they shimmered. Like he might cry, if he dared to lose his focus on his composure.

Cassandra squirmed in, settling her arms around Tim’s waist and squeezing him as well, ever silent but comforting.

Tim didn’t need to ask what the thank you was for. He knew it, could read it in the lines on Bruce’s face, the glimmer in his eyes. A thank you for giving Damian something good- for giving him his heart, his affection, his devotion. For supporting him when he could have turned away.

For loving him, when he could have forgotten him.

Silent thanks for giving him the little girl, now nestled against her grandmother. Thanks for the expansion of Bruce’s family- for the fact alone that he could finally hold one of his grandchildren, whenever he wanted to.

And, beneath it all, thanks for being the son Bruce had always loved and had faith in. And that-that had Tim blushing a little, clutching at Bruce tighter. Had his fingers trembling a little.

He had never felt love like this, in his life. Love for every single person in that room- and knowing that they all returned it.

Tim only pulled back as Damian was taking Ayah back, moving to wrap an arm around him, kiss his boyfriend’s temple, before kissing his daughter’s tiny nose. She made a little noise, squirming- and the room erupted in laughter.

“Is daddy harassing you?” Damian asked, holding her up higher. “Should I tell him to stop?”

“Never,” Tim said, kissing her forehead now. His other arm settled under Damian’s, helping to support the baby. “I’ll never stop,” he whispered, smiling down at her, before glancing at Damian- pausing to lean in, kiss him very softly. And against his mouth, whispered it again.

*I’ll never stop.*

He’d love Damian until Tim was nothing but dust- and even then, he’d find a way to love him.

* 

A wail ripped Tim from his sleep, had his eyes cracking open against the dark of the bedroom. He heard it again, over the monitor, and sighed, pressing his face into the heat of Damian’s neck. The omega was pressed against his chest, facing away from him, Tim’s arm locked around his waist.

Damian shifted, and Tim knew, without a word, that it had woken him too. “I hear her,” he whispered. Damian yawned, before he tried to pull away from Tim, who tightened his arm around him. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Calming our daughter?” he asked, reaching for Tim’s arm and pulling it off his waist. Tim sat up as Damian did, the omega tossing the blanket back.

“Stay in bed, I’ll do it.”

Damian shook his head. “You have been getting up for her since we came home. I can do it.”

But Tim was already out of the bed, heading for the door, ignoring it boyfriend’s protest. He
headed into the hallway, the short distance to the nursery, and let himself in. He didn’t flick the light on, only headed for the crib, peeking down at the little squirming baby.

He reached for Ayah, carefully lifting her up and holding him to his shoulder, rubbing her little back. “Hush princess, what’s the matter?” He turned, nuzzled his cheek against her as she continued to wail. “Are you hungry?” She didn’t need to be changed- and that seemed like one of the only other reasons she cried-

Except when she simply wanted Damian or Tim to hold her. Tim had found out, very quickly, that his little girl craved their attention possibly more than anything else. And if his heart hadn’t been swollen with affection before that, it was now.

“Is she alright?” Tim glanced at the door, found Damian leaned against the doorway. His had a sweater pulled around him, walking around in his boxer briefs and a tshirt otherwise, his hair still tussled. He was adorable, and Tim could only smile at him.

“Yeah. I think she’s just hungry- it’s about that time.” Damian nodded.

“I’ll get her bottle.” Before Tim could argue, he was turning, leaving them. Tim sighed, lifting the little crying baby from his shoulder and holding her out.

“What are we going to do with that baba of yours?” She began to quiet, looking at Tim with those pretty dark eyes. They were growing more alert- had been, every day, since they brought her home. And at two weeks now, he swore she saw more and took in more than the doctors had claimed was even possible.

He pulled her back in, turning back towards her crib and starting the mobile. The gentle music filled the room, and Tim turned, so she could watch it move, going back to rubbing her back gently. He was still standing like that when Damian came back, holding the bottle. “I can feed her,” the omega said, settling down in the rocker. Tim didn’t argue at this point, gently easing the baby down into his arms.

“Did you check the temperature?” Damian nodded, as he offered the bottle to Ayah, who began to wail again so suddenly Tim cringed. Damian frowned, pulling it back, hushing her softly.

“What is it habibi?” he asked. “Aren’t you hungry?”

“She’s *always* hungry,” Tim pointed out, placing his hands on his hips, “C’mon Ayah, we’re not judging you. Eat as much as your uncle Dick for all we care.”

Damian snorted over that, shifting her slightly and trying again. She turned her head away, still crying, and he sighed. “Maybe she is just fussing,” he offered, “For no reason.”

“Yeah, babies do that,” Tim pointed out, “Except she doesn’t normally.” She was very to-the-point, if Ayah was fussing, it was because she *wanted* something. Damian shrugged a shoulder, and Tim motioned for the bottle. Damian passed it to him, before standing up, so that Tim could sit down.

“Let me try, baby boy.”

Damian rocked her for a moment, before passing her back to Tim- and Tim could feel him watching, taking in the soft smile he offered their daughter.

“It’s okay honey,” he whispered, “Do you want daddy to feed you?” He shifted her up slightly, offering the bottle- and this time she took it, her crying stopping as she sucked happily. Damian sighed in relief, raking a hand back through his hair. Tim could only smile. “See? She did want it.”
“I think she just wanted you,” Damian pointed out, reaching out to stroke Tim’s hair back. Tim turned, nuzzled his hand.

“Nah, she was upset when I was holding her. She just has to have her way.” He chuckled, kissed Damian’s wrist. “Sort of like someone else I know.”

“tt- Funny, Drake.” Damian pulled away, folded his arms. “Hopefully she will settle soon. You have that meeting with father in the morning.”

Tim shrugged a shoulder. “That’s what coffee is for. This is worth the lack of sleep.” He smiled down at the baby. “You keep daddy up as long as you want, Ayah.” Damian rolled his eyes- but he was smiling, as he carefully settled down on his knees next to the rocker, leaning on the arm of it to watch the baby. “You know you could sit here?”

“You’re feeding her, I am fine.”

“You’re tired.” Tim knew it was true, without Damian reaffirming it. He had begun training again, to retrain his body so that he could once again the family on the streets at night.

Tim had thought he was doing it way too soon, waiting barely a week after the birth- but Damian was anxious, restless- he missed being Robin. But he was exhausted, Tim knew. Sore and worked to the bone.

Add on that, only a few days ago, he’d started up on suppressants again. This time a proper, lower dosage, that the beta knew he was monitoring- but it was still a change to his system that would require adjusting.

“But happy,” Damian pointed out, “I will take exhaustion knowing that I will be chasing you around the rooftops again soon.” He smiled, and Tim laughed, having to clamp his mouth shut to try and keep from waking anyone- or startling their daughter.

He didn’t doubt Damian. Strangely, he could feel it, in his chest. That Damian was happy. He shifted a bit, glancing back at the omega. “I know you are. I can feel it.”

Damian’s face changed then, a little more serious. “I can feel you, too.” He leaned closer, until he could rest his cheek against Tim’s bicep. His skin was warm, and Tim fought down a shiver. “I do not understand it.”

“I know sometimes you can form a sort of bond, if you’re close to someone. I’ve always felt the family,” Tim admitted, “You’re just stronger now.” He lifted the nearly empty bottle away, got a whine from Ayah, and pressed it back to her mouth, smiling softly at her. “We’ve got a tie now, whether we like it or not.”

“Can it become something...more?” Tim didn’t glance at Damian, but he felt the knot in his chest from his nerves. It was subtle, ghost like- could have been mistaken for his own, if he didn’t pay attention.

Tim swallowed. They had never discussed it… never discussed one day bonding. With everything that had happened so quickly, it simply hadn’t been at the forefront of their minds.

But now… “Would you want it to?” Tim glanced over at Damian, who lifted his head, nodding slowly. And Tim wasn’t sure why he had had to ask- Damian had shown, had expressed, had proven that what he felt for Tim he had never felt for someone else before. And when he said he never would again- Tim believed him. “I don’t know if I can,” Tim admitted, having to glance away. “I don’t know if I can do that. Even if I want to.”
Because he did. Not that very moment, but someday- someday he wanted to feel Damian’s emotions completely, in his chest. To have that connection, to know when he was close, when he needed him. He wanted everyone who saw them to know, know that they were intertwined, in the most intimate of ways.

“But you would want to?”

Tim nodded, turning to glance at Damian. “Yeah,” he admitted, “Someday.” He leaned over, kissed Damian’s forehead. “I just don’t know if I can- I’m not an alpha. There are things I don’t really know if I can do.”

To be honest, Tim wasn’t sure if he could bond with anyone. Wasn’t sure if he could open up to an alpha, or beg for acceptance from an omega. Wasn’t sure if he could do either with another beta.

There was so much about himself he didn’t understand- and to this point, hadn’t needed to question. It hadn’t mattered, he hadn’t been with anyone who he had wanted that relationship with, that tie. There had never been anyone like Damian before. And it was pathetic, in a way, that he didn’t know, that society still acted as if bonds were strictly alpha and omega-

Tim knew plenty of alphas who favored other alphas. Hell, he’d lived under a roof with Bruce long enough to see his type- Talia and Clark both proof of that. He’d seen omegas and omegas, as well-

And yet, no one seemed to care to know if he could properly form a bond.

“You are in your head,” Damian whispered. Tim glanced at him, then back down at Ayah, as she pushed her bottle away. He passed the empty bottle to Damian, before he stood up, heading to the dresser and grabbing a cloth to drape over his shoulder. He lifted her up, let her get comfy as he rubbed her back, before patting it gently.

“I just don’t want to disappoint you,” he admitted, “If it’s something I can’t do.”

Damian stood up, walking over. He rubbed a hand along Tim’s arm, leaning in to kiss his cheek. “Beloved,” he whispered, “You have yet to disappoint me. And if we can create a child, then there is hope.”

Tim nodded, slowly. Knew Damian had a point- the odds had been so firmly against them for having Ayah, that who was he to say that one day, he couldn’t open his mind to Damian? That they couldn’t bond?

He might have said something more, might have thanked Damian for the reassurance, but there was a gentle knock at the door, before it opened. Talia peeked in, smiling gently at the two of them. “Good evening.”

“No, I am just coming from the cave.” She stepped in, smiling at the child in Tim’s arms. “How is she?”

“I think she fell back to sleep,” Tim admitted, chuckling gently. Damian walked around him, gently lifting her from his shoulder so Tim could ball up the cloth, tossing it in a little hamper. Damian had walked back to the crib, kissed his daughter’s plump cheek, before settling her back in it, securing the blankets around her in the way that she always seemed to like.

Talia smiled, folding her arms casually, waiting until Damian had straightened up again. “Good. I am impressed with the both of you- you’re better parents than I ever was.” She held Damian’s stare
for that- and when he opened his mouth to protest, she only shook her head. “Hush habibi, I will hear not argument. Besides, it is not what I have come up for.”

“Is something wrong?” Tim, studying her. Tim, feeling as if something on her face wasn’t right- the light in her eyes dimmed, focused again.

Focused like he had seen, before, when he had freed her from the room her father had kept her prisoner in.

“My father,” she said, and Tim could feel Damian’s tension. He glanced over, and the omega has squared his shoulders, was gritting his teeth. “He has begun to regroup. His distraction these past many weeks seems to have come to an end. Which means I must create a new one.” She stepped towards Damian, reaching out to place her hand on his shoulder. “I must leave you, my little love.”

Her hand slid over his shoulder, and she pulled Damian into her hold. Tim hesitated, kept back, as she held her son, clutching him tightly. But then Talia glanced at him, and in a voice that was like wind,

“Timothy, come here.” Tim walked towards her, slid into her embrace as well- and held her, just as Damian was. “You are my child now,” she whispered, kissing his hair, “And I will miss you both.”

“Stay,” Damian said, glancing up- and Tim knew how badly Damian wanted it. How much it meant to him, to have his mother present in his life again. And not simply knowing she was alive, thousands of miles away- but having her here, seeing her face everyday. Holding conversations with her as if, for the first time in his life, they were a normal family.

“I cannot. Ra’s will grow restless, and I fear he may come looking for you.”

“Let him come,” Tim said, his hand tightening its hold on her shirt. “He will have to go through me to get to Damian, to Ayah. I will tear him to pieces.” There was venom, in Tim’s voice- there was violence and blood and promises that, in that moment, he felt he could keep.

He felt lawless, ruleless- when it came to his family, to the family he had created. And he felt like a barrier was torn down- like perhaps he was not above falling to baser, violent instincts.

Talia smiled. “You let me sleep at night,” she said, “with your love of my son, Timothy. Of my granddaughter. But I will not allow you to make a choice that will sever you from the family you have here.”

You won’t let me kill because you know what it will do to Bruce. Tim could fill it in for her. And he was thankful- and yet, he wondered if Bruce could truly lose love for him, because he protected what he held so dear.

Because he did what he knew Bruce wanted to do to so many others.

And suddenly, it wasn’t even a question of if Tim would do it- only if he would be given the chance.

“I will remain in touch,” Talia offered, pulling back from them and leaning over the crib. She reached down, stroked her knuckles along the ultra-fine hair atop Ayah’s head, down along her back. “I will not miss another child grow up.” She glanced back at them. “And when fate has allowed it, I will return again. Hopefully, before she has forgotten the sound of my voice.”

