Inescapable

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by TimDrobin

Summary

A young Robin aka Tim Drake is kidnapped by the Red Hood aka Jason Todd and the Outlaws. While being held captive, Tim tries to understand the reasoning behind Jason's actions. The answer may surprise you.

Notes

I also recorded an audiobook for the first chapter. If you guys like it I'll record every chapter. Link is down below to listen on youtube for free. :)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktTQ8FBT80A

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter Notes

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It was an unusual night for Gotham City. It was too quiet. Besides the traffic and general city noises in the background it wasn’t much of an exciting night for Tim Drake aka Robin. Bruce was out of town on some sort of business trip. He barely ever did this because of his role as Batman, but he trusted both Dick and Barbra to watch over Tim and patrol the city. Tim hated the thought of having to be babysat. He was seventeen now and didn’t think he needed much supervision. After all, Tim managed to pull off being Robin as well as remain the top of his class. He was in college now. He had been for three years. He was something of a prodigy. Bruce told him that there was definitely a spot for him at Wayne enterprises, but he had to complete the schooling first. He was very intelligent, tactful, serious, and resourceful.

These were traits that only made him a better student as well as a better Robin. Dick was much more laid-back and humorous. Jason was much more spiteful and angry. Tim always envied the two of them, mostly Dick. Who wouldn’t want to be Dick Grayson? As for Jason, Bruce did not like talking about Jason. Alfred told Tim what had happened and how Jason had died and come back. It wasn’t anyone’s favorite subject matter. Tim hadn’t really known much about him other than some old footage of him training as a young Robin in the Bat cave and his old red, green, and yellow suit that was torn partly burned. Tim’s modifications to the suit proved to be most worthwhile. He never understood why the previous Robins liked to go pants less. Tim removed the green and yellow color scheme and replaced it with red and black. It was much more comfortable as well as protective. Tim was wearing it proudly as he swung through the city, flipping and jumping off buildings. He was proud to be Robin.

**Tim’s point of view**
“I wonder if Barbra will notice that I’m gone?” I said out loud as the wind whooshed through my dark brown hair while I continued to swing through the night. I always loved the city lights at night from above. I also loved the thrill of falling and then shooting the grappling hook last minute. Though, I show great acrobatics I was nothing compared to how graceful Dick was. I knew that I shouldn’t be too reckless. He was on patrol and I wasn’t exactly supposed to be out. I hated being treated like a baby. I mean, I am more than capable of watching over the city for a couple of nights without it burning to the ground. I hated going against orders from Bruce or any of them for that matter. Barbra and Dick will have a shitfit if she realized that I snuck out by myself, but I see it more
of an opportunity to prove myself to Bruce. Plus, if I can save the life of someone then isn’t it worth it? Isn’t that the whole point? I didn’t need to worry about that tonight, anyway. I couldn’t find any action anywhere. The darkest allies were free of drug dealers and muggers tonight. What the hell? I know Nightwing is good, but this is ridiculous. He’s probably just as bored as I am.

I finally landed the rooftop of a nearby building. I gracefully stuck the landing, but I almost tripped with my next few steps. I laughed a little and continued to the edge of the rooftop and looked down. Even the traffic in Gotham wasn’t as hostile as usual. This was yet another one of the FML moments of my life. I quickly slapped my gloved hand up to my face and sighed with immense boredom. Great. I snuck out for nothing. That’ll be the story to tell everyone when I get back to the manor. I bet that they’d all be waiting for me to sneak back in through my window, and I would put on a dumb, innocent grin on my face and say something stupid like ‘I needed to run to the store’

Then Dick will lecture me on how dangerous it is for me to go out alone and what Bruce would do. He and Barbra will probably hold it against me and blackmail me later. Assholes. I mean, it’s not like I was expecting the Joker. Even I know not to try and take him on alone. I had been gone for approximately fifty three minutes when my com link buzzed and Barbra’s voice busted through my poor eardrum.

“Tim! Where the hell are you?!” She shouted numerous times. I began to think she would never stop. I was in trouble now and I knew it. Busted.

“Oh, hi Babs.” I said nervously, trying to be slightly comedic. I could tell she wasn’t going to let this go. I would have to return to the mansion as soon as possible.

“Don’t ‘hi Babs’ me! You snuck out! I already radioed Nightwing and told him you weren’t in your room. Where are you?” She said angrily. I hated how she talked down to me like she was my parent. She was only four years older than me. I was tired of being treated like a kid.

“Ugh, don’t worry about it. I’m about to be on my way back now okay. Jeesh.” I said with a undermining tone.

“Hey Tim, what the hell?” said a familiar deep voice in my ear. I could recognize Dick’s voice anywhere and I have to say that he was pissed. I could tell by his tone.

“Look, I’m sorry. I was just extremely bored and-” My voice cracked. I knew that was the absolute wrong thing to say. How could I be so stupid?

“You were bored?! That’s a good enough reason to sneak off?” He shouted.

“Come on, Dick. It’s not like you ever snuck out on patrol when you were my age.” I threw back at him sarcastically. This was true. Bruce told me about plenty of times when Dick used to sneak out. He was even younger than me, though in his picture he looks older.

“We aren’t talking about me, Tim. You are so much smarter than I was. You should know better. Now, get back to the mansion. You think you can handle that?” He said, trying to piss me off even more.

“Whatever.” I said coldly as I aimed my grappling gun, about to shoot it. Suddenly I heard a woman scream. I ran to the other side of the rooftop and glanced down at a woman with red hair and a purple coat on that looked expensive. She was in an alley being mugged by some goon in a trench coat with a gun.
“That’s going to have to wait Nightwing. I got trouble.” I declared before taking the com link out of my ear and dropping it on the roof top. I’d be back to get it after I dealt with this bad guy. I needed to blow off some steam and I didn’t need Dick yelling in my ear while fighting. I could hear his voice coming out of the discarded earpiece on the ground. I didn’t care. I’d answer for it later. Right now this woman needed my help. I quickly jumped off the side of the roof top, flipped and slid down the side of the building with great ease. As I made my way down to the ground, I noticed that the mugger had red hair too, just not as red as the woman’s. His old hat covered most of it, but it seemed familiar. I landed behind him and he turn around. I immediately kicked the gun out of his hand and then delivered another kick to his face. After he fell to the ground I saw his face. I know that I had seen this guy before. I looked up and saw that the woman was fleeing in the corner of the seemingly narrow ally.

“It’s okay, now. I’m not going to hurt you.” I said calmly while offering my hand to her. She didn’t respond at all. Was I that scary?

“No shit.” A deep voice said from behind me as an unknown figure grabs me and shoves a cloth into my face. The cloth smelled like alcohol. I struggled and screamed, but the guy was stronger than me. My hearing was beginning to go faint and distorted. I knew that it had to be chloroform. Suddenly standing up was proving to be too much of a challenge. My legs gave out. I went limp, but I could feel the mystery bad guy holding me up. After that everything went black.

When I began to wake up I kept hearing voices. I was fading in and out of consciousness. When I finally did wake up I remembered what happened and my whole body jumped. I was on the floor in a dark room. There was a bed and a door that lead to a bathroom from what I could tell. There was another door that was partially opened. Light beamed through and I could hear unrecognizable voices in the next room. I couldn’t quite make out what they were saying. I peeked through the small opening and saw three people. The first was a tall, red haired woman in a short purple dress. The woman was digging through the fridge. She pulled out a huge can of beans and a jar of peanut butter. I must have been in some hotel or something. She had some bulk to her figure and she looked like she just got a spray tan.

“Yeah, I vote we get take out.” Said a male voice. This wasn’t the voice I heard before I was kidnapped. The second person was a slender, yet somewhat muscular guy with that oh so familiar orange hair. His hair was cut pretty short and clean cut, but he had some stubble on his face. He was sitting at a table and leaning back in his chair.

“Nonsense!” said the woman. The third person was a tall muscular man with black hair. He had a little white streak of hair in the front. He was wearing a brown leather jacket with a white t-shirt underneath, and black pants.

“T’m going to have to side with Roy on this one. Sorry, Kory.” The man said. I knew that was it. That was the voice I heard before I was knocked out. What the hell did these guys want with me? I hadn’t ever seen them before. Then I realized that I wasn’t wearing anything except a pair of blue boxers and a white t-shirt. Even my mask was gone. That means that these guys knew my identity now. How could I have been so stupid? Why did I have to be so reckless? Maybe I could still sneak out of the hotel room. I thought about how I could do it. They thought that I was still passed out. There weren’t any windows in the dark room I was in so I knew I’d have to go through front door. These guys hadn’t tied me up or anything.

So, maybe they weren’t as smart as I thought. As I spied on them through the bedroom door all they seemed to do was argue over what kind of food they were going to get. I could also see another door, past the table and couch. That had to be the entrance. I could see that the lock was turned. So, I
needed to be prepared to quickly unlock it. Maybe, if I just move quickly, then I might make it. If they wanted to kill me they had the perfect opportunity to do so while I was unconscious. Despite what the motive may have been, I was not prepared to be someone’s captive. I waited until they were all looking away when I bolted out of the bedroom and headed straight for the door. I was a few inches from it when they noticed me and the red haired guy jumped me.

“Relax, kid. You ain’t going anywhere.” He said while trying to hold me down on the floor with my hands behind my back, but I quickly reacted with another kick to the face, this time much harder than before.

“We’ll see.” I said. Then I quickly unlocked the bolt on the door and opened it a little only to have it slammed shut by the other man with the white hair streak. That really pissed me off. I launched a barrage of punches and kicks at the guy, but he blocked every one of my attacks without much effort.

“I told you we should have tied him up.” muttered the red haired guy while holding his face.

“Who the hell are you?! I hissed while glaring at into his blue eyes.

“How insulting. I figured the new Robin would know my identity. Shows what the old man learned after all this time. Think about it, Replacement.” He said coldly. My eyes widened and my voice cracked as I began to speak.

“You’re Jason.” I can’t say that my reaction wasn’t completely abnormal.

“That’s right, kid. You should really learn some respect.” He said, before forcefully punching me in the stomach. I could tell that he wasn’t holding back. The pain was excruciating. I slide down to the floor as I held my abdominal area. I thought I was going to black out due to the pain. Then I coughed up some blood. It was dripping down my chin. I wiped it off with my arm. Jason kneeled down and began to whisper in my ear.

“That’s better. Now, if you try to escape again I’ll break your fucking leg.” His voice tickled my ear. It was deep and scary. As a result it made my whole body tingle. I was beginning to get goose bumps. This man was scary. I was trying my best not to cry, but I could feel the tears gathering in my eyes. This guy wasn’t kidding. I could feel the tears slowly streaming down my face. I felt worse than pathetic. What kind of Robin am I? Dick would have taken this guy out the first chance he had.

“W-What do you want with me?” I whimpered and the taste of blood still lingering in my mouth, still struggling to catch my breath.

“That’s a good question, kid. What do we want with him?” The red haired guy asked while looking at Jason with one brow raised. Who was this guy? I swear he looked familiar. I knew that I had seen him somewhere before. Even his voice sounded familiar to me, but I couldn’t place it.

“It doesn’t concern you, Harper. Just drop it. The kid stays with us now. End of story.” Jason said with a glare at the other guy. That is when I finally put two and two together. This was Roy Harper, the Arsenal. He used to be called Speedy and was Green Arrow’s sidekick before he started doing drugs or something. Batman and I had worked a case with the two of them once. I couldn’t recognize him because he wasn’t wearing a mask.

“Whatever, but I ain’t babysitting.” He said while glancing over at me while rubbing where my foot
had hit his cheek. Asshole. I know he was just being a smart ass, but I wasn’t a baby and I certainly
didn’t need to be under supervision. I just pouted.

“Hold him down, Roy.” Jason said as he went into the dark room from which I had emerged. Roy
then went over to me and pulled me to my feet. He held my hands behind my back again. I could
easily get out of his hold, but what was the point? By the time I could free myself Jason will have
been back and I didn’t feel like having my leg broken.

“Look kid, just do what he says and he won’t hurt you. I know Jason’s an ass, but he isn’t evil. Trust
me. He’s actually a really good guy.” Roy said quietly. What the hell did he mean? Jason kidnapped
me and he and his little minions are holding me captive in some unknown hotel for some unknown
reason. And I am just supposed to believe that deep down Jason’s really nice? I don’t think so. Was
this guy for real?!

“He kidnapped me and just threatened to break my leg if I tried to escape.” I said flatly glaring
behind me at Roy with a look that said die.

“I’m only trying to make it easier on you, kid. Get pissed if you want to. Just do me a solid and don’t
kick me in the face anymore. That’d be nice.” Roy said, countering my death stare. I kind of felt bad
for kicking his face, but then I thought about my current situation and quickly reconsidered. At least
he had a sense of humor, unlike Jason.

“By the way, this is Kory. If you think Jason punches hard, you should see her.” Roy said as the
woman began to casually walk toward me. Her eyes seemed to be glowing green. She was pretty
muscular for a woman. She was almost as tall as Jason. Her hair was a fiery red.

“Aren’t you a cutie? Pleased to meet you.” She said sweetly with a smile. Her hand made its way to
my cheek and gave it a pinch. She was acting as though nothing bad were going on in front of her
eyes. Like this kind of thing was completely normal. Who the hell were these people? Among all of
this crap I nearly forgot that I was in nothing but boxers and a white t-shirt. As if I weren’t humiliated
enough yet. I began to blush a little.

“Wish I could say the same.” I mouthed while jerking my head away from her orange hand. She
seemed nice, but they all played a part in my kidnapping. I wasn’t going to let them off easy and be
their perfect little pet prisoner. I am Robin after all. She laughed a little and then proceeded to go get
a bottle of water from the fridge. That’s when I heard a jiggling sound and saw Jason return from the
room with a long pair of hand cuffs. Prick.

“Wait a minute! Get away from me! ” I cried as I began to struggle and resist the hold that Roy me
in. Jason came closer with the restraints and I started to panic.

“Hold him, Roy!” Jason shouted while coming closer. Immediately and almost instinctively I
delivered a back kick to Roy’s knee and flipped over behind him as he yelled in pain. I didn’t even
kick him that hard.

“Damn it, Kid!” Roy screeched as he held his kneecap and bounced on one leg. Jason dropped the
shackles and came at me. I would have been mad to try and take him on like that. I took to the
defensive. The guy was like two feet taller than me and apparently, he was much stronger. I don’t
know why I so surprised at first. After all, Bruce did train him, but he trained me too. He basically
trashed the place trying to catch me. All I could do was dodge and keep my distance. His fighting
style was that of close range and his technique was similar to street fighting. Kory just sat there
watching like it was some sort of movie or something. All she did was laugh at the outrageous antics
of Jason and Roy. Finally, Roy managed to tackle me. This gave Jason the opportunity he needed.
He quickly reared his fist back and it connected with my face. I blacked out.
Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)
When I woke up, I noticed that I was lying on the floor of the bedroom from before except there was some light from a lamp by the bed on a cheap little nightstand. I was still scared. It was so quiet. I tried to raise up, but my head was killing me. I then remembered what had occurred. When my hand made its way to my head I heard a jiggling noise. I looked down to see that my left hand was cuffed. The other cuff was shackled onto Jason’s right hand. He was sleeping peacefully in the bed next to me. That would make escape far more difficult. I sighed and sat Indian style on the hard wood floor. My mind was quickly trying to concoct a way to get this cuff off of my wrist. I was beginning to believe that there wasn’t any way to do it without Jason noticing. If I had my gear from the Robin suit it would be no problem to pick the lock on the shackle, but it was nowhere to be seen. If these people were smart then they probably ditched it somewhere. Just my luck.

I looked over to my right and saw that there was a McDonald’s bag and a bottle of water next to me on the floor. I thought I might as well eat something. I was starving. Inside the bag was a cheese burger and an order of fries. I hated fast food. It is so bad for you. Not only for your body’s fitness, but also your cognitive functioning as well. I sighed again before I started eating. The fries were incredibly salty. At least they gave me a bottle of water.

“Be grateful you get anything, kid. Roy almost didn’t get you anything after that blow to his knee.” Jason said, startling me and forcing me to choke a little. Was he awake this whole time? Certainly, I didn’t wake him up. Also, I still didn’t feel bad for Roy.

“Sorry for the knocking you out, but you left me no choice.” He said, stretching his arms and legs. He wasn’t wearing anything but his red boxers and a white tank top. We almost matched. I could feel the blood rushing to my head as I blushed again. I was trying hard not to. I didn’t want to show any more signs of what might have been considered weakness. His muscular arms were covered in scars and a few bruises. I had scars too, but they weren’t as many or as noticeable.

“Well, I guess I’ll have to forgive you, now.” I said sarcastically, raising one eyebrow. Jason snickered as he looked down on me from the bed. What was he planning?

“You mean a hit. I still don’t understand why you kidnapped me. None the less, Batman will rescue me, you know. You can still let me go and save yourself the pain and humiliation.” I said seriously with my arms crossed. Jason remained unfazed as he took another puff. He did seem a little pissed about my first comment. I have read Jason’s files in the batcave. He protects certain drug cartels and takes huge cuts of the cash. He murders anyone who stands in the way of his business and forces the crooks that work in the drug smuggling scene to work for him. Jason is also known by another name, the Red Hood. The first person to use that alias was the Joker himself. Since then, several other criminals have used it, but Jason has the only one currently using it.
“Whatever you want to call it. And he won’t succeed. Bruce won’t find you and he’s probably not too broke up about it either. Take it from someone who knows.” Jason said with a tone filled with bitterness and hate. I knew what he was doing. His mind games weren’t going to work on me. I was trained better than that.

“You’re wrong. Batman, Nightwing, and Batgirl are all out looking for me as we speak.” I corrected him. He just laughed and put his cigarette out in the ashtray beside the lamp.

“Trust me, kid. You are better off with us.” He said calmly, so certain that he was right. I found his sentence to be obnoxious. There was no way the gang would abandon me. They were my family. I refused to accept this as my fate.

“Well, that’s your opinion.” I said while scowling.

“No, it’s fact. If you had stayed there you would have been killed. Just like I was.” His words were nothing to joke about. No pun intended. I had always felt a great swell of sorrow for Jason. His story was so tragic that it was almost unbelievable. I always thought that I would have probably killed the Joker if I were Bruce, but I know that that is not what Batman is about. Even if the joker hurt me, I still wouldn’t expect Bruce to take his life. That is a line he wouldn’t cross. Wait, was this all about jealousy or something? Or was Jason trying to protect me in his own twisted way?

“It was easy for us to take you away from Bruce. What if someone else managed to do that? I could have killed you several different ways by now. I could have done it fast, or made it painfully slow. Your Batman still hasn’t shown up.” He said with a sad look in his eyes.

“Hmph …Whatever.” I said, not giving up. This argument was clearly ridiculous; neither side was going to let up. Bruce probably just arrived back in Gotham. I knew that he would track us down and save me. There was no question. Bruce was way cleverer than this guy. I knew that any minute now he and the others would come bursting through the door.

“It sounds as though you have it all figured out, Jason. There is a problem, though. I have to pee. How exactly am I supposed to go to the bathroom like this? And how am I supposed to shower?” I said holding up my wrist and still looking up at Jason who was sitting at the bedside. Surely, we wouldn’t shower together. This was going to be a pain.

“You are a talkative little shit aren’t you? You are a smart kid. If you get any real opportunity to escape I’m pretty confident that you will succeed. So, you will be given bathroom breaks and shower time that will be monitored by either me or Roy.” He said before yawning. I could tell that I was not going to be happy with this. I think that he could tell. I was mostly private and a bit introverted. I was not going to be comfortable with this. Obviously, Jason proceeded to not care.

“You will only get one bathroom break tonight and you will get a shower tomorrow.” He said getting up. Then he slowly leaned down and looked me in the eye. I was wondering what he was doing. That’s when he grabbed me by my hair and pulled me to my feet. I yelled out in pain. He proceeded to drag me into the bathroom.

“Ow-Jason, stop it.” I cried before he let go of my hair in front of the toilet. It wasn’t too clean.

“Don’t try any funny stuff. I’m tired. If you don’t want to have hold it all night I suggest you go now.” He said while turning his head a little so not to be looking at me. Jason’s scars could be seen even better in the bathroom’s lighting. I relieved myself and after I flushed the toilet I washed my
hands. Then Jason ruffled my hair where my scalp was still sore.

“That’s a good kid.” He said this as if I were a toddler. Either he’s the world’s biggest asshole or he’s never spent time with kids before.

“I am NOT a kid!” I retorted, slapping his hand away from my head and looking at him with a frown.

“You look like a kid to me. How old are you, anyway?” Jason snickered as he looked down at me.
“Seventeen.” I replied while folding my arms across my chest. My birthday was in a month. He looked a little surprised. I didn’t really look my age. I have always been a bit small and looked young.

“Could have fooled me.” He said with another grin and a small laugh. He must have been trying to piss me off. What was his problem? Now he is going to try and be funny and laugh. Earlier he threatened to break my leg. Now he was teasing me about my age?

“What does it matter how old I am? How old are you?” I asked, trying to play by his rules.

“I’m twenty-five. And, your age doesn’t matter. Not really. It just means that I can be even harder on you and not feel bad.” Jason said, playfully shoving me a little. Idiot. I just sighed and pouted a little. Twenty-five wasn’t old at all.

When it was time to go to sleep Jason slept in the bed while I was made to sleep on the floor. I didn’t have a blanket or a pillow. It was freezing and hard. They could have at least given me some more clothes. I just laid there in a little ball, trying to trick myself into believing that this was all just a dream. I hoped that I would wake up in my warm bed in the mansion. The smell of Alfred’s cooking would be the first thing I would notice while waking up, just like always. I woke up in tears. It was early in the morning. I didn’t like to sleep for more than five or six hours. Jason, on the other hand, stayed asleep for much longer. I had to force myself to sleep for many more hours or my mind would torture itself. When I woke up I noticed that clock on the nightstand read 5:13 PM. I sighed and rose to my feet. I had such a headache. Suddenly, I noticed that Jason wasn’t in the bed. Instead of being shackled to him, I was shackled to one of the bedposts. No one else was in the room. This was my chance! I karate chopped the bedpost and freed myself.

I peeked out the door of the bedroom and saw Roy’s red hair on the couch. It seems as though that he had passed out while watching TV. The woman was nowhere to be found and neither was Jason. I knew that I had to get past Roy, but how? There was a dresser filled with clothes for both Roy and Jason. (I’m guessing, anyway.) I put on some of Roy’s jeans and a grey sweatshirt. It was a bit too big for me, but Roy’s clothes fit me much better than Jason’s. I could have drowned in his. I didn’t have any shoes on, but at this point I didn’t care. I had to make a run for it. The door to the bedroom squeaked softly as I slowly opened it. Roy didn’t budge. He continued to snore. Excellent! I silently made my way out of the hotel room. Now, all I had to do was exit through the lobby and I’d be home free. Our room was on the third floor. I decided to take the stairs since I didn’t know when Jason would be back. Finally, I made it to the lobby. It was a cheap hotel to say the least. I made my way past the check in desk. Many people took notice that I wasn’t wearing shoes, only socks. I found that a bit comical. I was almost the entrance when suddenly I spot a familiar face entering. There stood my kidnapper, Jason Todd. I have to say that he was less than happy to see me there in the lobby. I froze with fear as he approached me. What could I do?

“Where do you think you’re going, kid?” he asked, sarcastically. He was holding a bag of what appeared to be Chinese food.

“I’m leaving, Jason. You can’t keep me here.” I said, trying to stand my ground. He let out a chuckle.

“No you’re not.” He replied, reaching his hand into his brown leather jacket to reveal the handle of a gun. My palms began to sweat.

“If you struggle or make a scene right now, I will kill everyone in the hotel and possibly more. I didn’t want to play this way, but you ain’t leaving me much choice. Come back to the room with me
now, or everyone in the lobby dies.” He threatened in a deep, serious tone. He meant it. What had I
gotten myself into?

“You wouldn’t” I replied, looking him in the eye with a scared expression.

“Try me.” He whispered into my ear. I looked around and noticed an elderly couple at the checkout
desk. There were also two children playing tag near the entrance being accompanied by their mother.
There was an old man sitting on one of the couches reading the paper, and at least three different
staff members. I tensed up in anger before taking a deep breath and conceding.

“I hate you” I muttered in defeat while walking to the elevator.

“Just be a good bird and get in your cage.” Jason said with an angry smirk. I sighed. That night I
didn’t get to eat and Jason made sure we were cuffed to each other again. This was a nightmare. I
just went to bed hungry and heartbroken. Surely, the others were looking for me. They knew I was
missing. I still had hope that they would find me. That was my last thought before nodding off to
sleep.

The next morning I woke up before Jason and just laid there trying to think of a way to get away.
These shackles were a big pain in the ass. I wanted to try and sleep some more to pass the time, but it
was I just couldn’t do it. It was around noon and Jason was still sleeping. He and I had very opposite
sleeping patterns. I sat up and saw Jason sound asleep. I rose to my feet and looked down at him
sprawled out in the bed. He looked comfortable and peaceful when he was sleeping. I looked over at
the other side of Jason on the bed. There was an IPhone. My eyes widened in surprise. This could be
my ticket out of here. All I had to do was email Bruce at the mansion and he would be able to track
the IP address back to this location. I had to be careful, though. If Jason caught me there is no telling
what he would do. The chain to the cuffs was too short to try and go around the bed so I had to reach
over Jason to get the phone. Silently, I stretched my right arm out over Jason’s sleeping body. All of
a sudden, Jason began to stir. My heart skipped a beat. He didn’t wake up, though. I took a deep
breath and kept going. My hand was almost there. I almost had the phone in my grasp.

Suddenly, Jason’s hand shot up and grabbed my forearm hard. His hand was so big that his fingers
went all the way around my arm. I winced and looked down and saw that his eyes were wide open.
He wasn’t happy. I whimpered as he squeezed my arm and then pushed me back to the floor. I
landed on my butt. My arm was in so much pain and I was trembling. I wasn’t sure how he was
going to react. He arose from the bed and stood over me.

“Well good morning, replacement.” He said, angrily. I was afraid to stand or even move. He
grabbed a hand full of my hair and pulled me to my feet. I hated when he pulled my hair like that. I
grabbed his wrist in an ineffective attempt to ease the pain on my scalp. Then he pushed me up
against the wall and held both my hands down over my head with one hand and used the other to
grab my chin. I gasped in pain. He was forcing me to look up at him. He made me cringe from
squeezing so hard.

“You have no chance. You aren’t going to escape, and the bat trio is not coming to get you. You
belong to me now, kid. Not Bruce. Deal with it.” His voice was so deep and intimidating.

“Say yes sir.” He sternly commanded. I stayed quiet for a few seconds and hid grip on my hands
only tightened. There was no way I could get free from his hold. Jason was a great deal stronger than
me. I hated him right now.

“Say it!” he shouted, glaring into my eyes and slamming me against the wall even harder than before.
“Y-yes sir.” I said, stumbling over my words. It felt like they weren’t even mine. I could feel my face turning red from a combination of embarrassment and resentment. I slowly slid down to the floor when he let me go. I felt defeated and totally overpowered by him. I was quiet for the rest of the morning. Later, I noticed that my forearm had an enormous bruise from where Jason had grabbed it. It hurt pretty badly.

The rest of the day was pretty boring. I have to say that is was very awkward to have Roy sitting in a chair reading a newspaper in the bathroom while I was taking a shower. I could tell that he really wasn’t paying much attention. What did they think I was going to do? There weren’t any windows in the bathroom. I guess Jason thought I would try and escape through the air vents. That would be a reasonable concern if the vents were big enough for my head, let alone my body to fit threw. It was ridiculous, but I didn’t really have much choice in the matter. Jason made that perfectly clear. Roy was purposely trying to look the other way from the shower even though I was behind the shower curtain. It was still pretty humiliating and degrading.

I was made to wear one of Jason’s shirts. It was huge on me. The shirt kept on sliding down my shoulder. Kory bought me a few new pairs of boxers, jeans and shoes. She also bought me two shirts, but they weren’t for sleeping in. My guess was that they were for when I eventually had to go in public with them. Having attention drawn to me because of the weird way I’m dressed isn’t something Jason wants. That night, Jason and the others were all sitting at the table talking. Jason and I were cuffed together, but I had to sit on the floor.
“Roy, you got the kid’s papers?” Jason asked.

“Right here. I got him a fake ID and a passport in case we need it.” Roy answered, handing both to Jason.

“Nice. You sure these are legit?”

“Yeah, man. My guy is the best in the business.” Roy assured him confidently.

“Alright then, I booked the flight for tomorrow morning.” Jason said. A flight? Where was Jason taking me? What was he gaining from kidnapping me? I was so confused. It was giving me a headache. They kept on talking about where we were going to stay and how they were going to get food. Eventually, I just fell asleep on the floor. All of a sudden, someone was shaking me. As I began to wake up, I could hear Jason’s voice.

“Wake up, kid. C’mon, you can sleep in the bedroom.” He said, interrupting my dreams of going back home. I got up and followed him to the bedroom and laid down in the same spot as the previous night. I was out like a light.

The next morning was miserable. We all had to get up and go to the airport. Naturally, if Jason and I stayed cuffed together that would raise suspicion so we took them off when we left the hotel room.

“I’m only going to say this once, kid. If you try anything funny I will not hesitate to kill everyone around. If you think it’s worth it then try me.” Jason warned. I believed him. According to the data in the bat cave, Jason has killed many before. What was to say he wouldn’t do it again? I sighed in defeat and nodded my head. He kept his hand on my shoulder the whole time on the way to the airport, even in the taxi ride. When we arrived I was praying that someone in the bat family would be there like Dick or Alfred. They weren’t. We boarded the plane without any problems. The plane was headed to Los Angeles, California. Great.

I must admit that I did want to try and run away or scream, but I was just too scared. Some Robin I am. Every time I thought about it Jason would look at me and glare. I stayed quiet throughout the entire plane ride. After we arrived in LA we went to our hotel. The room had two bedrooms, a bathroom, a small kitchen, and a living room with a small couch. Kory had one of the bedrooms to herself. Jason and I had the other bedroom, and Roy had the couch. I would have felt bad for him, but at least he had a TV. None of the other rooms had one. Roy and Kory left shortly after we arrived to pick up something to eat.

I wasn’t overly fond of being alone with Jason. Almost instantly after the two left Jason made me put the cuffs back on. I tried to just stay quiet and not get in the way. Jason was unpacking and I had to follow him around since we were cuffed together. I could tell that he was avoiding eye contact with me. Maybe he felt guilty or something. Roy and Kory picked up some MacDonald’s. Really? Again?

“Here, kid. Eat up.” Jason said, handing me a MacDonald’s bag. He had a small smile on his face while doing so. He seemed to be acting unnaturally nice to me. I took it and looked at him with an eyebrow raised.

“Thanks.” I muttered after taking the bag. Jason was acting weird the whole night. He was joking around with Roy and Kory. They kind of reminded me of a family.

“Kory, I think that’s enough mustard.” Jason said as he watched her put and overflowing amount on
“IT IS NEVER ENOUGH!” She shouted, banging on the table. Her glowing green eyes and orange skin weren’t human. She had to be some kind of alien. Kon, aka Superboy, was a close friend of mine, but I doubt that she was a kriptonian like him. I found her overly dramatic love for mustard to be kind of funny. I chuckled a little as she continued to pile more mustard on her fries as well. I wasn’t the only one. Roy and Jason were too. Seeing Jason being able to kick back and laugh made me smile a little. He was so serious and scary most of the time. I knew about everything he had been through. Even though he kidnapped me, I still thought that he deserved to be happy.

When everyone finished eating we all settled down. Jason and I went into the bedroom. I changed into one of Jason’s huge shirts and some new boxers. Jason didn’t put any new clothes on. He just stripped down to his boxers. We were both pretty quiet. He threw me one of the two pillows from the bed. It hit me softly in the face. He let out a small laugh. After he got into the bed I laid down on the hard floor, yet again. I remember trying to go to sleep, but failing miserably. Jason seemed restless as well. I could hear him tossing and turning. Then he turned on the lamp on the nightstand beside his bed. I sighed.

“So, what’s up with you, kid? Can’t sleep?” Jason asked as he stared at the ceiling.

“Well, it’s kind of difficult to fall asleep on this hard floor.” I replied with a bit of irritation in my voice. The floor from the last hotel was made of wood. The floor I was on now was carpet. Believe me when I say that it was way more comfortable. My back was still aching from the last night I slept on the floor.

“Hey, I gave you a pillow.” He teased, knowing his argument was invalid.

“Aren’t you sweet?” I said, clearly sarcastically. Then I turned over to where I was facing away from the bed. My arm was throbbing in pain. I could take it, but it still hurt. I held it as it continued to become more defined. The bruise resembled the shape of Jason’s hand.

“I’m…Uh…Sorry for hurting your arm. Really didn’t mean to…uh, bruise it. You still shouldn’t have tried to get my phone, though.” He said, awkwardly. Listening to Jason apologize was weird. I really thought that he didn’t have much of a soul. I could tell that he wasn’t very good at apologizing. It was still sort of nice.

“Yeah, I know. I should just be quiet and let you drag me anywhere you want without concern of my own free will. You shouldn’t have left the phone where I could reach it.” I said. Part of me was joking, but other parts were serious. Did he really expect me to not try and escape? Ugh. He stayed silent for a few minutes. I began to slip in and out of sleep.

“Fair enough, kid.” I heard Jason say before I fell completely asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)}
The sound of Kory screaming woke me up. I could tell that she and Roy were arguing in the other room. I couldn’t make out what they were saying due to the closed door, but someone definitely wasn’t a happy camper. The sun was shining though the two windows. As I began to sit up and stretch my arms I noticed that there was a blanket over my body. Then I looked up at Jason’s bed to find out that it was missing his blanket. He was still sleeping none the less. Once again, Jason was sprawled out across the queen sized bed. Did he really cover me up in the night? Why? I looked at the small digital clock on the nightstand. It read 12:30 pm. I hated sleeping in this late. Jason seemed to be accustomed to it. I quietly folded the blanket and placed it on the foot of the bed.

Jason was sleeping so soundly. I thought about taking this opportunity to try and escape through the window, but then I remembered that we were stiff cuffed together. Ugh. That’s when I heard Jason mutter something in his sleep. I couldn’t make out what he said until he said it again.

“Get away! It’s my frick’n bread!” he muttered in his sleep. Then he turned over on his side. He must have been dreaming about someone stealing his bread? I laughed a little at the randomness of what he said. This guy was unpredictable. I decided it was best to just let him sleep for a while. I needed to start thinking about a way to get out of here. I sat there on the floor for an hour and a half thinking of what Bruce or Dick would do. They would have never been foolish enough to be captured in the first place, but still. I just ignored the constant bickering in the other room. After all that time, I could think of anything. If only I weren’t chained to Jason all the time. That’s when I thought of a plan.