“She won’t forget,” Damian said, and when Talia stood, he was throwing his arms around her again, clutching tightly. He looked so young, holding onto her as he was- and it struck Tim that
Damian still was. As easy as it was to forget- he was barely twenty now. He still had so much need of his mother, in his life.

Talia smiled, embracing her son again, before pulling back. “I must go. Your father is waiting for me. He will escort me safely out of the city, so that I may make my return.” She stroked Damian’s cheek, leaning in to kiss his forehead. “Be safe, habibi. Remember my love.”

She pulled back, giving Tim a nod, which he returned. A silent good luck, a silent belief he would see her again soon.

A silent thanks, for all she was doing for his family.

He didn’t move, until she had left. Until her footsteps were echos, through the manor. And once they had faded, Tim moved over to Damian, wrapping an arm around his waist. “C’mon baby,” he whispered, “Let’s go back to bed.”

Damian was silent, but Tim felt it in his chest. That subtle sadness, the weak loss- Damian was grieving, and Tim realized he probably grieved every time he said goodbye to his mother. Never knowing if he would see her again.

Once back in bed, Tim let Damian press against him, tangle their legs together. He held him tightly and rubbed his back, gently kissing whatever skin he could get as Damian clutched tightly onto him, taking the loss silently. Taking the threat to his family silently.

And Tim knew, as he tried to calm him, as he tried to ease his mind with pheromones and subtle touches, soft kisses, that this was a loss. This was a moment where Damian wanted to crack, and yet couldn’t allow himself too.

“You’re okay,” Tim whispered, “Damian, just… let it out.” He slid his hand beneath his shirt, pressed to the small of his back, and Damian burrowed his face into Tim’s chest, letting out a nearly silent sob.

Tim let him mourn. Tim let him grieve. Tim let him feel, because in the morning, he knew Damian would have steeled himself against it all, and would act as if nothing had happened. As if a nightmare’s name hadn’t been mentioned, after so long dormant.

As if his mother hadn’t gone off to face the nightmare, the demon, the devil, for the sake of his safety.

And as Tim held Damian, he was silently eternally grateful to Talia, for all she had done, and would do, for his family.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Damian swore he'd never be in chains again- and he'd die before he ever allowed that fate for his daughter. Tim is willing to sacrifice everything he's become, if it means a world where his family is no longer haunted by their personal demon. Both would do anything to keep the other safe- and more importantly, to give their daughter a promise of tomorrow.

Chapter Notes

I can't believe I'm saying this, but this is the last real chapter. The epilogue (which isn't as long) will be up Friday, and then this adventure of a fic will be complete!

Damian hoisted himself up, gritting his teeth against the strain in his arms as he held himself over the bar, before gently lowering himself, waiting a moment, and repeating the motion. The burn felt good, reminded him that his muscles knew this action, his body knew this work.

“Don’t over do it,” Tim called, glancing up from where he was standing, across the cave. He was shuffling through papers on a few minor cases, one arm wrapped around the carrier strapped to his front. Ayah was nestled happily within it, content to mostly doze as her father worked.

Damian completed the motion one more time, before dropping down to the mats, rolling his neck. He felt good, with his body burning almost pleasantly, good with sweat clinging to his back, even as it made his scars itch. Good to be moving like this again.

“You just worry that once I’m back on patrol, father will realize how badly I was missed and you’ll be stuck at home.” Tim glanced over at him, and Damian offered a playful, teasing smile. “You simply do not want me to have all the fun.”

Tim laughed, the vibrations making Ayah glance up with sleepy, dark eyes. He applied a little pressure against where her back rested to the harness, shaking his head at Damian.

“You’re never going to stop being a brat, are you?” Damian grinned, hoping off the mats and crossing the cave. He reached out, gripped Tim’s bicep and pulled him in, kissing him slowly, the kind that had Tim’s eyes falling shut, a little sound ripping up from his throat before he could stop it.

“You like me this way,” Damian reminded him, pulling back, and Tim chuckled.

“Yeah, yeah I do.” He reached out, ghosting his fingertips along Damian’s cheek, before his boyfriend bent down, kissed the top of their daughter’s head.

“Tell your daddy he has a pension for brats,” he whispered, and Tim snorted.
“Don’t encourage her. She’s spoiled already.”

“As she should be.” Damian reached into the carrier, lifting her out and holding her up. She was far more alert now, looking down at him as he smiled at her- her little face twisting and trying to mimic it. It was such a change, Tim realized, over when she had first come home, when she had done nothing but really sleep. Just five weeks, and it felt like she had grown years.

Tim rolled his eyes, even as he smiled fondly at the two. “And tell your baba to finish his workout and take a damn shower.”

Damian pulled her in, cradling her securely in one arm near his chest and shooting a glare at Tim, adding, “You like it, Drake.”

Tim kept his smile, leaning in and nuzzling Damian’s neck. Past the smell of sweat was hot skin, was cinnamon-almonds and every scent that ever clung to Damian, that drove Tim wild. “Mmm, maybe I do,” he admitted, kissing Damian’s pulse- hearing his boyfriend sigh.

And a moment later, Ayah whined- the sound turning to a cry before Tim could even move. He leaned back, reaching out for her and taking her back, rocking her gently to soothe her. She quieted down, and Tim grinned.

“However, I don’t think she does.”

Damian huffed, as Tim shifted Ayah, settling her back in the carrier so he had his hands free again, reaching back for his papers. Damian took a moment to watch Tim, as he quickly studied the words, shifting through each one, before turning, heading back for the mats, feeling like his body could still give a little bit, before he was spent.

* Tim clutched the handles of his bike, speeding up as he maneuvered the streets of Gotham. He was out in the Narrows- mostly empty roads at this point, and was hoping this might be faster than if he were to give the area a run down by rooftop. There was a light spring rain picking up, and it only added to Tim’s desire to make patrol fast.

There had been something that night that had made him not want to leave. Not something he could explain, or even expressed- he simply felt it, from time to time. When he paused in Ayah’s room to watch her sleep for a moment, when he kissed Damian goodbye-

Like there was a reason he needed to be there, at the Manor, and not here, on the streets.

He knew Damian would call him crazy, if he said anything. Call him crazy because the omega had such a bad case of cabin fever, was bursting at the seams to get back out into the city. And yes, Tim couldn’t wait to have him by his side here, missed having Robin in the city, missed the way Damian moved when he fell into the liquid dance he always did when fighting-

But there was security, in having him back at the Manor. A security that, until recently, Tim had never bothered with. They enjoyed what they did. They lived for the risk, the adrenaline rush-

But now, now? There was someone who truly needed them, relied on them-

Tim would have to make a point to call Jason, to ask him how he did it. How he ever left, with the risk he might not ever go back home to his family.

He didn’t think the answer would be pretty.
Tim took a sharp turn, accelerating down the empty street as the comlink in his ear crackled. “Red?”

“Yeah Batgirl?”

“You busy?”

“Negative.” He slowed the bike down. “What do you need?”

“Something strange going on at the docks. Wanna come be a second set of eyes?” Stephanie sounded a little unnerved, and Tim immediately turned his bike in the middle of the street, heading out of the Narrows.

“I’m en route. Hold tight. Wanna call the Bat?”

“Leave him to his company.” Bruce had shipped himself off to Blackgate to interrogate a drug lord recently sent there, left the city to Tim and Stephanie for the evening. “I’m sure it’s nothing. Just a weird feeling, you know?”

Oh, Tim knew.

He was glad it wasn’t just him- but he hoped what he’d felt earlier, leaving home, had nothing to do with this.

*

Damian inhaled, very slowly, his eyes closed to the room around him. He was settled on the floor, folded up with his hands settled motionlessly in his lap. When his lungs filled, he held the breath for a moment, then exhaled.

Pulling himself in, to his center. Letting himself out, to bleed out into the room.

He was sure there were more ideal places for meditation than his bedroom, but it was comforting, to be surrounded by the smells and textures he knew so well. Comforting that with each inhale, it was a mingling of the laundry soap used on the sheets, he and Tim’s soap, the lingering scent of Tim in the room. It was soothing, like he was there. Like he could know and control every element around him.

It was a bonus that he was so close to Ayah’s room, should the monitor alert him to her waking up.

Another inhale, and Damian held it again. He felt relaxed, felt like he was in tune with his body. He felt good, like he was himself again. He had feared the suppressants he’d started again may have had ill effects, like the last round- but aside of a bit of fatigue and crankiness for the first week or so, he felt fine.

He exhaled, was considering taking the monitor and heading down to the cave for another workout. He felt alive, too tired to sleep- and perhaps he could get Tim on the comlink, if the city was dull and sleeping around him. Perhaps he would keep him company until Ayah woke and needed him.

There was no if there. His princess was getting a little closer to a sleep schedule, but she was still so young he didn’t expect her to stay with it. Nor did he mind the bonding time in the middle of the night, if Tim was on patrol, and it was just him in her room, feeding her and talking to her. Never in English, the words he had for her never felt right that way.
Stories, of when he was young. Of his mother, of the life he had led before he came to Gotham. The good parts, the memories that made him smile because they were glimpses of a childhood he never truly had. He spoke of Talia more now that was gone- spoke of the way her hair smelled like lilac and that Ayah had her eyes, that Talia loved her even though she was not there, like his father was.

Sometimes, he spoke of Tim. *Often* if he was honest with himself. Spoke of how much he loved him, in ways he couldn’t quite bring himself to tell him yet- despite all they had been through. Spoke of how it felt like he was inside his ribs, how Tim knew things without Damian saying a word. Spoke of Tim’s love for Ayah, how she was a miracle for them both.

Damian exhaled again, just as an alarm suddenly rang out through the manor. He jerked his head up, eyes snapping open, before he jumped up, tearing for his door. He ripped it open, just to see Cassandra, down the hall, emerging from her own room.

“Perimeter alarms,” she said, frowning. Damian nodded. She headed towards him, and he held a hand out, silently telling her to wait.

“Stay here, I’m going to get Alfred. He may have been working with something and set them off.” It wouldn’t be the first time Alfred had accidentally set an alarm off- and the perimeter ones could be easy to set off, if he was working on something with any of the alarms in the cave. Damian knew his father had recently updated them, so it was plausible.

He ran down the stairs, grabbing the banister at the end to help him turn without slowing down. He was heading for the cave entrance, when he heard behind him, “Master Damian?”

Damian skidded to a stop, turning on his heel and staring at Alfred. “Pennyworth, you’re up here-”

“Yes young sir. The alarm was not you?” Damian shook his head. “Or Miss Cain?” Another shake. And then, suddenly, a shiver down Damian’s spine. The strange feeling that the world was closing in, like the air was thick, sticking to his skin, burrowing into his pores. Trying to hold him in place.

The first rolls of unease, fear that could build to terror. *Something was not right.*

“Get down to the cave,” Damian said, rushing past Alfred now, back towards the stairs. “And stay down there!”

He trusted Alfred to pull up the security cameras, to assess whatever had set the alarms off. He trusted- but it didn’t ease the feeling in his skin that this simply wasn’t right.

He was halfway up the stairs when he was yelling *Cassandra!* She appeared at the top, and he could see the tension in her shoulders, her legs. She was ready to spring, ready to move.

This was the Black Bat, simply without her suit.

“Cave,” he said, still running up the stairs. “Pennyworth is there. He’ll check the cameras for the cause- but I need you to suit up.”

She nodded. “And you?” Damian didn’t pause when he hit the floor, turning down the hallway.

“I have to get my daughter.”

The rest he left unanswered. Yes, he would be there. Yes, if need be, he’d don his Robin suit for the first time since his grandfather had held him captive.
Yes, he’d fight be her side if someone was in their home.

He threw open Ayah’s door, was met by her wailing. The alarm was still ringing, and his head ached with the noise, it ricocheted off his skull, vibrated his mind. He winced, but continued on, leaning over her crib and scooping her up, holding her to his chest. “/Hush darling/,” he whispered, giving her a tiny bounce, turning back for the door.

He’d taken two steps when he heard the glass shattered, and suddenly the sound of the gentle rain outside was crashing into his family’s sanctuary. Damian spun on his heel, gripping Ayah tighter as he stared into strangers’ eyes- and yet, he knew them.

Knew the intent in them, the focus. Knew the training, in their stance.

*Knew an assassin when he saw one.*

He gritted his teeth, had half a second to weigh his options. There were two, here, but he could assume more would be in those broken windows before they had crossed half the room. In the time it would take him to turn, to get to the doorway, he was sure they would have a throwing knife in his back.

But as he was, he could not fight. Not with Ayah in his arms.

His only option was to *distract*, until he had an opportunity.

“You know, we spent quite a bit of time on this room,” he dared, one hand pressing to the back of Ayah’s head, keeping her cradled to his chest. Her wailing had moved to a quiet sob. “And if it’s going to be desecrated, I would at least prefer it was the Demon’s Head himself, and not you simpletons.”

The assassins did not advance- but they tensed, and Damian tried to read the subtle movements of their muscles, the flickers of their eyes.

“And where is he?” he continued, “Is Ra’s too busy to come meet his great granddaughter for the first time?”

He sounded confident, cocky- but Damian was shaking, in his core. Shaking not for fear of himself- but for fear of his daughter. She was defenseless- he was all she had.

*He was all she had.*

For once, he was responsible for another life- one so completely dependent on him that if he fell, she would follow. It felt different, from the endless nights in the city, with the citizens who clung to his arms, his cape, in fear. He lacked his suit, he lacked the room to work, he lacked his weapons- he lacked everything, and yet he was tasked with defending the world.

And he couldn’t even let her down. He didn’t even have his hands.

“We were sent to bring you back home,” one finally said, “And the child.”

“If my grandfather wanted a *family reunion*, he could have called.” Damian lifted his chin, looked down like he had as a child, at everyone who was not his blood. Let the arrogance seep into him again. Let himself be the prince the family teased him about being.

It had always done wonders to intimidate before.
“You can come as you are,” one said, “Or we will take you. The choice is yours.”

Yes, it truly was.

Damian had had enough time to study them. The way their clothing fit, they didn’t boast the proper throwing knives he feared. Their swords they wouldn’t risk losing unless their target was sure- and he knew he was not. Any smaller blades would be heavy, harder to throw- he would hear them easier, he would dodge them.

There was no room for doubt.

And he knew his best choice was to run. And, for one of the rare, precious moments in his life- that’s exactly what Damian did.

He turned on his heel, to the door before they we reacting. He was out it when he heard their footsteps, was hitting the stairs when they emerged. He held Ayah with one arm, grabbing the railing of the stairs with the other half way down, and launching himself over it. He landed in a crouch, as her sobbing picked back up to a wail. In his chest, his ribs felt like they were piercing his heart, that he could not soothe her.

He was heading down the hallway, turning a corner, telling himself he could make it. Once he got into the cave, he would be safe. They would not be able to follow, and he could secure Ayah with Alfred, could suit up-

Could take back his home with his sister.

He skipped to a stop at the clock, moving to adjust the time, when a blade came flying through the air. Damian pulled back, in just the right moment, the blade sticking into the old wood of the clock. He turned, staring at the two assassins- and in the distance, swore he heard another round of glass breaking.

He knew there would be others. His grandfather wouldn’t send two simpletons after him. He knew better, no matter how little he thought of Damian now.

“We can take you home in pieces,” one offered, holding out his sword, the end pointing to Damian. “The Demon’s Head said he wants you alive- but he will accept you bleeding. And if you give us enough trouble, all he cares about is the baby and your lover. You can be a stain on the floor.”

Damian narrowed his eyes, running through his options- which came up blank. Nothing but static in his head.

He could do nothing in this position. And as much as the idea made his stomach roll, his only chance was to listen. A change of scenery may give him the chance he needed-

His thoughts cut off in a blur of motion, and suddenly one of the assassins was stumbling. He jerked his head, just as the other turned, swinging his sword, before a kick to the side of his knee had him stumbling- heel of the pal to the nose, elbow to the neck. Routine hits, practiced to the point that they were muscle memory, they were second nature.

He stumbled as the first turned, swinging one blindly. Cassandra, in all her glory, dropped down to the floor, crouching with her hands flat to the floor. The moment the blade was gone she launched up, supporting herself on her hands and flipping, wrapping her legs around the man’s waist and throwing him down the floor. She followed, entangled, and grabbed his head, slamming it into the polished floor, leaving him in a sharp cry- and then silence.
“Your six!” Damian yelled, and Cassandra was dropping forward, the other assassin’s blade swinging behind her, narrowly missing. She released her hold on the unconscious man, swinging out one leg and knocking the man in his other knee. Another stumble, but he swung out anyway, blindly. It came up short, as Cassandra ran for him, grabbed his arm and brought it down, over her knee. Damian heard the snap, didn’t even care what bone broke, as the sword clattered to the floor. She grasped his head, tearing him down until that smashed into her knee, and left him a crumbled mess on the floor, with the other.

And then she was running for him, grasping him by his biceps. “Okay?” she asked, and he nodded, squeezing Ayah tightly.

“Thank you.” He could handle the bitterness over needing to be saved later- if it even came. This was Cassandra, this was family- and let them come, let them help. There was no shame in that.

He had been learning that for years. And he could say, over the past year, he’d been learning it more.

“More are coming,” he said, and she nodded. Then, gritting his teeth, Damian held Ayah out to her. Cassandra glanced at the child, then back up at Damian. “Take her.”

“Damian-”

“Take her!” It was a bark, a command, and Cassandra frowned- but took the child into her arms, holding Ayah to her as the baby hiccuped for breath from her sobs. “Get into the cave. Make sure she is safe with Pennyworth. Do not let him leave the cave, unless it is compromised.”

“And you?”

“This is my home,” Damian said, taking a step past her and stooping down. He picked up one of the discarded swords, testing the weight in his hand. It would do. “I will take it back.” He turned, leaned in and kissed the back of Ayah’s head, pausing for a moment because she smelled like a field of lilac- one that had been set alight. His mother and Tim, mingled in her.

His breath was shaking when he exhaled, and he told himself it would not be the last time he kissed her.

He gave Cassandra a nod- he had no words, and he know she would appreciate his lack of them more than if he had offered her any. And as she turned, moving quickly to the clock, Damian stooped down, lifting up the other discarded sword, taking a moment to close his eyes, to inhale deeply.

Take in the sounds of the rushing rain, now echoing through out the manor. The sounds of floor boards and footsteps and breathing. The building giving him the living instead of ghosts, for once.

And when he opened his eyes, the jade was so intense, so focused, he could have turned men to stone.

He gripped the swords tighter, let the handles rub the scars on his palms, as he stepped over the unconscious bodies, walking back towards the entrance foyer, towards the stairs. Walking towards his pedestal, where he would wait, and allow any to try and take his place.

This was his home. This was his family’s sanctuary. And this slight would not go unpunished.

*
Tim’s bike skidded to a stop. Hands still tight on the handles, he killed the engine, listened to the night around him. The water, beneath the docks, the wind, picking up the rain, as it splashed the ground around him. He got off his bike, reaching up to press his comlink.

“Batgirl?” he asked, glancing around. It was too... quiet. There was nothing at all. There hadn’t been, the entire trip. No Stephanie chatter in his ear, and when he reached the docks- it was as if the city’s heartbeat had simply stopped.

He got no response, and Tim tensed. He pulled his staff free, releasing it to its full length, and pressed his back to a shipping container, trying to take everything in again. It smelled like salt from the water, smelled like night rain, smelled like-

Heat, there there shouldn’t be. Where everything should be cold.

He reached up, hit his comlink again. “Batgirl- where are you?” One last try. But a few seconds of silence, and he knew that whatever feeling Stephanie had had, it had been right.

He pushed himself off the shipping container, made a run for the next one- was about to it when there was a sudden pressure on his back- someone’s full body weight, forcing him forward, so that he smacked into it. Tim groaned, whirling around and ignoring the pain, staff lashing out, smacking into a man’s side and sending him stumbling. He lifted it, brought it down on the crook of his shoulder, so that he fell to his knees.

Against the sound of it, there was movement- he heard footsteps, and Tim turned, cape flowing around him as he held his staff out, hand poised and ready to strike. Sure enough, another dark clad man was running for him, dodging his staff to get a swift kick into Tim’s side. The beta growled, took his staff to the man’s knees before getting a kick kick into his ribs-

And, when he fell to his knees, Tim’s staff cracked against the side of his head- leaving him unconscious before he hit the ground.

“It is always so good to watch you move, young detective.”

Tim’s head jerked up, the voice grating over his bones, making him shudder. The words alone gave it away- but he would know that voice anywhere.

Ra’s. Standing there against the rain, against the black of the night, watching him with those inhuman eyes. Maybe jade, once, like Damian, like Talia- but now so green, coiling like iridescent snakes, from endless baths in the Lazarus Pit.

“Ra’s.” Tim straightened up, pressing the end of his staff into the ground. Relaxed, despite the fact that he felt ready to jump out of his skin.

“No words on how you have missed me, beloved?” Ra’s asked, “I do seem to remember that, despite your indiscretions, you had shown me some affection before our last parting.”

Tim gritted his teeth. “What are you doing here? Where’s Batgirl?”

Ra’s clicked his tongue. “Your partner has been disposed of.” Tim tensed then, lifting his staff and pointing it at Ra’s.

“I swear to god, if you hurt her-”

“Your little darling is in one piece, Timothy. I am not here completely destroy the family the good detective has built for himself. Merely to take back what belongs to my blood.”
And in that moment, Tim’s blood ran cold. He gripped his staff tighter, watched as Ra’s took the few steps off the container before dropping down to the ground, in a graceful movement that no human should have been able to execute. He inclined his head, studying Tim, and the beta wondered if he could hear his heart racing, could see the thoughts running through his mind, like they were broadcast in his eyes.

“You’ll never get to them,” Tim said, “I won’t let you. I won’t let you hurt my family again.”

Ra’s chuckled, a low rumble from his chest- and it felt like the Earth could open up, could swallow them down whole, drag them into the bowels of hell. Tim swore he felt the heat, could smell the dank, wet rot of it all.

“Timothy, I already have.”

His heart got the better of him, in that moment. Tim charged, swung his staff at Ra’s, who jerked easily to the side, the blow completely missing him. Tim spun on his heel, ready to strike again, watched as Ra’s reached behind him, pulling two swords from their sheaths, against his back. He held them with an ease as if they were weightless, eyed Tim with intrigue, not fear.

Tim gripped his staff tighter again, ran straight for him- gave into the anger, building in him. Ra’s blocked the staff with his blades, jerking them and forcing Tim to take a stumbling step back.

“By now, I would assume they are already in the hands of my men,” Ra’s mused, smiling at Tim like the devil himself, like the demon he so claimed to be. “I cannot imagine my grandson has much fight in him now. You have pacified him. I will see to it that your daughter is not numbed to her true calling.”

“You will never get your hands on her,” Tim said, eyes darting over Ra’s. The way he stood, how he held his swords- the close quarters they had, between these large shipping containers. His mind was reeling, thinking, taking in each advantage Ra’s had, each thing that gave him even more of an edge.

Tim knew he didn’t stand a chance, one-on-one with Ra’s. Knew there were very few people in the world that did- and of them all, none were there to cover his back. No one was going to come help Tim.

He was going to have to do this alone.

And, Ra’s’s words had any merit- he would have to do it quickly, or risk harming those he loved the most.

* 

Damian walked up the stairs slowly, worked to keep his steps light, silent. His eyes were darting along the open space at the top, looking for movement in the shadows. Looking for anything that could tell him who else was in his home- how many.

His palms were sweaty, the swords feeling a strange weight. Not his ideal choice, he preferred the ones I kept in the cave, that he still trained with. The blade was a bit too thick, a bit too long- the reach would be nice, but Damian had no qualms being in his enemy’s space.

He reached the top, glancing from one hallway to the next. Listening- the broken glass in Ayah’s room let the storm outside flood him with sound, rushing rain and rolls of thunder. The other break sounded down the hallway- and he turned for it, stalking through the shadows. He paused at Stephanie’s room, before he gritted his teeth, lifting his leg and kicking the door open.
The moment he did so, a blade flew past him, skinned his cheek. He felt the skin give, open, as the blade stuck in the wall behind him.

He didn’t stop for it.

Damian barreled in, lifting a sword to block a blow that rang metal-on-metal through out the room. He leaned into it, another just missing him- two in the room.

He had expected more.

He lifted his other sword, backing off his first and lifting them both, crossing them to block another swing. He growled, dug his feet into the carpet of Stephanie’s room and flung the man off him, watched him stumble back a step.

He didn’t have words. He wanted them, wanted to appear composed, to talk down to the roaches that thought they were good enough to go after the grandson of the demon head, the son of the desert’s flower and Gotham’s dark knight.

He wanted to scream at anyone who thought they could dare to taint his home.

But all he had was a rage, building in him. A rage that had festered for months, began and lived in fear and self hate and doubt, for so long. The voices were back, screaming at him now- screaming all the things his grandfather had said to him, done to him.

The room smelled of dank earth and rust and stale blood. It felt of whipping fire, opening up his back. Misery and hopelessness clung to it, tried to suffocate him.

Damian screamed- he screamed, and he swung his swords with blood in his eyes. And all the pain he had endured, it came out as hate, came out as a need to show that he would not be taken again, he would not lose everything he loved-

He would not have his happiness ripped from his hands ever again.

Each clash of metal rang in his skull. His lungs burned as he moved, dodging blows and keeping his assault up, backing one man towards the broken windows. The other kept him moving, shifting, dodging blows and swings until every muscle was screaming at him.

It felt good. It felt like he was alive.

He turned as he elbowed his target in the face, sent the man stumbling as blood poured from his nose. He turned, baring his teeth as he stabbed one sword down- through the other man’s foot, into the floor. The assassin cried out, and Damian delivered a punch to his jaw, was sure his world was spinning for a moment.

He turned back to the other, pressing his sword against his jugular as he leaned back against the broken window, spikes of glass pushing into his clothing.

“My grandfather thinks I am still his to take,” Damian said, staring down the blade at the man’s eyes. “But I am not. I never have been. My life is my own, and I will not have him intruding again.” Damian took another step, pressed the sword closer, the assassin leaned further against the broken glass. The rain outside was blowing in, a chilling mist on Damian’s hot skin, like sea foam on burning stone. “And I will never allow him to place his hands on my daughter.”

He stared at the man for a moment- and there was a decision to be made. There were choices, as there had always been-
And for the first time in a long, long time, Damian let the blood his mother had graced him with make the decision.

He threw the sword away, grabbing the man by his clothing and hoisting him up, lip twitching as he glared up. “Never again,” he said, “will I be in chains.”

And then, against the thunder rolling in heavy waves, against the black of the night sky and cold rain, Damian tossed the man past the broken glass, into the night’s air. And he listened to his scream, as he fell- until there was silence, for a moment.

Until there was just his heart hammering in his head.