All of a sudden, I could hear Jason mumbling something. I stood up and saw that he was thrashing around in the bed. He was having a nightmare. I was hesitant about waking him because it seemed like it was pretty bad and I didn’t want to get punched in the face. Sometimes Dick had nightmares too. He would thrash around just as Jason was. One time I tried to wake him up and he punched me in the face. I know that he didn’t mean to. It was a reaction, I guess. Nightmares come with the territory of our job. When I have them I usually wake up screaming and drenched in sweat.

Anyway, Jason had been doing this for a few minutes. I began to feel bad. He was sweating and his face was getting red. I put my hand on his shoulder and shook him a little. I used the arm that wasn’t bruised. His bloodshot eyes snapped open and he grabbed my arm. I winced a little at his grip, though it was nothing like it was before. He looked at me like I was doing something wrong.

“What the hell are you doing, kid?” he asked sleepily and irritated. He looked at me as his eyes tried to adjust to the brightness in the room.

“You were having a bad dream, Jason. You okay?” I answered, trying my best to conserve his pride.

“Oh.” He said, letting go of my arm. I was glad that he didn’t bruise me this time. He sighed in despair and sat up on the edge of the bed.
“What time is it?” He asked while rubbing his eyes.

“Almost two in the afternoon. You shouldn’t sleep so late.” I nagged, sitting beside him on the edge of the bed.

“You must be a morning person. That’s just my luck.” He said with a small laugh and a small goofy smile followed by a yawn. His muscles flexed as he stretched his arms into the air, still waking up.

“Thanks, by the way. For the blanket, I mean. You really didn’t have to.” I said as the blood rushed to my face.

“Don’t sweat it, kid. We’re going to get more blankets and stuff later toda-”

“Jason,” I said, looking into his blue eyes and interrupting him. I felt brave.

“Are you ever going to tell me the reason you abducted me?” I asked, feeling the room become thick with tension. Jason’s face quickly took on a more serious look. It was an honest question. Not knowing was driving me insane.

“No. Just drop it.” He said, turning his face away from me. I didn’t know what to say. I sighed and ran my fingers through my hair. I needed a shower. My dark brown hair was beginning to become greasy. I hated that feeling.

“There must be a reason. I mean-”

“Just drop it, I said.” Jason commanded once again, interrupting me. He was gripping the sheets tightly and his face was still facing the other direction. I was very scared, but I knew that it would eventually come down to this anyway. It’s not like I did anything wrong. He kidnapped me, and now he just expects me to be okay with it?

“Jason, please listen to me.” I pleaded. I needed to at least try and understand his motives for taking me away from my home and family. You can’t just go around abducting people and taking away their freedom because of some stupid reason, even if you are Jason Todd. The ends (whatever they may be) just don’t justify the means.

“I deserve some explanation. You took me away from my family, Jason, my friends. You are keeping me as a prisoner here. The least you can do is give me some answers. If you’re in trouble maybe I can help you.” I said, putting a hand on his muscular shoulder. I could feel his shoulder tense up when I made contact. There were so many scars, even more than Dick had. He was quiet for about a minute. Then he turned to face me with a scowl as he swatted my hand off his shoulder. He rose to his feet and stood directly in front of me as I was still sitting on the edge of the bed.

I was paralyzed with fear. He was much taller than me. I was afraid he was going to hit me or something. It’s really weird how he scares me more than most of Batman’s enemies. When I go up against two-face or the Riddler I never feel like this. Jason made me feel so helpless. He could totally overpower me if he wanted. There is nothing I could do to stop him. He isn’t even that much older than me. He looks a little older because of the Lazarus pit, but there is only an eight year difference between us. Jason’s birthday is August 16th and mine is July 19th.

He looked like he wanted to hurt me. His arm slowly started to move. I flinched and shielded my face with my arms, thinking he would backhand me or something. I closed my eyes and waited for the pain that I was certain was coming. That’s when he slowly moved my arms out of the way of my
face. I didn’t even try to fight him because I knew that I wasn’t going to win. I kept my eyes shut until he grabbed my chin and forced me to look up at him.

“You are better off not knowing, kid. Trust me.” Jason said simply, looking down into my eyes. I should have known that he wasn’t going to tell me. He was so serious, but he didn’t look scary at this moment. His eyes looked kind of sad. I actually felt sort of bad for him. I didn’t know why, though. “How can I?” I asked, with his fingers still gripped my chin.

“You’ll have to. You don’t have a choice.” He responded, releasing my chin and turning around. His back was no different from the rest of his body, muscular and full of scars from gunshots, burns, and stab wounds. He was right. I had no other choice, but I knew that I still had to try and escape. He cleared his throat.

“Besides, I’d never be so desperate that I’d need your help, replacement.” He boasted, attempting to change the subject. After which I rolled my eyes and sighed. I didn’t care much for the nickname he gave me, but I actually preferred it over ‘kid.’

“Whatever.” I countered, folding my arms. I was pissed that he wouldn’t tell me what all this was about. Jason went to all the trouble to wait until Bruce was gone and I was alone before capturing me. There had to be a reason. Jason had to be gaining something, but what? Obviously, asking him wasn’t going to be very effective.

“Aw, cheer up. I promise that everything will be okay, kid.” Jason said, ruffling my hair. I guess he was trying to make me feel better for whatever reason. I just sort of growled at him when he did that. I hated when people touched my hair. That’s when Roy and Kory started shouting again.

“Whoa, someone’s pissed.” Jason said, rubbing the back of his head while laughing a little. I was getting used to blocking them out. I figured that Jason must be a pro at it by now.

“Yeah, they’ve been at it all day.” I said stoically. They seemed just like an old married couple, and not the cute, sweet kind. Jason decided to go see what the problem was. I had no choice but to follow due to the cuffs. As soon as I walked into the living room I saw a plate fly through the air and shatter against the wall.

“The fault is not mine! Your life was at stake!” I heard Kory scream.

“I would have been fine, Kory. I told you to kill everyone except the Asian asshole in the red tie! He would have talked! Now, we have no leads!” Roy threw back at her. What the hell were they talking about? It turned my stomach to hear them talk so casually about killing people, even if the people in question were members of drug gangs.

“His gun was aimed at your head as you were reaching for an arrow. He would have shot you!” Kory spat. She looked pretty furious. Her eyes were glowing bright green with rage.

“What the hell happened?” Jason asked asserting himself between the two of them.

“The mission was a fail. We needed you, Jason. We almost had Chong. He had more men than we thought. We snuck in and his security saw us because somebody wasn’t being quiet.” Roy said looking over at Kory who just pouted and flipped him off. Then Roy continued.

“We killed most of them. I told Star to kill all but Chong. I didn’t know he had a gun. I turned my back on him for a minute to shoot at another thug and next thing I know, she fired a star bolt at him.
He didn’t survive. Now, we have no way to find his boss.” Roy said, aggravated. They were worse than children. I knew who she was now. There was information in the bat cave on her too. Her full name is Koriand'r aka Starfire. She is from the planet Tamaran in the Vegan system. Her Tamaranean physiology allows her to absorb ultraviolet radiation. That radiation gives her the ability to fly, superhuman strength, and durability. She can also fire powerful omni-directional energy explosive blasts called starbolts from her hands. That’s all I could remember about her.

“Sounds to me like she saved your life. There are other ways to get to Castillo.” Jason said, taking Kory’s side. Who were they talking about? The last thing I wanted to do was to get mixed up in some sort of gang war.

“I had it under control!” Roy said under his breath while folding his arms across his chest.

“Anyway, what are we going to do about food tonight?” Jason asked, trying to change the subject.

“I’ll go pick us up some more MacDonald’s in a few hours.” Roy suggested. How did these people live off of so much MacDonald’s? I was really missing Alfred’s cooking right about now.

“I don’t want MacDonald’s again.” I replied, not sure if my input was allowed at this point.

“I agree with the young Robin.” Kory said. She was probably only agreeing with me because I was against Roy’s idea. Roy rolled his eyes as a response. He obviously knew this as well.

“Then what do you suggest?” Jason asked me. I really didn’t know what to say. I honestly expected him to tell me to shut up. I was a bit of a shock.

“Well, I can cook something.” I answered. I’m not nearly as good a cook as Alfred, but I am descent. Often, I would help Alfred in the kitchen so I picked up a few things.

“No shit? Kory, did you go grocery shopping after the mission?” Jason asked, looking over at Kory who responded with a nod.

“Alright then, go crazy, kid.” Jason said unlocking his shackle. Roy and Kory sat on the couch in the living room and turned on the TV as I was getting stared. There was a small bar in the kitchen that Jason sat at to keep an eye on me. The kitchen and the living room were not separated so escape would be impractical. The fridge was stuffed with all kinds of food that I could use, except for the two gallons of mustard. I began scavenging through the fridge and pulling out everything I thought I might use. Jason just sat there watching me. I felt a bit nervous and annoyed.

“What’s making?” he asked with a clueless look on his face. I found it amusing. There were two skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, mushrooms, peppers, butter and some pasta in the pantry. There were also plenty of seasonings in the pantry.

“I was considering Cajun chicken pasta. It’s healthier than Macdonald’s and the resistant starch in the pasta will help make you smarter.” I replied while I turned on the oven. Hopefully, they would like it. I have made it plenty of times with Alfred. I mean, it’s not like they would really care since they were about to eat MacDonald’s for the third night in a row.
“You’re such a frick’n nerd. Anyway, sounds good to me.” Jason said playfully while watching me slice up the peppers. His little insult didn’t faze me. He was right, but it wasn’t a bad thing.

After an hour and a half of cooking I was finally finished. It turned out much better than I had expected. The chicken was juicy and seasoned well. That was what I worried about most. Everyone loved it, especially Kory. She gulped it down faster than the flash. Her eating habits reminded me of Goku from Dragonball Z. Jason and Roy took to it well too. Jason put the cuff back on me right after I was finished eating. Roy volunteered to do the dishes. I was thankful for that at least. Jason and I sat on the couch in the living room watching the Simpsons, a show I hadn’t seen in years. Jason opened a bottle of beer from the fridge. I didn’t like drinking. In my eyes it was a senseless beverage that only killed your brain cells.

“You know, you really shouldn’t drink beer.” I nagged once the show went to commercial.

“And why is that, princess?” Jason teased before loudly sipping on his beer as if to spite me.

“Well for one thing, it kills what little brain cells you have. Thus, making you stupid.” I said, laughing a little.

“Chill out. It’s not like I’m getting hammered.” He said, defensively.

“He did that last week!” Roy shouted from the kitchen. I really needed to get out of here. I know that Dick and the others were worried sick about me. I had a plan, but it was extremely perilous. I kept watching TV with Jason until I fell asleep on the couch. I woke up to Jason and the others talking about a plan of their own. Apparently, someone with the name John Castillo was hurting the Red Hood’s drug business by sending his men to kill several members of the gangs Jason was protecting and stealing the drugs for his own profit. George Chong was one of the two people who knew Castillo’s whereabouts at the moment. He was the man that Kory killed before they could make him talk.

The other was a man named Benjamin Stewart. He was staying at his penthouse in LA for a few days. The plan was for Jason and Kory to go interrogate him while Roy stayed here to watch me. Roy wasn’t overjoyed at the thought of babysitting me while the other two went into action, but Jason explained that he needed to go this time. I was pretending to be asleep so they wouldn’t know I was listening to their plan. Soon after I was sure all the important details were said I allowed myself to actually fall back asleep. I felt really tired for some reason. The next thing I remember was barely waking up as someone was carrying me. I woke up and saw Jason putting on his brown leather jacket over a black shirt with a red bat symbol on the chest. The sight saddened me a little.

The clock read 12:46 AM. Someone had carried me into the bedroom and put me on the bed. It felt much softer than the floor to say the least. I was now cuffed to the bedpost instead of Jason. In truth, I probably could have gotten it loose from the bedpost by simply breaking it again, but there was no point. Jason would see me. I yawned and Jason noticed that I was awake. He was slipping on a pair of black gloves. There was a red helmet on the dresser. I have only ever seen blurred images of it from the bat cave. Seeing it in person was so much more effective.

“Don’t try anything funny while we’re gone, kid. I mean it.” Jason ordered while he put a mask much like mine and Nightwing’s over his eyes, grabbed the helmet, and headed for the door. I could hear it pouring outside. I didn’t really want Jason to go because I knew what he was going to do. Killing people isn’t right. I know he knew that. I could tell that he really didn’t want to go either.
“Wait.” I said, sitting up on the bed. I was hesitating to speak. I sighed. Jason stopped and looked over my way, waiting for me to talk. I was at a loss for words. I wanted to help Jason so bad. I knew that his soul had been fractured, and that he didn’t have any hope of repairing it, but I did.

“What’s wrong, kid? You want me to pick you up a toy or something?” Jason teased with poor and stupid humor. I grimaced in response. Sometimes he was such an asshole, but other times he wasn’t so bad. All the hope wasn’t gone. It was just buried.

“Just-uh… Be careful.” I muttered, not intending for it to sound so worrisome.

“Yeah, yeah.” Jason replied with a mischievous smirk and small laugh. I felt like an immature little kid delving into grown up’s business. It was a little laughable. Jason exited the room and left the door leading into the living room wide open. Roy was sitting on the couch. I was in plain view of him from there with the door open.

“I guess that I hopeful enough for both of us.” I mumbled unknowingly to myself.

“Keep a close eye on the kid, Roy.” Jason said. Roy nodded and said something that I couldn’t quite make out from the other room. After Jason and Kory left Roy watched TV from the couch and looked over at me every so often. This was the perfect time to set my plan into motion. In order for it to work I have to be left alone with Roy. Based on my calculations, I deduced that Roy was the weakest link out of the three. He wasn’t weak by any means, but he was physically weaker than both Jason and Kory. This weakness makes him the easiest to exploit. He also seemed to exhibit some feeling of sorrow for me. I could see it on his face the night I was kidnapped. I hated taking advantage of that, but I had no choice. I waited a few hours because I didn’t want Jason anywhere nearby.

“Roy!” I called out to him loud enough where he could hear me. He ceased watching the television and entered the room to see what I wanted. First, I needed him to take off my cuffs.

“I can’t sleep. Can I take a shower? I feel dirty.” I pleaded. Hopefully, he would allow this. His indecisive look told me that he knew Jason wouldn’t approve. He sighed in irritation.

“I guess so, but make it fast.” He said, getting the key out of his pocket and unlocking the cuff on the bedpost. He grabbed it and led me into the bathroom. As per Jason’s rules, I had to be monitored by either him or Roy whenever I took a shower or went to the bathroom. I planned on using this to my advantage. I turned on the shower and began to strip. Roy just kind of looked away. I knew that he was about as big a fan of this rule as I was, maybe less. Before I entered the shower I stood nude in front of Roy with a question.

“Can you please take this thing off while I shower?” I asked. He took it off the other times that he monitored my shower time, but Jason was nearby. I knew that being naked in front of him would make him his decisions more frantic due to the awkwardness.

“Uh, sure kid. Just put a towel on or something.” He said quickly while still trying to keep his face steered away from me. He unlocked the cuff as the room began to fog up. I knew it! I knew it!

My plan was full proof.

I thanked him and grabbed a towel from the cabinet under the sink. I took a quick shower and cleared my mind under the hot water. It felt so nice. I felt so relieved to shampoo my hair. I needed a haircut soon. I had the skater hair thing going on. I knew that I had to act after I was finished and I really wasn’t looking forward to it. I turned the water off and began drying off as quickly and calmly
as I could. I wrapped the towel around me and emerged from the tub. Roy was sitting on the toilet with his legs crossed and arms folded. He got up and opened one of the cuffs up and came toward me.

“Okay, gotta put’em back on now, kid. Hold out your hand.” He said. I heard the chains from the cuffs rattle and I knew that I couldn’t go back to that. I sighed in dismay.

“Alright.” I said politely, holding out my wrist. Then just as he was about to snap it back on me I swiftly kicked him just below his right knee. He yelled out in pain and tried to throw an punch at me, but I blocked and countered by elbowing his extended arm. Then I did another number on his knee.

“Damn it!” He said, screaming in agony as he fell to the floor as I ran out of the bathroom and quickly grabbed one of the chairs from the table set. I closed the door and he was crawling toward the doorway and positioned the chair under the doorknob just right to where he couldn’t open the door. I had him trapped now. I quickly threw on some sweatpants, tennis shoes a white t-shirt, and a red hoodie. At this moment I so was glad that Kory loved to go shopping. The clock read 3:02. After getting dressed I slipped out the door. I was home free.

I needed to find a police station and use their phone. I didn’t know my way around so I decided to ask the clerk in the hotel lobby where the nearest police station was. He told me where to find it and asked if I was okay. I told him that everything was fine. After I exited the hotel, I began my search for the police station. I could have just used the phone in the lobby, but I didn’t want Jason and Kory coming back and seeing me in the lobby. Leaving the hotel as soon as possible was imperative. Jason couldn’t have picked a hotel in a worse neighborhood to stay in. There are some creepy looking people on the streets. It was super late and the rain wasn’t letting up. Thunder was roaring and lightning was lighting up the sky every so often. I knew that I just had to keep on moving.

The man in the lobby said that the police station was about forty-five minutes away by car, but I had no money for taxis. On foot it would probably take a few hours. I figured that I could probably make it by daybreak. Jason would know I was missing before then, though. I just had to keep a low profile. Thank God for the hoodie Kory bought me. I kept the hood over my head and my hand in the front pockets. It kept me warm and dry enough to keep on walking. All of a sudden I heard what sounded like a male scream. I looked around and noticed a dark alley across the street from the sidewalk I was on. I was a little more than halve way to my destination, but I still had responsibilities as Robin.

I had to check it out. As I ran across the empty street I hardly noticed that my hood had fallen off of my head. The street lights gave little assistance to my eyes, but I was used to the darkness. In the alley I saw a guy wearing a backpack being beaten down by six other men. They were big guys. It was a gruesome sight. All the guys that were beating him were soaked. Two of them were bald. They were all rough looking with tattoos down their arms and their pants were sagging lower than they should have been. Three of them had thick chains in their hands and one had a crowbar. These men were just common thugs. The victim looked like a college student. His cries of agony for help had pierced my ears for the last time.

“Hey!” I shouted without thinking while standing in the alley entrance.

“Leave him alone!” All the thugs and the guy with backpack looked at me like I was crazy. Cliché, maybe, but I’m Robin so I’m allowed.

“Look boys, we got ourselves a hero. You know what happens to heros around here.” Said the man with the crowbar, laughing nastily. They all began walking towards me, swinging their chains sadistically. I wasn’t about to run away. I didn’t know if I could take on all six of them at once, but I had to try. There was no way in hell I was about to allow them to gang up on that poor
guy until he was dead. That was out of the question. The rain was still pouring. Just as the thunder cracked above me all the thugs instantly raced in my direction. I began fighting them all at once which proved to be a challenge. I knocked two of them out cold with a few punches to the face while the others continued to barrage me with fists and chains.

One of the chains and struck me on the side of the head, just above my left temple. I gasped and fought on. My hair was dripping wet. As I dodged another swing of a chain it hit another thug in the face, rendering him unconscious and bloody. With a solid knee to the stomach, another guy was finished. The last two were the most skilled. I dodged several swings of the crowbar. Blood was flowing from the wound on my head into my left eye. The rain had already made it hard enough to see. I took out one of them with a kick to the head only to be struck in the back with the crowbar. I cried out in agony. The pain was immensely severe. The claw of the crowbar had dug into the flesh of my back. I found standing up was impossible. I fell to the ground and glared at the thug as he pulled a small gun from his pocket and loaded it. Tears were forming in my eyes. The guy with the backpack was sneaking past the thug who was too preoccupied with the thought of killing me to notice. It appeared that the victim managed to get away. Of that I was happy.

“Was it worth it, hero?” the thug said as he pointed the gun down at me as I lay helpless and injured on the pavement. Now that I was really looking at this man I saw that he had a scar over his right eye and a bandana over his head. His malicious smile formed under a thin mustache. His entire crew was scattered unconscious around me on the ground. Five out of six wasn’t bad, right?

I smirked and flipped him off. That was an unusual thing for me to do, but it felt ironically appropriate. I wanted to kick his ass so bad. I knew that I could if I wasn’t injured. Oh well. His expression changed to a look of anger.

“Die, hero.” He said aiming the gun at me. I tightly shut my eyes expecting a the sound of a gunshot to be the last thing I ever hear. I was about to join my parents in death. When the gunshot went off I flinched, but didn’t feel any pain. Instead, I heard the sound of the crowbar hit the ground. I opened my eyes to see him lying on the pavement, his head in a puddle of blood. What was going on? I was just mere seconds away from certain death. I looked up and saw someone standing on the roof of one of the buildings that formed the alley. The person jumped down and landed on his feet gracefully. I could see the brown leather jacket and the red helmet. I knew it was Jason. How did he find me?
“You sure are a lot of trouble, kid.” He said in his deep voice, looking down at me as my head continued to bleed. It hurt to laugh because of my back injury. I tried to get up, but only wound up failing. I was a little embarrassed, but grateful none the less.
“Don’t try to move.” He ordered while putting his gun away in one of its holsters. It also hurt to breathe, but I couldn’t help but take fast and heavy breaths. Jason slowly helped me up and brought me back to the hotel by letting me lean on him for support. He didn’t say a word to me the whole time. I know he had to be furious that I escaped. The helmet obscured any of the facial expressions he might have had. When we arrived at the hotel he had Kory fly me up to the window and entered
the room that way.

It was probably best to avoid anyone seeing me injured. Jason helped me into the bathroom and made me sit on a stool and wait there. He returned with a first aid kit. I was soaking wet. I was dripping water and blood onto the bathroom floor. Jason made me strip down to my boxers. He had to help me with the hoodie and the shirt. Both were ripped in the back from the crowbar. I was shivering so he helped me dry off some. I knew that this was the calm before the storm. In the light of the bathroom I could see several other smaller scratches and bruises on my arms, abdomen, and chest. When did this happen? I guess I took more damage than I thought.

“God, you’re going to need stitches. What the hell were you thinking?” He asked in tone that was a combination of strict and calm from behind me while beginning to clean my wound. I winced as he poured some alcohol on it. It was pretty deep. Jason probably felt sorry for me. After disinfecting the area he began to stitch me up. I have always hated getting stitches. I cried out a little before he finished. Then he began wrapping the bandage all the way around my torso.

“You want to tell me what happened?” Jason asked as he continued to wrap the bandage around my upper body, just under my armpits. I closed my eyes tiredly and ran a hand over the side of my face that wasn’t covered in blood. I threaded my fingers though the hair on the side of my head.

“Basically, the usual. A group of thugs were beating up an innocent man. They were going to kill him if hadn’t stepped in.” I answered, blatantly. That’s pretty much the truth.

“They almost killed you.” He said seriously stating the obvious. I let out a small laugh. Pain followed.

“Ah, but they didn’t.” I said, trying to add some comic relief to the conversation. Jason wrapped the bandage a little tighter after I said that. Way to go, Tim.
“I’m not joking. I didn’t take you away from Bruce just so you could go off and get yourself killed.” Jason said, making no sense. Did he really just say that? Then that begs the obvious question.

“Well, then why did you take me away from Bruce?” I blurted out with a familiar sense of bitterness and déjà vu. I turned and looked at his face as he continued wrapping. He looked mad so I just turned around scowled.

“We aren’t talking about me. If you pull another stunt like that I may not be around to save your ass next time. Why did you even sneak off on your own like that?”

“Well, let’s see. A trio of kidnappers captured me and has been keeping me as a prisoner with a total disregard to what I want or where I want to live. You’re right. I don’t know what could have possibly driven me to it.” I answered, with extreme sarcasm. I knew Jason wanted to slap me upside the head. If I weren’t injured I’m fairly positive he would have.
"Look, I’m sorry okay." I apologized, giving in to his nagging. I failed to see the reason to apologize. The reason in its entirety of why I was hurt comes down to the fact that Jason kidnapped me. Was I not supposed to try and escape?

“I get that, but you have to be more careful.” Jason argued. Who did he think he was talking to? I’m Robin. Robin would never have let those thugs kill someone right before his eyes.

"You won’t even tell me what the hell I’m doing here. What does my safety matter to you anyway?" I asked, with my head turned and staring him down in the face.

“Because…” He sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose.

“Because I care about you, kid. Okay.” What did he mean? None of this was making any sense. I felt like my head was about to explode.

“What does that even mean?” I questioned.

“Now, shut up, and turn around, you little shit.” Jason intoned, disregarding my question on purpose. I turned my body to face him. Now he was cleaning the wound on my head. He wiped all the blood off of my face with a warm rag. The scratch on my head didn’t hurt nearly as bad as the one on my back. As he was taking care of the scratch I found myself lost in his eyes. They seemed so intense. I stared at them for a few minutes. His eyes were really blue, like the sky on a bright day. It was a shame that those eyes have seen so much horror in this world. Even though his eyes were bright I noticed that there was a great sadness about them. My facial expression softened as I thought about everything that Jason had been through. I leaned in a little to see them better. When we made eye contact I pretended to look at something else. I figured that I should thank him for saving my life even though he put a Finding Nemo band aid on my head. After he did that he just sat there and looked at me for a second. I was beginning to turn red in the face.

“Thanks, by the way…For you know, saving my life and all.” I said, hypnotized as my voice cracked a little due to my nervousness. After my words left my mouth Jason began to blush too. I thought that it was kind of cute. I had never seen him blush before.

“Uh-sure, Tim.” He replied sloppily while his face moved a tad closer to mine.

“You know, that’s the first time you’ve actually called me by my name.” I said, trying to avoid the silence.
“Is that so?” He muttered as he continued to move closer to my face. What the hell was going on? My body seemed to be moving by itself, but strangely I liked this feeling. It was like gravity. All of a
sudden, I could feel Jason’s warm breath on my mouth. I began to move in a tad closer. It was so weird. Our lips almost touched. Then he hastily broke away before clearing his throat while running his fingers through his hair and arose from his chair.

“Sorry. Um-I need some air.” Jason announced before racing out of the bathroom. His voice gave off an uncomfortable vibe. I sighed and then the reality of what just happened hit me like a bus. Why did he stop? I mean, I know the whole situation is weird, but it seemed like he wanted to kiss me at first. Maybe I did something wrong. Maybe he dislikes me more now than before. What was I thinking, going along with it? He is Jason Todd. He kidnapped me. He took me away from the only family I had left. Every fiber of my being told me that I shouldn’t like or care for him. Ugh.

“Shit! What the hell is wrong with me?” I burst out, fighting the urge to break something. Everything that was happening seemed like a farfetched distortion of the real world, and I didn’t understand any of it.

**Jason’s point of view**

“What in God’s name just happened?” I said to myself as I walked down the hotel hallway. My head was filled with all kinds of debates and arguments about what just almost happened. He is just a kid. He’s seventeen.

‘He will be eighteen in less than a month, though.’ I thought as a response.

‘Why the fuck did I almost let him kiss me? I shouldn’t even be friends with him. In fact, I’ve been trying to make him be scared of me so that he won’t disobey and try and escape.’ I left him alone in the bathroom, but there’s no way he can get past Kory and Roy, especially with that damn wound on his back. He’d be down for weeks with that. Stupid ass kid. What the hell was he thinking? Did he really think I wouldn’t be able to find his clever little ass?

I implanted a small tracker into his left shoulder the first night we had him after I knocked him out. Obviously, he didn’t notice. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have snuck out and almost succeeded. Doesn’t matter, though. I would have killed all the police if he had made it to the station. I walked up several flights of stair to get to the very top of the building. I needed a smoke anyway, and they don’t like you to smoke inside the hotel or at least not outside the rooms. There’s no way I can go back there right now. My nerves were going crazier than the Joker, man. Something about that kid is just, I don’t know. I needed some time to think.

I loved teasing him. He hated it, but that just makes shit more fun for me. I love his dark brown hair and his cute little pout he does when he’s pissed. Was it possible that I might actually like him like that? My replacement was not bad to look at. I didn’t know what to think anymore. What if Roy found out? Shit, I’d never hear the end of it. I mean, he knew I was into guys and chicks, but not Robin. Aren’t I supposed to hate him for replacing me?

The top of the building was damp and the after smell of the rain was in the air. The storm was over. There were puddles all around. Day was beginning to break as I lit up a cigarette. It was pretty awesome to see the sun come up from this height. The sky was engraved with pinks and yellows. It reminded me of hope, which was a rare thing now a daysover my lips. After smoking a little I
calmed down some. I was still unsure about what to do about the kid now. The original plan was to take him away from Bruce before Bruce got him killed like me. I couldn’t tell the kid that, though. I hadn’t planned on anything like this happening between the two of us. The kid had to hate me for taking him away from the bat. If that was the case, then why not pull away from me much sooner? Hell, why did I move in? It was his eyes. There was something about those dark blue eyes that caught me. He appeared to enjoy it. His face looked like he was disappointed when I pulled away. The last thing I want to do is take advantage of him.

I am glad that I managed to get to him before that lowlife killed him. Another second and another Robin would have bitten the dust. Except this time, the blood would be on my hands instead of Bruce’s. I could never forgive myself if that were to happen. I can’t let something like that happen again. Maybe if he and I are uh…more comfortable around each other he won’t try and escape again. Was that just an excuse to explore my new found attraction to him? Maybe, maybe not, but it does make sense. I stood at the side of the building smoking and watching the people below for about thirty minutes. I loved being up high. It always helped me think and I had to think this shit through.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)
I had made my decision and made my way back to the room. Roy was passed out on the couch snoring and Kory must have been in her room. The TV was playing the news. The remote was in Roy’s unconscious hand. I took it and turned it off. Then I headed to my room. After opening the door I saw Tim all huddled up asleep on the floor. His head rested on a pillow. He was all cuddled up in a fetal position on top of some blankets. A lamp was the only source of light for the room. He had on a white t-shirt and a pair of boxers. He actually looked pretty adorable, especially with the Finding Nemo band aid still on his forehead. I noticed that his face was kind of red and there were dry tear trails on his cheeks. He’d been crying. I had decided to not bring make any more moves on him. I was going to leave that to him if he chose to do so. I had also decided that I was exhausted. I stripped down to a tank top and boxers before going to bed, myself. What a day.

Tim’s point of view

I woke up realizing that I had only been asleep for a few hours. My head was aching from lying on the floor for so long. I tried to go back to sleep, but I found it impossible. I sat up on my pallet and rubbed my tired eyes. It hurt to move. I realized that my back injury from the night before was more serious than I had previously thought. I looked up and saw Jason sleeping on the bed. He must have come in while I was sleeping. I didn’t blame him for not waking me up after what happened. It would’ve been more than awkward. Jason was sleeping on his back, sprawled out across the bed with no blanket. At this moment he actually looked kind of cute and serene, just like a sweet, little child. His hair was hanging down in his face partly over his eyes. As I recall, Jason gained the white streak in his hair after being exposed to the rejuvenating Lazarus Pit. It didn’t make him look bad. If anything, it made him look more bad-ass, in my opinion. My fingers touched his forearm, feeling one of the scars. His skin was ice cold. I took hold one of the green, cotton blankets on the end of the bed. I slowly and very carefully spread it over his body, covering him from his neck down to his ankles.

It wasn’t big enough for cover him completely. He didn’t seem to notice anyway. He wasn’t quite snoring, just breathing loudly. I stared at him for a few minutes. His lips were frozen, like ice and yet inviting. A finger stroked his cheek. I slowly began moving my face closer to his. For a moment I flinched back, thinking it was a bad idea, but then quickly decided not to care. What was wrong with me? This was so not how I usually acted. Normally I was this quiet, timid little seventeen year old boy who occasionally fought crime on the side. Jason always held up this bad boy persona, but I was beginning to see that he was so much more complicated than that. Don’t get me wrong, Jason was a badass, but I could sense that there was more to him. He was like an old dusty book with pages that went on and on for miles. If I really wanted to understand him then I needed to show more sympathy to his pages, his past. It was hard to explain, but the entire time I have spent with him I could see this kind of sadness about him. Even as he slept I could still see it. Maybe he needed someone to be there
for him. He does have Roy and Kory, though. Maybe this was a mistake. As my lips slowly made
their way to his my heart began pounding harder and harder in my chest, rapidly and out of control.
It was like the closer I was to Jason, the more frantic my heart became.

My body shook mercilessly out of nervousness and fear that he might wake up. Thinking back, I
don’t think that I was really rationally thinking about what I was doing. I was merely acting out of
instinct and desire. I couldn’t really help myself. My body was drawn to him so mercilessly. At this
point I could feel his breath on mine. As my lips were getting in sync with his I closed my eyes.
Suddenly I heard him begin to groan and stir about as he was waking up. Immediately, I moved back
and away from him, but not before his eyes opened and saw what I was about to do. Suddenly, he
jumped up and grabbed my arm, pulling me down onto the bed where he pinned both my hands
down. My heart was still racing quicker than I could count. We were both breathing
heavily.

“What are you doing?” he asked in a deep sleepy tone while hovering over me. He was being rough,
but it was sort of my fault. I shouldn’t have given into my urges, especially considering the last time I
accidently woke him up.

“I’m sorry, Jason. I honestly don’t know” I said my eyes closed tightly in fear of what he might do to
me. After a few seconds, Jason got off of me and turned on the bedside lamp. Then he sat on the
edge of the bed and rubbed his eyes. He was acting like he was about to say something, but he didn’t
know how to. I sat up a little bit, trying to think of the right thing to say as well. I might as well
address what happened the night before.

“Jason, I’m so sorry about earlier.” I babbled as he turned to look at me. Then he started making his
way over to me on the bed.

“What are you-“ I started to ask before he placed a finger over my lips. I was shaking, but trying not
to. I could feel my face getting hot from blushing so hard. I wasn’t alone, though. We were both
blushing like crazy. Jason’s face was so red. What was he doing?

“Just don’t move, okay. I want to try something. If you want me to stop just tell me.” Jason
whispered. His voice was so deep. I nodded and he slowly removed his finger. I continued to stay
silent. I was curious about what he was going to do. He gently pinned both of my hands above my
head with one hand against the bed. I didn’t fight him, but pain ran down my back due to my injury.
I shuddered as a result. Jason pulled away.

“I’m okay.” I quickly reassured him. Then he slowly leaned his face closer to mine and closed his
beautiful eyes. I could feel him breathing. He softly pressed his lips against mine. I could feel a tiny
bit of scruff on his chin. I hadn’t ever kissed anyone before so I didn’t really know what I was doing.
After a few minutes he gently grabbed my chin with his other hand and opened my mouth. Then
Jason deepened the kiss by pressing his tongue into my mouth. His tongue slowly explored my
mouth. I tried to do so as well, but I wasn’t very good at it. I inhaled sharply at the first feel of our
tongues pressing together. Jason’s mouth was hot and his tongue was soft and each tentative,
exploratory lick made me squirm and gasp.