He turned then, staring at the other man. He walked over, pulling his sword up from the ground and swiftly lifting his leg, dugging his foot into his chest and kicking him. He fell to the floor, and Damian stood over him, staring down as he gripped the sword tightly.

He could kill him. He could kill them all- and they would deserve it. Anyone who raised a hand to his family deserved it, no matter what they had been taught. And someone had to make it clear to Ra’s that blood would be spilled, if it meant protecting everyone he loved.

“You are lucky,” Damian said, gripping the sword tightly, “That while I am my mother’s son- I am my father’s as well.” He tossed the sword aside, crouching down and grasping the man’s head, staring into his eyes. “But I do hope that for the next few hours, you experience hell first hand, in your nightmares.”

He smashed his head so hard into the ground that Damian felt his skull vibrating in his hands.

He stood up, flexing his fingers, when he heard a round of quick footsteps. He turned- but in the doorway it was only Cassandra, staring at him from behind her mask.

“He will not wake for some time,” Damian said, and then, glancing away from her, “I do not know that his partner will wake at all.” He glanced over at the broken window, and Cassandra followed his gaze.

When he turned back, her eyes were not judging him. He knew she never would- of all the family, she understood. Understood the memories of how easy it was to break the rule, how muscle remembered even when the mind screamed for it to forget.

“Ayah?” he asked, stepping away from the body and heading towards her.

“Safe in the cave,” Cassandra said, reaching out when Damian reached her, brushing her gloves hand up along his cheek. “The other two are secured. Drugged now.”

“How long will they be out.”

“Twelve hours.” Damian nodded.

“Enough time to figure out what to do with them. There must be more.”

Cassandra pulled her hand back, slipping past Damian to crouch over the unconscious man, securing his hands together. “Alfred found four more, on surveillance,” she offered, “Outside.”

“In case anyone else returns home,” Damian said, and then, in a rushed out breath, “Tim.”

“Is capable,” Cassandra reminded Damian, standing up.
“But against my grandfather,” Damian said, feeling his ribs constricting in, piercing everything inside his body. Because he knew, he knew Ra’s would not send his men for this, and idly sit back elsewhere. He would want to have his own hand in this-

And if he was not here for Damian, for Ayah- that meant there was only one other place he would be.


Damian nodded, slowly, despite that it hurt him, knowing he would not be going after Tim. That he was leaving him to fight his battle alone-

But he was doing exactly what Tim would do, and he knew it.

“We’re going to put them down,” Damian said, as Cassandra pulled her hands back. He moved back into the room, picked up one of the swords and gripped it tightly, let his scar rub against it. “Every single one of them, for coming into our home.” He turned back to her, held her dark stare, could feel her eyes through her mask. “For threatening our family.”

The smile she offered him was the purest, wickedest curl of her lips, and Damian could only return it.

*

Tim sucked in a breath through his teeth, his staff pushing at Ra’s’s swords. He could feel a layer of sweat clinging to his skin, beneath his suit, like a layer of grime from this man’s eyes alone, staring into him.

“You’re inside your head, Timothy,” Ra’s offered, pulling back and taking a step back. “It must be lovely in there.”

It wasn’t. It was chaos, a mess of Tim trying to figure out how to get Ra’s out into the open, where he had more space to work. A mess of worry over where Stephanie was, what he had done to her-

And, at the forefront, of Damian, of Ayah, terror over if they were alright.

“Lovely as a cell,” Tim offered, moving to swing his staff. Ra’s blocked it and Tim dug the end of it into the pavement, used it to swing himself up and deliver a kick with both feet to the side of the alpha’s ribs. Ra’s stumbled, grinning through sharp teeth.

“You can have one of those, if you like. Nowhere near the one I will have for my grandson- but if that’s how you want this to go.” Ra’s swung at him, and Tim dropped down, rolling before hopping up, turning, his back to the open space now.


Tim took a step back as Ra’s stared at him, as if he was terrified.

“But regardless, Timothy, you are coming back with me. You, that bastard my grandson bore, and the heathen himself.”

Tim tightened his grip on his staff, watched as Ra’s ran towards him. He threw himself to the side, barely in time, losing his balance and falling, shoulder taking the brunt of his fall. He grimaced, turning onto his back and staring up at Ra’s, a few feet away now.
“What did Damian ever do to you?” Tim yelled. “What the hell did that kid ever do to make you so hellbent on seeing him suffer?”

“He wasted himself!” Ra’s yelled it back, the green of his irises seeming to light up. “He wasted all his potential, he threw away everything I have worked so hard to give him.” Tim narrowed his eyes, digging his heels into the pavement but not pushing himself up. “He was trained to be the best. He should be standing by my side, ready to take his place should the end ever find me. He should be an Al Ghul, and yet he has forsaken my blood for that of the father you two share.”

“He has rules,” Tim yelled, “that’s all. Damian never did anything to slight you-”

“Abandoning the world I have hand crafted for him for the mess the good detective offered him is a slight. There must be a flaw in him, a flaw I never corrected in my own daughter, one in the detective that was passed on. But he is no good to me broken.”

“And how am I better?” Tim yelled. “I’ve got the same rules, Ra’s.”

Ra’s grinned- and oh, it was something wicked. It was sharp points of his teeth that glistened in the moonlight, the curve of his lips like he was the devil, and Tim was signing over his soul for the smallest of favors.

Something wicked, like he was seeing something enticing in Tim.

“And you have the same dark tendencies,” Ra’s offered, “However, unlike my grandson, who cast them off in order to accept these rules, you have let them fester. You have let them build, young detective. And you can let them out.” Ra’s inclined his head. “Your mind is a glorious thing, Timothy. And I would love to see it taken apart, to have a hand in sewing it back together. Oh, the things I could show you.”

Ra’s lifted his swords then, running at Tim like lightning. Tim rolled out of the way, tried to lift his staff, to get a hit in on Ra’s, but he had nothing but air. Ra’s turned, still grinning at him. “Loss can bring out many things in us, Timothy,” he said, “And while I will take pleasure in draining the blood that my grandson does not deserve from his body- I will enjoy more what it will do to you. What it will awaken.” He moved, and Tim barely jerked to the side enough, the sword slamming down on the pavement, the sound deafening in Tim’s ear. “I know you will never come willingly, Timothy. So I will take you. And I will break you. And in the end, you will thank me for everything I have shown you.” Another swing, another narrow miss. “Damian’s blood will drain the fight from you. And whatever is left of your spirit- your darling daughter’s blood will wash away as well.” Ra’s bared his sharp too, white as that of his eyes. “And when you’ve seen the truth, young detective, you’ll give me the bloodline I deserve- the true heir to the Al Ghul name-untainted by the muddled blood of my grandson.”

Tim saw Ra’s moving next- he saw it, but it felt slow, as if suddenly his eyes were taking the world in around him at ten times their usual capacity. The rain drained away, he not longer felt its chill on his face, didn’t hear it pounding against the ground.

All he heard was Ayah crying, shrieking into the night- crying out for him to protect her, for him to save her. Crying over this demon’s hands holding her, when he had done nothing to deserve touching something so precious. All he saw were Damian’s eyes, the life gone, the color fading. Empty, where they had been so full of life, of love, of passion. Everything washing away into greys, doused in reds-
His eyes narrowed, his pulse pounding so hard in his head it echoed, bouncing off the walls of his skull to become deafening.

Ra’s loomed over him, and in the split second his chest was exposed, Tim had his legs up, feet planting into his chest. He kicked with all his might, sent the man stumbling back, before he was up, swinging out with his staff.

“You will never,” he started, growling through his teeth, smashing his staff so hard into the alpha’s wrist that he heard bone shattering. The sword held in that hand crumbled to the ground. “Touch my daughter!” He swung it into Ra’s’s side, moved out of the way of his sword, struck against at his shoulder. When the sword came again, his staff was there to block it, Tim twisting it back and then in, smashing Ra’s’s arm.

The second sword clattered down.

He was moving as if he was possessed, as if every bit of breath this city had to offer had been breathed into Tim’s lungs. He felt weightless on his feet, felt like his staff carried the weight and power of every forlorn soul walking his city. That it housed every single moment of agony he had ever personally experienced. He was himself, yet he was someone else- he felt as if he was watching his body from a distance, pulling the strings but trusting in his gut, in his most animalistic reactions to make his strikes true.

Tim lifted his staff, smashed it right into Ra’s’s skull, even as the ran reached up, grasped it in a grip like iron, tried to hold it off. Tim gritted his teeth, felt his hold give, felt it sink into the man’s head, watched him crumple down.

The moment Ra’s was on his knees, Tim tossed it away.

“You will never touch Damian,” he continued, stooping down to pick up one of the lost swords. The weight in his hand was foreign but not unknown- he had trained with Bruce with countless weapons, and even if a blade wasn’t his choice, it was not unknown to him.

Ra’s didn’t move. He looked at Tim like Tim was unraveling right before him. Like he was his personal entertainment. He looked at Tim with blood streaking down his face from his hair, leaving him decorated like he was a true demon.

He watched, as if he could stop this at any time- but he found more pleasure in letting Tim make his choice.

“You cannot stop me,” Ra’s pointed out, “You have rules, like you said, Timothy. Rules you will not break. And if you break them- well then, aren’t you just like me?”

He grinned, and Tim tightened his grip on Ra’s’s sword.

“I’m nothing like you,” he spat. “Damian is nothing like you. You kill for sport, for fun.”

“And you do not have the bravado to follow through with such an action.”

The rush of the blood in his veins was still deafening. Tim took in every point of the alpha’s teeth, the inhuman gleam of his eyes, and he knew, he knew that Ra’s would never leave him be. That he would never leave Damian be- that Ayah would forever live in the shadow of the demon’s head’s eyes.

He let the tip of the sword clink against the ground, his arm going limp for a moment.
“I didn’t, no,” Tim admitted, “because no matter what someone did to me, in this city—there was reason behind it. There was always something worse they could have done.” He squeezed the handle. “But you, Ra’s? What you’ve done—it cannot get worse. You threaten to life of your own grandson because he chose a better path— you would kill my daughter just to see me break. You’d take everything I have, just to see me become something I’m not.”

Tim lifted the sword again, holding the alpha’s stare.

“I’m not like you,” Tim said, his breath rushing out, “I’ll never be like you.” He pulled back—and then, Ra’s’s eyes still on him, he drove the blade forward, into the man’s chest. He leaned into it, watched his eyes go wide, saw so much white that it seemed brighter even than the green, like a chasm opening up, sucking in the lazarus blood in his body. “Because when I love, I love endlessly. And when I kill,” he leaned closer, and knew, just knew that Ra’s could see his eyes, through the lenses of his mask. “It’s for a reason.”

He twisted the blade, pulled it back and watched Ra’s reach up, hands pressing to the gushing wound.

“You will never touch Ayah. You will never touch Damian. And you will never touch me again.”

Tim tossed the sword down, heard it clatter to the pavement, as Ra’s crumpled down, collapsing to his side.

Staring up at Tim with those wide, all-seeing eyes.

And he told himself that he wasn’t like him.

“Tim?”

The beta whirled around in a mass of his flowing cape, found Stephanie clutching at one of the shipping containers. He could see, a few over, one was open, the bottom propped up enough that she could have crawled out through the gap.

“Steph!” He rushed over to her, let her collapse against him, held her up as she fisted her hands in his cape. “Are you alright?”

“Feel like… an elephant trampled my… lungs and skull. But I’m in one piece.” She looked up, tried to smile. “Whatever he put in me… it’s hard stuff.”

Tim clutched her tightly, pushed her into his chest. “I’ve got you now,” he whispered, could feel her looking over his shoulder, at the alpha’s body. “You’re safe.”

“But are you?” she whispered, twisting his cape in her hands. Tim squeezed his eyes shut, exhaled—felt his hands beginning to shake.

“He’d haunt us,” he whispered, “forever. I had to. He’d take Damian, he’d kill Ayah, he’d—”

“Tim,” she whispered, glancing up at him, looking past the blood pooling in the rain, on the black pavement behind them. “I’m not… I’m not judging you. I’m not asking why.” She shook her head. “I don’t care Tim. I’m not Bruce. And I trust you- I trust your judgement. I’m just asking if you’re okay.”

If he was safe from himself.

“I,” Tim started, before sighing. “I need to get home. Damian— Ra’s said—”
Stephanie nodded, pulling back. She was unsteady on her feet, and Tim could see, through the lenses of her cowl, that her eyes were hazy. The drug was still thick in her blood.

“Go,” she said, leaning back against the shipping container. “I called Bruce. He’ll be here soon. I’ll stay- make sure Ra’s doesn’t go all zombie-crawler on us looking for a Lazarus Pit.”

“Stephanie-”

“Go. Your family might need you.”

Tim held her stare for a moment- and it was silent, that she was his family too. They all were. But his heart beat for Damian, for their daughter- and there was no one else, beyond that.

He nodded, turning and heading for his bike, running as fast as he could. His shoulder ached from his fall, but he ignored it, hopping on and speeding away from the docks, as quickly as possible. Ignored it because he shouldn’t even be alive- he should be torn to pieces. There was no way he could bet Ra’s, not under circumstances he had no control over.

He shouldn’t have been able to drive that blade into his heart unless Ra’s had *wanted* him to.

He tried to reach the Cave on the comlink, but all he got was static. Still, as he was on the streets, turning onto the highway and heading for the Manor- he was yelling for someone to pick up. Despite the crackling in his ear- “Red Robin to the cave, is anyone there?”

Still, static.

“*Dammit* it’s Tim, someone answer me!”

Nothing.

And then, quietly, broken as he felt the rain chilling him to the bone. “Damian… Ayah… please. *Please.*”

*Please.*

* *

Damian huffed, the rain having soaked through his tshirt. It clung to him like melting skin, as he stared at the man on the ground. His knuckles were bloody, his sword long lost. His body ached, but he could ignore it- would ignore it, as Cassandra secured the man’s wrists.

She was talking, but he knew not to him. Her comlink to the cave still worked, and it was Alfred, in her ear. Alfred, who could not reach any of the family on their links.

He had said they must have brought a transmission blocker, left it somewhere on the property. Cassandra’s only worked because she was so close.

“He thinks that was the last of them,” she offered, straightening up. Her hair was stringy, soaked, clinging to her cheeks, the nape of her neck.

“My grandfather would not send only eight men,” Damian offered, “We must be missing some.”

“Unless they aren’t *here.*”

And Damian knew what she insinuated- unless they were with him. *With Tim.*
“I’ve got to go,” Damian said, “We cannot reach Brown or father or Drake, I need to get word to them, they need to be prepared-” he broke off at the sound of an engine, and next to him, Cassandra tensed. But the bike that came barreling over the property, along the tree lines that acted a natural wall, was one Damian knew anywhere.

Tim. Tim.

The beta was off his bike, letting it collapse to its side, while Damian ran to him. The space was a blur, was a rush of cold rain on his chest and face- and then the feeling of Tim’s suit pressing into him, belts digging into his flesh and tshirt. Tim’s arms, locking around him, pulling him in tight, as Damian clutched at his back, beneath his cape.

“You’re alright,” Tim breathed, pressing his face into Damian’s neck. Trembling- or was that Damian?

He couldn’t tell.

“I was so worried,” Tim whispered, “What Ra’s was saying-”

“My grandfather?” Tim lifted his head, and Damian clung tighter. “Where is he?”

For a moment, Damian couldn’t see anything, not the gorgeous blue of Tim’s eyes behind his lenses- only the white of them. And then Tim exhaled, and he could see them again, see the stunning blue, the black of his pupils-

“Dead.”

Damian felt his heart suddenly stop- but then a moment later it was beating again, harder now- and he was pulling Tim harder against him, letting him rest his face in his neck again. “Beloved,” he whispered, and Tim gripped him tightly.

“It doesn't matter,” Tim whispered, “Nothing matters if you’re okay.” He lifted his head. “Ayah-”

“In the cave. With Alfred.”

“Where we should go,” Cassandra broke in, from a few feet back. Tim nodded, pulling himself from Damian, the two turning. They followed her back into the manor, down into the cave.

The moment the elevator stopped Damian was off it, hurrying across the cave. Alfred was at the computers, frowning at them and working one handed- the other securely holding Ayah against his chest. Damian reached for her, not caring that he was soaked to the bone, lifted her up into his arms and cradled her in both his arms. The movement, the sudden press of wet, cool clothing, had her eyes opening, and she huffed, giving a little displeased sound.

Tim was there, a moment later, looking down at her. “Princess,” he whispered, behind his mask his eyes breaking, “It’s so good to see you.” He reached down, and she reached up, clutched at one of his gloved fingers, still sniffling but not crying.

“It is good to see you, Master Timothy,” Alfred offered, as Cassandra walked up behind him, leaning over the counter. “Tell me you are alright.”

“In one piece.”

“And what of Miss Stephanie, Master Bruce?”
“Steph stayed behind,” he said, glancing over at Cass. “Ra’s drugged her, but she had come to by the time… by the time…” he took a deep breath, and then, in a voice that was strained, that Damian could hear cracking, “Ra’s is dead. I killed him.” Tim sucked on his tongue, and Damian leaned in closer, wanted to be pressed against him. “She stayed back, waiting for Bruce to… clean up.”

“Is she alright?” Cassandra was staring at him, and Damian could see the tension in her shoulders, in her jaw. She was fighting to keep it from showing.

“I think so,” Tim admitted, and Cassandra turned away. Damian watched her grip the counter hard—so hard her wondered if she’s break one of her own bones with it. Tim had turned back to him, was looking down at Ayah, before Alfred was up, gently taking her back.

“She will catch cold,” he offered, “if the two of you allow her to get soaked. We are most secure here, and I am sure Master Bruce will return in a moment. Perhaps you two can clean up.”

Damian allowed Alfred to take his daughter, nodded, reached out for Tim’s hand. He grasped it, pulling Tim away, walking him through the cave, so that Tim could begin to remove his suit.

The gloves came first—then his cape, and finally, his mask. And when it fell away, Damian saw every crack in his gorgeous eyes, every fiber that had grown raw, thread bare.

“Beloved,” he whispered again, and Tim reached out, pressed his chilled, bare hands to Damian’s cheeks.

“He was going to kill you,” he whispered, “he was going to kill you and Ayah in the hopes that it would break me. He wanted me to lose my mind Damian. I couldn’t let him— I couldn’t live with him haunting us. I couldn’t let him put you in chains again, let him hurt our daughter—”

His voice broke off, and Damian pulled Tim into him, held him flush to his chest. Tim nuzzled into him, body shaking in a wrecked, nearly silent sob, and Damian rubbed his back. Hushed him, softly.

“Tim—”

“I’m not like him,” he whispered, “I’m not like him. I did it for you. For Ayah. For us, for our family. I’m not a killer. I’m not—”

“I know you are not,” Damian whispered, gently rocking Tim’s body. He clutched him tightly, felt each breath Tim took. “I nearly killed tonight, Tim. I thought I had. I pushed a man from a window.” Damian closed his eyes, could see the man’s body, which he and Cassandra had found. “He was breathing, but his back is broken. If he does not die in the rain, than he will be crippled for life.”

Tim said nothing, still clinging to Damian, he pressed his face down into his hair, smelled the rain water there.

“Do you know why?” Carefully, Tim lifted his head, looking at him. “Because I was angry. Because of everything that has been done to me, to us. I needed to prove a point to my grandfather. A point,” he paused, pressed his mouth to Tim’s forehead, “that you have proven far better.”

“Which is?”

“We are not his puppets— and while I may love my father, his rules be damned if someone touches my family.” His grip on Tim was iron, steel— but Tim only seemed to try and press closer. “You are
not my grandfather, beloved. Nor am I. But we… understand that rules, they must break under certain circumstances. And,” he leaned in again, Tim straightened up, “if you fear I hold ill will against you for what you have done, know that I am not sure I have ever loved you more than I do, in this moment.”

Tim’s eyes lit up over that, and Damian released him, just to sink his hands into his hair.

“I know what it must have taken,” he whispered, “To take that final step. I know because I fight it, every day. And I know that you love us, unconditionally.” He leaned in, pressed his mouth very gently to Tim’s- and it felt like heaven, to kiss him. To taste Tim’s lips against his own, to sink into him like they were melting together, like they were one existence, reuniting again. “The world is a better place without him.”

Tim nodded, slowly, and Damian could see relief in his eyes. Could see the storm there calming. He smiled, pulled Tim in again, sighing into his mouth and feeling like he would never let him go again- like he would simply crawl into the spaces between his ribs, live against the beat of his heart.

He was broken from the idea by the sound of an engine in the cave. Tim pulled from his arms, watched as the Batmobile came into view- waited, as Bruce climbed out, helping Stephanie out as well. She leaned heavily on him, walking towards them. In the distance, behind them, Cassandra was running towards them, taking Stephanie from Bruce and helping her girlfriend towards a chair.

Damian let Tim go, followed behind him as he walked over towards his father.

“Bruce,” he started, and the man held a hand up.

“Not right now, Tim.” He pulled his cowl down- but the eyes there, the dark blue, it wasn’t angry, wasn’t what Damian expected to see. “Stephanie told me.”

Tim paled. Paled until he was ghostly, looked like a drowned version of himself with his wet hair still sticking to him. “I had to,” he offered, “Bruce, it was for my family. For your family. For my daughter.”

Bruce lowered his hand, taking the last step towards Tim- before he reached out, pulled him into his arms. Tim melted against him, collapsed, and Bruce clutched one large hand at his back, keeping him locked in the embrace.

“I know,” he whispered, “I know.”

His voice echoed sadness. Sadness over the choice- sadness over the fact that it had to be made at all. Agony, over the fact that it was Tim who had done it.

Anguish, because Damian knew his father would not say he would do the same thing. And for a moment, he thought the alpha was judging himself on that- and failing himself.

“I’m sorry,” Tim whispered, shaking again, as Bruce continued to clutch onto him, hold him like he was a child again. Hold him like the father Bruce should have always been- and damn his failures, like he wanted to be. “I’m so sorry.”

Bruce said nothing, as Damian walked closer, reaching out to press his hand to Tim’s back, just above his father’s. He rubbed small circles into it with his thumb, glanced into his father’s eyes.

Bruce was just as torn has Tim seemed to be. And Damian knew he may never outwardly tell Tim that he was glad for what he’d done-
But he understood. Beneath his own rigid rules, he understood. Damian wondered how many 
Bruce had wanted to end just as Tim had ended his grandfather. How many times he’d heard the 
Joker laugh and wished, for Jason’s sake, that he could strangle the sound from his pale throat. 
How many bodies Batman could have left in his wake if is father wasn’t so stubborn.

A blessing, a curse- a muddled mix of everything, it really was.

“There are men all around the property,” Damian broke in, as Tim began to relax. “Cassandra and I 
have secured them- but they need to be dealt with.”

Bruce nodded, pulling back from Tim- who melted back against Damian now, taking his hand 
clutching it as if he may break his bones. Squeezing, like Damian had when he’d given birth to Ayah. “I have to call Talia,” he said, “We need her help.”

He moved past his boys, heading over to the computer. Alfred stood to give him the chair, and 
Bruce paused to squeeze his shoulder, giving him a thankful smile, before he glanced down at Ayah. He reached down, very carefully smoothed his gloved hand over the top of her head, and 
Damian watched his father lean over, kiss the top of her.

And he knew there was a silent thankfulness, in the gesture.

He pulled himself away from it, leading Tim away, through the cave. He found a dry shirt for 
himself, while Tim peeled the top half of his suit down, let it hang over his waist, still seeming 
dazed. The shock was settling in.

Damian reached out, placed a warm palm on his chest, the other hand reaching up, rubbing along 
his cheek. “Drake,” he whispered, and when Tim’s eyes seemed so unfocused, barely staring at 
him, he said, harder, “Tim.”

Tim blinked, focusing, and Damian sighed, leaning in, kissing him gently again. All he could do 
was keep Tim from receding into himself- he knew that. But it hurt, feeling as if he was helpless, 
watching his lover cracking inside him, sinking in and getting lost in the spaces of his own ribs.

Damian simply took his hand again- wanted to never let it go- and led him back towards the 
family. He pulled away from Tim only to take Ayah, who was far more content in his arms now 
that she could be pressed to a dry and not wet shirt. She cooed softly, turning and pressing her face 
into Damian’s chest, and he held her tightly, rocking her softly as he watched his father trying to 
establish a connection his with mother.

They hadn’t heard from Talia for a solid week. She tried to check in as often as possible, to give 
them updates on Ra’s and his movements- and, Damian knew, to catch glimpses of her 
granddaughter.

He missed her. He wished still, in his bones, that his mother hadn’t left. And now, more than ever, 
he wished she was there- as if she could teach him secrets on how to comfort Tim. As if the way 
she had chased away Damian’s nightmares as a child could chase away whatever hell was slowly 
brewing within his boyfriend’s head.

The screen gave nothing but static, until suddenly it change to black- and then there she was, 
Talia’s face. Her eyes looked tired, Damian could see shadows beneath them, the lines around her 
eyes and mouth aging her more than he had seen in some time.

“Talia,” Bruce said, “Your father-”

“Has slipped from my radar,” she said, “He was supposed to be taking a large number of league
members on a mission across seas- but I received word an hour ago he and a few of his men never arrived. He left control of the mission under his White Ghost.”

“He was in Gotham,” Bruce said, and Talia’s eyes widened. She glanced along the screen, and Damian knew she was taking them all in.

“Is everyone alright?” Her stare had turned to Damian, and he tried to smile at her- truly. But his cheeks hurt with the action, and he knew it didn’t carry into his eyes.

“No,” Tim answered, staring up at her. She turned her attention to him, studying the blooming bruise on his bare shoulder. “No, we’re not all alright. Ra’s is dead.”

For a moment, Talia was absolutely still. She stared at them, and Damian couldn’t read her. He couldn’t tell what emotion were flitting over her eyes, was given not a single curve of her lips in either direction to let him know if she boasted the relief he felt, knowing the Demon’s Head was finally no longer looming over them-

Or if she mourned, internally, because whatever monster he had slowly become, he had been her father. And that was a love hard pressed to die.

Bruce cleared his throat, licking his lips before offering up, “He was dead. We no longer have a body.”

“What?” Tim lurched forward, grabbed the back of Bruce’s chair, forcing it to turn. He reached out, clutched at his cape where it attached to his suit, jerking him forward. His eyes were fire-

Damian wasn’t sure he’d ever seen him touch his father like that. “What the fuck do you mean there’s no body? I left Ra’s with a sword through the damn heart. I killed him, Bruce. I fucking killed him, I did it, I killed him, I—”

Tim broke off when Stephanie reached up from where she sat, clutching at his other wrist, trying to ease him back. Tim gritted his teeth but let go of Bruce’s cape, easing back, and Bruce glanced over at Talia, before turning back to Tim.