I wanted to savor this, feel every lick and press of lips and mouth. I wanted to talk to Jason,
encourage him but all I seemed to be able to manage at this point were low groans and
incomprehensible gibberish. Jason let out a little laugh while still kissing me. I felt slightly
embarrassed, but I quickly forgot about it as we continued. After a few minutes it began to heat up a
little. Jason was becoming a tad rougher as he pressed his mouth against mine. I did the same. I freed
one of my hands and started to lift Jason’s shirt off of his back.

“Hold on.” He said, breathing heavily. I let his shirt fall back down over his back.

“We’re moving a little too fast don’t you think, Babybird?” He said with a heavy breath between each word and a smirk on his face.

“Sorry, I-uh… kind of haven’t ever done this before.” I confessed, stating the obvious and looking away. Jason just sat there with an adorable look on his face. I could tell that he was nervous too. This has complicated the whole situation. I wasn’t entirely sure that I could trust Jason. What if this was part of a plan? What if he was just doing this to hurt Bruce? On the other hand, what if he really did like me? He did save my life. That is enough reason to trust him for now.

“That ain’t nothing to be embarrassed about. I think it’s kind of cute.” Jason said, moving the hair out of my face with his fingers.

“It isn’t cute.” I replied without thinking.

“You know, you’re right. It’s kind of hot.” Jason smirked while winking at me, trying to be funny. Maybe he was serious too. I don’t know.

“To be honest, I don’t think we are ready to go any farther than we already have.” He continued as he laid down on the bed next to me and stared at the ceiling with an uncertain look on his face. I figured that he meant that I wasn’t ready to go any farther. He was right. I had zero experience with sexual relationships. Heck, I barely had any experience with normal friendly relationships. Besides the batfamily, there was Conner and Wally. I guess you could say that I was sort of a recluse, but just because I wasn’t very sociable wasn’t because I couldn’t be. I simply chose not to be. Most of my time was spent either studying or kicking butt as Robin, mostly the latter. I never really had time to consider what else I could be doing.

I have been aware of my sexuality for some time now. Before I started working with Conner I was surprisingly oblivious. I used to have the biggest crush on Conner. He’s my best friend, but he is currently with the Martian Manhunter’s niece M’gann (aka Miss Martian). Ultimately, this is why I left the Teen Titans. I know it sounds selfish, but I couldn’t stand to watch them being together all the time. Sure, I was glad that Superboy was happy, but it still hurt. The only person that I told about the real reason of why I left is Dick. He must have told Conner later on because he gets really awkward around me nowadays when I see him.

“This is crazy.” I muttered, trying to stop the silence.

“Got that right, kid.” Jason replied a few seconds later. We were both still breathing kind of hard.

“So, uh…How did the mission go?” I asked, curious about whether or not I ruined it by escaping. I carefully laid on my side so that I was facing Jason

“Oh, it went according to plan. Stewart sang like a canary once he had a gun to his forehead.” Jason said confidently with a small chuckle. It was a little disturbing. I had to say something.

“Jason, that’s not funny.” I proclaimed, looking at him with a serious face. The world that Jason lived in was not like mine. In my world, killing was not something to be taken lightly. Bruce made sure we all knew that, Jason included.

“C’mon, Babybird. Sometimes you have to take extreme measures. I know that the old man is against guns and killing. I know that you are too. I can see it in your eyes. You’re no killer.” Jason
said, staring at the ceiling. The thought of taking another person’s life was sickening to me. I mean, if I had to resort to killing someone in order to save the ones I loved I would. That was something totally different than Jason had done. He was murdering people for non-altruistic reasons.

“But those are innocent people, Jason.” I pointed out. Then Jason’s eyes turned cold and met mine.

“Innocent is a strong word, kid. I’ve lived in this world monger than you have. I’ve seen death. Sometimes you have to take control. Sometimes it’s kill or be killed. Trust me when I say that this world is rotten. Despite what you might think I hate killing people, but the people I kill aren’t innocent. They are rapists, drug smugglers, and murderers. What I do I do for the good of the truly innocent.” Jason declared, trying to assure me. He wasn’t lying, but he couldn’t deny that there are better ways to stop those criminals.

“I guess we will simply have to disagree.” I admitted, while forming a sad expression.

“Guess so.” Jason agreed, letting out a brief sigh. It was quiet for a minute. The lamp was the only source of light. The curtains draped over the windows to ensure that. I hated sleeping during the day. It messes up my regular sleep schedule, but I was exhausted. I knew that I hadn’t been asleep long when Jason woke me up.

“You know, I can’t believe how long it’s been.” Jason murmured, still staring up at the ceiling.

“Since what?” I asked curiously.

“Since we first met.” He answered with a smirk. That was a long time ago. I was only seven years old, but I was obsessed with the idea of meeting Batman and particularly Robin. I had always followed them in secret with my camera, hoping to snap a picture. One night I had spotted Robin (a young Jason Todd) on the roof of an old warehouse just past Main Street in Gotham City. I remember it being pretty scary, but I decided that it would be worth it if I could get a picture of Robin. I quietly snuck up to the rooftop and hid behind a broken beam. I saw Robin peeking over the side of the warehouse. I quickly snapped a picture of him without taking the flash into account. Jason quickly turned around and found me. After I told him that I only wanted his picture he let me take a few more pictures as he posed for me. Goof ball. Then he nagged me and made me promise not to follow him anymore and to stay out of trouble. He helped me off the roof and vanished soon after.

“Yeah, you were such a show off.” I said, laughing. He turned to me and raised and smiled.

“You ate that shit up and you know it. You are lucky that no one grabbed you in that neighborhood. It wasn’t very kid friendly to say the least. You were too smart for your own damn good.” Jason said, sounding a little concerned. He was right of course. It was a miracle that I wasn’t kidnapped or murdered. It was a bad part of town.

“Gosh, you were so tiny.” He teased, while scooting closer to me.

“I’ve always been kind of small for my age. Maybe I’ll go into it one day.” I said, trying my best to lean into his embrace without making my wounds hurt.

“I like you just fine the size you are, Babybird.” He said, wrapping his arms around me and pulling me into his chest. I swear that I could have fallen asleep right then and there. His heart beat was at a steady pace, I could feel every breathe he took as his chest continued to elevate. I felt so protected and safe in Jason’s arms. Strangely, it felt content, like home.

“I like you too.” I yawned into his chest. That was the last thing I remember before I was out cold.
Jason's point of view

When I woke up the first thing I noticed was Tim laying on me with his face halfway buried in my chest. I didn’t want to wake him. I gradually moved in closer to his face and lightly kissed his soft, frost tinted cheek. Tim was so pale. Why had I never noticed that before? My fingers shifted his bangs from out of his eyes to reveal his considerably long eyelashes and his broad, dark brown eyebrows that matched his hair. The Finding Nemo Band-Aid was still there. Tim had such an adorable and perfect round face with a soft and defined jaw line. I remember thinking that unlike me, he didn’t snore at all. He was simply breathing peacefully. As he slept he retained a sense of innocence and tranquility.

While looking at him I couldn’t help but wonder if this was right. Was it wrong for him and me to be together like this? This happened so quickly. I didn’t know what to think after that. That’s when Tim started to stir some. It was so cute. He must have been dreaming or something. It didn’t appear to be a nightmare. I softly rubbed his back with my fingers in an attempt to soothe him. I was careful not to go near his wound. Surprisingly, it worked. He calmed down and just stuck close to me. I continued to rub his back for the next few minutes. We didn’t even get under the covers before we passed out. It would have been wrong of me to take advantage of him earlier. Even though he thought he wanted to fool around I knew that he just wasn’t ready. Not to mention that we had just started to recognize our feelings for each other. For some reason, I really want this to work. Something about Tim makes me feel like there is hope left in a world full of hopelessness. I ain’t about to ruin that by doing something stupid like sex too soon. Tim doesn’t know any better, though. Believe me, I could tell. The way he was shaking and the rash way he tried to take my shirt off was more than enough proof.

The digital clock on my bed stand read 4:38 pm.

Babybird was going to be pissed that I let him sleep so long through the day, but he looked like he really needed it. I can’t believe that bastard and his crew were able to injure Tim like they did. I mean, if he had been given access to his Robin gear I have no doubt that they would have been taken out much quicker and he probably wouldn’t have been wounded. That was a stupid thing Tim did. He put himself in danger for someone who abandoned him after he saved his life. I should have shot him too. Scum like that doesn’t deserve to live. Tim still thinks like Bruce programed him to think. The simple truth is that this world cannot be fixed the way that Bruce thinks it can. His methods only delay the inevitable. I didn’t lie when I said that I hated killing people, but it is the only way to completely insure that they will never harm anyone ever again. As for crime in general, you cannot stop it. You can only control it and kill anyone who tries to break the rules that you have put into place. In this world, you either kill or are killed.

Hopefully, Tim will never have to be Robin again. I will try to make sure of that. I can’t let him suffer the same fate as I did. Bruce just doesn’t know how to protect his soldiers. The fact that he even allowed Tim to become Robin is proof enough of that. Why the hell would he even think about considering endangering the life of another young partner? I know that I’m not much better, but it’s better than Bruce. Anyway, how the hell am I going to explain Tim and me to Roy and Kory? Kory will probably not be fazed, but Roy might be at first. He’ll have to get over that shit. I was there for him when we first formed the Outlaws. He had a serious drug problem. Roy was horribly addicted to heroin when we first met. Kory and I helped him get away from that, which wasn’t fucking easy. That being said, I don’t regret it. He’s so much happier now. Sometimes I think that Kory and him will get together. I have my suspicions that they already have. The only reason Roy might have a problem with me and Tim would be because the kid is seventeen. Maybe, it’ll help him to know that next month is Tim’s birthday. And it’s not like I’m just using Tim for sex or revenge on Bruce (at
least not directly.) I still wasn’t looking forward to the awkward conversation.

Suddenly, I heard a growling noise. I looked down at Tim and realized that it was his stomach growling. I could feel the vibration from his belly as it made continued to yell at me. I laughed a little and Tim began to stir again. I figured that it was time to get up and get some grub. I noticed that his dark blue eyes were blood shot as they slowly opened and met with mine. He clearly needed more sleep.

“Morning, Babybird.” I said before realizing that it was far from morning. His head rose up and looked around.

“Morning. Sorry I used you as a pillow.” He said as his voice cracked a little.

“It’s all good. How’d you sleep?” I asked as he rubbed his sleepy eyes. He seemed a bit on edge. I don’t think that he was too used to being physically close to anyone, not that I am either, but I am better at hiding it.

“Pretty well. Much better than the floor.” He smiled.

“So, you know that we will have to tell Roy and Kory.” Tim said, saying what I was just thinking.

“Telling Kory won’t be that hard. Roy might think I abducted you just so we could um, you know. Since you’re so smart, then tell me the right time to tell Roy.” I joked when all of a sudden the bedroom door unexpectedly opened. Roy came in and gasped when he saw Tim laying on me. Tim quickly formed a distance between us and turned red. Talk about a shitty way to wake up.

“Now’s good.” Tim replied to my sarcastic question.

“Jason, what the hell?!” Roy snapped, wide-eyed. I knew that this was not going to go well. I should have told Roy my real reasons for taking the kid away from Bruce. Now, Roy probably thought that I took Tim so that I could shack up with him or something. Idiot. As if I would ever do that. Hell, I kill people that do that.

“Roy, let me explain.” I said, trying to make him understand that it wasn’t what it looked like. He stormed out. I threw on some clothes and raced after him.

“Sorry, kid. I’ll be back.” I said to Tim, who was just sitting there at the center of it all. I know that it must have been awkward as hell, but I had to go talk to Roy. I raced out the door of the bedroom. He wasn’t in the living room or kitchen so he must have left the Hotel room. I quickly followed and found him in the hallway leaning against the wall, brooding. No one else was out roaming, thank God. When he saw me he began to walk in the opposite direction.

“Roy, would you chill the fuck out, and let me explain?” I begged, while continuing to follow him. I grabbed his shoulder and he immediately turned around and glared at me.

“So, is this what we do now, Jason? I wasn’t okay with kidnapping him in the first place, but now you and the kid are sleeping together? What the actual hell??” He exclaimed, using his hands to express his anger.

“Roy, it isn’t like that.” I defended. Roy groaned.

“Then, what’s it like, Jason? Why the hell did we take Robin away from Batman?” He probed intensively. I knew that I needed to just tell him the truth. He was being overly dramatic. I sighed deeply.
“Roy, the sole reason I took the kid was so that Bruce wouldn’t get him killed. I figured that I could convince Tim to give up being Robin for his own good. I didn’t mean for this to happen. Believe me, I am just as shocked as you are. Besides, we haven’t done anything.” I said, trying my best to not punch the freckles off his face.

“You’re my best friend, man. You know that I wouldn’t take advantage of him like that. Please, believe me.” I pleaded, after which Roy’s expression changed almost entirely. He went from furiously disgusted to nauseatingly irritated. Eh, it was a step in the right direction. He began to rub the bridge of his nose and let out a long sigh. I don’t usually talk about my feelings or any kind of shit like that, so I think he finally understood why I didn’t tell him beforehand.

“Fine, Jason. How old is he anyway?” Roy asked, trying to make the best out of the situation, I guess.

“Seventeen. In less than a month he’ll be eighteen.” I answered. Tim did look pretty young for his age so I can see why Roy might think the way he did. However, I can’t believe he thought I would do anything with a minor. What frick’n douche bag.

“Wow, the kid looks younger than that. That makes me feel a little better about the whole situation, but you know the bats won’t be nearly as understanding as me.” He warned, sounding much more reassured. I hadn’t even thought about that. Bruce probably wouldn’t get over it if he knew Tim was legal and willing. Though, he may not forgive the kidnapping part. Anyway, Dick was going to be the one who I was worried about. He has always seemed overprotective of Tim. He was of me too at one time. I figured that I’d cross that bridge when I came to it.

“Just don’t tell Tim any of this.” I said, glaring at his face. I wasn’t ready for Tim to know my true intentions just yet.

“I won’t, but you should. That’s assuming he doesn’t already know.” Roy said walking passed me until he made it to our room. I wasn’t sure if Tim knew or not. He was a smart little bastard.

“Oh, and next time locked the door, please.” He asked before entering the room. I rolled my eyes. What the hell has happened? I didn’t even know if this thing between Tim and I was going to work. We were totally different people. I had my doubts, but something about him just felt right. It felt natural. That’s the best way I can describe it.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)}
“Jason, I don’t like you doing this.” Tim declared, as if I didn’t already know. It had been a few weeks since Tim and I got together and so far it was going really great. I stayed by Tim’s side for most of the time while his wounds were healing. We played video games and he taught me how to cook. (Really I just let him cook while I nodded to what he was saying. He looked sexy in the apron, though.) Tonight was one of the nights I had to go to work. I knew where Castillo was going to be and I had to take him out. Of course, Tim didn’t want me to go through with it, but ultimately he knew he wouldn’t change my mind. This job was bigger than usual. It was going to take me, Roy, and Kory to pull it off. I wasn’t worried about Tim trying to run away, though. He was hardly a prisoner anymore. Plus, if he did I could just track him with the chip in his shoulder. I need to remove that thing before Tim finds out about it, though.

“Look Babybird, I’ll be back soon. Just watch some TV until I get back.” I said, trying to calm him down.

“Why can’t I come with you? I can help. Besides, you don’t have to kill the man.” Tim said, still trying to change my mind. If I learned anything in my life it’s that people don’t change. Down in their core they stay the same forever. If we didn’t kill Castillo, what would Tim have us do?

“That sense of morality crap would get you killed out there. Besides, what else would you have me do with Castillo?” I inquired, pretending that Tim actually had a valid point.

“I would be fine ‘out there.’ And you could put him in jail.” He spat back at me, grabbing my arm.

“Please. The man is loaded. He will be out of jail immediately. Then he’ll pay off whoever he needs to. He won’t even make it to trial, kid. This is the real world. You can’t trust anyone.” I roared, snatching my arm out of his grasp. Tim flinched a little. I didn’t mean to scare him. I was just trying to help learn about life.

“You’re wrong. I trust you.” He said calmly while glaring at me. His nose scrunched up as he continued to look at me with those dark blue eyes of his.

“That’s different. You know what I mean, Tim.” I said, scratching the back of my head. He was such a stubborn little crap. I swear. There wasn’t any way he was going to give up. Is he going to do this every time I have a job that involves killing someone? I began to laugh a little at that thought.

“Jason, there is a better way.” Tim said, singing the same song. His face held such a serious look that was frick’n adorable and irritating at the same time.

“Sure there is, Babybird. Sure there is.” I interrupted, kissing his forehead. He just folded his arms and pouted as his face turned red. I could tell that he wanted to kiss me back, but he was still pissed at me.

“You’re an asshole. Just be careful.” He replied before getting on his tip toes to hug me. I chuckled at his shortness.
“Yeah, yeah.” I said, hugging him back. When we arrived to Castillo’s mansion we stormed in and fought off every goon he had stationed. It wasn’t that hard. I actually had expected more of a challenge. The sound of gunshots was like music to my ears. Castillo’s men sealed their fate when they chose to work for such a twisted boss. Unlike his goons, I couldn’t find Castillo anywhere. The mansion was huge. Castillo owned four mansions in all. He is usually staying at one of them every weekend. According to one of Castillo’s top goons, Benjamin Stewart, this is where he was supposed to be tonight. All three of us searched until every room had been turned over. This took a shit load of time. He was nowhere to be found. Someone must have tipped him off.

“Where the fuck is Castillo?” I shouted at one of the guards we had knocked out upon arrival. He was lucky that we didn’t shoot him before, but his luck was about to run out if he didn’t tell me Castillo’s real location. He just whimpered pitifully as I held him up to my face by his shirt. I knew a squealer when I saw one, and this guy was definitely one. When he didn’t answer right away I pounded his face in a few times. I could see the fear in his eyes, along with the reflection of my red helmet. His nose bled and his lower lip was busted open. He was young, but not as young as Tim. He looked like he was maybe twenty-three. This disturbed me a little. I stopped hitting him and let go of his shirt. There was blood splatter on the knuckles of my gloves. I groaned and walked past Roy and Kory who had been watching as usual.

“Let’s go. He’s not going to tell us anything.” I said, stepping over a dead guard. Now we were going to need another lead to find Castillo. He probably would have told us if I had beaten him more, but I just didn’t want to. His face was already swollen and bloody. In truth, I was scared of killing him. That has never happened before. I guess I could just see Tim there in his place. Damn it.

“How do we find Castillo, now?” Roy asked while walking up behind me. I had no frick’n idea of how to find him at that moment. I was really pissed that he wasn’t there. Did he know we were coming or was this just an unlucky coincidence?

“We’ll figure out another way to track him down.” I answered, with anger in my voice. I hated when Roy always asks such stupid questions. How was I supposed to know how to find him right now? Fucking idiot.

On the way back to the hotel I picked up a couple pizzas. I never know if Tim eats enough. He is so small and sometimes I think it’s because he doesn’t eat right for a boy his age. When I was his age I was always eating. Hell, I’m still always eating. I know Tim was into that healthy eating bullshit, but a few slices of pizza weren’t going to hurt him. Plus, it would make me feel better to see him eat more. When we got back to the hotel I began to think of what Tim would say to me once he knew I didn’t kill Castillo. He would probably nag me just as before, little brat. I opened the door to our hotel room and all the lights were off. Both my mask and helmet were in a bag that Roy was carrying. The bag also contained his bow and arrows.

“Kid?” I called, expecting to hear a reply. It was completely silent. He wasn’t on the sofa and he wasn’t in the bathroom. I checked my bedroom and he wasn’t there either. Had he tried to escape? What the hell? I immediately pulled a briefcase out from under the bed and opened it. I pulled the remote sensor that could track the microchip in Tim’s shoulder out and turned it on. That was how I was able to find him before he was shot. According to the device he was on top of us. He must have been on the roof. I put the remote back and pushed the briefcase back under the bed.

“Where did the young Robin go?” Kory asked as I ran passed them both.

“Stay here. I know where he is.” I managed to say before quickly exiting the hotel room. I ran to the entrance to the stairs and began climbing. What was the kid thinking, scaring me like this? I thought he was supposed to be smart. Maybe he was planning on trying to escape again, but then why didn’t
he run away like he did before? After climbing like four flights of stairs I finally made it to the top. I
didn’t hesitate to open the door to the roof. There, I saw him. Tim was leaning over the side of the
building looking down at the city lights below. Thanks to the city lights you could barely see the
stars above, but you could see the crescent moon. Tim didn’t seem to notice that I was standing
behind him. I let out a huge ass sigh of relief and began walking over to him. He had on one of my
white t-shirts and a pair of grey sweat pants Kory bought him. I loved it when he wore my clothes
because they were too big for him. I thought it was flipp’n adorable how my shirts would always
slide down his shoulder. He would always pull it back up and it would just slide back down a few
seconds later.

“Hey Babybird, what the hell are you doing up here?” I asked while slowly walking up to him from
behind. I expected him to turn around and answer me, but he didn’t. Was he ignoring me? Did I do
something to piss him off? I figured that he was probably still pissed about me going off on the job
tonight. I knew just how to get him unpissed.

“Okay, fine then. Ignore me. I’ll just go back down to the room.” I said using a smug voice. Then I
turned around and took a few steps back towards the door. I turned my head a little and saw that he
hadn’t budged. What was he doing? Now I was getting pissed.

“Hey, Princess!” I shouted, turning back around to face him. After which I started walking back over
to him. Both my hands formed fists. A cool breeze blew through Tim’s dark brown hair.

“Tim, why won’t you—” only then I realized something that made me feel incredibly stupid. I saw
two white wires, each leading to one of Tim’s ears. I couldn’t see the earbuds in his ears from the
angle I was standing. I might as well have had DUMBASS written across my face. I peeked over his
shoulder to see Roy’s IPod in his hand. He was listening to Home by Michael Buble. Ah, crap. I
began to sweat. I could see a shit storm coming. All of a sudden I felt like kicking the crap out of
Roy. He and Tim seemed to be getting along pretty well these days, but at the moment it was biting
me in the ass. I sighed.

“Stop brooding, kid!” I shouted after slapping him upside the back of the head, knocking both of the
earbuds out of his ears. He immediately turned and looked at me. His cheeks looked wet and his eyes
were filled with tears. I didn’t hit him hard enough to actually hurt him. He had to have been crying
before I even made it to the roof.

“Oh..Uh…Sorry, Jason. I didn’t know you’d be back so soon.” His voice was tight and it cracked.
He turned his face away from me and tried to walk quickly towards the door. I don’t think he wanted
me to see him when he cried, but that was too bad.

“Hold on, Tim. What’s the matter?” I said, grabbing his forearm and pulling him back towards me.
He was still trying to hide his eyes under his bangs by holding his head down.

“I’m okay, Jason. I promise.” He sniffled, pulling away. Seeing the tears in his eyes made something
in the center of my chest clench. He was pissing me off with this.

“You can tell me, Babybird. Please.” I begged, before he made it to the exit. He stopped and sighed
before turning around. It was quiet for a minute or two. I hated awkward silences. Suddenly, Tim
buried his face in my chest and wrapped his arms around my waist tightly. I wasn’t sure what to do
so I gently hugged him back.

“What's wrong?” I asked again in a more mild tone.

“I just miss them.” He confessed while looking up at me. I knew it. He was so hesitant to admit it. It
was like he thought I would be mad at him or something. I suspected that he was getting homesick,
but I didn’t think he was this torn up about it. I knew that I couldn’t let him go back to them. Maybe I
could figure out another way to make him feel better. I just held him for a few minutes until he
calmed down.

“Hey, it’s okay. Cheer up. Your birthday is next week. Aren’t you excited about that?” I said while
wiping a tear from his eye with my finger, trying to lighten up the mood. He smiled and laughed a
little as a reaction. At least he wasn’t crying anymore.

“I haven’t been excited for my birthday since I was like ten.” He said, trying to prove his maturity. I
loved messing with him by treating him like a kid sometimes.

“You okay, now? Cuz the pizza is getting cold.” I joked as my both our arms released each other. He
laughed some again. I’m glad that I could make him laugh. We headed back down to the room and I
made him eat two slices of pizza. After everyone ate Roy, Tim, and I watched some TV. Roy was
on a reclining chair, and we were on the couch. After about an hour Tim fell asleep leaning on me. I
positioned myself to where his head on lying on my chest. He stirred a little, but he didn’t wake up.
Why was he so tired? I mean, it’s not like he did anything today. He always went to sleep before me.
After another hour pasted I was beginning to dose off as well. I tossed Roy the remote and collected
Tim in my arms. As I was carrying him to the bedroom bridal style he started to wake up.

After I put him down on the bed I went to the bathroom. When I returned I stripped down to my
boxers and joined Tim in the bed. He yawned and we both got under the covers.

“You know, u didn’t have to carry me to the bed.” He said, sleepily.

“Of course I did. Wouldn’t be the same without ya, kid.” I answered before giving in to a powerful
urge to yawn, myself. Tim just rolled his eyes.

“I mean, I could have just walked.” He said, sitting up.

“Ah, quit complaining. I could just make you sleep on the floor.” I said playfully. He smiled a little
and climbed on top of me, sitting on my abdomen. Whoa. He really knew how to get the blood
flowing. Even though Tim and I haven’t done anything besides make out a little he was learning
pretty fast. He knew that I loved it when he got on top of me like that. I took hold of his hips and he
gave me a devilish, child-like smile before leaning down to press his lips against mine. I was starting
to get a boner. The first time we made out in the bed I remember feeling Tim getting aroused before I
made him slow down. I didn’t want to say anything because I knew that he would be embarrassed,
but I actually thought it was hot. The fact is that he wasn’t ready for that kind of stuff yet, and he still
ain’t ready.

“Really?” He said sarcastically while kissing me. I opened my mouth to deepen the kiss and he
followed my example. I took a deep breath before flipping over on top of him. I couldn’t help
grinding against his body as we continued to go at it. He began to moan as I gently caressed his chest
and stomach under his shirt. Ugh, I wanted him. I know he wanted me, but it wasn’t right. Not yet,
anyway. I slowed the kiss and slowly pulled away. We were both breathing heavily. Tim just laid
there wanting more. Hell, so did I. He was beautifully sprawled out across the bed. I sat up and got
back into my side of the bed. Tim looked at me with a puzzled expression. I almost scared to ask
what was wrong.

“Jason, is there something wrong with me?” He asked innocently while looking into my eyes. Where
was the kid going with this? Surely this wasn’t about me.

“No way, Babybird. What the hell would make you think that?” I answered, scratching my head in
curiosity. I was a bit hesitant to continue talking. Oh, shit. I knew it. It’s about sex. Tim always
"Then why don’t we…uh, go further?" He mumbled just loud enough to where I could barely hear him while looking away from me like he had done something wrong. It was kind of cute how he was so foreign to talking about relationships and sex. Of course, so was I, but it didn’t look nearly as adorable on me. I sighed before resting my hand on his shoulder.

"Am I doing something wrong? Or are you not attracted to me or something?" He kind of blurted out before I could answer. For someone as smart as he was, that was a pretty dumb ass question. He was very wrong to say the least. I was very attracted to him, but I also really like him and I didn’t want to ruin that. I also didn’t want to take advantage of his naiveté. It was too soon in the relationship, anyway. He deserves much better than me, so I’m going to do my best to do what is best for him. It just so happens that sex isn’t the best thing for him right now. Maybe after another month or two. By then, we should know me even better and can hopefully decide whether or not he wants to go through with it. I honestly don’t know why he ever liked me in the first place. I kidnapped him and kicked him around. I treated him like total crap. I didn’t even know he was into guys.

"Oh Babybird, I promise that is not the case. You are frick’n beautiful." I answered him with a small sigh of laughter. Then he just looked at me all confused again.

"Then, why?" He asked as his voice sounded shriveled and nervous. Ugh. Should’ve known this was coming.

"Because, we just aren’t ready yet." I groaned, trying to make him understand.

"What do you mean? Is it because I am not eighteen yet? Because of all the vigilante work we both do, an age inappropriate relationship is the least of our concerns. Also, sodomy laws in California are not the same as—"

"It’s not your age!" I quickly interrupted. I have to admit that I wasn’t comfortable discussing whatever the hell it was that Tim was about to say. Why was he in such a hurry to have sex anyway? It was mix of his age and the fact that he is still a virgin. I know I was a good bit younger than him during my first time, but that was all I was looking for. I was stupid and selfish, the exact opposite of Tim.

"Look, when I said we weren’t ready that’s exactly what I meant. We as in both of us. I really like you, Tim. And I don’t want to ruin that by having uh…sex too soon. Just trust me. Okay, Babybird?" I said, trying to sound as sincere as possible. Tim nodded as he sat Indian style on the bed, trying not to make eye contact.

"Why are you in such a hurry, anyway?" I asked, trying not to blush.

"There’s uh…no reason." He replied unprepared for that question. His face went red as I went on.

"Not buying it, kid. The Tim I know doesn’t do anything without a reason. Just tell me." I stated, trying to get him to just spit it out. Tim has never done anything for no reason. That was an obvious lie.

"I just-" He started, turning red. Damn, I hated when he wouldn’t just say shit.

"Yeah?" I asked, moving closer to him. He sighed deeply.

"I guess I just don’t want to leave me or stop liking me. I thought it was something that you wanted." He answered hesitantly while twiddling his fingers. Wow. I’m pretty sure if that ever
happened it would be the other way around. I put my hands on both of his shoulders and looked him in his dark blue eyes.

“Tim, that ain’t going to happen. It’s not that I don’t want it. I just don’t think we’re ready for it yet.” I said, trying to convince the kid. It was kind of weird, but I feel like it would have been even weirder if it had been anyone but Tim. Truth be told, I have never been with anyone younger than me. I had only been with older women or guys that were my age. I kind of liked being with someone that was younger than me. He was still fairly innocent and full of questions. I loved that about Tim. What I didn’t understand, was why Tim liked me. I wasn’t innocent like him. I’m not pure. I just wanted what makes him happy. If he ever chooses to leave me then that will just have to be. Until then, I will do everything to do what’s best for Tim and make him happy. When did I become such a softy?

“How will I know when we’re ready?” he asked, still sitting in that same position. I could tell that he wasn’t planning on making this easy on me. I chuckled a little and thought about what to tell him next. I rolled my eyes and then tackled him on the bed. I loved it when Tim and I wrestled. It was such a turn on. Finally, I got him pinned down. I looked at his face and his grin. Then I proceeded to tickle his ribs. Tim was extremely ticklish, which you couldn’t tell by just looking at him or by his personality. This was a trait that I thought was interesting about him.

He acted like he hated when I tickled him, but I think he really likes it as much I do. He tried to push me away while he laughed loudly. It was fucking adorable. I stopped after he was out of breath from laughing so hard. I still had him pinned under me. I leaned down and pressed my lips against his, closing my eyes. After about a minute I began kissing his neck. I gently used my teeth to gently pinch his skin, breathing softly onto his skin as well. Tim responded by letting out a soft moan. I slowly moved up to his jawline. His skin was soft and pale. Tim used my body wash and I loved the way it smelled. I ran my fingers through his hair as my lips made their way up to his ear. I slightly nibbled on his ear, breathing on it slightly at the same time. He responded with a small whimper. Man, I love when he does that.

“You’ll know when we’re ready, Babybird. I promise.” I whispered into his ear. I think I’m really falling for this kid. Damn. After a while of some steamy make out sessions we just laid beside each other in the bed. The lights were off. It would have been completely dark if the city lights weren’t shining through the window and blinds. The lights were bright enough for us to still see each other.

“So, you haven’t told me much about you.” I said, using my forearm to prop up my head. I wanted to learn more about him and his past. I mean, I knew that he used to stalk me and Dick in our earlier days. I knew that he replaced me as Robin. That’s about all I knew about the kid. Well that, and the fact that he had a perfect, little, tight body.

“You know, I could say the same about you.” Tim reprimanded. I also knew that he was a little smart ass.

“‘Oh, so that’s your game, huh?’ I asked, smirking and raising an eyebrow. I know that he knew some stuff about me from the batcave’s database, but it was probably all bad things. I sighed. That’s probably all there was. There wasn’t too much good about me. In fact, the best thing about me at that moment was probably Tim. He just looked at me, like he was waiting for me speak.

“Okay, kid. Have it your way.” I said, after which I began telling my story. I told Tim all about Crime Alley, which was where I was from. I told him about my drug addict mother who taught me how to make money by ripping off car parts like tires, and getting cash for them. I had to pretty much take care of her until she died of an overdose, leaving me alone. After that, I began living on the
streets and continued ripping off car parts for money. It was a tough life. My dad was a criminal who worked for Harvey Dent (aka Two-face). He got busted one night and wound up doing time. For a long time I didn’t know where the hell he was. Later on I found out that he had been murdered by Two-face and his thugs. I even told Tim about the night I met Batman for the first time. I was a young punk ass looking for cars to steal parts from when I came across the frick’n batmobile parked in an alley. I had just finished taking off all four tires when the old man returned to his car only to find me about to make off with his tires. The surprised look on Bruce’s face was visible through his scowl.

Tim found that part pretty amusing. Batman tried to put me in a school for troubled kids, but that turned out to be a bust since the owner of the school was actually teaching us criminal trades. Bruce could see the anger and rage in me and decided that I should learn to channel it by becoming the second Robin. I did this, but I was still too angry for the job. I came close to killing criminals I would take down. Bruce wasn’t too happy about that. Tim’s face grew more concerned as I continued to tell my story. He knew what was coming. I told him about how my mother actually wasn’t my biological mother. It sounded like bad soap opera when I said it. When I eventually found my real mother I found out that she was being blackmailed by the Joker. She had been embezzling from the aid agency that she worked for. As part of a cover-up deal she tricked me, and ended up handing me over to the Joker as Robin. I didn’t go into much detail with the next part. I know that he read my file. He was well aware of my death and resurrection. After beating me nearly to death with a crowbar the Joker activated a bomb that ultimately killed me and my biological mother just before Batman arrived.

“I think you know what happened after that. So, there you have it, kid. That’s my story, more or less.” I said, sitting up and reaching for my pack of cigarettes from the nightstand to my right. I turned the lamp on and lit the smoke. I inhaled the nicotine goodness. Tim just looked at me with a sad little expression on his face. It seemed like he wanted to help me, but he didn’t know how. To be honest, I don’t think I can be helped. At least, not when it comes to the damaging effects that my death caused. This world sure is a funny place. At one point I thought I wanted to kill the new Robin for replacing me. Then, I wanted to try and protect him from suffering my fate. Now, I’m in bed with him, acting like I’m in love with him. I exhaled my smoke away from Tim’s direction. He didn’t much care for my smoking habit. He was pretty much against it, but he put up with it anyway.

“How could your own mother sell you out to the Joker?” He asked, getting all stirred up. He sat up cross-legged on the bed. Sitting like that was one of his habits. I thought it was cute as hell.