“When I reached the docks, there was no body.” Bruce glanced over at Stephanie. “Stephanie had fallen unconscious.”

Tim glanced over at her, and Damian knew it was terror in his eyes, for her- not anger. Never anger for the omega he had loved first- had never stopped loving, in some way.

“I’m sorry.” she offered, carefully letting go of Tim’ wrist- but he was taking her hand, squeezing it, before leaning over her, wrapping his arms around her, letting her cheek rest to his bare chest.

“I shouldn’t have left you,” he whispered, “I’m sorry.” He glanced back at Bruce, and Damian watched his father turn away, looking back at his mother.

“There were signs of two other bodies. Stephanie confirms that two assassins had been left unconscious but alive when Tim left. Their bodies were also gone- and I found evidence of two persons who may have removed all three.”

“There were eight men here,” Damian broke in, “four broke into the Manor- four remained outside, working a perimeter.”

“And you are alright?” Talia was looking at Damian intently, and he nodded, turning slightly so that she could properly see Ayah in his arms.
“We are all alive,” he offered. He knew the question was directed at the child in his arms, as well.

Talia nodded, turning her eyes back to Bruce. “That’s twelve men accounted for- the exact number missing from the head count of the league sent out.” She sighed, reaching up to pinch the bridge of her nose. “He planned this. He planned this directly under my nose- he knew I was watching him. I did my best to remain a phantom when I worked to sabotage his plans, but it seems I have failed.”

“If they took his body,” Tim said, gently pulling away from Stephanie, “Then they’re going to resurrect him.” Talia only nodded.

“There is always a contingency plan, with my father. Always the instructions that should he fall, he is to be returned to a Lazarus Pit immediately. He may have never admitted it- but my father fears death as much as any man.” She folded her hands. “I’ll get eyes on every Pit I know of. I will not allow him to come back again.”

Damian knew, in that moment, that his question regarding his mother’s feelings on the issue was answered. She may have loved the man somewhere, in a forgotten cavity of her heart- but she would not forgive him. She would not give him another chance.

He was glad for it.

Tim reached up, covered his mouth as he leaned against Bruce’s chair, pulling off only to rub his jawbone. He had gone pale again. “He wanted me to do it,” Tim whispered. Damian watched him, watched the way his eyelids fluttered, the crease of his brow, the lines around his eyes. “Ra’s wanted me to kill him. He told me… he wanted me to break. He planned this. He planned for me to take that step- and that he’d come back to enjoy my fall.” That hand moved up into his damp hair, tugged at it. “He fucking planned it all and I played right into his hand.”

“Tim.” Stephanie, with her eyes sad, leaning forward. Stephanie, with Cassandra protectively behind her, like an inky phantom, a shadow.

Tim only shook his head, and Damian could only imagine the knots in his stomach. Could only imagine the nausea rising in him.

“You did what you had to,” Bruce offered- and Damian’s own heart skipped a beat. He needed his father to get through to Tim- he needed Tim to know that Bruce still loved him.

He needed Tim to see that he wasn’t a different person, for what he’d done.

“I knew he was letting me win,” Tim offered, before he gestured to himself. “Look at me, I’ve barely got a scratch on me. I should be dead. I barely held my own against the Demon’s Head before- and I hadn’t even been fighting to win.” Damian cringed, knew the night Tim was referring to. Knew that everyone in that room did-

A night Damian still wanted to thank Dick for. Because if he hadn’t been there- if he hadn’t caught Tim-

Damian’s life would be nothing at all like it was, in that moment.

“Then we operate as if Ra’s truly planned his own death,” Talia offered. “It changes nothing. Little love, you said there were eight of my father’s assassins on your property?” Damian nodded. “And they are secured?”

“Sedated and bound,” Damian offered.
Talia nodded. “Good.” She glanced back at Bruce. “I need them, beloved. For interrogation- they may know which Pit my father has instructed for use.”

Bruce nodded- and if he held any fears over what Talia’s *interrogation* would entail, he kept them to himself. “I’ll call Clark,” he offered, “He’ll help me get them to you. Diana even.”

Talia nodded- and Damian could admit that he was proud of her, the lack of anger or any sort of emotion at all in her eyes over the mention of his father’ *current* lover. He knew better than to ever expect Talia to stop loving Bruce.

Bruce glanced back at the rest of them. “Cassandra, you and I will gather them up and secure them. I want everyone else upstairs and getting some much needed rest. I’ll re-arm the security system- but I don’t think we’ll be getting anymore visitors tonight.”

Damian took a moment to glance along his family- a group of tired eyes, shadows showing under them as if they had all been awake countless days. Stephanie, still slumped forward in her chair- Tim, with his distant eyes.

He hoped for their sake, his father was right.

*

“Here, I’ve got the bassinet set up,” Tim offered, gesturing for Damian as the omega stood up from the bed where he had finished feeding Ayah, a few minutes ago. He was gently rubbing her back as he walked over, leaning over and settling her into the bassinet. They’d gotten it from Kon and Cassie as a gift, and had yet to even properly put it together or use it.

They were both glad they had it now.

“Comfortable, princess?” Damian asked, adjusting the blankets around their daughter. Ayah stretched, content, sleepy sounds coming from her, and the omega kissed her forehead, before straightening up.

Tim leaned over her now, rubbing his thumb over her plump cheek. Wanting to pick her right back up, to hold her in his arms for the rest of the night.

He’d wanted to be the one to feed her- but he’d felt so terrified that his hands could shake, that she would see the distance, in his eyes. He’d felt better busying his hands, putting the bassinet together.

Tim kissed her forehead, hesitated over her, his chest tight. “Daddy loves you,” he whispered, stroking her thin, dark hair now. “So much princes. More than you’ll ever now.” Another kiss to her forehead, and he was pulling back, straightening up and turning around-

Found Damian watching him, standing next to their bed.

“Come here,” Damian offered, pulling the blanket back and climbing in. Tim hesitated- hesitated because he felt like he would defile this space, this little bit of heaven they had constructed, in this room.

But Damian’s eyes, they were calling him. Looking at Tim like he looked at no one else- and he couldn’t deny him, couldn’t keep himself from moving toward the bed, crawling into it and accepting Damian’s arms around him. Couldn’t deny himself the comfort he so badly craved.

Tim closed his eyes, pressed his face into the crook of Damian’s neck, let himself tremble. Let himself hate, hate himself for playing exactly into Ra’s’s hand, doing exactly what the alpha had wanted-
Maybe he was everything the man said he was. Maybe he’d just damned Damian, and Ayah, the whole family. Maybe-

“Beloved,” Damian whispered, reaching up to stroke Tim’s hair. “Speak with me, please.”

Tim inhaled his soft scent, turning so one cheek was pressed to Damian’s shoulder. He could just see the bassenit across the room.

“What if I’m everything Ra’s said I was,” Tim whispered, “What if I just damned us all. I just wanted to protect you, Damian. And Ayah- I couldn’t let him have you, either of you.” Tim squeezed his eyes shut, and they burned, burned like fire and cotton and acid had been crammed into his skull. “What if we’ve been lying to ourselves this whole time? What if we can’t be happy-”

Tim was pushed up suddenly, forced to stare at Damian. The omega’s eyes were so dark, so pretty, had Tim’s stomach going into knots.

“You are nothing like my grandfather,” Damian said, squeezing his arms. “Nothing like him, Tim. You are the most amazing man I have ever met. You take agony and carry it on your shoulders as if it is wind. You smile as if you see the stars in everything around you.” Damian let his hands run down Tim’s arms, find his hands and grasp them. “You make me happy, beloved. We have not lied to ourselves for a moment- because we have been happy. And that cannot be undone.”

Tim watched Damian, how his eyes had begun to soften. And his heart ached, ached for everything he had ever felt for the omega. Ached over the agony he’d felt, when Damian had been taken- over the uncertainty he’d felt, when wanting him-

Over the love he’d felt, when he realized he could laugh during their intimacy. Over the pure adoration and awe he’d known, when Damian had held Ayah for the first time.

Ached because Damian was a miracle to him, and that he was still here, still loving Tim- looking at him as if nothing had changed-

Maybe he was right. Maybe it didn’t even matter, what Tim had done. If Damian still loved him. If he still had him, had their daughter.

“Tim,” Damian whispered, squeezing his fingers. “You’re nothing like him because you have reminded me that I matter. You have reminded me of my worth- and I am forever thankful for it.” Damian glanced past him for a moment, over at Ayah, sleeping now, before his eyes came back to Tim’s. “You’ve given me our daughter. You’ve loved me. I do not care what are you, what you fear you will become- you are my beloved. You are my soul.” He lifted Tim’s hands, kissing his knuckles- and Tim felt his heart, in his throat. Leaving him dizzy. “I love you, like I’ve never loved before. Like I will never love again. You will always have me- have us. Your family.”

Tim reached out, hands freeing from Damian’s as his arms wound around his neck. He pulled him in, pressed his mouth to Damian’s desperately, passionately- felt the omega clutching at his shirt, inclining his head as Tim’s mouth trembled against his.

“And you’re my life,” Tim whispered into his mouth. Damian smiled, pressed his forehead to Tim’s.

“And she is our heart.” Tim smiled, offered up a laugh- and it felt good, so good, bubbling up from his belly, bringing color and warmth to his lungs.

“This is the corniest thing ever,” he admitted, and Damian rolled his eyes. Tim took the chance to
lean in, kiss him quickly. “And I wouldn’t change it for the world, baby boy.” He eased Damian down, against his chest, stroking back his hair as Damian hummed in relaxed approval, seeming to melt against him. “I love you, Damian,” he whispered, and the omega gave him an affectionate squeeze.

“I love you too, Tim.”

Tim smiled, let his chin rest atop Damian’s head. For the moment, he let his fear go silent- locked it away to lay dormant. He had Damian in his arms. He had Ayah sleeping safely, just feet away. He had his family in one piece- Stephanie resting up in Cassandra’s room, Bruce working with Talia to ensure that Ra’s would not haunt them again.

He had everything, everything he could have ever dreamed of, and he hated himself for ever thinking it would disappear. For even entertaining the notion that he was anything like the Demon’s Head.

He would never be Ra’s Al Ghul. He had too much to love. He had too many people who needed him- and he needed too many people.

He had limits, he had rules- and one slip, it wouldn’t change a thing. It wouldn’t change how he treated crime in Gotham, on patrol. Wouldn’t change his stance on Bruce’s iron rule.

He wouldn’t kill again. Not for the trivial things he knew Bruce feared they might deem as reason, if they allowed themselves to fall into that vice. If they allowed themselves to feel above those they hunted. If they allowed themselves judgement.

Tim wasn’t a god. He wouldn’t pretend to be one- but he was human, and he knew the man he held was human as well, no matter how amazing Damian was. He wasn’t unbreakable, wasn’t immortal-

And the daughter who slept so close, she needed him, needed both of them.

For that, he wouldn’t kill for the sake of Bruce, for the sake of revenge or any slew of emotions that could ever over take him- but he would kill to protect his family. Tim would drown himself in blood if it meant Ayah lived to see another day-

If it meant that she woke up and had Damian to protect her. Especially if it meant she woke up to the both of them there.

He couldn’t lose them- and they, they couldn’t lose him. He’d never allow it to happen.

When Damian finally pulled back, it was only to stretch out, to tug Tim down into the bed with him. Tim smiled, laughed against as Damian nuzzled into his chest, the omega relaxing his tired muscles and bones against Tim’s heat, against the perfect dying-fire smell that made him feel safe, made him feel at home. Tim kissed the top of his head, kept his arms tightly around him as he closed his eyes, felt his heart finally beginning to slow.

He’d sleep, at ease with the sweet cinnamon-almond smell of Damian’s contentment. He’d sleep and dream of nothing but the way Damian held their daughter, of Ayah’s little happy sounds and her eyes that made his heart truly melt into nothing at all.

He’d sleep and forget what he had done- and come morning, if he dared to remember, he knew he would not remember alone. He would never be alone again.

And he would never be like Ra’s, never be what the alpha wanted of him, because he had the
support of the man in his arms, had the love of their tiny daughter. Had the endless net that was his family, to keep him from ever falling so low that he never saw the sun again.

And he’d dream of all the tomorrows he would have, because of what he had done.
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Damian and Tim have been through so much, have given and taken, have nearly lost everything- that it seems the only thing they lack is that final link, that final stitch of the other inside their very being. And yet- Tim's not sure it's even possible. But Damian will be damned if they don't try.

Chapter Notes

And here you have it, the epilogue!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tim gasped, felt one of Damian’s hands clawing at his lower back, blunt nails pushing into bare skin, grasping just above where his jeans rode. The omega was beneath him, pushing up off the bed to fit flush against him, soft little noises falling from his mouth as Tim kissed him until they were both dizzy.

When Tim pulled back, trying to breathe, Damian was watching him through half-lidded eyes. His mouth was already going pink, his lips wet, and he smelled so utterly sweet that Tim’s head was swimming. He could barely see straight.

He tightened his hands in the sheets. “You sure you wanna do this?” he asked, feeling Damian’s other hand sliding up under his shirt, rubbing along his ribs. “You’re so close to your heat, we can try after-”

Tim clamped his mouth shut as Damian shook his head. “No,” he whispered, pulling himself up to gently kiss Tim’s mouth. “I want to do it now. I want to go through that with you in my head, beloved.”