“Guess she didn’t care for me too much. Doesn’t matter, though. She died in the explosion just like I did. In the end, she paid the price for bargaining with that crazy bastard.” I muttered stoically before taking another puff of my cigarette. After saying those words out loud I thought it made me sound a bit sadistic, but it was too late to change the phrasing. I figured I should probably try and change the subject now.

“Your turn, Babybird.” I said, grinning at him. I was anxious to hear about his life before Robin. He sighed like I thought he would before he started talking. For some reason, Tim didn’t really like to talk about himself. He acted too embarrassed or something. Maybe he thought he wasn’t interesting enough or something. The kid’s self-esteem wasn’t exactly top gun.

“Well, I suppose I should start from the beginning. I lived quite the privileged life as a child. It all started with a circus my parents took me to when I was a little kid. It was the same circus that Dick and his parents were participating in. I witnessed his parent’s murder with the rest of the audience. A few years later I was able to see some old footage of Batman and Robin battle the Penguin and his men. That was when I saw dick perform the same quadruple somersault that he had performed at the circus. This was his signature move in the circus. I hadn’t seen anyone else attempt it. That piece of
information, along with a few other clues to the public, led me to deduce that he was Robin. After figuring that part out, it was all too simple to figure out that Bruce Wayne was Batman. It seemed that my conclusion turned out to be right.” He divulged, while fidgeting his fingers. How old was he when he figured out that Bruce was Batman? He had to be super young because when I first met him he was such a little tike. That’s amazing. As he was talking I noticed that it was beginning to rain. Thunder followed soon after. Tim jumped a little when the thunder roared. I laughed a little bit.

“I followed the two of them quite extensively. Not long after I realized who Robin was he disappeared. Around the same time, another masked vigilante appeared in a city nearby that went by the name of Nightwing, Obviously, it was Dick. There was no mistaking it. That’s when you took his place soon after.” He said.

“How in hell did you ever convince Bruce to let a little thing like you become Robin?” I probed, interrupting his story. It’s was hard to believe that Bruce was stupid enough to take in another kid after what happened to me. What a dick. Tim could have suffered the same fate. I shuttered at the thought of something like that happening to him. I put my smoke out in the ashtray by the bed. The sound of the rain falling was kind of soothing.

“It wasn’t easy. It took a great deal of persuading on my part. He wasn’t going easy on me either. Before I became Robin I noticed that Batman was acting out of character. He was excessively violent and too careless. He needed a Robin to help keep his sanity intact after what happened to you. He took it really hard, you know.” He answered with a bit too much information for my taste.

“It still doesn’t excuse the fact that he endangered the life of another kid after one already died. Just because he has issues doesn’t mean other people, especially children, should have to suffer.” I replied, dead set on making Tim see the monster Bruce really is.

“It isn’t that simple. Both Bruce and Nightwing were reluctant to accept me as a new Robin. I actually stole the suit and ended up saving both of their lives from Two-face. Only then, did Bruce even remotely consider the idea. My training went well over the next several months.” Tim continued. Who cares if Tim stole the suit? Bruce should have been more careful.

“When my parents were killed–” He started to say. My mind immediately cleared and turned its attention to Tim’s words. His fingers were still fidgeting like he was nervous or something.

“–Bruce, Dick, Barbra, and Alfred were all there for me. I think that I wouldn’t have been okay if I wasn’t able to be Robin. I am sure that Bruce knew that. The mind is a scary thing. I found myself depending on Robin just as Bruce had.” He finished, before lying down beside me on top of the covers. I decided to just drop the whole thing about Bruce for now for Tim’s sake. This kid has been through a lot. He deserved to have a normal life, but fuck no. It was quiet for a few minutes.

“So…What’s your favorite color?” I said, trying to break the silence. I must have sounded like a total idiot. It was the only thing I could think to say. Tim chuckled and moved on to his side.

“I like green, I guess. What about you?” He looked at me with a smirk. I think he knew that I couldn’t think of anything else to talk about. Not everyone can be a frick’n genius like him.

“I’m going to have to go with red.” I replied just before the thunder cracked and lightning lit up the room. Tim jumped again. It was pretty hilarious and I guess pretty adorable too. And of course, being the loveable oaf I am, I proceeded to laugh.

“You scared of a little lightning, Babybird?” I teased, ruffling his hair. He scowled at me as his face turned red.
“Of course, I’m not afraid of lightning. It is merely the occurrence of a natural electrical discharge and high voltage between a cloud and the ground or within a cloud, accompanied by a bright flash.” He lectured while still red in the face. What, did this kid eat a frick’n dictionary to gain its power or something?

“I love it when you talk dirty to me.” I continued to tease him while wrapping him in my arms. He let out a small laugh at my last comment. I loved hearing him laugh and making him smile. He didn’t do enough of either, in my opinion. The kid needed to loosen up some. I pulled him close and kissed his forehead. He just leaned into my embrace. His head rested on my chest. I turned the lamp off and thought we were going to sleep. We just kept on talking. Tim is such an awesome person. I was glad that I got to learn so much about him. He loves cats and doesn’t care much for dogs (they are too needy). His middle name is Jackson. He hates being cold, and loves snuggling. He hates parties. Tim doesn’t strike me as a real physically affectionate person, but he tends to enjoy it more than I thought. He talked about how he knew he was gay since he was a little kid, but was scared to tell anyone until he was fourteen. He wants to become a vegetarian, but he thinks he lacks the self-discipline, bullshit. He can talk in five different languages and is pretty good at diffusing bombs right before the counter reaches one. I also learned that Tim’s childhood crush was Zac Efron (go figure).

Eventually, the kid fell asleep on my chest again. I gently shifted his bangs out of his sleeping face. His breathing was even and deep. I didn’t know why I was feeling this way towards him. All I knew was that I couldn’t stop it.

“Why am I so fucking stupid?” I whispered to myself, not loud enough to wake Tim. What if this whole thing ended badly? I really didn’t want to wind up hurting Tim. I felt the need to protect and comfort him. Every fiber of my being was suddenly burning with a desire to keep him close and not let anything happen to him. Ugh. I am such a fucking tool.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)
“I have to hurry!” I said to myself while running blindly through the snow. What was I running for? I was trying to make my way up a huge hill for some reason. The icy powder was falling mercilessly. The freezing wind was also not doing me any favors. I was about to freeze my ass off. With every step my legs would sink into the deep white snow. The ground almost looked silver as the moon’s light shined down on it. It may have been nice to look at if it was calm, but it wasn’t. Sparkling white dust continued to fall and get in the way of my vision. It was like wrestling with a blizzard. What was the fucking point of this? That’s when I heard something through the wind and snow. A scream, maybe? It sounded faint, but definitely there. I heard it again.

“Shit!” I cursed before trying my best to run through the freezing storm, toward the scream. I could still hear it. It began to sound familiar. Was someone in trouble? Suddenly I could hear another noise. A certain laugh pierced my ears, a sinister laugh that I could never forget. It was the last laugh I heard before I died, the laugh of the psychotic madman that killed me. There was no mistaking it. It only made me struggle harder through the snow. My eyes widened upon hearing it. Both my numb hands formed fists as I was gritting my teeth with rage. This time I’ll kill him. I have to. Someone has to. Bruce won’t do it. Bruce can’t do it. Only I can. I’ll silence that crazy ass laughter of his once and for all!

“HELP!” said the other voice, accompanying the insane laughter. Who was this? I know who it is, but I can’t remember. Then the voice let out another shriek. This time it sounded like it was in pain. I didn’t know who it was or what was going on ahead of me, but it wasn’t good. What was that fucking madman up to, now? I’ll rip his fucking head off! Suddenly, I could see what looked like a warehouse up ahead. The lights in the windows, though dim, were still present. My vision was getting more and more blurred from the increasing wind and ice hitting my body. My lungs burned from heavily breathing in so much of this cold air. It was almost like the weather was trying to keep me from getting to that warehouse at all costs. I wasn’t going to give up, though. Jason Todd ain’t a pussy.
“JASON!” shouted the voice again. They knew my name? Wait, the voice was much clearer this time. It was Tim! That madman had him alone in that warehouse! I had to hurry before it was too late. I heard him scream with agony one last time before the insane laughter took its place. Then, my heart stopped. The icy wind stopped blowing. Instead, ash took its place. The snow at my feet disappeared. It was like everything besides the warehouse had been burned to ashes. What the fuck? I was sweating insanely while I quickly ran to the warehouse door and kicked it in. Splinters of the wooden door flew everywhere. That’s when I saw Tim’s lifeless body in the corner of the warehouse in a puddle of blood. His Robin suit was torn and bloody. His mask was missing. Blood splatters covered the walls. Tim was lying on his side. His arms were all bruised and cut up. I couldn’t see his face. I didn’t want to. Beside his body was a crowbar that had been bathed in his blood.

I fell to my knees beside Tim. Tears began running down my face. I scooped his limp up in my arms. His hair was filled with dried blood and dirt. I held him close and screamed at the top of my lungs. “I swear the Joker will pay. I’ll exterminate that vermin from this earth. I swear!”

Tim’s point of view

I was half asleep and disoriented when Jason woke me up with all of his stirring and carrying on. He was violently tossing and turning sobbing quietly with an expression of utter terror on his face. He was obviously having a nightmare. His breaths were long and deep. He was completely drenched in sweat. Immediately I shook him in an attempt to wake him. After multiple efforts he finally opened his tear filled eyes. This was the first time I had ever seen Jason cry. It was a bit heartbreaking. Right after he woke up he instinctively grabbed my upper arm, causing me to let out a small whimper. His hands were much bigger than mine. His grip was tight. Jason was scaring me.

“Jason, it was just a nightmare! Everything’s okay, breathe!” I assured him, scared Jason was having a panic attack. He was still struggling to breathe steadily. My words took effect seconds later. He let go of my arm and wiped the tears from his eyes. I knew he didn’t want me to see him cry. Jason was too macho for that. His breathing began to slow and he calmed down. What could he have dreamed about? Whatever it was, it had to have been excruciatingly painful for him. His blood pressure and heart rate had to be through the roof. He turned and sat on the edge of the bed. I placed my hand on his left shoulder, trying to comfort him the only way I knew how.

“How are you alright?” I asked, still a tad afraid. My arm was throbbing from where he had grabbed me. It would probably bruise. I don’t blame him, though. It wasn’t his fault. Everyone in the bat family had nightmares. I was no exception.

“Yeah, I’m okay, kid. What about you? I’m sorry I grabbed your arm. I swear I didn’t mean to.” He said, still shaken up.

“I’m okay. What was it about? Your nightmare, I mean.” I asked skittishly. Dick used to tell me all about his nightmares. They would get pretty bad.

“I-uh..don’t want to talk about it.” Jason said, getting up from the bed and heading to the bathroom to get cleaned up. I couldn’t help but wonder what it could have been about. I usually forget my dreams moments after I awaken, but not the nightmares. I wonder if Jason was the same way. It is most depressing to forget the good and be forced to remember the bad. That is, if there are any pleasant dreams to speak of. They rarely find me anymore. If I dream at all, they are usually nightmares. I suspect that is the case with Jason as well. I sighed deeply. I would be lying if I said that I wasn’t worried about Jason. I just sat there on the edge of the bed waiting for him to come back. It is a good
thing that I didn’t hold my breath. He was in the bathroom for nearly half an hour. If he thinks that I am just going to go back to bed and ignore what just happened, he is sadly mistaken.

“Jason.” I said when he finally did return. I found myself at a loss for words. I felt so sorry for Jason. No one should have to suffer the pain and sorrow that he has had to endure. This man has literally died. Of course, he would have night terrors and occasional panic attacks. It is completely understandable that he wouldn’t want to talk about his nightmares. Talking about them may make Jason think himself weak. This is obviously not true. Maybe, if he were to talk about them then he would come to terms with his issues. Perhaps then they wouldn’t occur as often. Dick and I used to discuss our nightmares and it helped me.

“Listen, Tim.” Jason started to say, standing right in front of me as I sat on the edge of the bed. My head only came up to his chest so I had to look up into his eyes. They looked serious and gave of an air of despair. Then Jason bent down slightly and pulled me into a tight embrace. My chin rested on his shoulder. It happened to suddenly that I wasn’t sure how to react.

“I will always be there to protect you. I swear.” He said into my ear. His deep voice took my breath away. My arms slowly made their way to his back. Why was he saying this? I already knew that he would protect me. I would do the same for him, but why tell me like this? This had to have something to do with his nightmare. Maybe, something happened to me in the dream. After a few minutes Jason took a sleeping pill and we went back to bed.

“You know, I am not a defenseless child. I can take care of myself. You don’t have to worry about me.” I said in the dark, trying to remind him that I was more than capable of protecting myself. He responded with a small laugh. I think he was half-asleep.

“Shut up, Babybird.” He said just a couple of minutes before passing out completely. I smiled a little and joined him.

“Happy Birthday, Tim!” Kory shouted deafeningly. I wanted to hurt Jason. He knows I hated parties, especially when they are mine. I also hated being treated like a child. I didn’t want to be rude, but I hated that the three of them went through so much trouble to get me a cake and presents.

“Oh, you guys didn’t have to do all this. I-” I said, before being interrupted by non-other than Jason sneaking up on me from behind.

“Ah, c’mon, kid. Loosen up. It’s your birthday. We can’t just ignore it.” Jason said innocently, while wrapping his arms around me from behind. I could have hit him right then and there. Instead, I let out a great sigh.

“Whatever.” I replied, lifelessly. Hopefully, wouldn’t be that bad. I mean, how bad could it be?

“Alright, then. You’ll need one of these.” Jason snickered as he put a pointy, red and white striped party hat on my head and secured it with an elastic string under my chin. That did it.

“No way, asshole!” I growled, punching Jason in the arm. Roy and Jason laughed out loud.

“But, you look so cute!” Jason teased. Needless to say, the hat didn’t stay. I was about to curse Jason some more, but then Kory interrupted my thought process.

“On my home world we would celebrate the day of one’s birth by slaying a giant gorkuchu (Gor-Kah-Chu) and then having a bountiful feast. We would drink from the fountain of Prazdnik until our ancestors were made proud!” Kory said while stirring a bowl of something. Tamaranean cooking
was not exactly what I was hoping for. She nearly killed us the last time she cooked. However, her people’s culture was interesting to me.

“I’ll drink to that. I’ll just have to pretend that this beer is from the fountain of what’s its name.” Roy said, taking a gulp from a red party cup. Oh, Lord. Jason only drank a little the entire night. I was proud of him. He knows I am not a big fan of drinking. We ordered pizza and Jason brought out a cake he made. Even though it was uneven and pretty rough looking I still thought he was sweet for making it. It actually tasted great. The presents were great as well. Jason got me my favorite book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and a video game. The only video games I ever really cared for was Mario, so he got me MarioKart. Roy got me an Ipod with head phones and all his music already on it. Roy had good taste in music. Kory made me some of her ‘glorax pudding.’

This is a ceremonial dish they made for one coming of age on her planet. I smiled and acted grateful, but it tasted horrible. I predicted as much. I still thought it was a nice gesture. Roy and Jason laughed at me having to eat some. The majority of the rest of the night was spent playing MarioKart. The hotel suite we stayed in came with a Wii console and two remotes. If there was one quality that Jason and I had in common it was how competitive we both were.

“Yes!” I said after passing Jason on the Rainbow Road. I was playing as Yoshi and Jason was Mario. It had been a long while since I had played this game, but I was still fairly good at it. Every now and again Jason would elbow me, causing me to drop the controller as he scored a victory.

“Hey, that’s playing dirty.” I said, trying to regain the lead position.

“Sorry Babybird, but I play to win.” Jason smirked, after which he stole a kiss. I smirked back and then proceeded to stand in front of his view. We wound up wrestling over it. When it was all over I won the game, but not the wrestling.

“Oh, and there’s one other thing I got you, kid.” Jason said, digging in his pocket. I wish that he wouldn’t have got me so many gifts. I mean, any at all was unnecessary. I sat on the couch next to him, about to tell him how he shouldn’t have gone to so much trouble. Roy was passed out on the recliner and Kory had passed out on top of him. She drank at least twice as much as Roy did. Roy’s drunken and relentless snoring was getting a bit old. All of a sudden, Jason grabbed my wrist and pulled me a little closer to him. When he let go there was a woven, brown, leather bracelet with a steel magnetic clasp fastened around my wrist. I glanced at it as it slid down past my wrist due to the fact that my wrist was a bit too small. It was quite endearing. I couldn’t stop myself from turning red. I could feel the blood rushing to my face. I didn’t know what to say so I immediately hugged Jason tightly.

“Well, I take it that this means you like it?” He said, his words filled with small bits of laughter as he gently placed his hand on the back of my head.

“You might say that.” I replied, looking up at him. Suddenly he leaned forward and his lips were moving against mine. Jason made me feel so content and happy. Two feelings that rarely showed any liking to me. He gave me the feeling that everything would be alright as long as we were together. I was sinking deeper and deeper into this vast ocean of affection for this man. I couldn’t help but wonder if I was feeling this way because of my youth and inexperience. I was hardly the romantic type before this. I didn’t even like any form of physical contact before Jason. Was this just something that was being conducted inside my own mind, something that would burn for a while before coming to an abrupt end that would hurt everyone involved? Or was this feeling trying to be something more?

We had to go to bed shortly after that. Jason and the others had a plan to go after Castillo the following night. As I have mentioned before, I hated the thought of Jason going off to assassinate
someone. It was so demoralizing to Jason’s character. I spend all this time thinking highly of him and then he continues to kill people. This makes it harder for me to respect him. It also makes it harder for me to see the good in him that I know is present. I know that he only kills criminals, but I cannot and will not accept that. At the very least he could allow me to go with him. Unfortunately, he is totally against that idea. I still had to try and ask the next day. I hated asking questions to which I already knew the answers. Ugh.

“Please, Jason? I promise I will not compromise the mission.” I pleaded, putting on my most convincing and persuading puppy dog eyes. Jason just looked at me with a face full of irritation as he continued to lace up his combat boots. Now he was ignoring me completely. He was already wearing his brown leather jacket with a black shirt underneath. Underneath that was a small bulletproof vest. He was also wearing grey pants with guns placed in holsters wrapped around each leg. He was still missing his mask and his helmet.

“Tim, you know I can’t do that. You’re not going. It’s too dangerous. Sorry, kiddo.” Jason sighed for the umpteenth time. He was really pissing me off. I am completely able to look after myself. I am Robin, after all.

“I don’t get it, Jason. I’m Robin. I may even be a great addition to your team. It would only be to your benefit to utilize my abilities, rather than keep me cooped up here all day and night.” I nagged, trying to change his mind, but to no avail. Damn it.

“If I let you join us then that would make me a hypocrite, see. That’s the same reason I took you from Bruce. I didn’t want him to endanger another young Robin. How would I be any better if I were to do the same thing? Plus, I would never be able to forgive myself if something happened to you, kid” He said, countering my argument and making me want to slap him more and more with every word. I sighed and proceeded to grimace at his decision. He was basically taking Robin away from me. He was going to have to try harder if he wanted to succeed. Not only that, he was also being selfish. He was worried about my safety? What if I was worried about him? He isn’t immortal. Someone might get lucky and shoot him or something. He wasn’t considering my feelings at all.

“Hey, don’t look so down, Babybird.” He said with his deep voice while using his fingers to tilt my chin upward to where I was looking up at him. He loved doing this, and I didn’t exactly mind it. I still tried to avoid eye contact with him, though. He kissed me deeply before putting on his mask and helmet. I know he was trying to cheer me up, but I wasn’t going for it. It was time for He, Kory, and Roy to go on their mission without me. Jason had to exit from the window with a grappling hook. Kory flew out while carrying Roy. After they left I thought of an intriguing idea. Jason left his laptop here in the room. It was password protected, but I managed to crack it with much ease. After gaining access to Jason’s computer I began to review all of the information it held about Castillo.

Apparantly, Jason and the others were off to beat the whereabouts of Castillo out of another one of his goons. In theory, that isn’t necessarily a bad way to go, but there is always the chance of the news getting back to Castillo before they are able to. This would obviously result in him going into hiding, as he did the last time Jason pursued him. Jason’s tactics were far too broad and unnecessarily messy. Using Jason’s laptop, I was able to gain information on another one of Castillo’s men. This one held a great deal of importance to Castillo’s drug business, more so than the one Jason and the others were perusing. His name was Johnny Piner. Though, his nickname was tiger. For what reason, I knew not. He had been well known among the drug cartels around the country for the last decade. He was clever, but not clever enough. In order to avoid being caught, most drug deals take place over the phone or in person. It is considered stupid to use some type of email or text message that can be traced back, unless it is a code word or something. Using Jason’s resources and information on hundreds of gangs and drug dealers, I was able to find an email address that held the same initials as the man I was looking for. It read JPtiger@hotmail.com. Got him.
I was successfully able to hack his email. I saw that the emails weren’t for his drug business, but for porn ads, prostitutes, and few casual conversations. Still, this was no coincidence. It had to be him. The latest email was received moments before I hacked it. After refreshing the page I saw that it had been read. This means that this man was most likely on some sort of traceable smartphone. Using the IP address of the phone I was able to geographically pinpoint his location. This still did me no good, though. I was in the same position as Jason. What was I going to do? Beat the guy until he coughed up answers? He is more likely going to be more afraid of what the drug gangs will do to him than he would be of me. I sighed and tried to think of a way to get this guy to reveal Castillo’s whereabouts. Then another idea popped into my head. What if there was a way to listen in on his phone calls? I happened to know a way. A few months ago, Bruce and I took down a crime lord in Gotham by using their own phones against them. I had been able to create a computer virus that I could email or text to their phones. When opened, this virus would take over the speaker and microphone of the device and stream every call to the Batcave. The virus was a tool of my own invention, but I couldn’t take all the credit. It was Barbra’s idea to start with.

I immediately went to work on re-creating the virus. It took me a total of two hours and twenty-seven minutes. When it was finally done I sent it in the form of an email to Piner’s inbox. I had made it appear to be another porn ad. He seemed to get a lot of those. Sure enough, he opened it within minutes of its arrival. The virus was now implanted into his phone and online. I would now know about any phone calls he would be making or receiving.

I don’t know why Jason refused to trust me. With my help, he would get his job done much quicker. Oh well. Of course, I would never agree to help him if I knew he was going to kill anyone. In a way, I preferred it this way. Maybe I could put Castillo and his men behind bars and prove to Jason that he doesn’t have to kill him. If I was going to do that I would need my Robin suit. This was the interesting part. Jason had trashed my Robin suit when he kidnapped me in case it was bugged, which it was. I had noticed that he kept several of my sharp batarangs and my grappling hook gun. After checking them for bugs, he put them away in his closet. I must admit that he didn’t know that I knew about them and I concluded that he needed to stay ignorant for a while. I actually stumbled upon them accidently. Jason’s closet was also where he kept all of his gear and outfits. He trusts me enough now to not run away again, and I won’t. I will, however, still be Robin. Sooner or later I will have to contact Dick and the others just to let them know that I’m alright. Jason will have to accept that. For now, he made me promise that I wouldn’t contact anyone in the bat family. I hate to put them through so much pain and stress over me. I sighed at the thought of trying to convince Jason.

There were other matters at hand at the moment. For example, I needed a haircut if I was going to be fighting bad guys. I headed to the bathroom and found Jason’s electric razor and a pair of scissors. Jason cut his own hair, and Roy’s. Like most people, I was hesitant to do this. It got easier after the first few clips. Suddenly, there was hair all over the floor and the bathroom counter. Strands of my dark brown hair were well defined against the white tile floor. The back was the most difficult, but I did it rather well. I was surprised that I didn’t cut off a piece of my ear. When finished, my hair was cut it short all over but slightly longer at the top, giving it a clean cut look. To be honest, I tried to model it after Jason’s haircut. After cleaning the mess on the floor and counter I returned to Jason’s closet. I needed to put together a new outfit.

This was tricky. Out of all Jason’s brown leather jackets there was one that was too small for him. His bullet proof vests were adjustable and his masks were just like my Robin mask. I stole some of Roy’s grey pants and gloves. Roy also had boots that were a bit too big, but a much better fit than Jason’s. Between the two of them, I could create a descent uniform for myself. My attire consisted of: A bulletproof vest underneath a black long sleeve-shirt with a red hood attached to it, and one of Jason’s smaller brown leather jackets (with the red hood from the shirt pulled out). I cut the sleeves off of the jacket a little bit above the elbow because they were too long. I wore a pair of Roy’s grey pants, gloves, and brown combat boots, and lastly I had on a mask that covered my eyes.
As far as weapons, I packed a grappling hook gun, a few knives, an adjustable bo-staff, and as many batarangs as I could. I also took one of Jason’s utility belts, and filled it with any other smaller gadgets I might need. After getting dressed, I snuck out of the room and locked the door behind me. I made it to the rooftop without being seen by another guest. That would have been an interesting encounter. Stepping onto the edge of the rooftop and looking down filled me with such joy and intensity. The bright lights of the city were calling my name. They all looked so beautiful from way up high at night. This city was so much brighter than Gotham, that’s for sure. All the buildings and roads were lit up magnificently. Everything about this was refreshing, the smell of the air, the sound of traffic below, and especially the adrenaline coursing through my veins.

“Robin’s back.” I smirked before diving into the city, shooting my grappling hook and swinging through the city air. I felt like I was flying again as I soared through the air. My acrobatic skills didn’t hold a candle to Dick’s, but they weren’t too bad either, especially considering that I haven’t been able to perform them in a quite some time. Flipping through the air and gracefully jumping from building to building felt incredible. I felt like it was the first time I was Robin all over again. This night wasn’t all about the complications of nostalgia. I had a job to do. I needed to spy on Tiger in order to strategize. I might get lucky and Tiger will simply lead me to Castillo. Such luck rarely befell me. Still, the thought of getting out of that hotel for a few hours and freely swinging through the city was reason enough to at least give it a try. I knew Tiger’s coordinates according to his phone. He wasn’t far. His location was approximately seven miles away. It had become painfully clear that we weren’t going to leave this bloody city until Jason’s beef with Castillo is dealt with.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.
Just as predicted, I was able to locate Tiger. He was staying in a very fancy hotel. I was able to spy on him from outside of a window. He was a very tall and lanky man with a small mustache. The suit that clothed him looked awfully expensive. On his wrist was a Rolex, and on his arm was a girl, likely a hooker. She was surely dressed as such. Upon closer examination, I could see that her teeth were rotten, and she was painfully thin. I knew she had to be using. I knew that if I could follow Tiger as much as possible I might get lucky. He could lead me straight to Castillo. I was still able to monitor all of his phone calls, but I was still going to tail him. This went on for a few nights. Jason was also on the hunt. He would be out all night trying to track Castillo, just as I was. We both just kind of slept during the day due to this.

Sleeping in all day was so unlike me so I needed to force myself to get up around noon to keep Jason from becoming suspicious. So far, Jason had no idea that I had been sneaking off to play hero after he left. As far as the progress of the mission went, Tiger wasn’t leading me anywhere except huge parties, a few strip clubs, and hotel after hotel. I was beginning to lose hope. All of his calls weren’t about Castillo, but one discussion with a blocked number was about a new deal that was going down tomorrow night. This was my chance. I was praying that Castillo shows up. I wasn’t overly fond of following Tiger everywhere he went. It was both repugnant and boring.

“Morning kiddo.” Jason yawned as he sat up in the bed and stretched both arms out. I hadn’t been awake but a few minutes before him. I was lying on the other side of the bed, not wanting to get up yet. My body was telling me that I needed more sleep.

“It’s hardly morning.” I replied looking over at the digital clock on the bed stand that explicitly read 4:37 pm. I hated the groggy feeling that was running through my body.

“And I’m not a kid.” I added, with a smear of irritation and sleep in my eyes.

“Relax. I know you’re not.” He said as he crept over to my side of the bed and gathered me against his chest. He wasn’t wearing anything except his boxers and a pair of socks. I was wearing boxers and one of his old shirts that time had made soft. It was huge on me, but it made an excellent night shirt. His face leaned down and our lips met. I rolled over on top of him and sat up. He placed his hand against my cheek as a peaceful smile formed on his face.

“Tim, why the hell do you like me so much?” Jason asked from out of nowhere. The question was accompanied with a small laugh and I couldn’t help but roll my eyes.

“Well, your sense of humor is quite endearing and you are exceedingly brave. One of the bravest people I have ever met, actually. You are also remarkably sweet when you want to be.” I said, making Jason’s face turn bright red. It was pretty adorable.

“Also, the fact that you’re amazingly hot helps.” I laughed. One of Jason’s eyebrows rose and his face formed a half smirk. It was a face that made me think that his ego might explode at any moment.

“What can I say? I have good genes.” Jason said, making me laugh a little. He wasn’t wrong. Jason was very attractive.

“Plus, you like me. Most people just kind of write me off as a non-feeling nerd, and the rest think of me as a child.” I added. Only after I had said it did it sound so depressing. I hadn’t meant for it to come out that way.

“What's not to like?” Jason said as his hand made its way under my shirt and caressed my stomach
up to my chest. My body began to tingle at his touch. It felt so natural, and gave me a sense of true happiness.

"Oh, shut up." I said while blushing, trying to conceal a grin. Jason then took my hand in his and lightly brushed his lips over the top of it. I wish that moment could have lasted forever.

"You're beautiful, Tim. You should really learn how to take a compliment." Jason said, continuing to kiss my hand. I leaned down and slowly kissed Jason. As he kissed back the kiss deepened. Jason was really good at it. Suddenly, Jason flipped over on top of me.

"Looks like I caught myself a pretty bird." Jason said, kissing my neck. My face was burning red. I could feel it. Jason knew what he was doing. I was actually impressed. He continued to kiss my neck until his lips made their way back up to my face again. His breath deepened, as did the kiss. One of his hands was on my cheek and the other found my butt and squeezed it. He began pulling my body close to his. I could feel his erection against my thigh. I found myself becoming more than a little excited as well, though not as much as Jason. My arms wrapped themselves around Jason as he began rubbing his erection against mine. At this point I was super nervous and I’m almost positive that my face reflected it. My arms were shaky even though it felt really nice.

"You seem tense. Just relax, Tim. If I’m doing something you aren’t comfortable with just tell me and I’ll stop." He said with a sincere look on his face. I nodded and tried to stop shaking. We continued kissing, I mean really kissing. My hands caressed Jason’s chest and abdomen. His body was very firm like stone. I noticed his scars, but I didn’t mind. I had some too. I loved the warmth of Jason’s body against mine. I felt so happy I could have died. All of a sudden, the alarm clock began to sound.

"Damn." Jason cursed, reaching over me to turn it off. Neither one of us wanted this moment to end, but we both knew it had to. We both sighed. Jason got out of bed and put on an old pair of pajama bottoms. Then he headed over to his dresser and took out some more clothes.

“You know, you could take a night off.” I suggested, trying to persuade him to return to the bed.

“Afraid I can’t do that, Kiddo. I got a job to do.” He said. I could tell that he wanted to stay just as much as wanted him to.

“Yeah, I know.” I replied, sounding melancholy. He turned to me and kissed my forehead.

“Don’t be upset. As soon as I catch this bastard, I’m all yours.” Jason said sweetly. It was hard to be mad him after looking him in the eye. I tried and failed. I knew what I had to do. I had to put an end to Castillo as quickly as possible without killing him. After Jason, Roy, and Kory left the hotel it was time for me to suit up. I was beyond tired of searching for this man. Tonight at the meeting that Tiger was attending was the opportunity I sought. I was ready to take them down.

When I woke up I was lying on a concrete floor of an enormous room. There were stairs leading up to another room. There were bright fluorescent lights beaming at me from above. My head felt like it had been split open. I tried to get on my feet, but something wasn’t right with my body. I felt so weak. It took all my strength just to sit up. I noticed that my head been bleeding down one side of my face and onto the floor. Both hands were cuffed behind my back. What happened? I couldn’t remember a thing. Standing in front of me was a tall overweight man in a fancy, white suit. He was wearing a golden watch. The bright lights made his bald head shine. I instantly went to feel my face. My mask was missing and all my weapons had been taken off me. Damn it. Standing behind this large, bald man was Tiger.

“Well, Well, if it isn’t the Red Hood’s little buddy.” Tiger said with a devilish grin. I scowled at him
while trying to stand again, but it just resulted in me falling to the ground. I was suddenly out of
breath. Then I began to cough up blood. Something wasn’t right with my body.

“I see you’ve noticed the effects the drug we injected you with.” The bald man said, pulling a
syringe that was filled with a bright green fluid out of his pocket and holding it up. Drug? That
would explain my weakness and perhaps why I failed to recall how I got here. What kind of drug?
Are there other effects? What the hell did he do to my body?!

“You see, this drug is created from a rare venomous spider found only in a few regions of south
Japan. It is newly discovered and doesn’t even have a name yet. The known effects are memory loss,
extreme fatigue and weakness, and even death when the proper amount is administered. The victim
would die painlessly in their sleep. We had to be careful to not give you too much. After all, I want
you alive. Of course, if I were going to kill you, I wouldn’t use this drug. I would resort to far more
violent means.” His words slithered out of his mouth like a snake as he took a few steps toward me.
The way he talked was so smooth and sickening at the same time.

“You are probably wondering what happened. Basically, you interrupted and attacked Mr. Tiger and
I while we were attending a very important meeting. Thanks to you, we lost those clients. You
fought very well, but you were heavily outnumbered. One of my men snuck up on you and knocked
you out with a two by four.” He said, his voice high and raspy. This had to have been Castillo. Man,
this guy really loved to hear himself talk. At least that explained the splitting headache I had. I
needed to remain calm. After all, this was not the first time I had been poisoned. I should introduce
this guy to Ivy sometime.

“I figured it probably wasn’t you that took me down.” I laughed, trying to provoke him a little. I’m
not sure why. I guess it was because I really disliked this guy more so than the average thug I face
most nights as Robin. Part of the reason may also have been that my thought processes were being
altered by the drug.

“Laugh while you can, little boy.” Tiger said as he pulled something out of another pocket. I couldn’t
see that well, probably another effect of the drug. Everything was slightly burred. He kneeled down
beside me and held the object up to where I could see it. After pushing a button on the small device,
the tip of it lit up with blue sparks. It was a taser. This was not going to be pleasant.

“I know it’s small, but it has a voltage two times higher than anything your average cop is allowed to
carry. You’d be surprised at what enough money can buy. Now, tell me where the Red Hood is
hiding. Who is he? And why does he persist in interfering with Mr. Castillo’s business?” Tiger asked
while threatening me with the taser. I wasn’t going to submit. This guy didn’t know who he was
dealing with. I just laid there with both arms restrained, unable to move, and quite adamant about
keeping quiet. After staying silent for more than a minute Castillo held the taser to my neck and
pushed the button. I let out a scream and my body began to recoil and jump around involuntarily.
The stinging pain was excruciating. I thought I might pass out, but he removed the taser before I did.
My breathing was heavy, and my skin was tingling with pain all over my body. My heart was
forcefully beating out of control. Every cell in my body was twitching from the electric volts that had
charged through them moments ago. However, Tiger was not about to break my resolve. I would
sooner die. Pain wasn’t enough to make me sell Jason out. Nothing was. He did this three more
times. Each time the pain became more intense. He laughed with pleasure each time I yelled out in
agony.

“You’re one tough kid. Perhaps, other means are necessary.” He said, sounding slightly aggravated
that I didn’t talk. My body was shaking profusely and tears were streaming down my cheeks. How
could I have been so stupid? My neck was burning, and my head was pounding worse than before.
My body would twitch involuntarily for a few minutes. He put the taser back into his pocket and
kicked me in the stomach. I coughed up more blood than before. Some of it splashed on his expensive looking boots.

“Why, you little shit!” He shouted with a sour face. Then he snapped his fingers, signaling Tiger, and two other goons to come forward. Tiger was holding a pocket knife, and the other two men were holding what appeared to be thick, old, metal pipes. Tiger carved the skin on my arms slowly so that it would hurt more. He carved the word scum onto my pale skin. Castillo smiled as the two men began beating me with the pipes. There was so much blood, and so much pain. I could withstand it. I’m Robin. All I could picture in my head was Jason’s face smiling at me. He looked so handsome when he smiled. I wished I was in his warm bed him instead of this cold stone floor. I couldn’t help but cry. Where was he? Where was Dick? Where was Barbra or Bruce? This time they weren’t coming to save me. Before I met Jason dying didn’t seem like a huge deal to me. Doing what was right and protecting the innocent was far more important. Now, I had tasted what being in love was like and I didn’t want to give it up just yet. It appeared as though I would have no choice. At least I was able to spend some time with Jason. For that, I am truly grateful.

**Jason’s point of view**

After leaving the hotel me, Kory, and Roy headed off to interrogate a suspected squealer that worked for Castillo. He lived in a crappy apartment with his wife and kid. Some families owe these drug gangs so they have to work for them to pay off their debt. I had Roy go to the door. After the squealer came to the door Roy revealed a concealed gun. The man stepped out and we lead him to the roof. That way if he didn’t talk I could throw him off it. When we interrogated him he said that he didn’t know where exactly Castillo was, but he knew that he was in town to make a new deal with new clients tonight. He also told us that some kid with a mask and a brown leather jacket crashed their meeting and almost took down the whole operation. What. The. Fuck. There was no way, just no fucking way. I was going to kill Tim, assuming Castillo’s thugs hadn’t done it already. Stupid little shit. How could he do this? I told him to stay put. Why does he have to be so damn stubborn? Kory and Roy both agreed that this was now beyond catching Castillo. We had to save Tim. I was ready to slaughter anyone who got in my way. We rushed back to the hotel. Tim was gone just like we thought. I immediately felt a knot in my gut. If those bastards hurt Tim I would skin them alive.

“What are we doing here? We should be out looking for Tim.” Roy spat as I rapidly pulled a briefcase out from under my bed. I opened it and turned on the remote sensor I had used to find Tim before. It started beeping between his words.

“That would take too long, Roy. After we took Tim away from Bruce I embedded a small chip in his shoulder. It’s still inside him. We’ll use that to locate him.” I said while the device was processing the chip’s coordinates.

“You put a tracking device in Tim’s shoulder? What the hell is wrong with you, Jason? That’s crazy!” Roy snarled. This was so not the time. Yeah, it was a pretty messed up thing to do, but right it was the only means I had to finding Tim.

“We can talk about that later. For now, stop being a pussy and-” I was interrupted by the device’s beeping. I had Tim’s location. He was definitely in gangster territory. It was time to go. I had what I came for. Roy needed to suck that shit up right now before I put his head through a wall.

“Fine, and we will. Where is he?” Roy asked looking at the screen of the device. I know Roy was worried about Tim too. Roy had always had a cooler head than mine.
“He’s in an old, abandoned, automotive factory on Galantine Street, 34.3 miles south of here. He better still be breathing. Let’s go.” I answered. The three of us headed there immediately. Kory flew on ahead. Roy and I hijacked some douchebag’s corvette. We parked down the street of the old factory where they were keeping Tim and rushed toward it. The place was flooding with guards at every door. Parked in front of the building’s main entrance was a long white stretch limo with golden trim and spinning rims. I took this as a sign that their boss was here. If Castillo hurt Tim I’d make him wish he were dead. Roy and I snuck around the building and Roy quietly shot the six thugs stationed at the front. Due to his sharp precision, each thug had an arrow directly through the heart. We were about to enter when Kory descended from above.

“Nice of you to join us.” I hissed, about to bust the door open.

“Wait, Jason. This place is crawling with the guards. There is a window on the roof. We may have a better chance of victory if we attack from above.” She replied, her voice a bit hesitant. I turned to face her instantly.

“Did you see Tim?!” I asked frantically, sounding more desperate than ever.

“Yes. He is alive, but you will not like what you see.” She warned if a grimace on her orange face. Kory helped us get on the roof. This building was much larger up close. When Kory led us to the window I shoved both of them out of the way to have a look. Kory wasn’t kidding. There were several of Castillo’s thugs with different types of weapons and guns. There were at least thirty men down there. Toward the back of the huge room below there was Tim with his arms tied behind the back of an old, raggedy wooden chair. He looked beaten up. It was obvious that they had been torturing him. I recognized one of my old black shirts that I wear under my leather jacket as Red Hood, and a pair of my old combat boots. He wasn’t wearing a mask, and his head had a wound above his left temple. I could see where the blood had been seeping down his face from it. His arms had scratches, bruises, and what appeared to be burns. He was breathing extremely hard. Blood was also dripping down his chin from his mouth. I gritted my teeth upon seeing him like this. These men were going to pay. Each one had to die.

One heavy looking man, wearing a white suit, was standing in front of him. He was bald and had several golden rings on his fingers. I recognized him as Castillo. Suddenly, his foot plunged into Tim’s stomach. My hand made a fist. Then blood shot out of Tim’s mouth and he coughed several times. Tim had the same look of resilience on his face that he had when I first took him away from Bruce. Tim was a tough kid, but his body wasn’t nearly as strong as his will. I knew that Tim would die before giving into whatever demands these assholes had. The thought of Tim being beaten to death caused anger to rush through my whole body. I wasn’t about to allow that shit to go down. Then Castillo delivered a punch to Tim’s stomach, and he coughed up more blood. That’s when I reached for my gun.

“Jason, not yet. We need to make a plan. If you jump down there shooting at everyone, they might kill Tim before we can get him out of line of fire. Blindly charging these guys won’t work while they have Tim as a hostage.” Roy whispered, interrupting what was about to be that guy’s brains splattered across the ground. Tim was suffering, and I had to save him, but Roy was right for once. Damn it.

“I take it that you got a plan?” I whispered angrily, while trying to keep my cool.

“Yeah, just give me minute.” Roy whispered back before reaching into his quiver and pulling an arrow out. He started to unscrew the tip of the arrow and altering it. I didn’t see everything he did because after Roy spoke Castillo took a switchblade from his jacket pocket. The curved blade that
swung out of the handle resembled the talon of a hawk. My eyes widened at the sight of it. I pulled both my guns out of their holsters as quick as I could.

“Wait, Jason!” Roy urged. I was barely restraining myself. The dam was about to break.

“THEN HURRY THE HELL UP!” I said, almost too loud. Kory was behind me looking down. Her bright green eyes were glowing with rage. My heart was pounding out of my chest. I could feel Tim hurting below. Now it was payback time.
The man grabbed Tim’s chin and tilted his head up to look him in the eye. Tim had a blank expression on his face. I couldn’t hear what the man was saying, but he was holding the knife up to Tim’s face. Tim kept on looking at him like the piece of garbage he was. This must have pissed him off. Next thing I knew, he stabbed Tim’s thigh the blade. Then the man twisted the blade before yanking it out. Blood splattered across the cement floor as Tim let out a loud cry of pain. A bunch of the other thugs watched and laughed. That was it. I couldn’t just sit there and watch. Several things happened at once. I kicked the window, shattering it completely. My actions didn’t go unnoticed as all the thugs in the enormous room turned and looked up at me. That’s when an arrow flew past me and exploded once it hit the floor below. Upon exploding, it exuded a dark gas which instantly filled most of the room.
“Go!” Roy shouted before all three of us jumped down to join everyone. Kory wasn’t affected by the
gas. Roy’s mask and my helmet allowed us to see. I heard several of the thugs coughing. It wasn’t poisonous or anything. It was only meant to confuse and hide our movements from them. I shot many of them to get to Tim. I was relieved to see that he was breathing when I got to him. From the corner of my eye I saw Castillo emerging from the gas as his lard ass ran up a nearby flight of stairs. I used one of Tim’s batarangs I stole from his Robin outfit to cut the ropes binding Tim’s hands. After I did that he almost fell over onto the floor, but I caught him. What the hell? I dropped the batarang beside him and felt his pulse. It was slow, but present. Those bastards must have drugged him. I turned him over on his back and sat him up with my arm.

“Jason, you came.” Tim said quietly with a faint smile. I felt at peace when I saw those dark ocean eyes looking up at me. I could hear the sounds of Kory’s starbolts and those thugs screaming behind me. They could all burn in hell. Tim was covered in so much blood it was hard to tell where it was all coming from. I quickly ripped part of his shirt off and tied the fabric around his thigh, just above where he was stabbed. I noticed that there was a wound on his neck that resembled a burn. It looked painful.

“You bet, Babybird.” I whispered, looking down at him. Finally, he was safe in my arms. This was going to cost Castillo his life. I gently placed Tim back down to the floor. His body felt limp.

“Arsenal, guard Tim!” I ordered. Roy came and stood beside me as Kory continued to fight off the remaining thugs.

“Where are you going?” Roy asked before firing another arrow into some guy’s skull. That should have been obvious.

“I’m going after Castillo.” I said before rushing up the stairs. The stairs led to the control room of this old factory. Fatass was up here hiding and I was ready to blow his brains out. The room was bigger than you’d think. There were tons of old desks, and empty wooden barrels to hide behind. I think that factory had been an oil refinery in its heyday. Now it was just a creepy building that desperately needed to be torn the fuck down. Suddenly, I heard something move from behind one of the barrels so I fired three bullets in its direction. That’s when a huge rat ran out from behind the punctured barrel. Nasty. Then I heard some more movement from behind me. I turned and saw Castillo coming at me with the same curved switchblade he had used to stab Tim.

“Attacking from behind, huh? How original.” I jested while dodging the thrusts and jabs of the blade. I could have shot him right then and there, but that wouldn’t have been enough for me. I wanted to see this man pay for what was done to Tim, not to mention all the lives he and his drug trade has ruined. Shooting him was too quick. He needed to suffer first. I kicked the blade out of his hand. Then I delivered another kick to his chest that caused him to collide with the wall. This wasn’t the way I wanted to kill him. It needed to be more personal. He had made it more personal by torturing Tim. I took off my helmet to reveal my face. I wasn’t wearing a domino mask underneath like usual. I wanted him to look me in the eyes when I killed him.

“Try and make this fun for me.” I said throwing my helmet and guns down. His face look terrified, but he was trying to regain his composure. You could clearly see that he was totally shitting himself.

“So this is the mysterious ‘Red Hood’ who has been trying to ruin my business and kill me and my gang? How dare you try and mess with me! I see to it that your head is mounted on my wall! My men will-”

“Your men will what? My group is taking them down right now. It’s over Castillo. You’re dead.” I interrupted with a smirk on my face that I’m not too proud of. He was majorly pissed now. He ran at me bare handed.
“Come on.” I mouthed as he began throwing punches and foaming at the mouth. I could read all of his moves like an open book. Fighting dirty is very familiar to me. This is when I began to get serious. I made sure all the blows I landed hurt like hell. I delivered several punches to the gut, a few elbows to the face, and a roundhouse kick to his right arm. The overweight, bald man screamed in pain as his arm fell to his side. I smirked at the thought of my kick breaking his arm.

“Can’t we make deal? I’ll pay you whatever you want! I got money, girls, territory, you name it!” He desperately cried. This kind of thing really pisses me off. Scum like this needs to be wiped off the planet. This is the flaw in Bruce’s idealistic mind. If I were to lock this piece of trash up he would only pay his way out of prison. He might serve a year or two. What then? He wouldn’t change. He would go back to the drug business. Killing him is the only way to fix the problem. I unsheathed my kris knife, and held Castillo up by his suit.

“I want you dead.” I said, holding the blade to his throat. That’s when I felt a great jolt of electricity stabbing me in the neck. The shock made me drop my knife. I looked down and saw Castillo with a taser in hand. My body was shaking uncontrollably. Castillo laughed as I fell to the floor, my body burning and still tingling. He had only tased me for a few seconds, but it felt like it had been much longer. Castillo grabbed one of my guns that I threw on the floor earlier. He was still holding the taser. Damn it. This was bad.

“This little guy has a voltage that is much higher than what the standard cop carries. How did you like it? Watching you experience the painful effects of it wasn’t nearly as fun as watching your young comrade.” He laughed while pointing the gun at me. That must have been where all of those burns on Tim’s neck and arms came from.

“You bastard.” I muttered while gritting my teeth. I wanted to kill him more than anything. I should have ended him when I had the chance. I had been too careless. He was smarter than I gave him credit for.

“You should have shot me when you had the chance, Hood. I’ll make sure to finish off your young friend after you’re gone.” He said, still laughing. His face was beaten and bloody. One of his eyes was swollen shut. He held an ugly grin on his face and took aim for my head. This was it for me. I wasn’t afraid of dying. After all, I had already done it before. Out of nowhere, a batarang flew through the air and pierced Castillo’s throat. His eyes widened, and then rolled upward as the blood began seeping from his throat and mouth. His body fell over and collided with the ground. Castillo was dead. I looked over to see who had killed him. To my great surprise, I saw Tim standing in the doorway struggling to breathe. His face looked like he might pass out at any moment. It was a miracle that he was able to walk all the way up those stairs in his condition.

“Tim.” I didn’t know what to say. That was the first time Tim had ever killed someone. He fell to his knees. I immediately got up ran over to him.

“Are you okay, kid?” I asked trying to talk in a soft tone.

“Yeah, I’m okay.” He lied, looking at the floor with a lifeless expression. The guilt was written all over Tim’s face. I sighed. Then I picked up my guns and knife before putting my helmet back on. Tim put his arm around my neck and I helped him to walk. He was very weak. I don’t understand where he conjured up the energy to throw that batarang. His body was shaking. It was definitely a mistake to leave him alone. I was going to give him a lecture, but not right now. When we reached the bottom of the staircase we saw that all of Castillo’s goons were on the ground behind Kory and Roy. They had done well.

“What the hell happened to you, Tim?” Roy asked. Suddenly a man in a green suit hopped to his feet and pointed a gun in my direction. There was an arrow in his back, and he was covered in blood.
The bodies of his comrades surrounded him. Instantly, there was an arrow in his chest, but not before his gun went off. Tim pushed me out of the way with all of his remaining energy and we both fell to the ground. The then man fell over dead. I was quickly back on my feet. As I glanced down at Tim I realized his shoulder was becoming more and more drenched in blood. Within a few seconds he was in a pool of red. My heart went numb.

“Tim’s been shot!” I yelled, in shock. It wasn’t fair. That bullet was aimed for me, not Tim.

“What the hell did you do that for, Tim?!” I asked, practically screaming at him while trying to put pressure on his wounded shoulder. He was such a stupid kid. His eyes were weaker than the ones I had come to know. All he could do was look up at me with an innocent little grin before passing out from blood loss. He had been trying to hide the fact that he was in pain. His face was even paler than usual. What happened after that is a bit of a blur. I don’t like to picture Tim covered in blood. Roy and I immediately began working on stopping the bleeding. Kory wasn’t too familiar with the human physiology so the most she could really do was apply pressure to the wound. This wasn’t the first time I have treated a gunshot wound, but there were incredibly different circumstances.

Tim’s Point of View

When I started to come to it felt like I was lying in a bed. Honestly, I was getting tired of passing out and waking up in strange places. My brain was still a bit fuzzy. The last thing I remembered was being tortured my Castillo, and his thugs. I was still putting the pieces together in my head. I knew this room. I was back at the hotel. I could feel something scratchy against my hand. When I opened my eyes I saw Jason asleep with his head down on the bed. His face was pressed against my hand. It felt like he hadn’t shaved in a few days.

“Jason.” I whispered with an unintentional rasp in my voice. He didn’t budge. I cleared my thought and repeated myself. This time his eyes quickly came open and he jumped up and hugged me upon seeing me awake.

“Tim, thank God!” He exclaimed. This was the happiest I had ever really seen Jason. I quickly tried to sit up. Suddenly, a sharp pain hit me in my left shoulder and I cringed.

“Hey, not too fast, Babybird. You’re wounded pretty badly.” Jason reprimanded, helping me slowing ease back onto the bed.

“What happened?” I struggled to say though the pain.

“You got shot in the shoulder, kid. That, along with all the other wounds that bastard, Castillo, and his thugs inflicted on you before I got there. Roy and I managed to stop the bleeding and remove the bullet before it became infected. We stitched you up the best we could. It will take a few weeks, but you should be okay.” Jason explained. Then I began to remember what happened and I shuttered at what I had done. It was like it had all been a dream. The pain from my shoulder didn’t tread water in comparison to what was in store for me. My eyes widened once I realized that I was the one who killed Castillo. He was about to murder Jason. Still, I could have just disarmed him. I didn’t have to slit his throat. I was so ashamed. Batman would disown me for what I had done. It was an unforgivable act. My body instantly sat up despite the pain.

“I killed him. It’s entirely my fault!” I said to myself as I glanced down at the hands that brought the end to a human life. I felt like I needed to wash the blood off of them, but I knew that I would never be able to. I began to tear up at the thought of what this meant.

“Hey Tim, Calm down! Get a hold of yourself!” Jason ordered as tears streamed down my cheeks.
“But I murdered Castillo! He’s dead because of me! Batman will never-” I burst out like an explosion. Jason sighed and wrapped his arms around me.

“Tim, you did what you had to. That man was nothing more than a crime lord who ran several drug trades and killed many people, including children. You saved countless others, including me. He can’t hurt anyone anymore. Besides, they drugged you.” Jason interrupted, rubbing my back in an attempt to calm me down. I know what he was trying to say, but I just couldn’t see certain things in the same light that he could. Castillo may have been one of the most evil men on the planet, but he was still a person. I had no right to take away the life of another person. Who cares if I was drugged? In the end, it didn’t matter because I was the one who snuck off on my own and ended up being captured. I could hear Bruce’s voice in my head telling me that I was a disgrace and that I had no right. I knew arguing about it with Jason would only make me feel worse so I stayed quiet. I just wanted him to keep holding me. Jason held me all night. He laid in the bed and let me rest my head on his chest and slept. I was still very upset, but there wasn’t anything I could do about it. All I could do was wait. I hated myself. Thanks to the drugs, I slept straight through the next day. Jason only woke me up to eat. I found myself to be quite the insomniac that night. It was around one in the morning. I was still just lying around in the bed. Jason was about to join me. All I could think about was how I killed Castillo. I kept on think about what I could have done instead. There were so many other options. I sighed while staring at the ceiling.

“You seem depressed, kid.” Jason says, trying to be subtle.

“I just don’t know if I will ever be able to forgive myself.” I sighed. I hadn’t talked much at all since I woke up. Jason put his hand on my shoulder that wasn’t covered in bandages.

“You’re going to have to. We can’t change the past. Believe me, I wish we could. You did what you had to.” He replied as he sat next to me on the bed.

“But I could have handled it differently. I was trained better than that. I had other options. I could have disarmed him. I could have-“

“You could have been killed. If you had disarmed him with the baterang he would have simply over powered the both of us. I was still stunned and you were drugged. Besides, if you hadn’t killed him Roy and Kory would have killed him for sure. I know the ‘no killing’ rule has been drilled into your head, but come on!” Jason urged. His words were predictable, but honest. He did have a point. Maybe I was being too hard on myself. I still couldn’t take my actions lightly, but he sort of made my burden of guilt bearable. There was no way I was going to be able to ever fully get over what I had done, but maybe there was a way to live with it. Jason has been through much more than this. He literally died. How does someone get over something like that? As cliché as it might sound, I believed that Jason and I could share the weight of our burdens.

Jason’s Point of View

After talking, Babybird and me just kind of went to sleep. I think he likes it when my fingers slowly traces invisible shapes on his back while he lies on my chest. Every time I do it his muscles relax and he usually passes right out. His breathing evens out when he sleeps and he doesn’t snore. He does drool sometimes, though. I don’t mind so much. I love the scent of his hair. I often hold him close when I sleep so I know that he’s safe. I honestly don’t know what to think about him sneaking out and being Robin. At first I wanted to bitch him out for it. It might take some time, but I know I can persuade him to give up being Robin. I have to. If I don’t then he will just end up getting himself into dangerous situations like he did with Castillo. I can’t believe he managed to fool me. I need to watch
him more closely from now on. What a dumbass kid. It’s not all Tim’s fault, though. Bruce played
the biggest hand in it. If Tim was never Robin then maybe he could have lived a normal life. For
most of the night we slept pretty soundly. Tim didn’t stir much. Around about 3:30 in the morning I
heard to what sounded like heavy breathing. I was half asleep and the room was pitch black. My
body felt weird. From my chest down to my abdomen I felt a warm, wet sensation. I quickly turned
on the lamp beside the bed and saw Tim and myself covered in blood. He was drenched in sweat.
He was still asleep on my chest, but his breathing was loud and rapid. He had a pained look on his
face.

“Shit! His wound reopened! Roy! Get your ass in here!” I shouted to Roy in the living room. Blood
was all over me, and the bed. The white bandages we wrapped his shoulder up in were a deep red.
Roy gasped when he jolted into the room.

“Fuck! His stitches must have torn.” Roy said, just as panicked as I was.

“Hurry, take him to the bathroom. I’ll get the stitch kit.” I immediately scooped Tim up off the bed
and carried him to the bathroom. There was almost as much blood as there was when he was shot.
Poor Tim. He had just started to come to when the bright lights of the bathroom hit his face. His eyes
were bloodshot and he had a clueless look on his face.

“What the hell’s going on?” He asked pitifully, still not completely awake. That’s when Roy entered
with the medical stitch kit.

“We think you tore your stitches in your sleep somehow. We have to stop the bleeding and sew it
back up again.” I answered while un-wrapping the blood drenched bandage. Tim cringed when I
took the last layer of the bandage off. I felt bad for the kid. This wasn’t going to be pleasant. I wish
he had been unconscious. I began cleaning the wound and Roy started re-stitching. Tim was tough,
but when Roy starting sewing in the stitches Tim screamed louder than I thought possible. I thought
it would never end, but thank God it did. We finally finished at 5:33 AM. Roy and I managed to re-
stitch the wound, and get Tim cleaned up. We changed the sheets on the bed and then helped Tim
into it. Then I gave him some good ass pain killers. After it was all over and the kid was asleep in
bed I asked Roy to watch him while I took a much needed shower. It had been one hell of a night.

After seeing Tim go through that, I knew that I was in too deep. What if his wound only proceeded
to get worse? I sighed before making a very desperate call. The night after Tim’s little emergency
happened I scheduled a meeting with a special guest who I thought could help Tim. I told Roy and
Kory about it and they agreed to watch Tim while I was gone. So far, he hadn’t bled out anymore. I
left the hotel in my civilian get up. I tried to dress a tad nicer than usual. I made my way to the better
part of town. My ‘friend’ and I were supposed to meet up at a small diner on Second Street. It wasn’t
anything too fancy. I entered and was escorted to the reserved table. There was my guest sitting at
the table. Her long flowing brown hair was just as beautiful as it had been years ago. Her scarlet
dress was all but modest. There she sat with her deep green eyes amusingly narrowed at the sight of
me, Talia Al Ghoul. She was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen on the planet. I
knew her pretty well, (Maybe not as well as Bruce did, but still pretty well) and I was still
overwhelmed by her presence.

“Hello, Talia.” I said, after clearing my throat, and sitting at the table.

“Well, hello Jason. It has been too long. Believe it or not, I was pleasantly surprised that you called
me. It’s been quite a while” She pursed her lips, before the waiter arrived with two glasses of fine
wine. I wasn’t too fond of Talia or her father, but I knew that deep down she did care for me. After I
was revived my mind was shattered. This woman helped my mind recover and helped me escape
Ra’s more than once. The only reason I don’t particularly like her is because of her and her father’s
demented goals for this world. For now, I needed her help so as not to cause unnecessary attention to
me and the others. I knew Talia would understand. She agreed to come and meet me here alone, and
to keep Ra’s out of the loop. Though, I doubt she was truly alone, I’m sure that she has kept our
meeting a secret from her father which was all I really wanted.

“I’m sorry to call you up like this. I know how busy you are. Thank you for meeting me here on
such short notice.” She knew that I wasn’t really a fan of her or her family, but she still came and
agreed to assist me. For that I was truly grateful.

“Of course. Over the phone you sounded so panicked which is quite unusual for you. You must be
truly desperate to call me up for help.” She replied with a smirk and one brow raised. All I had told
her over the phone was that one of my friends had been badly injured. I was hoping that she would
go snooping around for the details.

“Can you help?” I asked very bluntly, trying to get to the point.

“Ah yes, your friend. What sort of injury does he sustain?” She asked, her long eyelashes batting.

“He was shot in the left shoulder. He was protecting me.” I answered, wearing an expression of guilt
and giving her more information than I meant to.

“How bad is the injury?” She asked, putting a black woven purse on the table.

“Bad. We can’t seem to stop the bleeding, and we can’t take him to a hospital.” I said, tempted to
take a sip of the wine, but then remembering Talia’s habit of drugging people.

“And who is this friend?” She probed, while digging through this bag. Why did she need to know it
was Tim? I wasn’t telling her all that.

“Why do you need to know who it is?” I asked a second before she finished talking, gently banging
my fist on the table. I was trying to play it cool, but she knew that I didn’t want to tell her. She
laughed a little as a response.

“Jason, if you don’t want to answer my questions I assume then that you also do not want my help. If
that’s the case-” She said before proceeding to get up. She may have just been teasing me, but it was
hard to read this woman.

Alright, I’ll tell you, but you can’t tell Ra’s I have him.” I interrupted, all the blood rushing to my
face. Her rose colored lips formed a smirk and she sat back down. I sighed and began explaining
what had happened. I wasn’t going to tell her about me and Tim’s relationship, but I could tell that
somehow had already deduced that much.

“So, that’s where the new Robin has been? How interesting. Believe it or not, Bruce stormed into the
League of assassins thinking that maybe we may have had him. I’m surprised he hasn’t found out the
truth. In any case, I will agree to help young Tim Drake recover, but Jason this is the last time you
will receive free favors from me. Next time, you’ll owe me.” She said, gesturing at herself. Then she
dug through her bag and pulled out a small syringe already filled to a certain amount with a clear
liquid.

“This drug is derived from the same chemical properties of those present in the Lazarus pit, including
its rapid healing factors.” She talked about the Lazarus pit like it was a God sent miracle. I wasn’t
about to let Tim become exposed to that. It does rejuvenate people, but it also has mental effects too.
Look at how crazy Ra’s is. I’m lucky to have turned out the way I did and it’s only because of Talia.
Injecting it into your bloodstream? No. Fucking. Way. I arose from my seat with both hands on the
table.
“No way. What if Tim goes crazy because of it, like I did?!?” I said, practically screaming at her. She stayed calm, cool, and emotionless. She took a sip of wine before answering me.

“He won’t. I assure you. Calm down. You see, your case was a major difference. You were dead, and then exposed to the pit in its purest form. That is not what we’re doing here. Your friend is still alive. He is just in need of healing, simple as that. This drug will only advance the boy’s own healing abilities. There will be no psychological damage, Jason. I promise.” She insisted handling me the syringe. I sighed and looked down at it in my palm. Maybe she was right. That’s when she arose from her seat.

“I can tell this boy means a great deal to you, Jason. I wouldn’t want to jeopardize your happiness, as it is so hard to come by with you.” She tenderly placed her hand on my arm and looked me in the eye. This was the Talia I remember. She wasn’t lying.

“Well, now that the business has been handled I best be on my way.” She spoke, very elegantly and yet tenderly.

“He’ll be okay, Jason. I give you my word.” She said, without even turning around. My facial expression softened at her words. I believed her.

“Thanks, Talia. I mean it.” Was my only response before she gracefully nodded and walked out of the diner.

After returning to the hotel and explaining what had happened to both Roy and Kory we all agreed that we should give Tim the shot. It turns out that Tim had bled out again after I went to meet with Talia. Roy and Kory had to clean, re-stitch, and re-bandage him. We gave him more pain killers and after he passed out I injected the drug into his arm, hoping to see results soon. A few days passed and Tim’s wound didn’t re-open. I could tell a difference. Talia actually came through. Thank God.

Tim’s Point of View

It only took two days for my shoulder to heal enough for Jason to stop worrying that I would bleed out again in the night. It was actually quite remarkable, but Jason barely slept during that time because he didn’t want that to happen again. I have to admit that it had not exactly been an enjoyable experience for me either. My shoulder still hurt, but not nearly as much as before. I still required bandages (Mostly because Jason insisted). Jason helped me change them every night. The other bruises, scratches, and burn wounds I received by Castillo and his men had soon turned into faded scars etched into my arms and back, joining the others. My body had taken worse damage than that. It was not something I couldn’t overcome. In all honesty, I think my injuries bothered Jason more than me. Jason and I were sitting on the couch watching a show about a murder in Colorado back in 1997. A man had kidnapped a woman and when she tried to escape he slashed her throat and buried her body in his back yard. The case remained unsolved until 2002. Roy was sitting in his recliner, and Kory was sitting on the opposite side of the couch. I was wearing one of Jason’s old shirts again. Of course, I drowned in it. Half of my attention was on the TV show while the other half was on the Sudoku game I was playing. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. It was seriously late, like two in the morning.

“Who the hell could that be? Expecting any late night visits from your evening hooker, Roy?” Jason
said, getting up off the couch. The knocking started up again.

“Very funny, buy sadly no.” Roy replied with a small grin, getting up as well. Roy took hold of his nearby bow and strapped his quiver to his back. Jason pulled a gun out from the kitchen, and cocked it. Then knocking got louder and more aggressive. Kory stood beside Jason.

“Tell me, what is this ‘who car’? And what kind of harm does this person wish to inflict upon Roy? I shall grind their bones into dust!” Kory whispered to Jason, her eyes glowing bright green with righteous fury. It wasn’t hard to tell that she was pretty defensive of Roy. Though I appreciated the humor, I would hope that Roy really didn’t visit these types of women in real life for Kory’s sake.

“You don’t want to know, Star. Anyway, it’s not important right now. Tim, get behind me.” Jason ordered, with a serious look on his face. I wasn’t about to argue. Everyone’s eyes were glued to the door. The knocks turned into violent kicks. Finally, the door was knocked off of its hinges and fell to the floor. In front of us was the mother of all surprises. There stood Dick, Barbra, and Conner (Superboy). My jaw dropped open, as did Jason’s. Standing at the door were Nightwing, Batgirl, and Superboy.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)}
“Hi. Nice night.” Dick said with that smug grin he was so famous for. I hadn’t seen them in so long. Instantly, I broke through Jason and Kory and hugged Dick.

“I missed you guys so much!” I practically squalled into his chest. It had been three months and four days since I was taken away from them. I felt Dick wrap his arms around me in return. I missed his hugs more than I realized, and I’m not exactly the “hugging” type. I was able to see Dick and Babs up close. Both of them looked terribly exhausted. Dark semi circles appeared under their eyes and Dick had short beard stubble on his face.

“Are you okay, Tim? You’re wearing bandages. What happened to you?” Barbra asked in a motherly tone, pulling me off of Dick and examining me right there in the hallway of the hotel.

“Tim, I’m so glad you’re alive, man. We’ve been worried to death. ” Conner said, putting his hand on my good shoulder. I won’t lie. It was a bit awkward.

“What the hell did you do to him, Jason?” Dick asked, grinding his teeth and pointing at Jason. This was bad. I really didn’t want them to fight. (On a side note, it was really weird how Dick and the others just stood outside our hotel door and violently broke the door in. How were they not noticed?! It had to be Dick’s idea.)

“Wait! Dick, you don’t understand. Jason didn’t do this to me. We got caught up in-”

“Save it, Tim. Whatever you’re about to say doesn’t change the fact that he abducted you!” Dick interrupted, while pushing Roy out of the way and walking into the room. Babs, and Conner followed. I rushed past them and blocked Dick’s path to Jason.

“Dick, it’s okay. They did kidnap me, but after a few weeks I chose to stay with them.” I said, trying to calm dick down. A showdown was not something I was interested in seeing.

“Hear that, Dickiebird? The kid chose to stay with me. So, why don’t you go back home to the head bat?” Jason added, seemingly trying to pick a fight. Now was not the time to be an instigating asshole, Jason. I glared at him. He knew what he was doing.

“If it was all your choice to stay, then why the hell haven’t you called us? The last three months have been total HELL for all of us.” Dick snarled, with his finger in my chest. I took a breath in order to talk, but I was interrupted once again when Jason slowly pushed me aside. I tried to stand my ground, but he was much stronger than me.

“Because, I wouldn’t let him. That’s what you want to hear, right?” Jason answered with a smirk. I kind of wanted to slap Jason. He was only making it worse. I needed to somehow tell them that Jason and I were together, but I had no idea how.

“So, where’s the big man?” Jason went on to ask. Why wasn’t Batman there? That was actually a good question. Nightwing gritted his teeth before answering.

“He’s busy. Joker and Harley are holding the mayor of Gotham hostage. I asked green lantern to back him up so we could come here. Believe me, he wanted to be here. In fact, him not being here is probably the only reason you’re still conscious, you low life.” Dick explained, not
“It figures that he’d continue to put the joker before his own Robin.” Jason jeered.

“What’s your problem, Jason? Why’d you kidnap the kid?” Dick growled, holding himself back. I guess I was officially sidelined, and forever known as a child.

“I ain’t got a problem, Night-Wang. Maybe you guys should have taken better care of your stuff.” Jason replied with both a smirk and a glare. I swear that I could feel the heat radiating from Dick’s eye from behind his mask.

“It looks like you are doing a much better job. His bandages would go great with a black eye, by the way.” Dick’s sarcasm was in very poor taste. Now Jason was beginning narrow his eyes in anger.

“We’ll see who needs bandages.” Jason spat back. The tension was becoming thicker with every word.

“If you want to fight, Jason, I will give you a fight!” Dick roared. I knew that I had to intervene before this got ugly.

“Alright, guys. Let’s all just take it easy.” Barbra (The usual voice of reason) said calmly, while stepping between the two men. I swear she beat by one second.