“We’ve barely,” Tim paused, swallowed, “It hasn’t been that long.” It was the same concern he’d voiced, over and over again, since Damian had brought it up, more than a month ago. Since Damian had looked at him with those stunning eyes and told him he wanted Tim embedded in every fiber of his being, wanted to feel him and his every thought.

And he wanted that for life.

Damian smiled at him softly, pulling his hand from the small of Tim’s back to stroke some of his hair back, to tangle his fingers in it affectionately. “It could have been thirty seconds,” Damian whispered, “And I would know, Tim. I’ve always known.” He leaned in, nuzzled against his neck. “I love you. I love everything we have built. I want it to never end.”

Tim smiled, turning and managing to kiss Damian’s hair. He felt the fingers on his ribs flexing. “Okay.” He swallowed again- he’d agreed before, countless times. He’s told Damian yes despite the fear that they were jumping into something they weren’t ready for-
But in the end, it almost seemed absurd. They had jumped into all of this before they were ready- and it had been what they needed.

Damian smiled, lifting his head again and kissing Tim for the countless time that day. Tim fell into it, the perfect glide of his boyfriend’s mouth, the way Damian tasted like a special sort of heaven that Tim never wanted to share with the world. His own slice of perfection, of paradise, and Damian gave it to him without a thought.

The omega pushed gently at Tim, and he let them roll over, until Tim was on his back and Damian was straddling him. He leaned up, grinning down at Tim as he grasped at his own shirt, pulled it over his head and dropped it off the side of their bed. Tim simply stared up at him for a moment, marveling over every bit of dark skin, every scar, every curve of muscle. Damian was just too beautiful for him not to stare.

He reached out, rubbed his thumb along the hem of his boyfriend’s jeans, before his hand slid up along his stomach, felt every curve of his muscles, wanted to trace them with his tongue. He couldn’t believe it had been four months- it felt like the blink of an eye but also an eternity, since Damian’s belly had been swollen under his hands. Since Ayah had still been sleeping inside him.

“You’re staring,” Damian said- but it was said so fondly that Tim only smile, slowly sitting up, hooking his other arm around Damian’s waist.

“You’re stunning,” he whispered, pressing a kiss to his collar bone, his thumb tracing little circles into his abs. “I can’t help it.” Damian flushed, but let his head fall back as Tim bent his head, trailed slow kisses along his chest until he had his mouth around one nipple, rolling the bud beneath his tongue. The omega’s hands found his shoulders, grasped tightly as Tim teased and worried the sensitive, pink flesh, before turning to the other- drawing out a perfect little gasp.

Damian slowly rolled his hips forward, digging into Tim’s stomach. Despite his jeans, Tim could feel that he was hard- but oh, he’d known he had been since before they even made it to the bedroom. Knew Damian had been so excited over what they were going to do- and the fact that Tim would have his hands and mouth all over every inch of him, before they were done.

Tim pulled back, just long enough to pull his own shirt off and toss it away, before he was reaching down, working open Damian’s jeans.

“The things I could do to you,” he whispered, and Damian shivered, groaned low in his throat. His sweetness only intensified, heightened by his arousal- and Tim knew in a few days he’d be unable to keep his hands off his lover, unable to deny him a single thing. He swore Damian’s heat was catching, was a fire that ignited under his own skin as well.

“All of them,” the omega gasped, as Tim got his jeans open, rubbed the shape of his erection through his underwear. “Whatever they are, I want you to do them all.”

Tim growled, shoving Damian off his lap. The omega spilled to the bed, and Tim was behind him, grasping his jeans and underwear, peeling them down over the swell of Damian’s ass as the omega rise it, spread his thighs. Tim left them half way down, reaching out and cradling Damian’s balls in his palm, before rubbing it up along his shaft, watched as he shivered, heard his moan as Damian turned his head away from the pillows.

“Whatever you want, darling,” Tim whispered, leaning over him and kissing the small of his back. He glanced up, saw the array of scars littering his dark skin, the way they broke it with fractures of much paler, stitched up flesh- the way they moved with a strange sort of life with every flex of a muscle. Tim reached his other hand out, rubbed it up along his spine as he squeezed Damian’s
cock, got a shaky breath from his boyfriend, before another tremble as he paused to rub one of the heavy, fat marks left behind by metal once sewn into leather.

Their entire story, it was written on Damian’s back. Each scar a piece of their agony- and every bit of unmarred flesh, a victory.

Tim kissed the small of his back a second time, between the dimples that rested there, before pulling his hand back, rubbing it over Damian’s ass. He released Damian’s cock- which got him a frustrated whine- so he could properly grab both ass cheeks, smiling to himself as he splayed Damian for his own enjoyment, exhaled against his wet hole. The omega shuddered, hand rubbing desperately along the sheets.

“Drake,” he breathed, “Tim, please, please.” Tim smiled, pressed closer so he could lap over Damian’s hole, groaning because he was so wet, so completely sweet, that for a moment Tim could believe he was in heat now-

Except that Damian wasn’t, he knew. He was just some sort of utter perfection, so enticing that no matter what he did, he constantly had Tim’s knees going weak.

“Ahh- Drake, yes.” Damian pushed back against his tongue, groaning when Tim squeezed his ass, gasping for breath because Tim’s tongue was a mystery to him, how it always had him coming so undone within mere seconds. Damian squeezed his eyes shut, every breath dragging a noise form his throat as Tim continued to lick, until his tongue was pushing into his body, and Damian’s cock was throbbing over it, his belly beginning to go tight.

Tim groaned, his own cock aching in his jeans. He felt Damian rocking back against his tongue, and then,

“Careful,” he breathed, and Tim only thrust his tongue faster, dragging out the most perfect, moan, so obscene that Tim swore he nearly came, in that moment. “Beloved, I-” Damian paused, gasping as his spine tingled, small bits of warm static filling his spinal cord, throbbing beneath the heavy scar that traveled almost the length of his back. “-I might-”

Tim released Damian’s ass with one hand, reaching between his legs and grasping his cock. He squeezed the base firmly, and Damian’s jerked his hips, nearly coming undone, whining loudly as his orgasm receded, cut off but the pressure of Tim’s hand.

“Not yet,” Tim breathed, pulling back. He let go of Damian, only to grasp his hips, to flip him onto his back. The omega tared up at him, eyes dark, pupils nearly gone- stared up at the wet shine on Tim’s lips, his chin, the way his own eyes seemed like electric fire.

Damian whined, arching his back, loving the way those eyes ate into him, as if Tim was re-memorizing his body. He knew Tim had mapped even the smallest of scars out already, knew every line of Damian’s body like he was a constellation.

Knew Tim looked at him exactly as such, as a wonder- and it still left his belly in knots, his skin alive and tingling that someone could find so much wonder and perfection hidden inside his skin.

Tim managed to pull Damian’s clothing off his body, the omega arching to help him. Once he’d tossed them aside he crawled off the bed himself, working his own jeans open and off his body. Damian turned his head, stared as inch upon inch of skin was revealed, until Tim was blissfully naked and he was sitting up, smirking at Tim like the devil himself.

The beta shivered, didn’t move as Damian got on his hands and knees, reaching a hand out to grasp
at his lover’s hip. Wordlessly, Damian glanced up at him and let his tongue roll along the head of Tim’s cock, teasing the slit and gathering up the precum there. He swallowed it down as the beta shivered, before mouthing his way down his shaft, sucking gently at the base. A part of him wanted to take his hand from Tim’s hip, to slid it between his thighs and see if he was wet, if he could slip a finger into his body. He’d been given little opportunity to experience his lover when Tim acted an omega like himself- but it was intriguing, the desire for it.

“Damian,” he breathed, as the omega licked his way back up, before he repeated his name in a shout when he sucked the head of his cock into his mouth. Damian hummed in approval, easing half way down his shaft, moving slowly as his other hand reached down between his own legs, fingers running along his own cock, subtle and so light it was nothing but a frustrating ghost. Another time, maybe, he’d leave Tim as wet as the beta left him.

Tim tipped his head back for a moment, let his eyes fall shut, got lost in the warmth of Damian’s mouth, the wicked way he moved his tongue with each slow bob of his head. He reached down, stroked his hair back as he felt his legs trembling, felt the desire to thrust into his mouth, over and over again, until Damian was swallowing down Tim’s orgasm.

He swallowed thickly, tugging at the omega’s hair gently, guiding him off as he looked back down. “Careful,” he breathed, “Or I won’t get to fuck you.”

Damian whined over that, before he pulled away from Tim completely, sprawling back in the pillows like the prince he truly was. He looked at Tim expectantly, easing his thighs apart.

“Best do it now,” Damian teased, “Before I do it myself.” Tim groaned, eyes rolling for a moment before he crawled back onto the bed. He’d take Damian up on that later- for the moment, he needed to be inside him. He slipped between his legs, lifting them gently so they rested on his hips. Damian smiled up at him, pushing himself up on one elbow and reaching between them, grasping Tim’s cock and rubbing the head gently against his overly-slick hole. He bit at his lip as he helped guide Tim inside him, falling back to gasp and arch when his lover was fully seated inside him.

His legs tightened around Tim’s hips, until they were lock around him, and Tim’s hands were rubbing his thighs, vision blurring for a moment form the intensity of Damian’s heat, the way his body always fit so perfectly around Tim.

Like they were made for each other.

Tim eased his hips back, thrusting in shallow and slow. Damian sighed over it, rubbing his hands along the sheets as Tim watched his mouth falling open, lips moving in almost silence as he mumbled words to himself that Tim couldn’t understand. As he gave himself over to that sweet feeling in his belly, the way pleasure seemed to seep out of his body slowly, from his core, towards his fingers, his toes.

“You always feel so good,” Damian whispered, glancing up at Tim, who smiled down at him. Tim leaned forward, stilling his hips as Damian pushed himself up, met him half way and accepted the kiss the beta pressed to his mouth. Tim grasped at the back of his neck, holding him as he simply kissed Damian, with every bit of love he could drag up from his soul. Damian’s body clenched tightly around him, and Damian squeezed his legs in response, mewling into Tim’s mouth. Tim’s teeth nipped gently at his lower lip, tugging, before he broke the kiss, enjoying the way Damian panted against his mouth. Smiling, the omega cocked his head slightly, before whispering, “Turn me over.”

“Yeah?” Damian nodded, and Tim grinned, pecked his lips again, before releasing Damian and
gently unwinding the omega’s legs from around his waist. He pulled out, rolling Damian over onto his belly- watched as the omega pushed his knees into the bed and raised his ass, spreading his thighs.

Tim grasped Damian’s ass, teasing his cockhead against his hole as Damian whined, before the omega pushed back, easing Tim’s cock into his body until his ass was pressed flush to Tim’s body. The beta gasped, and Damian smirked, looking over his shoulder. “Come on beloved,” he teased, “You know I won’t break.”

Tim growled from his chest, was almost unsure the noise was even him for a moment, before he grasped Damian’s hips with both his hands, blunt nails digging in as he guided him along his cock, thrusting quickly, hard up into his body to ignite every nerve. Damian gave a shout, before turning, pressing his face into the pillows, teeth gripping one to muffle his noises.

Tim tossed his head back, enjoyed the way Damian’s body clenched around him tightly each time he settled deep in his body- as if he would never let Tim go. He grasped at Damian’s ass, got a broke, muffled mewl, before he leaned over him, reaching out and burying his hand into his hair.

“C’mon baby boy,” he breathed, tugging Damian’s head up form the pillows, “Don’t hide those pretty noises from me.”

Damian gasped, eyes going wide, thighs shaking as Tim fucked him harder still, to the point that Damian was seeing star bursts along the edges of his vision, each time Tim’s cock slammed into his prostate. His scalp burned in the most pleasant way as Tim tugged at his hair. Damian squeezed his eyes shut, unable to handle it, his cock aching between his legs, his near orgasm earlier building again, at the base of his spine, tight in his belly.

His body clenched around Tim tightly, one, and the beta groaned. “Baby, you’re so close,” he whispered, and Damian nodded, gasping sharp when Tim tugged his hair again. He released Damian’s hip, leaning over him more and reaching around him, getting a hand around his cock. He stroked up quickly, not quite in time with his thrusts but it didn’t even matter, Damian’s nerves were on fire by this point.

With a loud cry, Damian came, pushing back against Tim’s body, shaking with the sheer force of it. Tim slowed his hips, kept his thrusts sharp and shallow, staying mostly just inside Damian’s body, giving him something to squeeze as he rode the waves out. When Damian’s head began to bow Tim let go of his hair, let him relax into the bed, before he carefully pulled out. Damian whined, pushing his face into the pillows against, his thighs wet from the extent of his orgasm- Tim’s cock slick with it too.

He leaned over his boyfriend, kissed the small of Damian’s back. “You okay?” he asked, and Damian nodded, not lifting his head, mumbling something. Tim chuckled, moved to kiss the edge of the scar along Damian’s spine. “Baby boy, you have to pick your head up.”

Damian managed, glancing back at Tim, still panting. “I’m far more than okay,” he managed, before he carefully rolled over, collapsing onto his back. He stared up at Tim, holding up his arms, and the beta laughed, crawling over him. Damian wrapped them loosely around his shoulders, leaning up to kiss him, his mouth warm, like liquid silk against Tim’s. “And I’ll be even better,” he whispered, “once you feel as good as I do.”