“We didn’t come here to fight. We only came to take Tim home.” She continued, glancing at Dick. She was trying to tell him not to let Jason get under his skin. I know that’s what she meant. I think Dick understood. He began to chill out and back off a little.

“Why the hell would I think you wanted a fight? I mean, you brought distructo boy over there.” Jason gestured at Superboy. Conner just held an annoyed expression. He then turned to Dick for a response.

“Jason, you know we don’t want to fight, but if we are forced to then we wanted to be prepared. Like I said, we are just here to take Tim home.” Barbra said, trying to assure Jason. Jason’s ego wanted a fight. It was more than obvious. Jason is tough, but he couldn’t beat Conner. To be fair, it’s only because Jason is a human and Conner is half kryptonian. Anyway, I heard what Barbra was saying, but she wasn’t going to like what I had to say.

“Actually, Uh. It’s a rather funny story.” I said, rubbing the back of my head. I really didn’t know how to tell them that Jason and I were together. Nor did I know how to tell them that I was going to stay with him. The focus of the room shifted to me.

“You see, I won’t be coming with you.” I struggled to say. I must admit that it did break my heart to say.

“What do you mean, Tim? You can’t stay here. They kidnapped you.” Dick said, stepping around Barbra and looking down at me. He put both hands on my shoulders. I shuttered a little when he put a hand on my bad one.

“C’mon little bro, come home. I can’t tell you how much we’ve missed you. We started to think that maybe you were dead. Even Bruce has been through hell since you went missing.” Dick continued, looking me at me and smiling. He was even shaking a little bit. I think that maybe he was touching me to making sure I was really there. It had been so long since he’d seen me. It was that moment that
I realized how much trouble this whole situation had caused for them. I knew that I should have called them and told them that I was okay. Jason would have had a cow, but I still should have at least tried. I had plenty of opportunities. The only reason I didn’t was because I knew Jason would be mad at me. I guess I thought that eventually, he would let me contact them. The weight of the guilt I had could have caused me to break through the floor and into the room beneath ours. I began to tear up a little.

“I’m really sorry for putting all of you through so much pain. Please don’t worry over me so much.” I said, touching one of Dick’s hands. I had decided to just say it.

“Please apologize to Bruce for me as well. I can’t go back with you because Jason and I are uh-together.” I finally declared. Barbra put both hands over her mouth. I could see Dick’s expression through his mask as both his brows rose. He was surprised, and there was some anger mixed in too. Everyone’s expression was basically the same.


“Together?! As in a couple?!” Dick replied almost immediately. I nodded silently. Then he removed his hands from my shoulders.

“I know this looks bad, but I swear that it wasn’t planned.” I attempted to reassure everyone.

“YOU SICK SON OF A BITCH!” Dick shouted, walking over to Jason. This was not good. In response, I followed.

“Dick, it’s okay. Please don’t make a big deal out of this.” I said in an attempt to calm him down. I wasn’t sure what to do at this point. I stood between Jason and Dick.

“Oh God, Tim, you don’t know what you’re talking about. You're not in your right mind. You're suffering from steak home syndrome.” Dick’s reply was quite hard to be taken seriously. In his defense, he did look like he hadn’t slept in weeks.

“First of all, it's pronounced Stockholm Syndrome. Second, I am not. I really do have feelings for Jason. I'm sorry if you can't accept that.” I blurted out, trying to sound brave. Dick just ignored me and looked at Jason.

“What the fuck, Jason? He’s just a kid!”

“Actually, he’s eighteen. You of all people should know I’d never do anything with a kid. And who are you to act all high and mighty? The whole reason I took him in the first place is because you and the old man can’t protect him! I was trying to save him.” Jason hurled back, getting in Dick’s face. Oh, boy.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Barbra weighed in with both hands on her hips.

“It means that all of you are selfish assholes! After what happened to me, Bruce should have known better than to endanger the life of another kid. And all of you should have known better than to let him!” Jason exclaimed with a heated expression.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. You’re responsible for part of the crime we fight against! You’re the one who kidnapped Tim, and then you took advantage of him!” Dick shouted back.
“He didn’t take advantage of me! Why can’t you understand that?” I exclaimed, still between them.

“And if any of you actually cared about his safety, maybe you would have kept a closer eye on him, especially considering that you already lost one Robin.” Jason spat, trying to hurt Dick. I was about to interject, but I was pushed out of the way again, this time by Dick before he delivered a solid punch to Jason’s face. Before I knew it, they began fighting. Jason and Dick were going at it. Dick pulled out his twin Bo staffs and Jason resorted to his gun and fists. Before I could even attempt to intervene, I noticed Roy and Barbra. They began to glare at each other.

“Roy, we don’t have to do this.” Barbra said, using her hands to express her reluctance to battle.

“Sorry about this, Batgirl.” Roy muttered to Barbra before attacking her with his bow, with which he was quite skilled at wielding without the use of arrows. She defended herself well with the use of hand to hand combat skills. Neither of them wanted to fight. Then I heard Kory’s voice and turned to her direction.

“It is said that you are indestructible?” Kory asked while facing Conner down, her eyes emitting a bright green glow. Both of her hands began to glow green as she prepared to fire her starbolts. She seemed amused as she hovered two feet off the ground.

“I dunno. Everyone has limits.” Conner replied expressionless, standing his ground and taking a battle stance.

“Allow me to test these limits of yours.” She said just before charging at him with great haste and brute force, while shouting her battle cry. The sound of starbolts and gunshots echoed throughout the hotel. Jason had shot at Dick, but he kicked the gun out of his hand. I saw Kory take Conner’s face and shove it through a wall. Barbra was busy fighting Roy. He had improved his combat skills since the night I almost escaped. (Jason forced him to train with him for days after that.) Kory and Conner both fired laser beams from their eyes. Kory’s was green and Conner’s was red. When the two beams met the result was a small, but flashy explosion. Jason and Dick continued to wrestle and were both bleeding from their noses. I tried to pull them off of each other, but I wound up getting elbowed in the gut. Fuckers. That’s when we noticed the red and blue lights along with the sound of police sirens through a window that had been shattered in the battle.

“Fuck!” Jason shouted. Dick quickly grabbed my wrist.

“Come on, Tim time to go.” Dick said, wiping the blood from his lip.

“I’m not going with you. I have to go with Jason. Please don’t hate me.” I said before snatching my wrist away and joining Jason, Roy, and Kory in packing up some important items. There was no way we couldn’t stay here. We had about five minutes to evacuate.

“He’ll be okay.” I heard Barbra say before pulling on Dick. He sighed angrily before succumbing to her. They ran out of the room and headed to the roof where I’m guessing they entered. Kory was pretty banged up, but she didn’t act like it. We had three rather large backpacks. I packed up the boy’s clothes (and my books) in one while Kory packed hers in another. Jason grabbed a ton of cash from out of his closet, his laptop, and other important devices. Roy quickly gathered most of the weapons including guns, arrows, chemicals, knives, etc. We had to leave some bullets, clothes, a lot of food, the Wii Jason gave me for my birthday, and over half of Kory’s clothes. She was extremely pissed. I was not really mad about the Wii. I just made sure to get my bracelet. Roy, Jason, and I had
to dawn domino masks. Jason figured that the best way to get away was from the roof. The police had the building surrounded. The bomb squad would show up any minute now. We managed to escape by using Roy’s arrows. He shot one arrow filled with an ample amount of tear gas down from the roof to temporarily blind the cops below. Jason and I used the grappling hook to swing to the nearest building. Kory carried Roy to another building. After getting away we rendezvoused at the airport.

“Sorry about the Wii, kid. I’ll get another one.” Jason said after we found our seats on the plane. I had the window seat. We were on our way to Queens, New York.

“It’s okay. You know, you could have handled yourself a little better back there.” I said, changing the subject. I was very disappointed in how Jason acted around Dick. It was like he was a completely different person. I think that he resented Bruce and Dick for not killing the Joker after his death. Maybe that’s why he acted like that. It’s is still not much of an excuse.

“Well, shit. What the hell was I supposed to do? Dick was practically begging for an ass kicking.” He spat back, like it somehow made any sense.

“For starters, you could have not tried your best to pick a fight with him. You could have tried to explain. Hell, you could have just let me talk, but no.” I relied. I know that I was pissing him off, but I did not care.

“Like you handled it so well. ‘Oh, Dick I missed you!’ How do you think that made me feel, Tim?” Jason mocked. I didn’t regret hugging Dick and telling him that I missed him and the others. There was nothing wrong with that. They have been through hell for the last three months looking for me. I felt bad enough for not communicating with them somehow. Now, I was supposed to feel bad for Jason because he’s jealous that I still love them? Not to mention, he did kidnap me in the first place so they kind of had a right to be pissed. If this thing between Jason and I was going to work then he was going to have to work harder, damn it.

“You’re such an asshole.” I sighed, giving up on what would have been a hopeless argument. I sort of felt bad for Roy and Kory. They were sitting behind us listening awkwardly

“They’re lucky I didn’t use them as shooting targets.” He said, gritting his teeth. Jason was tough, but even I knew that he wouldn’t cross unnecessary lines like that without proper cause. I did not believe that Jason would kill Barbra, Dick, or even Bruce for that matter. If he truly wanted Dick dead, he would have already tried to murder him. Or if he wanted them to suffer, then he could have tortured and killed me at their expense. I could sense that part of him still cared for them. His pride was too big to admit it. Still, I sighed again and got out of my seat.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Jason asked with his arms crossed and an angry look on his face. I couldn’t stand to be that close to him at that moment.

“Roy, switch seats with me.” I insisted, turning my face in Roy and Kory’s direction. I’m sure he was thrilled to become involved in our conversation. I know that he knew I was right and Jason was being a prick.

“Uh sure, kid.” Roy answered nervously.

“What? Are you going to just ignore me now?” Jason snarled. I proceeded to do just that. That’s when Roy got up and we switched seats. Kory was more than happy to sit by me.
“Come young Robin, we shall enjoy a bag of earth nuts!” She said, trying to diffuse the tension. I actually thought it was pretty funny, therefore somewhat effective. Kory usually acted as if nothing bothered her. Facing Superboy was quite a feat, even if it ended in a draw.

“Fucking whatever.” Jason said, loud enough for me to hear while slouching down in his seat. For the rest of the flight Jason and I didn’t speak. He mostly slept, and I read an e-book on Roy’s phone. It was a terribly long flight. The sooner we landed in New York, the better.

After we landed Jason decided to rent a crappy apartment instead of staying at another hotel. At least the apartment was in a better neighborhood than the hotel was. It was surprisingly similar to what we had before. There were two bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen with a small dining area. It appeared quite cozy, actually. Jason and I didn’t really speak until after we began unpacking in our room. Roy and Kory went to get food, and other things we might need. Suddenly, I heard Jason’s IPhone make a dinging sound (meaning that he received an E-mail) all the way from the kitchen. He opened the email and cursed.

“Tim!” I heard him shout from another room, startling me. He quickly made his way to the kitchen. His expression wasn’t a happy one to say the least.

“What the fuck is this?” He cursed, shoving the phone in my face. The email he opened read:

Tim, you need to come home. You don’t belong with them. I’m sorry that I over reacted when I heard you say you and Jason were together. It’s going to take some time before I can accept that. I just have trouble seeing you with someone like him. I wish you would call. Please, at least email me or Babs. We need to know where you are and that you’re safe. I love you, bro.

From: DGrayson@GothamBmail.com

“How did he get this email address?” Jason asked, grabbing my upper arm so tight I flinched a little. He seemed like he was ready to throw the phone across the room.

“How should I know? It’s your email.” I replied, slightly angered. Did he think I somehow gave Dick his email address? Jason’s grip only tightened as he scrolled through his phone. Sometimes, I wished that I was a tad taller and stronger. Jason was bigger than me, and I didn’t like the fact that he could physically dominate me so easily.

“Because you hacked it!” he shouted, shoving the phone in my face again. That was getting old very quickly. The screen showed Jason’s sent messages. There was one that had been sent yesterday. It read:

Hey Dick, I’m just letting you know that I’m okay. Please don’t ask questions. Just know that I am safe. -Tim

“I didn’t send that!” I grimaced. I wasn’t lying. Though, I wasn’t proud of it, I did not attempt to contact Dick or anyone else as per Jason’s rules.

“That’s how they found us! They tracked us using the IP address. We were in the clear until you fucked it up.” Jason said, aggressively releasing my arm.
“I seriously didn’t send that email, Jason. Besides, they would have had to find out sooner or later.” I said, rubbing my arm as it throbbed. He threw me a glare.

“You expect me to believe that someone else sent the email? You’re shitting me!” He said angrily.

“Look, I don’t know who sent the email. All I can say for sure is that it wasn’t me.” I responded, trying to convince him of my innocence. It wasn’t working. Why didn’t he trust me?

“You’re lying!” He shouted, lifting me up by my shirt and pinning me up against the wall. When Jason was angry he was pretty scary.

“Jason, stop it! I didn’t do it! I promise!” I replied, trying to feel the floor with my feet, but failing. I know that it looked bad, but I didn’t understand what the big deal was anyway.

“I trusted you.” He snarled as our eyes met. His eyes were electric with rage, while I’m sure mine were flooded with shock. If I didn’t send the email from Jason’s IPhone, then who did?

“Trust me now!” I shouted, just before plunging my knee into his stomach, causing him to let go of me.

“You little shit!” was what I heard before Jason’s fist grazed my face, knocking me to the floor. Before I could conjure a thought I was on the ground with blood dripping from my nostrils looking up at him, unable to move. It was not that I physically couldn’t. I just really didn’t want to fight Jason, and I was partially in shock at what he had just done. I was Robin. I shouldn’t have been shaken up so easily. We were both breathing heavily for a minute or two. Then Jason’s expression softened and he began to apologize.

“Geez Tim, I’m sorry. I just-” Just then, Kory and Roy interrupted him by walking in with groceries.

“What’s going on?” Roy asked, looking surprised. I wiped the blood from my face with my forearm and rose to my feet. Both Roy and Kory (who was carrying more groceries) held surprised expressions on their faces.

“Nothing. Everything’s fine.” I mouthed, holding back what I wanted to say. I began walking to the bedroom Jason and I were sharing.

“Tim, wait a second.” Jason called out behind me and attempting to follow. There was a bathroom that came with our room. I went in and slammed the door in his face. Why was this happening? I was so confused. All I could do was clean myself up. After a while, I could hear Jason knocking on the door, but I just turned the shower on to help drown him out. I examined my face in the mirror. It seems that Jason had held back when he hit me. All he did was give me a bloody nose and a light bruise on my left cheek. I took the opportunity to actually get in the shower. It had been a while since I saw Jason act that way towards me. It was unsettling and I knew that it wasn’t over. I had to figure out who sent those emails.

Jason’s point of view

“I know how the Bats found us.” I said, furious at Tim for what he did. I have a hell of a temper, and I really didn’t mean to leave a bruise on Tim’s body. It was an act of rage and I felt like shit for it, but
Tim was still in the wrong. He just didn’t understand. Apparently, no one did. Roy and Kory sat down on the sofa in the living room part of our apartment both of them looking confused as hell. I told them about the emails.

“So, Tim used your phone to email Dick and they tracked the location using the IP address?” Roy asked, perplexed.

“Pretty much. That’s the only way they could have tracked us” I sighed. I finally started to calm down. How could he do that? I mean, I thought I could trust him. I knew that I should have never let this go as far as it did. I should have been tough on him all the way through. All I wanted was to protect him. That’s the whole reason I took him.

“But I thought that the young Robin enjoyed our company.” Kory said, looking puzzled.

“He does, Star. He probably just missed his family. That’s all.” Roy concluded. That’s all? What the fuck, Roy?

“You’re just as clueless as Tim. Now that the whole bat family knows we have him, they won’t stop until they get him back.” I stated, fearing that he may actually want to leave.

“So?” Roy added, with one eyebrow raised. What a dumbass.

“So, I for one don’t want to wake up to the whole frick’n Justice League at our door.” I said, standing up out of my chair, and pointing at the door. I knew that we couldn’t fight them all. I knew that if that happened, they’d take Tim away.

“Jason, I doubt that’d happen. Don’t you think you’re taking things a little too far? I mean, in the end Tim chose to come with us.” Roy said, making a pretty strong point.

“It is true. The young Robin is kind. He likely sought to spare Dick’s ache of the heart?” Kory added, with an empathetic look on her face. I really didn’t give a rat’s ass about Dick, but Tim did, unfortunately. I was beginning to see that I might not be able to change that.

“I get that. I do. My main issue is that as long as Tim is around the bats he’s going to want to be Robin again. I can’t let that happen.” I proclaimed, with a serious expression.

“Isn’t that up to Tim?” Roy threw back at me. He seemed a bit off. It was like he cared about Dick, and the others. Sometimes, I forget that both Roy and Kory have worked with Dick before. They still have emotional ties.

“Tim’s safety is my only real concern. As long as he’s Robin he’ll be risking his life. As long as he’s with the bats, he’ll always want to be Robin. I won’t let history repeat itself. They let one Robin die already.” I replied, putting on my jacket and grabbing my cigarettes.

“And what if Tim doesn’t want to give up being Robin?” Roy asked as I began heading toward the door. What a stupid ass question.

“I’ll force him.” I said, angered by the idea. What other choice did I have? Neither Kory nor Roy had a response to that.

“Where are you going?” Roy asked, getting out of his chair.

“Out. Don’t let the kid out of the apartment. I mean it.” I answered. I needed a cold one. The last twelve hours had been incredibly stressful. I knew there had to be some bars around town. I needed
to get away from those three for a few hours. I finally found a bar after walking down a few blocks. It wasn’t anything fancy. I sat at the bar and ordered a beer. All I could do was sit there and think about what had happened. It kept on replaying in my head. I couldn’t believe that Dick actually showed up. I had planned everything out perfectly. There was no way to track us. Why did Tim have to send that email? I thought we were happy together. Surely, he knew that the email would be traceable. Did he want Dick to find us? Sure I did kidnap the kid, but he’s been happy staying with us for the past few months. I’ve tried to give him what he wants. Me and him even started to care for each other, really care. After a few beers I realized that Tim was no different than anyone else in my life. I made the mistake of thinking that he was different. I felt betrayed by Tim.

“Betrayal can only happen if you care about someone.” I mouthed to myself after my eighth (maybe ninth) beer.

Tim’s point of view

It was pretty quiet after Jason left. I could hear Roy and Kory talking in the other room, but not Jason. He must have left the apartment. It had been such a weird day. I hated being cooped up like this. I began to doze off numerous times. I had a hunch at who sent those emails. I really wanted to wait for Jason to return. Maybe he would calm down and listen to me. Jason needed to understand that I would have eventually had to contact Dick and the others. Even though Jason meant a great deal to me I still loved them as well. I wish Jason would realize that it wasn’t a contest. He didn’t have to be so jealous. A few hours after Jason left I heard a loud banging sound. I opened my eyes to see Jason stumbling through the door.

“Where have you been?” I asked sleepily, while sitting up and rubbing my eyes.

“Out.” He slurred. He seemed offended that I asked. It was obvious that he had been drinking.

“Okay. Well I’m going back to sleep.” I said before lying back down on my side facing away from his direction.

“Tim, why did you email Dick?” Jason asked, sitting next to me on the bed. I ignored him and pretended to be asleep. I didn’t want to talk to him if he had been drinking. He knew that I hated when he drank, and I kid you not when I say that he was wasted.

“Answer me!” He said louder. His voice made me flinch. When I didn’t respond he turned me on my back and pinned both of my hands down. He was really starting to scare me. When I finally opened my eyes I saw him on top of me. He looked angry and reeked of alcohol.

“I didn’t send the email, Jason. Please, get off me.” I pleaded looking into his bloodshot eyes. I tried to get my hands out of his grip, but he was too strong.

“I told you before. You belong to me, Tim. Not Bruce, and not Dick.” He whispered, before sloppily shoving his mouth against mine in an attempt to force a kiss. I began squirming more with every passing second. I tried to tell him to stop, but my mouth wound up spewing some sort of gibberish due to Jason trying to kiss me. Finally, I was able to kick him off of me and the bed. I took this opportunity to step out of the apartment. As I was heading out the door Roy caught me.
“Is everything okay, Tim?” He asked. I hadn’t realized that I had been crying.

“Yes. I just need some air.” I replied. He must have known that Jason had become belligerent as well as intoxicated.

“You know, no matter what Jason says, you can leave whenever you want, but Please don’t. I know Jason can be a real asshole, but with you here he seems different, happier. I know that you guys are fighting right now, but just give him time and he’ll get over it.” Roy said, trying to convince me to stay. I sighed, and continued out the door without a word. My intention was never to try and escape. I sat outside of the apartment door and pulled my knees up to my chest. It was raining. The roof was protecting me from getting rained on, but I was still cold. One of Jason’s white T-shirts, and a pair of boxers was all I was wearing. I liked listening to the rain. It calmed me and helped me think. Why was I here? Maybe going with Dick was the wiser decision. Maybe being Robin wasn’t good for me. Maybe it was time to let go. Eventually I fell asleep sitting there in that position. I was woken up by the sun’s bright rays, and the sound of nearby birds chirping. I noticed that a blanket had been placed over my body. Roy must have done it after I fell asleep. I didn’t feel very well. I felt congested and I had a headache. A few minutes after I awoke, the door to the apartment opened and I was joined by Jason. He was walking like he was dizzy. I sighed. He looked like crap. He was wearing a white tank top and a pair of pajama bottoms. He sat beside me against the wall and lit up a cigarette. I tried to ignore him by not looking at him. I could hear him breathe. He began to speak, but then he retreated into silence.

“What is it?” I asked bluntly, trying to get him to say whatever was on his mind. Jason is a lot of things, but emotionally sound is not one of them. I know I’m not one to talk either. I am, however, a vast improvement over Jason.

“Look Tim, I’m sorry about last night, really sorry.” He sighed squeezing the bridge of his nose.

“A lot happened yesterday. I had a few drinks and things got out of hand. I know that I shouldn’t have hit you. I really am sorry if I hurt you.” He continued, slowly putting his arm over my shoulders and watching to see my reaction. I let him do it and casually leaned into his embrace. I don’t know why, but I did feel sorry for him. I know that’s wrong and that I shouldn’t, but I did.

“You didn’t hurt me. You just scared the shit out of me. I just wish you would trust me more. You could also lay off the booze.” I replied, realizing that my voice sounded odd.

“Tim, I do trust you. I just don’t see who else could have sent that email. You are an expert hacker. It had to be you.” Jason argued, completely ignoring the whole ‘booze’ portion of what I just said. I sighed.

“I know who wrote the email.” I said. A shocked expression dawned his face. It wasn’t all that hard to figure out. Jason should have thought of it before, rather than running around recklessly accusing me.

“I don’t understand.” He said, wide-eyed. Of course he didn’t. Idiot. I sighed once again and arose to my feet.

“If I tell you, you can’t get mad and shoot people. Understand?” I said, offering him a hand to help him get up as well. He needed it.

“Babybird, I’m too hungover to shoot anyone.” He said, laughing a little. I believed him. At least, he
called me ‘Babybird’ again. After returning into the living room we saw Roy sitting there on the couch watching TV. Jason and I sat on another couch.

“So, who sent the email, Tim?” Jason bugged. I really didn’t want to do this, but it was the only way to clear my name. Roy muted the TV and started paying attention to me. I think that he knew what I was about to say.

“Jason, remember when Roy used your phone yesterday to call his daughter, Lian because his phone was dead? About one and a half minutes after he hung up was when the email was sent. And it was sent via IPhone.” I explained. Jason hopped up sloppily and glared at Roy. Roy’s face lit up with guilt.

“Why the fuck would you do that, Roy?” Jason shouted at him. Roy remained silent. I knew that was well.

“I know why. While I was reading an E-book on Roy’s phone on the plane ride here I thought about trying to call Barbra or Dick. I went into his resent calls and saw that Roy had received a call from Dick a day before the email was sent. Roy answered it and talked on it for thirty-three minutes. I’m guessing that Roy could tell how much hell this was putting Dick through so he lied over the phone and said he hadn’t heard anything about my whereabouts, but then sent him an email reassuring him of my safety. You really shouldn’t be upset with him, Jason. In all honesty, he did the right thing.” I said, trying to make sense of the situation. I surmised this after spending the night outside. “It’s all true, Jason. I just couldn’t live with myself knowing that Dick and the others didn’t know if Tim was dead or worse. I put myself in their position. I have a kid, man. I couldn’t imagine going through what we were putting them through. Plus, Dick and I have been friends before. I couldn’t just sit there and lie knowing that would bring, unnecessary suffering. And I was pretty sure that the kid wouldn’t leave us.” Roy explained, with valid points. Jason still seemed bitter, though a bit more understanding.

“Whatever, man. I don’t want to talk about it anymore right now.” Jason said, with a hint of animosity. Roy and I both knew that he would get over it in a few days, and I didn’t feel like bringing up the fact that Roy was going to let me take the blame for it. I didn’t want to fight anymore. I could’ve, I just didn’t want to,

“Thanks for the blanket, by the way.” I said returning the blanket to Roy, who was still sort of pale faced. After which I let out an enormous sneeze followed by a sickly sounding sniffle.

“Sure, kid. I don’t know how much good it did. You sound like you’re coming down with something.” Roy said back. Jason walked over to me and felt my face.

“Shit. I think you’re running fever. You feel warm. Probably caught a cold or something from sleeping outside.” Jason said. Now that he mentioned it, I wasn’t feeling my best. As a result of this, I went back to bed. It was like 6:45 in the morning. I took a well-earned shower and slept for most of the day. Jason stayed in the living room with Roy and Kory watching TV. He tried getting me up once or twice to eat some soup he made, but I wasn’t hungry. Later in the evening, Jason went to the store to get some cold and flu medicine for me. I got out of bed around 7:30 that evening. By this time I was hungry and Jason was back with the medicine. Roy and Kory went on a job that night while Jason stayed back with me. I tried to go back to bed after eating and taking the medicine, but I couldn’t get comfortable. I already felt like crap, plus I was tossing and turning for almost an hour before I got up and walked into the living room to find Jason sitting on the couch watching TV.

“Are you feeling any better, kid?” he asked, turning down the volume.
“Not really.” I responded, with a snuffle before joining him on the couch. I guess the medicine hadn’t kicked in yet.

“You don’t sound better. You should be in bed resting.” He nagged, putting his hand against my face and using his thumb to stoke my cheek. I knew that I was still running fever.

“I know.” I mumbled before collapsing onto Jason’s chest and wrapping my arms around his torso. He seemed a bit surprised I think.

“Would it be okay if I just lie here with you? I promise I won’t talk, I just—” I began to ask before being interrupted. For some reason I was fighting back tears. I guess, I was just under a great deal of stress. A few seconds later, the waterworks began.

“Hey, hey, calm down, Babybird.” Jason interrupted, with a calming smile. He began caressing my back with his hand. My head was on his chest. His heart beat had come to be my favorite lullaby. I was still crying. It was pitiful.

“Of course you can lay here. What’s the matter?” Jason asked sweetly. Like Jason, I didn’t like feeling vulnerable. There were several things that were weighing heavily on my mind, as well as my heart. These were some of the most imperative issues.

- Dick (and the others) being mad at me, or even growing to hate me now for deserting them, not to mention how much I missed them. I hated the thought of not being able to see Dick, Barbra, Alfred, Celina, and Bruce ever again.
- Jason continuing to kill criminals, and me not being able to stop him. I didn’t know how much longer I could ignore what The Outlaws were doing, and still living with myself.
- The fact that Robin was being taken away from me. Robin was like an extension of my soul. The realization of having it slowly ripped away from me was beginning to take its toll on me.

“Please, just hold me.” I cried quietly into his chest. I was an emotional wreck. Being physically ill seemed to have triggered more of a break down.

“Okay, Babybird. I promise it’ll be okay.” Jason assured me. Being this close to him always made me feel safe and secure. I felt Jason’s fingers slowly trace invisible shapes on my back while I laid there on him. I continued to weep until I fell asleep there in his embrace.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tim's point of view

Jason and the others were gone on another job. He wouldn't tell me what it was about. That's okay, though. I really didn't want to know anyway and I didn't want to fight with Jason over killing gang members and drug dealers. I only bring it up enough to plant it in the back of his mind. Anyway, I was sitting on the sofa in our newest hotel room sipping on my third cup of coffee. We moved to a town that was only two and a half hours away from Gotham. It was a rundown, crime infested city. I was hoping to maybe see Dick, Barbra, and maybe even Bruce soon. This time it would be on better terms. I made sure to keep Dick updated on our whereabouts. Jason wasn’t too happy about that, but he got over it. This time we were able to stay in a really nice hotel. It was 3:00 am and I was getting worried. They left at 5:00 pm and they still weren't back. I wish Jason would let me come with them.

I could be of some assistance. I think Jason was more reluctant to murder in front of me. If I joined the outlaws I know that I could contribute to the team, but Jason's mind was made up and he was one of the most stubborn people that I had ever known. He hated the idea of me being Robin again. Truth be told, I have thought about sneaking out again, but Jason usually leaves Roy or Kory here to keep an eye on me since the whole Castillo thing. I suppose that he still didn’t trust me completely. This was the first time in months that all three of them left. For the last few hours I had been on the couch waiting. My nerves were going crazy until finally, the door opened and Jason, Roy, and Kory entered, making me almost choke on the hot, black liquid I was in the middle of swallowing. I was most relieved to say the least. They were all dressed in their civilian clothes and kept their suits and gear in two fat bags. Jason was wearing one of his old faded jeans that had a few rips at the knee. I loved to see him wear those.

"Hey there." Jason smiled at me, still walking in his hair nearly drenched in sweat. I rose to my feet.

"Are you all alright? Is anyone hurt?" I asked, ready to get the first aid. I had to at least be of some use.

"We're fine, Tim. Were you that worried about us?" Jason replied, teasing me while ruffling my hair. I didn't care. He did worry me. I mean, they weren’t exactly in the line of work that wouldn’t make one worry.

"Well, yes. You can be rather sloppy when you work." I tossed back, gently slapping his hand off of my head. Roy laughed a little.

"So how did the mission go?" I probed. Roy was about to answer when Kory cut him off.

"OUR ENEMIES WERE VANQUISHED!" She said deafeningly, with her long, flaming, red mane flowing behind her as she walked. She wore a prideful grin on her beautiful orange face and her fists clenched in victory.

"What she said." Roy answered with a discouraged look on his face, and feeling his ear to make sure it was still there. I made sure that they all had eaten something other than fast food. In their absence, I cooked Roman-Style Chicken to keep busy. I packed the chicken with fresh herbs, tomatoes, and peppers. It was rather light, yet satisfying. It really wasn’t difficult. I just hate that these people only
ever get food from a drive through window. Roy and Kory really seemed to enjoy my cooking. Jason just loaded the dish up with salt resulting in my eye twitching. Afterwards, I just sighed and rubbed the bridge of my nose. Jason didn’t even notice. At least I tried, right? Jason and I made our way to our room after everyone was finished eating. Jason started stripping before headed into the bathroom (that came with our bedroom) to take a shower. He slowly pulled his shirt off, his shoulders and back muscles bulging. I just kind of sat there on the side of the bed, my cheeks aflame. After Jason showered, he walked out of the bathroom wearing nothing but a towel. I had remained sitting on the bed reading a book about computer programming. I tried not to stare, but I couldn’t resist. I fought to keep my eyes to myself.

His dark hair was still damp. He put on a pair of solid white boxers that left very little to the imagination. Jason was hardly the shy type. I have always hated having to change clothes in front of others. Jason didn’t seem to mind. I turned my whole body around and sat facing the opposite direction on the bed. I didn’t want him to see me blushing so much. The next thing I knew, I felt his fingertips lightly stroking the back of my neck. This made me flinch at first and then caused a shiver to run down my whole body.

“You’re so tense, Tim.” Jason said quietly in my ear from behind me. Then I felt his lips kissing the area where my neck met my shoulders. It gave me goosebumps all over. I could feel his hot breath between kisses. It felt good so I just sort of closed my eyes and tried to relax. His mouth slowly moved up my neck and eventually met with mine. I could feel his still damp hair against my skin. I took and few deep breaths before turning my body around to face him. He looked at me with an eye brow raised and a smirk, his blue eyes were electric with mischief.

“You dirty little thief.” Jason teased. I was wearing one of his old shirts and a pair of my grey boxers. I liked his shirts because they were so soft and big on me. It made them comfortable to sleep in, or to just wear around.

“It's comfortable. Plus, it’s not like I ran off with it.” I laughed. The cloth had become thin with time, and had a few holes in it. Jason said that he had kept it for many years. I found it hard to believe that it was still intact as much as Jason and the others travel. The old shirt also carried Jason’s scent that I had come to really like. I was going to keep that fact to myself, though.

“Yeah well, I'm going to need it back now.” Jason smirked before joining me on the bed and sliding the shirt off over my head. He threw it on the floor and slowly began kissing my neck again. I really liked it when he did that. I wrapped my arms around him and softly kissed his lips. We spent a few minutes kissing, occasionally taking breaks and resting our foreheads against each other’s before I pulled away. I cuddled into his chest with a question that had been lying heavily on my mind. I was a bit scared to ask it, partly because I didn't really know how.

“Jason, can I ask you something?” I said, sitting up cross legged on the bed. Jason held a puzzled expression. Usually, I just said whatever I wanted. Perhaps I shouldn't have asked, but it was too late to turn back now.

“Uh, sure. Go for it.” Jason replied, sitting up against the headboard, nervously, which was weird. I wasn't used to seeing Jason be nervous. He probably thought I was going to start another argument about wanting to join him and the others on their missions. Or maybe he thought I was going to lecture him about his how deadly combat methods did not sit well with me, but neither of those things were what I wanted to talk about. I stayed quiet for several seconds, not sure how to phrase my question.

“I know you care about me. And I’ve developed feelings for you as well. I just need to know something. Do you...uh, love me?” I struggled to get out, while looking down at the bed and
twiddling my thumbs. I could feel the blood rushing to my head, yet again. I looked up and saw
Jason’s eyes widen for a moment and then go back to normal as an endearing smile formed. I needed
to know this because I wasn’t sure where this whole thing between Jason and I was going. He
cupped my face with his hands and used his thumb to caress my cheek. He gently pulled my face to
his and our eyes met.

“You’re so funny, Tim.” He whispered before slowly kissing me with such passion and care. I
covered Jason’s hands with my own and leaned into him. He stayed on top of me as he eased me
down onto the bed, one hand running through my hair while the other gently held my arms above
my head like the first time we kissed. Jason really liked that for some reason. I didn’t mind
it.

“Do you really need to ask, Babybird?” He smiled with his mouth against mine. A small grin found
me as I blushed at his words. That’s when I took a deep breath through my nose and flipped him
over.

“Whoa.” was his response while looking up at me, slightly surprised with a smirk. One hand
cressed my stomach and chest while the other fondled my lower back, eventually sliding down
lower to my butt. We proceeded to make out for a while longer. Suddenly, I interrupted our kiss yet
again with my words. I looked down at Jason and couldn’t seem to logically organize my thoughts.
He looked up at me with such a loving and peaceful smile. His bright blue eyes reflected the genuine
affection he had for me. This was the side of Jason that most people did not see, the side of him that
could be happy even though his past still lingers. I had hope that one day he would overcome the
blood soaked tragedy that had once befall him, and I wanted to be there to see it. As I continued to
gaze into his eyes my body seemed to make an unconscious decision.

“I think I’m ready.” I whispered nervously, still straddling him. I know he likes it when I do that. I
felt his body respond accordingly. I too became aroused shortly after him. After hearing the words
come out of my mouth as they did I wished that I could have rephrased them a little, but oh
well.

“Wait, are you sure Tim?” Jason asked with concern in his voice as he slowly leaned up.

“I am.” I said softly, placing my hand over Jason’s. This seemed to be a tad surprising for him. He
seemed somewhat reluctant. I think that he didn’t want to take advantage of me, but he wasn’t. This
was my proposal. Jason always tried his best to let me decide on how far we should go since I wasn’t
experienced. In truth, I just really wanted to make him happy. Sure, I wanted to feel good, but I
wanted to make him feel better. That is what I have come to know as love. At first, Jason held a
puzzled look, but then his expression formed a small grin and he let out a small breath of laughter.

“Alright, but if you’re uncomfortable or you don’t like something just say so, and we’ll stop.” Jason
assured, sounding a bit nervous himself. I know that he didn’t want to hurt me and I knew that he
wouldn’t. It became silent for a few minutes. Neither of us was sure of what was about to happen. I
began kissing Jason’s lips. He kissed back a bit more aggressive than myself. Jason broke the kiss
briefly while he slid his massive hands down my sides. He stopped at my hips, the boxers shoved
down to make way for his hands against my skin. My breath hitched as Jason’s thumbs rubbed the
skin around my hipbones. When Jason touched me it was like an electrical current had snapped
between us. There were urges and desires burning within both of us.

My hands made their way to Jason’s lower back and began lowering his boxers, making them drop
at his feet. His muscles flexed as they moved and I could feel the blood flowing through them. He began kissing my chin and neck. I savored each one. He exhaled slowly into my neck before playfully biting the area between his neck and shoulder. His lips could always find just the right spot that gave the rest of me goosebumps from the pleasure. I let out a small whimper before his mouth gradually moved down to my chest, then to my abdomen. My face reddened uncontrollably. I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to be doing anything so I just sat there. Then Jason looked up at me before grasping my boxers and pulling slowly pulling them down, revealing my already noticeable erection. His eyes were so beautifully clear, like the translucent hue of ocean water sparkling as hits of sunlight are refracted off of its surface.
“You’re trembling.” He was right of course, but I couldn’t help it. I don’t think any sane person could at this point. I was completely naked. Jason rose up to meet my face. His hand crept down my abdomen as he passionately kissed my lips. Jason’s hand took hold of me and began gently stroking. All I could do was breathe heavily as Jason proceeded to kiss me. It felt entirely amazing. Jason
seemed to know exactly what he was doing. I wrapped my arms around his neck as he continued. I could feel Jason’s hard on rubbing against my thigh. After several minutes of this immense pleasure I cried out as my body made the release Jason had been waiting for. I leaned my head against Jason’s shoulder while trying to catch my breath. He held me for a moment as I continued panting. I knew that I was ready for Jason to go further.

**Jason’s point of view**

“How was that?” I whispered into Tim’s now messy, dark brown hair. I was trying my best to take things slow for him. He just looked up at me with an adorably tired smile on his face.

“Great.” He answered between breaths. Was this as far as he wanted to go for now? I gently pushed Tim down on the bed, spreading his legs to make room for myself between them. I gazed upon his nude body. *Beautiful* was the only word I could think of to describe him. Just looking at him made my heart pound ferociously. His small, but tight, muscled build was so damn hot. Tim had no idea how bad I had it for him. I noticed that his pale body, like mine, was adorned with several combat scars. Some were more faded than others. I wanted to make Tim forget all the pain from his former life. I wanted to make him happy. It was more of a need than a desire. I hadn’t ever had these types of feelings before. It was kind of overwhelming. His small, muscled chest continued to rise and fall with every breath he took. No way could I stand there and do nothing. My hand caressed Tim’s stomach as I tangled my fingers in his hair and pulled our lips together. Tim’s tongue slipped past my lips first this time, and I was left trying to play catch-up. I swear the way Tim’s licking and sucking at my mouth was robbing my brain of oxygen. It was so hot.

Tim’s gaze was filled with such eagerness. I could tell that he wanted to go all the way. I didn't know how much Tim knew about anal sex, but I knew that there was a lot of prep work involved, and it could be painful for the one being penetrated if things weren’t taken slowly. I began kissing Tim again. While doing this I slowly slipped one of my spit drenched fingers into him. His response was a small whimper of pleasure. After a few minutes, I pushed another digit in, attempting to stretch him out some. Tim was extremely tight. Then after a few moments later, I slipped another finger in, making three in all. Tim broke the kiss and leaned his head into my chest, breathing heavily. Was he truly ready for this? I rushed to the bathroom and returned with some lube. I was going to use a condom, but Tim insisted not to, which was so unlike his careful nature.

“I think this would be more comfortable for you from behind. If you bent over-” I started saying before Tim interrupted me.

“I don’t want to do this, unless I can see your face.” He said without hesitation and with a bit of stern in his tone. I understood. I just didn’t want to hurt him. I suspect that he found the idea of turning around and bending down too embarrassing. I had to laugh at that. Classic Tim.

“Fine, but if I hurt you just say so and I’ll stop.” Was my response. Tim continued to lay on the edge of the bed. I entered Tim very slowly and gently. I could never forgive myself if I hurt him. I made sure to pay close attention to his facial expressions. When I was half way inside of him Tim let out a painful whimper and violently gripped the sheets.

“Shit, does it hurt?” I said, alarmed at Tim’s pained expression and the tears forming in his eyes.
“I’m sorry, I’ll...” I began saying before Tim interrupted me again.

“No, I’m fine.” Tim breathed heavily; sweat sticking to his forehead and rolling off of his naked body.

“Please don’t stop.” He begged with tears still in his eyes. Why was he doing this? I continued thrusting until I was all the way in. Tim shut his eyes hard, and let out more whimpers. The inside of Tim felt so warm and only made me hornier. Tim was so tight. The intense pleasure caused my toes curl in the carpeting. It felt amazing in ways I could never begin to describe. My hand crept down his abdomen as I kissed his lips again. Tim was taking hot little gasping breaths that were short and heavy breaths. He was trembling more than before even though I can tell that he was trying his best not to.

“You need to relax, Babybird.” I said softly, trying to help. I felt kind of stupid, stating the obvious. Still, Tim was way too tense and I wanted him to enjoy it as much as I was.

“Okay.” Tim nodded; taking deeper breaths and allowing himself to become less tense. Then he pulled me down and wrapped his arms around my shoulders before burying his face in my neck. I could feel Tim’s heart beating frantically in his chest. My hand on Tim hip adjusted the boy better so he was flat on his back, knees in the air. I swear he was almost panting as I continued to thrust into him. He seemed so fragile and vulnerable. I could feel his deep breaths against my face before he kissed me. Suddenly, Tim’s muscles tensed and his fingers scrabbled across my back, pressing into the skin. I must have hit Tim’s special spot because he was making short little thrusts with his hips, moving back and forth against me. By this point Tim’s eyes replaced his tears with fiery passion. It was really hot. Then his muscles tensed and tightened again and it felt amazing. He let out a soft whimper as I started thrusting a little harder and faster. Soon his whimpers turned into moans of pleasure.

His voice and body was so beautiful. Everything about what was happening was beautiful. I silenced him with a fairly rough kiss. Finally, after several minutes I came into him. Then I gave him a minute before I pulled out and plunged back in, taking his mouth into my own and swallowing the groans and whimpers. We were both letting out enormous breaths and continued to take quick, short breathes afterward. I slowly kissed his forehead as gently as I could and muttered something into his skin that made him tense for a moment before slowly pulling our mouths together.

“I love you so much, Tim.” I could feel Tim’s lips form a smile against mine, and for once in a very long time, I truly felt at peace.

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Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! It means so much! Please voice your opinion on my work! It makes my day! And hey, thanks again! :)
Chapter Notes

Thank you so if you've made it this far! Please leave me a comment and tell me if you liked it:
Thanks, again!

Tim’s point of view

I was sitting at a table in a small café in a small city close to Gotham. The sky was grey and it seemed as if it would snow soon. It was really cold out. Dick wanted to meet up with me and talk. He promised that he would refrain from doing anything stupid. Jason stayed back at the hotel. He had offered to come with me, but I don’t think he really wanted to. It was best that he didn’t. It had been months since Dick found me and fought with Jason. I had been talking to Dick over the phone so that he knew my whereabouts, but that’s about it. I really had no intention of revealing how or why Jason and I got together, at least not over the phone. I did want to keep my relationship with Dick, Bruce, and Barbara. After all, they are my family. This was becoming rather difficult without seeing them. I knew that Dick wanted to ask me a ton of questions about the nature of my relationship with Jason, and I really didn’t mind telling him. I just didn’t want to be permanently excommunicated from them. I didn’t want them to dislike me or anything because I was involved with Jason Todd, the Red Hood. I didn’t want Bruce to be disappointed in me either.

As I sat there bringing my coffee cup to my lips, I saw Dick enter the café. He looked well, much better than the last time I saw him. Of that I was glad. I hated to cause him and the others so much pain over not being able to find me. His blue hoodie went well with his grey sweatpants.

“Hey, Tim!” He said excitedly, before almost breaking my back in a one of his tight hugs. Then he sat down. I really missed his big, goofy smile. Dick was annoying and overprotective, but I could tell he really cared, and I had missed his sunny demeanor. We talked about patrols, bad guys, Alfred, and other things. He told me that Bruce had been on a secret mission that started a few nights after they found me. All Dick knew was that it had something to do with Talia Al Ghoul. He did say that Bruce was relieved that I was alive and well. I was trying to avoid talking about Jason, but Dick was very persistent to say the least.

“So, how did you and Jason get, uh, together? I mean, I didn’t even know he liked guys.” Dick asked, seemingly out of the blue. His face was red and he tried to avoid eye contact with me. Knowing Dick, he most likely did not want to ask, but he felt like he needed to because he was concerned.

“Good question. To be honest, I’m not even too sure how it happened.” Was all I could say back. I didn’t want to bring up the fact that Jason kidnapped me again.

“Tim, I know it’s a touchy subject. I just want what’s best for you. Jason is, uh. Well, he’s a criminal. There are a ton of people that want him dead. I don’t want you to become involved in that kind of
“I know what he is and what he’s done.” I muttered, trying not to get angry, aggressively placing my coffee cup on the table.

“So, are you going to keep traveling with Jason across the world every few months so he can hunt down drug dealers and crooks? That’s no way to live. What about college? What about your position at Wayne Enterprises? What about Robin?” Dick went on. I understood, but it is my life.

“Things change, Dick. As fate would have it, Jason needs me more than Batman and Wayne Enterprises. And I’m actually happier than I’ve ever been.” I sighed. It was that simple. Dick looked at me with a saddened expression, like I wasn’t happy before.

“I don’t get it. Are you sure that you’re the same Tim I know? Before the Outlaws took you away, being Robin and getting your education was all that mattered.” Dick objected, his expression emitting bitterness towards Jason and the others.

“I can still go to college, Dick.” Was my reply. I did plan on returning to school, but I needed a little more time. It was just announced that Tim Drake was never kidnapped or murdered. He ran away with some friends, and acted like a spoiled delinquent. That’s what Bruce and Barbra came up with as a legal explanation of why I was missing. I saw it on the news a few days after I was found.

“You were so determined back then. You were so suborn and driven. What the hell happened to that Tim? Are you just going to give up on your life? What about Bruce, and Barbra? What about me? Are we ever even going to see you anymore?” he spat at me. I sighed again before answering.

“Yes, you are going to see me. What do you think we’re doing now?” I threw back, though he had a point.

“What? You’re going to check in every few weeks? Maybe a visit every few months? That’s not good enough. He had no right to take you away from us, and now he’s gotten into your head. For all anyone knows, the next time I see you, you could be a criminal just like him.” Dick was crossing all sorts of lines, but I was letting him because of how bad I felt about not contacting him before.

“You don’t understand.” I muttered, standing up from my seat. Dick looked up at me with one eye brow raised.

“You don’t know Jason like I do. I know that he can be saved, and I’m the only one who can help him.” I said stoically, before pulling out a small wad of dollars and change from my pocket and placing it all on the table. I’d had enough. Dick’s face was full of regret of pushing too far. I began walking toward the exit when Dick grabbed my arm as I passed him.

“Tim, I know you want to help him, but a person like Jason can’t be helped. We have all tried to help him. All he knows how to do is hurt those around him. You can’t change who he is.” He said with his puppy dog eyes looking at me. Dick still didn’t understand. Jason was not a lost cause. In Dick’s eyes, Jason was just a rabid dog that needed to be put down. That’s not what I saw. I saw a man who has been tortured by his own past for years. His pain is not likely to ever go away, but I know from experience that my touch helps to ease it. Dick had too much resentment for Jason built up to understand.
“No. I won’t just give up on him. Goodbye, Dick.” I said, not looking at him and walking out of the café into the cold weather. He didn’t say anything or try to follow me after that. I had come to the realization that no one could take Robin away from me; not Jason, Dick or anyone.
Sitting on the sofa in the living room of the hotel we were currently residing in was getting really old. I was growing more than a little impatient while waiting for Jason, Roy and Kory to return from a mission again. This was the third mission they had gone on this week and it was only Thursday. We were currently in the lovely city of Big Spring, Texas. The hotel we were staying in was nicer than you’d think. There’s a pool, a huge television with satellite channels, but no Jason. Here I am, sitting on the counter, waiting for their safe return with nothing but a bowl of cereal and cup of coffee to distract me.
He tells me all the time to not worry and to just “chill out.” I was not the type to just sit back and relax when Jason doesn’t tell me any details pertaining to their mission or anything. I’m just supposed to assume that the trio will be okay and come back safe and sound? I wasn’t sure how much longer I could stand that. I was beginning to reach my breaking point, and Jason was beginning to realize that. I wasn’t allowed to go along with them even though, everyone knew that I would be a great addition to the team. I swear, Jason was one of the most hard headed people that I had ever known. All I knew about their mission tonight was that it involved a Mexican gang. I predicted that someone called in a hit for the leader. If I’m right about the identity of the leader, then Jason would gladly exterminate him based on how he operates. The leader in question is one who recruits children after beheading their parents in front of them, and to top it off, he also runs a sex slave industry. I’ve learned all of this through watching the news lately in this area. His name, Crain Lobos. My guess was that Jason and the others were hired to shut him down. I still do not think that the man deserves to die. I just do not can not see how taking the life of another is justified. Jason believes the exact opposite. However, he’s died before. Doesn’t that make him a bit biased? Anyway, I’m not saying that Lobos does not deserve to die for his horrific actions. I just don’t think we, fellow human beings, should be able to make that choice and carry it out. I know it sounds complicated. Sometimes, I try to put myself in another’s position. If this man painfully murdered someone extremely close to me, (mother, sibling, Jason, etc.) Would I change my mind? Would I not hesitate to kill him, or would I make sure he was put under the worst jail I could find? I don’t know. After the whole Castillo situation, where I acted out of impulse from a strong desire to save Jason and killed Castillo, I just don’t know precisely where I stand anymore. I do know one thing that Jason is right about. This world is not all black and white. The grey areas far outweigh the black and white areas. Batman would never kill, even if it meant losing another Robin. Sometimes I wonder if Bruce knows about the grey? If he could somehow go back in time a kill the man who murdered his parents before they were murdered, would he? I don’t think he would, but I don’t know for sure. In any case, I do not agree with the carefree approach Jason uses when it comes to killing his enemies. I know for a fact that it doesn’t make him feel any less empty. I have found that Roy, Kory, and I do. I wish that could be enough for him. I let out a dramatic sigh when finally, I hear familiar voices from behind the door. It was Jason and Roy. It sounded as if they were bickering

“Dude, I’m just saying. It’s dangerous to go into battle without your helmet.” Roy said, in a defensive tone as I listened closely.

“I’m fine. Neither of you two wear helmets, so the hell’s the big deal? A stupid underling of Lobos got me while my guard was down. Shit wouldn’t happen again in a million years.” Jason retorted, arrogance and stubbornness embedded in his words. That also confirmed my suspicions about their mission. That’s when the door opened. I immediately jumped to my feet when I saw Jason in wearing his Red Hood attire, but he was holding his helmet. The trail of blood running down the left side of his face clearly signified that he was injured. I ran up to him as fast as I could.
“Jason! What happened?” was the first words to come from my mouth after seeing the blood. “Ah, C’mon! Not you too, Babybird. I’m fine I promise. We went up against a hoard of goons. Turns out, one of them got lucky and got a shot in on me when I wasn’t looking, but it’s all good. You should see the other guy.” He said in response to my question, basically, not giving me any details. He was just standing there with a goofy grin, not knowing if he had a concussion or what. I hesitated to ask what was on my mind, a much darker subject matter regarding the lifespan of the “other guy.” After all, I know I heard Jason say he was an underling in Lobos’s gang. Did he really have to die?

“He wasn’t wearing is helmet, and the guy struck him with a huge ass piece of wood that was laying around.” Roy clarified. Ugh. I sighed. “Yeah, and then the guy found himself being shoved through a wall by yours truly.” Jason attempted to clarify Roy’s clarification. I had to ask.

“Did you-uh…” I started to ask before rethinking my question.

“Relax, kid. As far as I know the low class thug was still breathing when we left.” He answered my unasked question that was burning in my mind. I decided to quickly backtrack

“Why weren’t you wearing your helmet?” asked, knowing it would probably just piss him off more. Jason does not like being seen or thought of as weak or vulnerable. I get it. I don’t either, but the ego of Jason Todd wouldn’t allow it. Believe me when I say that threshold is vast.

“Look, I forgot to put it on, okay. Geez. It was in the heat of battle. It’s not that big of a deal. I go without it a hell of a lot of the time fighting bad guys anyway, so what the hell? I’m sorry. There, is everyone happy now?” Jason went on, sounding a bit like a ranting child, but it was endearing, non the less.

“My stomach has the rumblings.” Kory interjected, ignoring the conversation entirely and making her way past all of us and into the kitchen. I did not blame her.

“Okay. How do you know you don’t have a concussion?” I said, getting to the point. Jason’s eyes squinted and looked in Roy’s direction for some reason like it was his fault. I would have noticed his head injury without Roy saying anything. I sighed and grabbed Jason’s gloved hand.

“Come on, let’s get that wound taken care of.” I said, leading him into the bathroom where the lighting was much better. He hated to be “babied,” but he did it to me all the time, and I had to make sure he was really okay. After examining the wound on his head, I made him walk in a straight line and move his body in certain precise ways. He said that he didn’t have a headache anymore, and that he wasn’t feeling dizzy or nauseated. He also commented on how annoying I am when I act this way, and he also jokingly referred to me as “mom.” I ignored his baiting. He likes to make me just mad enough to amuse him, but not so upset that it’s serious. I highly doubted that he had a concussion, but I had to keep him awake for at least a few more hours to make sure. As I cleaned his wound and wiped the blood from his face he scowled somewhat and things got quiet. He didn’t require stitches or any type of bandages. Afterwards, he took a much needed shower. Then he grabbed a beer from the fridge and joined Roy, Kory and I in the living room area. It was quiet for a while, except for the television on in the background. I decided to bring up my thoughts, knowing that it wouldn’t end well. Here goes.

“You know, if I had been there, maybe I could backed you up and maybe you wouldn’t have been injured.” I said, slowly, and yet without putting much thought into my words. His face said it all. There was no way he was going to allow that.

“Or, it could have been you that got hurt, which tends to happen to you more often than me, kid.” Jason’s snarky remark made me grind my teeth a little, but I didn’t let it show on my expression.
“So basically, and correct me if I’m wrong, but it sounds as if you’re grossly underestimating my abilities as both a fighter and a detective.” I said with more attitude than intended. Jason rose to his feet and looked me in the eyes.

“Hey, I wasn’t the one who snuck out, was captured, and then got shot. That was you and I’ll be damned if I let that happen again.” Jason began to yell at me. I had forgotten how scary he could be when he wanted to be. I clinched my fists tightly and I began to tear up at his words. He knows that it was more complicated than that. And the part about me getting shot, low blow Jason, low blow.

“I took that bullet for you.” I said, rising to my feet and starting to walk out of the room. I was stopped when I felt Jason grab my arm. I heard him let out a sigh.

“Look, I’m sorry. That came out wrong.” He sighed again and released my arm.

“I’ll think about it, okay Tim, but not tonight.” Jason replied, regarding me joining the team.

“I think that the young Robin would make our team even more formidable.” Kory interjected, making Jason send a glare that would stun any normal person her way. Roy just sat there. I think he knew that arguing with Jason was impossible.

“Both of you know how I feel about putting Tim in the field.” He said coldly, talking to both Roy and Kory, like I wasn’t even in the room.

“But, if you-” I began to argue.

“Not tonight, kid. Please. I’m tired and I don’t want to fight.” Jason interrupted before heading towards our bedroom. That was his answer, and facial expression, he used every time I asked to join the team. I sighed and decided to just let it go for the moment. I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was Kory. She knew how badly I wanted to fight alongside the rest of them. Roy did as well, but didn’t say much about it because it would only cause a fight between Jason and himself.

“Do not fret, young Robin. I feel that soon Jason will begin the coming around.” She said, attempting to make me feel better. Kory could bench press a house, but she could also be so sweet and empathetic at times. She was a good friend. I formed a small smile and nodded. Later that night, Jason was sitting on the edge of the bed. He had just finished smoking. I walked in and got in bed on the other side. I didn’t bother getting under the covers. I was lying on my side in bed when I felt Jason snuggle up behind me.

“You seem way too deep in thought, Babybird.” At first I didn’t say anything and just allowed Jason to cuddle up behind me. I was trying to ignore him. Then he began kissing the back of my neck, not in a total sensual way. He then proceeded to tickle me as I tried my hardest not to give in and laugh. I knew what he was doing. After a few moments I couldn’t help but give in and turn around into Jason’s embrace. My head rested against Jason’s chest as Jason pulled me closer.

“Jason. How long are you going to do this to me?” I asked, randomly after a few quiet minutes of just lying there with him.

“Do what?” Jason, answered, playing dumb.

“You know what.” I replied, with a more serious tone. He smelled like dove soap.

“Tim, do we have to talk about this tonight?” he pleaded. If not now, then when?

“Yes.” I pulled away and sat up in the bed.
I just don't know how much longer I can do it anymore. Waiting on you to come back after a mission every few nights. Wondering if you're hurt or worse. I can't lose you, Jason. You and I both know I can help you. I'd make a great addition to the team.” I explained, trying to win him over, but to no avail. I could see his answer set in stone reflected in his bright blue eyes.

“Kid, you don’t know what your asking. It's not just the concern for me when I go on jobs. I know you, Tim. You hate the thought of me killing anyone. If you see it first hand like tonight, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying. You think you can persuade me to stop killing the bad guys. You can't. I'm sorry.” He said, bringing up hidden agendas that I cannot deny to be true. However, my main concern still had to do with Jason’s well being.

“If it makes you feel any better, because you care so much I don't use deadly force as often as I did before you came along. I have actually started holding back and only killing off the really evil ones, like Lobo. Those that are child molesters, sex slave drivers, drug lords, and thugs that recruit children younger than 13.” He continued. While it did not completely put my mind at ease, it did help. I was slowly getting through to him.

“Jason, I can handle it. I've seen you kill before, but with me there, maybe I can help apprehend them in other ways. And seeing you kill someone wouldn't make my feelings for you any less real. And believe it or not, I do worry about you getting hurt like tonight, but worse. You're not immortal. Besides, even you have to admit that I would be a great asset to you. I am Robin. My hacking skills, hand to hand combat abilities, and the fact that I've been trained by Batman, himself should be more than enough to convince you. Plus, I've been doing some side training with Roy and Kory.” I said, lecturing him to a degree.

“Really? When?” he asked, changing the subject. I probably shouldn’t have mentioned that last part. I hoped that it wouldn’t start a fight amongst them.

“When you sleep in.” I answered, truthfully. Jason sighed and gently pulled me back down on the bed with his arms around me with my head is lying against his chest. Then Jason began slowly stroking my back like he knows I like.

“Sorry, Babybird, not tonight. I know you’re extremely skilled, not to mention really hot when you’re riled up, but it's just too dangerous. I’m not belittling your abilities, but if I were to bring you along with us on a job the entire point of my taking you away from the bat would be defeated. Maybe you can convince me next time.” He says sarcastically, as if this was a game, but somehow endearingly at the same time. I took a deep breath and just began to try and relax. Jason’s actions spoke louder than his words.

“That might be the reason you took me away from Gotham, but that’s not why I stay. This isn't over, you know.” I told Jason as my eyes became heavier by the second. Jason let out a quiet laugh.

“I know, babe. I know.” He whispered in my ear before I fell into a deep and much needed sleep. I felt so at peace with Jason there with me, even if our ideals were completely different. I was so relieved that he made it back to me. I came to appreciate moments like these because of his line of work. Still, it was just as I said, this wasn’t over. I was not giving up.

Tim’s Point of View Continued...

It had been so long since I’d been to the mall, I had forgotten how noisy it was. People were talking, some shouting. Working my way through a large crowd of people was not really my cup of tea. I didn’t believe Jason would be too fond of it either, until I saw him rummage his way through the sea of rude teenagers, children, mothers with baby strollers, men in suits wearing way too much cologne, and even some elderly women. Even now, he still manages to surprise me. He was dragging me
along with him to this new gaming store that had just opened up at the mall. If it weren’t for his brown leather jacket I might have lost him in the crowd. Jason was pretty excited about some new Mario game that just came out. I enjoyed playing video games, but Jason took it to a whole new level. It was quite endearing, actually. I thought it was great that he found something to do with his time instead of going off on one of his jobs. Bonus information: Jason is a giant cheater when it comes to playing Super Mario Bros and Mario Kart. Every time I would get ahead of him in the game he would elbow my shoulder, causing me to drop the remote, or he would tip over the whole couch to prevent my victory. Then he denies any foul play and claims that he was in “the heat of the moment.” Anyway, Jason still goes on missions, but he does it less frequently so he can spend more time with me. When he does go out to take care of a job I never ask him about it. Deep down I know that he still kills the criminals and drug bosses he apprehends, but I can’t expect him to change over night. Here lately, I have been able to tell when he has murdered. I can see it in his face and eyes. The blood on his hands is real and I think I’m beginning to get through to him. If only I could convince him to allow me to come with him and the gang. On another note, I should have had a camera to film Jason pushing teenagers and kids out of the way when the gaming store opened. I followed at a reasonable pace. Roy and Kory were also in the mall. Last I saw, Kory was dragging Roy in the opposite direction Jason was dragging me. I imagine Kory will want to cipher through all the clothing stores she could find and poor Roy was just along for the ride. After shopping, we all agreed to meet up in the food court. That is where Jason and I went next. The food court was a giant spherical room with a glass ceiling near the entrance to the mall. They were contiguous with the counters of several food vendors. One of them was serving Japanese food, which was the only food Jason and I could both agree on eating when it comes to fast food. I was never overly fond of the idea of eating Japanese food all the time, but it was a compromise we had. Plus, it was much better than MacDonald’s. After getting our food, we sat down at one of the unbelievably empty tables in the food court.

“I wonder where Kory and Roy are.” I said before stabbing a piece of steamed broccoli in front of me with my fork. We had separated over two hours ago and agreed to meet back up at 12:00. Jason bought the newest MarioKart game that was just released for the Wii. He was in a pretty content mood.

“Chill, Tim. They’re probably still shopping for dresses that Kory is never going to wear. They just lost track of time.” Jason replied while stuffing his mouth full of chunks of his steak hibachi. He continued to talk, but I couldn’t understand a word with all the food in his mouth. This was most likely the case.

“Maybe.” I said before taking a few small bites. I ordered a vegetable hibachi plate. It was the healthiest meal available. I noticed that there was a pretty blond haired lady sitting straight across from us. Sitting beside her was a small child. I could only assume that the little girl was the lady’s daughter, due to the child’s blond hair and similar facial features. The lady was talking about Jason and I. I over heard the woman tell the child that she saw Jason and I holding hands earlier in another part of the mall. Her face lit up with disgust as she told her daughter that we were gay and that we shouldn’t be together like that. It isn’t natural. If only she knew that others don’t want us together for reasons that are quite deeper than a petty case of homophobia. I sort of thought it was funny at first. Then she said the word ‘faggots.’ I was offended, but not enough to show any type of response. I was, however, glad that Jason didn’t hear her. Knowing him, he probably would have caused quite the commotion. Personally, I felt sorry for her daughter. The woman was teaching her child to be ignorant and hateful.

“What a bitch.” I muttered quietly. Jason looked up at me with a mouth full of rice. He tried to ask me if I said something, but it didn’t come out that way due to him continuing to stuff his face. I laughed a little. Suddenly, I let out a small cry due to a painful sting running through my body. It was
emanating from the back of my neck. My hand reach back and pulled out what appeared to be a tranquilizer dart. It was dripping with blood as I dropped it on the table, making a loud metallic sound. Jason’s concerned expression formed on his face before he could say anything. Then, half a second later, a huge explosion erupted from above us. Several events happened in seconds. Thick shards of glass, metal, and chunks of stone fell from above. I immediately looked up toward the woman and the little girl sitting at a table across from us. I acted quickly and without haste as Jason shouted words I couldn’t comprehend due to the screams of everyone else in the food court. I may not have been able to hear him, but I knew that he was trying to protect me even if other innocents were to die in the process. While that sentiment was sweet, Robin could not allow that. I could not allow that. I had to face my responsibilities and make my stand.

Jason’s Point of View

I was not expecting what had just occurred. Whoever caused that explosion was about to be sorry they were ever conceived. In the midst of it all, Tim played hero. I thought I made it clear that those days were over for him. Stupid kid. Not that I blame him. The first thing I did when Tim made his move was grab a woman and attempt to shield her from the falling debris. Luckily, most of the heavier shit landed away from us. I think a variety of stone and rubble fell on me, but I’ve had worse. When it got quiet, I rose from underneath the rubble to see nothing but what you’d think. The food court became a huge wreckage, a giant pile of glass, rocks, cement, metal, bodies, and other people running in the opposite direction. The woman I had thrown myself over seemed to be okay, but she was in shock. When I let go she ran away without so much as a thank you. I started yelling out Tim’s name in the direction I thought I last saw him in. At first it was quiet. When the dust finally settled, I heard movement. Then I rushed toward it to see a table full of debris being lifted up by Tim. He, along with a young woman, and a small girl she was holding to her chest were all underneath the table. Tim threw the table backwards and asked them if they were okay. The mother hugged Tim and was crying like crazy.

“Hurry, get your kid out of here.” He said to her, his shirt practically ripped to shreds, arms painted with scratches and bruises, and a trail of blood bleeding down the right side of his head. After the woman nodded she ran through the rubble with her child in her arms. Then Tim’s gaze met mine. I can’t say I wasn’t proud of him, but it was a foolish thing to do. He could have died. I think he could tell that was what I was thinking. Suddenly, a gunshot went off and the woman with the child fell to the ground, both dead in one shot. Tim and I both turned toward the shooter. There stood a mutual enemy of both Batman and myself. The orange and black metallic mask he hid his one eyed face underneath was one that I hadn’t seen in quite some time.

“No!” I heard Tim gasp as my eyes widened in shock. Standing about twenty feet away was an old enemy of both of us. Though, the dust from the explosion obscured him somewhat we both knew who he was. His body was covered in armor similar to that of the league of assassins. The handgun he held had to be extremely powerful to kill the woman and her child in one shot from such a distance. Of course, that credit could also be given to his expert marksmanship.

“Hello, Robin.” The mercenary muttered with his head creepily tilted to the side and his one eye shifted and narrowed, his voice deep and intimidating.
“S-Slade?” Tim replied, surprised to see him. Slade Wilson was his full name, but he also went by
another name, Deathstroke. Out of all the criminals and bad guys I’ve ever faced, Slade is the only
one that I would willingly admit to being a better marksman with any gun than myself. (Roy isn’t
included.)

“Oh, good. You remember me. How touching. Sorry for the surprise visit, but I’m afraid I needed to
gain an audience with you, Robin. Or do you prefer Tim these days?” Slade continued as he slowly
made his way through the dust toward us. How did this bastard know Tim’s identity, and why was
he here? None of this made any sense. The last time I faced Deathstroke, he had been hired to
assassinate me by some drug cartel leader that I was trying to kill, long story. When we fought, he
ended up falling off a two story building that was on fire. How was he even alive? That was over a
year ago. Did he want revenge? Why now?

“Murderer. Why did you kill them?” Tim shouted, his body shaking. His bloody fists clenched up in
ager.

“Why not? The real question is why you’ve chosen the crowd you’re hanging around with these
days. How irresponsible, not to mention hypocritical.” Slade was just trying to get under Tim’s skin
at this point, as if his murderous actions already hadn’t. Tim’s injured body took a fighting stance. I
rushed over to him.

“Tim, run. Get out of here, now. That’s an order.” I said, without looking at Tim’s face, knowing
what his expression was. I put a hand in my jacket pocket and grabbed my glock 17. It wasn’t
carrying the kind of firepower I usually use on a job, but it was all I had with me. It was stupid of me
not to bring any weapons. Suddenly Tim collapsed to his knees into a small pool of blood. What the
hell was happening? I began to freak out. His body went limp and his eyes lost all of the life that they
previously held. I immediately checked his pulse and breathing.

“It seems all that jumping around, anger, and not to mention the injuries he’s sustained have caused
his heart speed up, in turn speeding up the spread of the tranquilizer.” Slade said slowly and cruelly
ambitious as he continued walking forward towards us.

“Jason…I can’t…stay…awa-” Tim struggled to mutter before completely passing out in my arms.
Was he poisoned? Knowing Slade, there was no telling. I could feel the blood rushing to my face in
an unyielding anger.

“What do you want, Slade? Is this about evening the score between us? Cause there’s much easier
ways to get my attention, you son of a bitch!” I couldn’t contain my rage.

“No need to be so upset, child. He is alive. I did mention the tranquilizer didn't I, Jason? How hurtful
to be thought of a fabricator of truths.” Slade said, his words laced with grace and arrogance.

“If that hurts. You're about to be in a world of pain.” I replied, gently laying Tim on the ground,
amongst the rubble and dust. Poor kid.