Tim laughed into Damian’s mouth, Damian pushing up to reach down, grasp the base of his slick cock. He took the hint, pulling away from Damian’s kiss and spreading his boyfriend’s thighs, easing back into his body again. Damian sighed, shivered, tipped his head back and closed his eyes. He was so pliant under Tim, warm and set and so easy to move, so relaxed, that Tim could
barely contain himself. He gripped at the sheets, holding himself up as he rocked into Damian’s body, pressed his mouth down to Damian’s neck and kissed against his pulse.

“How I,” Damian started, fingers flexing in the sheets, “be in your lap?”

Tim groaned, eyes rolling. “Oh god, like you have to ask?” Damian laughed, even as Tim thrust into him again, the sound ending in a moan.

It was possibly the best sound Tim had ever heard.

He pulled out again- his cock throbbing over the fact that he was so close, but kept denying himself Damian’s body long enough to reach release. Tim settled back into the pillows and Damian climbed into his lap, easing down onto him again, locking his arms around Tim’s shoulders as he rode his cock, gasping loudly with each lift of his hips. Tim moaned, wrapped his arms around Damian and dug his nails into his back, feeling his scars beneath his fingertips.

Damian leaned in, pressed his forehead to Tim’s, watching his eyelids fluttering. “Come now beloved,” he whispered, purposefully clenching his body around Tim. “I want you to feel as good as you have made me feel. Please, Tim.”

Tim clutched tighter, moaning out Damian’s name as he lifted his hips as best as he could, meeting Damian’s downward thrust as he felt his orgasm pulsing down his spine, turning his stomach to iron tangles, his cock pulsing until his body was empty- and even then trying to give Damian more. Trying to give him *everything*.

Damian smiled, kissed Tim as he began to come down from it, the curve of his lips against Tim’s mouth making him smile as well. Damian clung tightly, nearly purred as Tim’s hands began to rub along his back- comfortable now with the way Tim touched his scars.

Didn’t doubt that Tim saw the beauty past them, the story in them.

“How?” Damian asked, and Tim chuckled, nosing under his chin to nuzzle his neck.

“How baby boy? *Always.*” He kissed his pulse again, trailing them down Damian’s neck slowly. The omega squirmed a little, loving that Tim was still inside him- not ever wanting to move, to lose that connection.

Tim paused to suck gently at the base of Damian’s neck, and Damian relaxed more around him. He smelled like such a heaven Tim never could have dreamed of- swore even his skin tasted sweet, in that moment. Tim dragged his teeth along it, carefully, and Damian shivered, lightly raking his nails along the top of Tim’s back.

“Drake,” he whispered, “Tim…beloved.”

“You’re sure?” Tim asked, still rubbing his hand along Damian’s back. The omega nodded.

“There’s only you,” he whispered, “There only ever was you. Only ever will be. I *want* this.”

Tim nodded, focusing on the feeling of Damian’s pulse, beneath his skin, under his mouth. He tried to focus on calming him, heard Damian gasp softly as Tim’s pheromones rolled over him, left him clenching around him once, before relaxing. Soft, pliant- exactly where his mind and body needed to be.

And then, with his mind open and his heart *praying*, Tim sank his teeth into Damian’s neck.
Dark flesh parted, and the sweetness in Tim’s mouth washed into saltiness, into copper. He clutched tightly at Damian, could feel a throbbing pull in his own chest, a strange dizziness in his head. Damian’s voice echoed inside his skull, his gasp, the sound of Tim’s name rolling off his tongue as a mingling of their scents washed over him.

But despite Tim begging for entrance, for the sanctity of Damian’s headspace, it felt as if there was a block. He trembled, for a moment allowing panic to wash over him-

He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t bond with Damian. His fears about it were all true, he couldn’t forge that connection-

Tim felt Damian unwinding his arms from Tim’s neck, reaching for him. Tim released his hold on Damian’s back, one arm locking around Damian’s waist, while the other was lifted. He felt Damian’s mouth on his palm, his wrist- following veins beneath his skin towards the crook of his elbow.

“All the way?” Damian breathed, his voice sounding so far away, dream-like. Musical, whimsical even.

And then Tim felt the sharps of his teeth, pressing into his skin. The moment it broke his mind seemed to burst, eyes going wide as he felt Damian’s breath rush against his skin. And he could feel the omega’s chest opening up, could feel Damian’s wonder over the sensation, his elation of suddenly having Tim’s voice echoing in his head.

Tim clutched his arm tighter around Damian’s waist, held him until the omega was shaking, until he finally dared to pull off his neck. Tim straightened up, slowly, glanced down to see Damian pulling off his arm, perfect little indents from his teeth showing in his pale, sensitive skin- welling up with drops that looked like rubies.

Like there was treasure, inside Tim.

Damian glanced up at him, smiled as he straightened up, and Tim felt a rush of affection of it, loved the curve of his lips and the shimmer in his eyes.

And Damian, he felt Tim’s emotion, so strongly his breath rushed out again, eyes going wide. “I can feel it,” he whispered, and Tim smiled. He reached up, sank both his hands into Damian’s hair and pulled him down for a kiss.

The omega was dizzy over it, swore he felt every detail of Tim’s mouth like never before. Felt his love and adoration through such a could-be simple gesture. Felt it in the very depths of his body, until he was trembling, hands rubbing up Tim’s chest, gripping at his shoulders.

“You did it,” he whispered into Tim’s mouth, and Tim smiled at him- charmed and dizzy, still reeling in the sensation that he was feeling Damian’s happiness, clouding his head and filling his chest.

“We did it,” he whispered, pressing his forehead to his lover’s- his mate’s. He couldn’t give a damn about whatever Damian had managed to do, whatever he had needed to bridge that final gap between them. Didn’t feel like he had failed, because he’d been unable to form the bond on his own.

Nothing mattered, because it had worked.

Damian laughed suddenly, and the sound filled Tim’s chest with fireflies, beating their wings like hot static. Laughed and Tim smiled and caught it too, giggling and leaning his head into the crook
of Damian’s neck.

“I love you,” he whispered, turning and kissing the fresh mark on Damian’s neck. Another scar he’d bare- but this one telling a good story, giving a proper ending to the trail of them on his back.

And Tim’s arm would bare it’s counterpart.

“I know,” Damian whispered, “god, Tim, I can feel it.” He grinned, lit his face up like the stars, and Tim was kissing him again- could do it endlessly. Would give his last breath to Damian, if it meant he could kiss him until the end.

The omega sucked at Tim’s lip, then his tongue, shifting in his lap- before he gasped into his lover’s mouth, nails digging into his shoulder.

“You’re,” he whispered, clenching his body tight around Tim, “You’re hard again.”

Tim flushed, trying to glance away- but Damian only lifted his hips, rocking down onto him. Tim gasped, scrambled to get his hands on his omega’s waist, as Damian smiled.

“Good,” he whispered, “it saves me from asking if you will take me again.”

Tim felt a rush of pure want in that moment- his and Damian’s, a mingling of Damian’ sweetness and Tim’s fire, of Damian’s pure, unfiltered desire creeping into his chest.

Tim’s cock pulsed, and he whined as Damian carefully lifted himself off him. The omega crawled from his lap, standing and reaching across the bed for him. Tim took his hands, climbing from the sheets, before Damian tugged him in close, taking a few steps back until he was pressed to the wall. He sought out Tim’s mouth, kissed him hungrily as he ground forward into him, felt Tim’s cock sliding against his own, still wet from Damian’s body.

“Here,” the omega managed, between kisses- and Tim didn’t need him to finish.

He’d never forgotten what it had been like, to have Damian’s legs around his waist, the omega desperate and pressed to the wall. Never forgot how good it felt to support Damian and listen to each of his small, desperate noises.

He’d never forgotten a single moment of the string of encounters that led them to where they were.

Tim grasped as Damian’s thighs, hoisting him up as Damian once again locked his legs around Tim’s waist. The omega eased back down onto his cock, before he tipped his head back, let it smack against the wall and didn’t even care as Tim filled him.

The feeling of it, of being full, flooded Tim’s mind, and his legs trembled. At the same time, Damian felt an unimaginable heat, a flood of pure desire from Tim, and he reached up, buried his hands in his hair.

Tugged and left fire in Tim’ scalp, just like before.

Damian forced himself up, leaned over Tim to stare into his crystalline eyes as he moved, the two rocking desperately. More than anything, Damian felt every bit of desperation in his beta, ever bit of love and want- had his cock throbbing over it.

He wouldn’t last. He didn’t want to.

“Tim,” he breathed, as his cock was pushed against his abs by the angle, as it left wet smears along
the hard muscles. “Beloved—”

“I know,” Tim managed, his pupils nearly gone as he looked up at Damian, managing to jerk his hips, to slide in so far that Damian lost his breath, gave a breathy moan. “It’s never felt like this.”

It hadn’t.

Tim could feel every bit of Damian’s pleasure, doubling his own, leaving him drowning. He squeezed the omega’s thighs, and Damian closed the gap between them, kissing him desperately. His fingers twisted, and Tim groaned into his mouth, thrusting harder, murmuring mine against Damian’s tongue before it pushed into his mouth—

And that did it—sent Damian plummeting into an orgasm that had him ripping from Tim’s mouth to toss his head back, to scream out in a voice that seemed to echo off their bedroom walls, wordlessly in pure abandon. He shook with it, couldn’t breath, couldn’t see anything except white burst against black velvet—except his eyes were open.

Tim stared for a moment, mesmerized, before he gave in, let Damian’s body drag his own orgasm up from his depths. He leaned his forehead into Damian’s shoulder, groaning out for his mate, hips jerking before they stilled—

And then there was nothing. Nothing except the two of them attempting to catch their breaths, to collect their thoughts from the jumbled mess that was a sudden, combined stream of consciousness. That was a connection neither could have even imagined.

When Tim finally gave Damian’s thighs another squeeze, his own legs feeling weak, the omega carefully unwound himself—allowed Tim to help lift his hips until he was no longer inside him. The loss of the physical connection left him whimpering, but he bit it back mostly, more than happy to have Tim guiding him the few steps to their bed, where they collapsed, tangling together and squirming about, among the sheets.

They let the silence fall over them, Tim stroking Damian’s short hair as the omega nestled under his chin, content to close his eyes, listen to his each and every breath. Content to lose himself in a calming hum inside his body that was Tim, simply letting him know he was close, he was there.

Damian didn’t think his head would ever be silent again.

*

Damian pushed open the nursery door, Tim following him into the room as they headed for the crib. Ayah had been shockingly quiet during her nap—Damian had expected that, the moment he and Tim had collapsed to the bed, she would have begun crying. As if she knew. However she’d been quiet enough that they had been allowed their few moments of blissful peace. That Damian had been allowed to cling to his mate and try to re-memorize the way his scent seemed to smell like burning cinnamon now—

As if everything that he was, Damian had now touched.

They found her squirming around her crib, glancing up at them. Damian smiled at her, leaning down and brushing at her soft hair. “Hello habibi,” he whispered, allowing her to grasp at his finger before he lifted her up into his arms to press to his chest.

“Does she need to be changed?” Tim asked, moving towards the changing table, but Damian shook his head. He paused, watching, as she reached one of her little hands up, pushed it against the raw mark on Damian’s neck.
The omega winced, but didn’t push her off, as her dark eyes tried to take in the change to her baba’s skin. A moment later, and she was gripping at Damian’s shirt. He boosted her up slightly, and she leaned her face there, smiling and giggling to herself.

“Does she know?” Tim asked, walking back over and reaching out to rub his daughter’s back. She quieted, going limp and warm against Damian, comfortable between her fathers.

“I am not sure,” Damian admitted, eyes glancing down at Tim’s arm, at the marks his teeth had left. It was unconventional- but Damian didn’t care. All that mattered to him was that it had worked.

And considering how he and Tim had started- he felt unconventional was very fitting.

Tim continued to rub her back, before gently taking Ayah from Damian. “Come over to daddy,” he whispered, turning her and holding her up. She giggled, squirming around, and Tim lowered her so he could showering her plump cheeks with kisses, before lifting her up again. Her eyes lit up like the stars he always saw in Damian’s, and she reached her little hands down towards him, grasping for him as Tim lowered her again for another round of kisses.

Damian smiled to himself, folding his arms, content to watch his daughter and his lover- his mate. He felt a bit of an ache in his chest, over the severity of his affection for Tim- caught the beta glancing at him, before smiling at him and turning Ayah so they could both look at him.

“Tell baba he’s the best,” Tim whispered, kissing her head. She cooed happily, and Damian laughed, moving closer and wrapping his arms around Tim. He kissed the corner of his mouth, quickly, before leaning down and kissing Ayah’s temple.

And feeling, after the ache receded, a calm he had never known. Like a fire had burned him for centuries, and finally, finally, he was standing in the cooling ashes, with the silence of just the wind. With just the sound of Tim’s heartbeat, he swore, inside his head.

And Ayah’s little smile, as she grasped at his finger again, holding tightly.

Like for the first time, there was simply nothing missing, in his world. In that moment, that sliver of time, everything he had ever needed was in front of him, within his reach- and it promised to never leave him.

Not ever again.

Chapter End Notes

I just want to thank everyone who has been reading, leaving kudos, commenting, anything on this fic. It means the world to me that so many of you stuck around for this journey. This is some of the most fun I’ve had writing in a long time, and seriously- thanks for the support and for going on this wild ride with me!

End Notes
Since the chapters are all going to be fairly long (...probably...) I don't know how quick I'll be with updates! But I feel like I delivered enough that it's (hopefully) worth the wait! <3

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!