“It seems you're reacquainting yourself with the bats. Interesting. I thought that part of your life was
behind you.” Slade continued, calmly and collected with his arms behind his back as if he were
Teaching a class.

“And I think that behind that mask of yours is a dead man.” I replied, seething with more hate for this
man. Slade then chuckles disturbingly enough to send chills down my spine.

“Oh, Mr. Todd. You couldn't imagine the number of dead men behind me.” Slade says stepping
through the rubble and closing in on us. Then he stopped. As I stood over Tim’s unconscious body I
had a bad feeling in my gut. This wasn’t going to end well. That’s when I charged at him through the
rubble and over a few bodies. Before I knew it, I had already emptied all my bullets. However, Slade was wearing very protective armor. The only damage my gun shots did was put a noticeable crack in the orange half of his metallic mask. That, and piss him off little. So, I proceeded to fight him barehanded. It wasn’t long before he gained the upper hand due to my lack of gear and sustained injuries from the explosion. Before I could get any hits in, he fired a shot in my left my left thigh. It happened so fast that I didn’t even know what had happened for a few seconds. I crashed down into the dust and rubble, bleeding, holding my leg to try and slow down the bleeding. I began to notice the extent of the damage I took from that explosion. I was dizzy and my body was shaking. I was bleeding pretty badly. As my vision was starting to fail, I saw Slade pick up Tim’s unconscious body and throw him over his shoulder like a rag doll.

“Sorry Todd, I’m afraid I’m only here for the boy. Consider yourself lucky.” He said with the silver tongue I longed to cut out of his fucking skull.

“I'm warning you. Slade, if you hurt him, I'll make you fucking regret it!” I threatened from the ground, practically screaming. I had never wanted to kill someone this bad before, except the Joker. Part of me flared up in a furious rage. I wanted to see Slade on the ground, suffering, and then die slowly. Slade turned and walked toward me. I tried to stand, but it was impossible. I only spat up blood. The pain was unbearable and my body just wouldn’t fucking listen to me. I was gasping for breath and slowly starting to pass out.

“How ominous, but just like you, your threats are no more than a hollow shell. And don’t worry. I’ve all but forgotten our last encounter. Make no mistake. The next time I see you, I’ll be more than happy to take you on. Right now, you’re too pathetic to kill, even for me. It’s quite sad.” I heard Slade say as he stood over me with Tim draped over his shoulder. I imagined the satisfaction I would get from hearing the sound me snapping his neck.

“Just as I said, pathetic.” I heard him say in a voice full of hateful pity, before delivering a hard kick to my face. Then I passed the fuck out.

________________________________________________________________________________

“Jason! Jason!” A familiar voice echoed from nowhere. My head was killing me. I could hear sirens and could see flashes of blue and red lights through my eyes as my vision began to come back to me. I was finally coming to. I recognized the that voice was talking to me.

“Dude, the cops are here. You've got to wake up.” Roy said as I continued to regain my consciousness. I felt almost as bad as if I'd had a hang over, just with out the vomiting. Then I remembered what happened.

“Where’s Tim?” I snapped, a second later, suddenly remembering the encounter with Slade. I jumped to life and sat up so fast before pain shot all through out my body. This caused me to grunt and grind my teeth really hard. I noticed that my leg was bandaged up, stopping the bleeding. Both Slade and Tim were no where to be seen.

“Hey, take it easy, man. I haven't seen Tim, but we have to get out of here before we get arrested for setting off bombs off in the mall.” Roy said, helping me to my feet. I couldn't stand up by myself so I had to put an arm around him for support. We were in some upstairs clothing store without power in the mall. I could hear the voices of the swat teams and med crews making their rounds in the mall. That's when Kory descended down from a hole in the ceiling created by the destruction of the explosions.

“There is no choice. We must fly if we are to get away. And we must make with the haste.” She said, her feet landing gracefully on the tile floor. She looked around as if she was looking for
“Where is the young Robin?” She asked, extremely concerned. I began grunting and I fell to my knees.

“He took him.” I muttered, before punching the tile floor, creating a giant dent in the floor that matched the size of my fist. My knuckles were bleeding. I didn’t notice the pain because of how pissed I was.

“Who, Jason? Who took Tim?” Roy asked kneeling down to my level. I felt his hand on my shoulder.

“Slade. Slade took him. And I, I couldn’t protect him. It’s my fault!” I said angrily, punching the same spot on the floor, making it bigger and making my knuckles bloodier. Tears were beginning to form in my eyes. After those words came out of my mouth I heard them both gasp. Kory put her hands over her mouth. Then we heard footsteps. The police and medical assistance were making their way to where we were.

“Jason, we have to go. Believe me, we’ll find Tim, but we can’t do it from here or from in prison.” Roy said standing back up again, putting my arm around his shoulder for support. He was right. Here I was crying like a little bitch because I couldn’t protect the person I care about most in this world. I needed to stop thinking like that and think about how I was going to put Slade’s head on a pike. Roy was also right about another thing. We were going to find Tim, no matter what it took. Roy and I both put our arms around each of Kory’s shoulders and we ascended from the ground and flew out of the hole in the ceiling she arrived through.

Tim’s Point of View

“Wake up little bird. Wake up.” I heard in a deep familiar voice. My eyes struggled to open, as I regained consciousness. There was an annoying pain running through both of my forearms. I remembered being at the mall with Jason and Slade showing up. After that, everything seemed to be a blur.

“I was drugged.” I whispered to myself as the environment around me became clearer and clearer. I didn’t know my location outside this room, but I did recognize the Greek symbols etched into the walls and ancient Greek artifacts all positioned in a certain way. Old tapestries and statues honoring the Greek Gods from that era. I’ve done much research on Greek mythology as Robin when Batman and I helped Wonder Woman defeat Hades. So, yeah. Magic is a thing. Anyway there was very little light. In fact, the only light that the room had came from a nearby window. That could be my way out. I was laying on some sort of stone table or tablet. I looked down and noticed that my arms were shackled to this rock. Then he emerged from the shadows.

“Good evening, Timothy Drake. Or should I say, Robin. Though, you’re not the the first Robin with whom I’m most familiar with. I guess things never truly do stay the same.” He said, slowly walking towards me with both hands behind his back. Slade Wilson, also known as Deathstroke, was a mercenary. Unlike Jason, Slade did not resort to sparing anyone or take charge any drug cartels. He merely killed for the highest bidder, and if I remember the reports from the bat computer correctly, his methods would usually be more insidious than Jason. Thinking about it made me cringe. This man has brutally murdered innocent families including women and children. He has presented the heads of some of the United States top military personnel to a client in China. There he was, standing over me while I was restrained to a rock. Slade’s creepy eye looked down at me in a weird way, like he was examining me. I remember reading that his wife shot him, resulting in the loss of his eye. His whole body was covered in battle armor and his signature black and orange metallic mask hid his face.
“Slade, why have you brought me here? And where is here? And how do you know who I am?” I asked, getting more and more uneasy by the minute.

“My, aren’t we full of questions? I have very reliable resources. I’ve known for a while the identities of Robin, The Red Hood, even the capped crusader, himself.” Slade replied with a gleaming dash of arrogance coating his words. This is when I noticed that I was only wearing my boxers, and that my arm had been bandaged up. Did Slade do this? Why?

“Okay, so then what the hell do you want with me?” I asked partially lunging at him as much as possible. Before he answered I noticed that one the chain links that shackled my right arm was weak and rusted. After some strain on it, I got it to crack. The window was only maybe three feet away. If I could get to it, maybe I could scream for help or at least see where we were. Everything in this room was old and looked like it belonged in a museum. Slade began to enlighten me.

“It seems my luck with apprentices has been quite unfortunate. It also seems that my luck hasn’t improved in other areas as well. Recently, I was hired to assassinate someone. My skills are indeed unique and more than enough for the job. The fringe benefits were indeed enjoyable. Afterwards, however my client refused to pay their fees. Instead they caught me off guard and gassed me with a deadly poison that deteriorates the body of normal humans from the inside out. Due to my advanced healing abilities, I have managed to keep the poison at bay and buy some time, but the clock is still ticking and my options are becoming more and more limited by the second. I’ve tried gathering the world’s best doctors in hopes that they would produce a cure. Some of whom were responsible for curing the wife of the infamous Mr. Fries.”

“Why are you telling me all of this? What does this have to do with me?” I asked while squirming, trying to break that one rusted link.

“Patience, dear boy. Needless to say, those high ranking doctors failed. And, just as the fate of the client who poisoned me, their bodies will never be found.” He said, casually. I could feel the chain link about to break. It didn’t seem like Slade was going to leave the room, so my best bet was to fight him. He did say he was poisoned. I was hoping that the poison he spoke had taken a serious toll on his body. If I could knock him unconscious I would have time to break the chains that bound my left arm. Until then, I needed to keep him occupied.

“You’re a psychopath.” Was my only reply, before breaking the link off.

“Didn’t the bat teach you any manners?” he said to my face just before noticing my right arm was free.

“Yeah, and that’s not all he taught me.” I said before launching an uppercut to Slade’s jaw. I wrapped a part of the chain that was still connected to the shackle on my right arm, around my fist to deliver another, more devastating punch to his head. As a result, his mask broke open and flew across the room, revealing his face and white hair and goatee, along with an eye patch. He truly had been poisoned. His veins were a greenish color, enlarged, and twisted. They were very defined as they were very close to the surface of the skin. My eyes widened at his haggard appearance. I quickly ran to the window and looked out, my arm still shackled to the stone table.

“No.” I whispered to myself. I saw the ocean with no land in site. The walls actually appeared to be made of stone and the whole room seemed to be embedded into a cliff or mountain.

“Foolish child.” Slade said after regaining his composure. Slade grabbed me by my hair and throws me back onto the table. Slade used his foot to break my free arm. His shoes were metal and hard. His foot was pressing into my forearm. I could feel the bone cracking. I was crying out as loud as possible at this point. The bone in my arm was crushed. Breathing became a challenge. I realized that
I could not move that arm at all. He was not finished yet. I screamed as Slade's foot connected with my ribs again and again. At this point, I could have sworn that I heard something crack inside me, but my entire body was on fire with pain so it didn't make a difference. I couldn't breathe or even move. I just laid there and took it. There was no chance in hell I was going to be able to hold his own in a fight.

“Perhaps this will put an end to all your resistance.” He sneered at me as a foot collided lower into my gut. I tried and failed to hold back my screams of agony. I was surprised that I had any air to release after getting it kicked out of him. Finally, the kicking ceased and I took a shuddered breath, feeling the tears drip down the side of my face as well as the metallic taste of blood ran through my mouth. When I didn’t respond to his words, Slade used his hand to press into my injured stomach. That caused me to scream even more and made Slade smirk.

Slade put the black part of his mask back on. The orange half was shattered.

“How do not attempt to escape again.” he said, very close to my face.

“What the hell do you want from me?” I asked, gasping for air, and coughing up some blood.

“All in good time, child. As I was saying before I was oh so rudely interrupted, after science had failed me, I began pursuing more unconventional means. Means that included the ancient waters of the Lazarus pit. To no avail, I'm afraid.” He went on. So the Lazarus pit couldn't even restore Slade’s health?

“Now, I am forced to try my very last resort, magic. I'm sure you've heard of the magician who specializes in Ancient Greek sorcery, Felix Faust.” Slade said before moving aside, revealing a thin, hooded man wearing purple garments and several pendants with ancient Greek markings on them. I had not read much on Faust, but I knew that he had given Wonder Woman trouble in the past. In other words, this was not good for me.

“All of the preparations have been made.” Faust muttered with a devious smirk.

“And you're sure my healing factor will transfer as well?” Slade asked, slightly irritated. I gained the impression that Slade did not like Faust.

“Yes, if you survive the transfer, that is.” Faust answered, tilting his head to the side.

“If you want your payment, you'll make sure I do.” Slade’s eye narrowed at Faust.

“Transference? What are you talking about?!” I demanded as my wrist began to bleed from the shackles.

“Yes. It is just as it sounds, young Robin. I enlisted the magical talents of Felix Faust to set up an ancient ritual the Greeks used thousands of years ago. According to legend, Greek kings would transfer their consciousness from the old decrepit body into a younger one so they could extend their rule. Until, one of the Greek gods, felt cheated. So, Hades reduced anyone else who attempted to recreate the spell to ash. Fortunately for us, Wonder Woman has recently trapped Hades in the Greek underworld and destroyed the key. He won't be able to stop what is about to happen. And neither are you.” Slade unsheathed a foot-long knife and held it to my cheek making a small slit. Blood trickled down onto the blade.

“This is insane, Slade. Jason and the others will stop you.” I said, kicking as hard as I could with my injuries. Slade eventually pinned me down and got close to my face, once again.

“I'm afraid it's too late, child. Here’s another fun fact. You don't have to be conscious for this ritual to
work.” He said before grabbing me by my hair and slamming his head into the stone table I was chained to, knocking me out cold.
Jason’s Point of View

“What do you mean the tracking device you embedded into Tim's shoulder isn't responding?” Roy asked, as if it he actually didn't understand the fucking first time I told him.

“Look, back when we were rescuing Tim from Castillo, and Tim took a shot for me in the shoulder, the tracking device must have been damaged. Damn it!” I replied. I knew what was coming next.

“Dude, did you ever even tell Tim about the tracking device you crammed into his body?” Roy argued.

“I didn't tell Tim because I just knew it would upset him and plus I've been a little preoccupied with work, ya know?” I spat back, ready to punch Roy in his teeth before Kory interjected.

“Boys! We are going nowhere. This arguing is meaningless. We must find another way to locate Tim, and soon.” She said getting between us and pushing us apart from each other. She was right, but aside from going to the bat, I didn't know of any other ways to find him. He could be anywhere. At this point I was actually praying that he was still alive.

“Besides, I have an idea, Jason. However, I know that it will not be to your liking.” Kory said with a determined look on her orange face.

“What did you have in mind?” I asked cautiously.

“Well, if we do not have the technology needed to locate Tim, perhaps we are in need of thinking outside of the square shape.” She said. What was she getting at? She couldn't mean what I thought she meant.

“I think we should visit my previous home, Titans Tower.” She stated with a serious face. I could tell that she really didn't want to go, not that I blame her. She used to be a Titan and let's just say that most of the team weren't on good terms with her or me. They have every reason to hate me, but this was the only way we could find Tim.

“You know they hate us, right?” Roy asked openly with an eyebrow raised.

“Not all of them. Besides, we only need the assistance of one Titan. And we shall not take no for an answer.” Kory said, her eyes glowing more intensely than usual.

“Alright, every gather your shit. We leave in five.” I said, taking a deep breath. I was a Titan for a very short time. I really don't even think I qualify as an ex-Titan because I did a shitty job and basically got kicked out for being too violent. I've had a run in or too with Beast Boy and Cyborg. That didn't end too well.

Anyway, we booked a flight to Jump City that night. I scared to ask them for help due to everything I've done and crimes I've committed. Hopefully, I can get her to help us, for Tim's sake. I thought about calling first, but I figured it would make it more easy to reject us. So we were going to Titan's Tower. The next morning, we landed and had no trouble find the enormous T on an island close to the shore. They should basically write
“Hi bad guys! Aim all your weapons here! We live here and stuff so just feel free to ambush us at any time!” All over the tower. When we go there, Kory decided to perk up a little and lead the way. We figured they hated her the least of all of us. She rang the door bell.

“There's a doorbell?” Roy said, a little caught off guard. I have to say that I didn't really blame him. I mean it's not like there's a welcome mat at the inference of the bat cave. Suddenly the door opened. It was Cyborg. He looked just as surprised to see us as we were.
“What the hell are y'all doing here?” He asked, his left mechanical arm transforming into a sonic laser canon. So, it wasn't quite as bad as I'd hoped.

“Cyborg, please listen to me. We are not here to cause any harm or to fight. We are in need of assistance. Please lower your weapon.” She said, in a genuine tone.

“And why should I help y'all with anything? You, the alien traitor, and the two murders you call team mates! Because of him, Beast Boy ended up in a coma for two weeks and almost died!” He scolded pointing his sonic canon at me. That's when I approached him fully unarmed to prove a point. If we wanted their help we needed to play it their way for now.

“Look Victor, I know we've never seen eye to eye. I know you think we are the lowest of the low because of what we've done and maybe we are, but that's not why we're here today. Please just hear us out. Tim Drake, the third Robin has been kidnapped by Slade and we have no way of locating him to mount a rescue. I'm not asking for me, but for Tim's sake.” I poured my soul out. That's all I could do at this point. We stood there for about fifteen seconds before I heard his cannon power down along with a sigh.

“Most of the team is out on a mission, but there's still someone here who can help you, if she wants to.” He said, stepping aside.

“That's all we need. Thank you, Victor.” I muttered while passing him as I entered the tower.

“This is a one-time thing. And don't try anything or all hell's going break loose up in here.” This was his way of saying you're welcome. I smirked and proceeded. Both Kory and I knew where her room was and that was where we were going. Before we knew it we were standing outside the door of the one person that could locate Tim, Raven.

I gently knocked on the door and waited a few seconds before the door opened just a little bit. I could see half of her grayish pale skin and purple hair peeking out. Unlike Cyborg, she showed no emotion, no sense of shock or anger. I scratched the back of my head and looked at the ground. Even without looking at her, her presence was intimidating. It gave me chill bumps.

“Uh-hi, Raven. Long time no see.” I said, mentally slapping myself.

“I'm sorry, but I can't help you.” She said right off the bat. All three of us gasped

“What? You don't even know why we're here. You can't just write us off like that.” I said, putting a hand on the door.

“Wrong. I know why you're here. Slade has taken Tim Drake away from you, much like you took Tim away from his home. As for why I won't help you is because of what the three of you have
done. The three of you are murderers. I've been to hell, and there's a special place waiting for you, Jason Todd.” She said, completely stoic.


“Tim has made his choice when he chose to stay with your group. His fate is completely his fault.” She muttered as her eye closed for a few seconds and reopened.

“No it's not, Raven. It's my fault. It's my fault he's in the situation he's in because I couldn't protect him. He's always trying to stop me from killing people and making me realize there's another way. I'm not going to lie and say I believe that because I don't. There are people in this world that deserve the fate I give them. Tim and I disagree here, but he is always preaching to me and every time he does it, I become more and more human. And if he deserves to die because of that then what's the point of the Teen Titans or the Justice League? Tim is one of the kindest and bravest people I know. And I-I love him. Please reconsider, Raven! I'm begging you!” Throughout my speech I had actually gotten down on my knees with one hand still on the door. For a few seconds, it was silent. Then she spoke.

“You really have changed. You really do love this boy. I can feel it.” She said, putting her hand over mine. I looked up at her.

“How do you know how I really feel?” She looked at me and removed her hand, opening the door all the way.

“I know what everybody feels. She said with a hint of sadness.

“I'll help you, but not for any of you. I'll do it for Tim.” She sighed.

“No one ever goes in my room, but in order for me to assist you, I'll have to allow it. I need to prepare first, though. Just go back downstairs and wait for me to get everything ready. We must act quickly.” She said, turning around and walking into the darkness that shrouded her room. Her dark blue cloak hid most of her body as it was draped around her before almost closing the door in my face. What did she mean by preparing? And how?

“Prepare? Do you need help?” I asked, trying not to rush her, catching the door.

“No. I have to set up the area in order to properly channel my powers. Otherwise, things could get messy.” She said with absolutely no emotion, I swear to God.

“Messy?” I asked again before thinking.

“Look, you want to find Tim, right? Once I locate him telepathically I'm going to teleport the four of us to his location. First I have to find him. Searching the planet for one mind out of billions is not a simple task. Give me about thirty minutes and I should have all the necessary preparations made. She explained after letting out a sigh of annoyance.

“Okay, Raven. I guess we'll wait on the couch downstairs then. And, uh-Raven, thanks.” I mutter just loud enough to be heard and as polite as I could possibly be.

“Don't thank me yet. And Jason,” she said turning to me.

“Don't break anything.” She said, as if I was an immature child before closing her door. I thought it was kind of funny in a way. At least she had agreed to help us. I knew that if Tim could just hang on a little longer, I'd be there.
The morning sun felt so warm, but the brightness was a bit much for me. Laying in the bed awake at this hour is pretty unusual for me. I ain't really a morning person, see. I'd had a long night on a job. Guy almost busted my knee cap with a wrench. Of course, I rewarded him by busting his face in with the butt of my gun. Anyway, I turn over to see my baby bird still asleep on his side. I noticed that he was wearing one of my old t-shirts that was like three times too big for him, exposing his shoulder. He seemed so peaceful and adorable. I couldn't go back to sleep for the life of me. Instead I laid there for a while tracing patterns on Tim's jaw with my thumb, thinking how lucky I was to wake up next to him. When I was with him, I was truly content, at least for a little while. And that's not an easy thing for me. He was beautiful, especially when sleeping. My fingers gently made their way through Tim's already messy hair. Tim finally woke up, rubbing his eyes and then aiming them in my direction with a yawn.
“Good morning.” He yawned, stretching his arms. I couldn't help but grin at the sight of him. He was precious to me in a way that is indescribable.

“It looks good on you.” He stated, leaning up a little, still looking at me looking at him. I didn't understand what he meant.

“What?” I laughed a little. Then he let out a smaller, quieter laugh before answering.

“A smile. It looks good on you.” He said with a smile way more adorable than mine, I promise.

“Shut up, Tim.” I replied, flirting a little by playfully shoving his exposed shoulder.

“I like it when you smile.” He said back, waiting for my face to blush. I tried to fight it, but I lost. So, I proceeded to start a pillow fight with him. It ended with me grabbing him and pulling him close into my chest as he and I both held each other.

“I am never letting you go.” I said into his bed head hairstyle.

“What?” He said.

“I said I'm never letting you go.” I started to say, but my words went mute mid sentence. I could say or hear anything. Then everything turned into a huge blur.

“Jason, I said we have to go. Raven says she's ready. Wake up.” I heard Roy say as he shook my shoulder. My eyes popped open and I realized that I had fallen asleep on the Titan's couch. Since Tim was abducted, I hadn't gotten hardly any sleep in the past twenty-four hours. It was starting to catch up with my ass. That dream felt so real, though. Tim was in my arms and safe. I could feel him. I remember everything so perfectly, and for once it wasn’t a hellish nightmare. I remember thinking that if there was a God, why was he taunting me like this right now? I immediately got up from the couch and Roy, Kory, and I made our way to Raven's room. I got to say, this chick was creepy as hell. When we entered her room we were all taken a bit by surprise. The room was much bigger than I'd expected it to be. There were statues that looked like demonic emissaries, each with two sets of eyes. Some of these stone creatures had horns while others resembled skeletal like beings with not only two sets of eyes, but also a weird symbol resembling an “S”. I was familiar with Raven's past through Starfire. Back when Kory was a Titan, they faced a foe like no other. He is one of the most evil entities in the universe. His name is Trigon. He is an inter-dimensional demon, basically Satan. He is also Raven's dad. I'm still sort of fuzzy on the details, but Starfire fought along side Dick, Cyborg, and Beastboy in order to seal Trigon away forever in the hellish dimension he came from. The walls of her room was covered with bookshelves filled with some of her magic voodoo stuff. I assumed that because I couldn't read a word inscribed on the spines. They were all written in some other language. To my credit, there was barely any light to see.

The only sources of light were four tall candles. They were arranged to where they formed a circle in the center of the room. Within that circle was the witch girl herself, Raven. She was sitting with her legs crossed while floating about three feet off the floor. Beneath her was a giant funny looking star with more symbols circling it. All of it seemed to be formed from some kind of glowing white dust or sand. It doesn't shock me that Raven would know all about demonic forces and stuff, but why keep statues and other creepy stuff around so that they can just remind her of her father? That's what I was thinking as we approached her.

“Because I happen to like the way I decorate.” I heard her say without opening her eyes to look at me. Roy and Kory didn't acknowledge what she said, so I knew that she was reading my thoughts. She was hooded and only some of her pale face was visual. She was giving me goose bumps. This
whole room was creeping the hell out of me.

“I know where Tim is. And I'm afraid the situation is much worse than you think.” She said, this time out loud for all to hear. My eyes widened. I had to ask before I had a stroke.

“Is he dead?!” I asked immediately after she ended her sentence. If he was not alive I don't think I could ever have forgiven myself. “Relax, Tim is very much alive, but killing him is not Slade's goal. Before we teleport to his location, I must tell you what he's planning. Right now, I am connected to Tim's mind. He intends to transfer his mind into Tim's body.” She continued. All three of us were stunned. Why the hell would he do that? How the hell would he do that? What the hell is going on?

“Why would he want to do that?” I asked, interrupting her.

“I was getting to that. Something is wrong with Slade's body and he's on the brink of death, making him more determined and dangerous than ever before. He's no sorcerer. So, he has promised Felix Faust, an evil sorcerer who specializes in ancient Greek magics to help him do this. Faust is conducting a ritual that, if successful, will give Slade just what he wants. Thousands of years ago, Greek rulers would transfer their consciousness from their old decrepit body into a younger one so they could continue to remain King. Eventually. Hades, the Greek deity of the underworld, forbade any and all from recreating the spell. He destroyed the rulers who had ever been through the ritual, only to reclaim their souls on the other side. However, things are not as they were back then. Wonder Woman has trapped Hades in the Greek underworld and destroyed the key when he attempted to over step his bounds.” She said, her deep violent eyes intense. This magic shit was too much.

“We have to stop him.” I added, trying to move this along. I didn't understand everything she was talking about, but I heard the parts involving Tim and I knew that we needed to act quickly.

“Jason, are you sure you are able to fight? The previous wounds you received at the mall are not healed yet.” She asked, looking me in the eye. How did she know about that?

“Don't worry. I'm not 100%, but it'll be enough. If what you just explained to us is true, we don't have time to worry about that right now.” I said, intensely gazing back at her. I knew she could sense my doubt, but she knew I was right.

“Very well. Let us begin.” She said before making weird hand movements and speaking what I assumed to be a spell.
“In virtute Azarath, spatium non aperire in rimanos autem Ianuae!” She pronounced, as everything in the room began to shake. Then there was a great blackness that enveloped us. What happened next is a bit hard to explain. It was like I was being thrust through empty space at the speed of light. I almost lost my lunch. Then suddenly, the blackness faded away and we were on a small and steep island that stood like a tower in the middle of the ocean. Upon arriving I noticed that unlike me, Roy had lost his lunch when he puked. It was some kind of nasty. Raven stepped foot on the ground instead of hovering like before.

“Sorry, some people vomit the first time I teleport them long distances. I should have warned you.” She said.

“That would have been nice. Roy said, spitting afterwards.

“You okay?” I asked him, trying not to be a total prick. After all, they were all here to help me save Tim.

“Yeah, I'm fine dude. Just took me by surprise is all.” He replied. That was a relief. Starfire seemed fine as well.

“Slade, Faust, and Tim are in a chamber beneath us. The ritual has is about to begin. We have to hurry.” Raven said with more emotion in the words than Ever before. She almost sounded like a real concerned person. I put my helmet on. It was go time.

“Let's crash their little party.” I said with great determination and desire. I was not about to let Slade take over Tim's mind and body. That bastard was going to pay with his life.

Tim's Point of View

As I started waking up again, I heard Slade and Faust talking. Apparently, Slade was going to reward Faust for his magical abilities with an Ancient sword that came into Slade's possession over the years. Faust believed that the sword was created by Hephaestus, a Greek deity and that it held Magical properties that would enhance his own abilities. My head was killing me, but it was far from my greatest source of pain. My arm, chest, and abdominal area was heavily bruised. I knew that Slade had cracked at least two of my ribs and had broken my arm. I tried to move my arm, but I couldn't due to the horrible pain. My involuntary shrieking gained the two men's attention. I think Slade was ready to begin the ritual he was talking about.

“It seems our guest is awake, yet again.” Slade said, glancing across the room at me.

“The poor lad would have been better off unconscious.” Faust added. What did he mean? If I couldn't escape on my own, then I needed to give Jason and the others time to find me.

“I have a question.” I said with deep breaths, trying to ignore the chronic pain that accompanied my broken body. I needed medical attention. My back was damp and sore against the stone from all the sweat.

“Why me? Surely, there are other, much better people to choose from.” I asked, stalling. Although, I did raise a good point.

“Ah, yes. Why did I choose you? Part of the reason is that I want revenge from both Batman and the Redhood, for both of them have not been particularly kind towards me. Initially, my goal was to take over your body and then return to Batman. This would allow me to get close to him and render unto him, a killing blow. It would not only destroy him physically, but also psychologically. Imagine Robin, the ironic killer of Batman. Slitting the throat of the caped crusader would be simple if caught off guard.” He said, his face covered. Every word made me want to vomit. He wasn't going to get...
away with this. I would rather die than go along with his plan.

“But now that I know your ties with Jason Todd, it makes my vengeance even more satisfying. Perhaps I'll kill them both. Or rather, you'll kill them both.” He continued, walking toward the stone table. I couldn't help but get angrier with every passing moment.

“Batman would never fall for such a simple, idiotic attempt on his life. He would never die by the lowly likes of you.” I spat, before I felt the sting of his gloved hand against my face. The metal on his glove made it more painful. Blood flew across the stone piece of history. After slapping me his eye narrowed. He cleared his throat before continuing.

“Revenge is not the only reason. You see, you were much easier to capture than someone like Jason Todd or Nightwing. That, combined with your youth is why I chose you, but don't worry. I know that you're deeply attached to Mr. Todd. Now that you're in my grasp you'll never see him again. So, I'll spare you the agony of going on in this life without him.” Slade's silver tongue made me want to kick his masked face in. Then, he took off the glove on his right hand and placed it on the table. Faust began reciting another language from a book he was holding. The five candles on tall, slender rods that surrounded us all ignited at once by themselves. I knew that this must have been the spell to start the ritual. He was invoking an ancient power from thousands of years ago. Frankly, it was hard to believe that stuff until I witnessed it first hand.

“Archaía dynámeis, na synchronései tís týches aftón ton thnitón. metaférete to myaló kai tin psychí tou sto sóma tou. Na, ópos egó tin entolí!” As Faust recited this Greek incantation over and over the symbols on the stone table began to light up and glow a blueish color. I was trying desperately to break the shackle on my arm that wasn't broken, but to no avail. Suddenly, I felt a weird sensation, one that is difficult to describe. My entire body became limp. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't move. I felt like I was weightless. It was like I was under water, sinking. I felt weaker and weaker with every minute. Then my vision became extremely blurry. Moments later all I saw was black, even though I know my eyes were open. I hate magic.

“_It has begun._” I heard Slade say before I passed out, yet again.

_Jason’s Point of View_

Not going to lie. Raven sure knew how to make an entrance. She used her powers to literally scoop the top half of the building off into the ocean. Kory lifted Roy and I out of the way while she did so. Before the smoke could clear beneath us, we descended upon them. I had my guns, helmet, and the rest of my gear. Roy was ready to fire a round of arrows, and Kory’s fists were enveloped in bright green orbs of light.

“Fool! Stop them!” I heard Slade’s shout. He must have been screaming to that Faust guy. I quickly switched my helmet to infrared vision. I could see three heat signals. Two of them were standing and the third was laying down. The latter was Tim. I could tell by the size and stature in comparison to the others. Then all of a sudden, the dust cleared and a transparent, yet pinkish colored hemisphere formed around the three of them. I switched out of infrared mode and instantly began shooting at Faust. My shots did not make it past the weird force field that I’m assuming Faust had created as a defense.

“Take down that force field!” I shouted, before firing more shots. Star shot several star bolts, and Roy fired four or five exploding arrows, but nothing would get break through the damn thing.

“Damn it. How do we get past it?” I asked, openly. Then Raven appeared behind me, hooded.
“You can’t, but there's a good chance I can.” She said, examining the barrier. We could see Faust on the other side laughing.

“You? How amusing. A lowly girl thinks she can break one of my spells? You will perish beneath my feet, mortal!” Faust smirked in response to Raven’s words. Then I realized that Slade was preoccupied with Tim. Tim was unconscious and bruised up worse than before. This infuriated me. I began running toward the barrier without haste or tact. I don’t know what I was thinking. Suddenly, a dark shadow like wall arose from the ground in front of me, bringing me to a halt. Raven stepped out of it.

“Stop. If you touch the barrier’s membrane, you’ll be incinerated. Rushing into battle like that is both careless and reckless.” She said, calmly. I was ready to explode.

“But, Tim-” I started to say when she cut me off.

“I know, Jason. Let me handle the barrier.”

“We have to hurry! Tim is being assimilated!” I screamed, like we didn’t all know it.

“I’m aware, but you have to listen to me. You need to control your temper. I know exactly what you're feeling.” She said, in a serious manner. She was right. I needed to think strategically if I wanted to save Tim. I know that's what he would advise me to do.

"How are you planning on breaking the barrier?" I asked, taking deep breaths.

"Believe me when I say that casting spells requires a high degree of concentration. Right now, Faust’s attention is divided by the ritual spell and the magical barrier he has erected. I am certain that I can break his barrier and then take him out. However, the type of power needed to do this will leave me temporarily incapacitated. After that, it's up to the three of you.” She said walking close to the barrier and removing her hood. In other words, once she takes out the deranged magician she’ll be useless to us for the remainder of the battle.

“I understand.” I replied. That’s when Faust let out a laugh that made me want to rip out his vocal cords.

"Fools! I told all of you. Your mortal efforts are useless. My barrier is impenetrable!” Before I could reply, Raven beat me to it.

"I am no fool nor am I mortal." She said coldly, placing her hands on the barrier's surface. The areas where here hands made contact turned from a bright, glowing pink to her signature black aura. Roy, Kory, and me all took a few steps backward. Suddenly being so close to her gave me a weary feeling deep in my gut. What was she doing? With her palms on the barrier, she recited a spell.

"By the power of Azarath, I beseech thee, Azarath, Metrion, Zinthos!” A black shroud engulfed the entire force field. Then the barrier began to crack and flake. Faust continued to laugh.

"Your pitiful powers cannot compare to mine, child. You're wasting your time!” He taunted. That's when raven's eyes began to glow red instead of white. Then two eyes turned into four, resembling her father, as she continued to tap into what I assumed was her demonic powers to break the barrier. Soon after, it shattered like glass. The pieces of the barrier evaporated once the hit the ground. Raven then hovered over to Faust, black flames exuding from her body. Her eyes were still a demonic red and all four of them were focused on Faust who began to exhibit fear. His cockiness and arrogance
melted away to reveal a scared, brittle man. It was totally pathetic, but I couldn’t really blame him. Raven was scary as hell at that moment.

"Are you afraid? Who’s the fool now?" She asked sinisterly, her voice distorted somewhat. Faust had backed himself into a wall, unable to back away anymore. I could see him sweat. He fell to his knees, knowing that his magic was no match for the daughter of Trigon.

"I can see inside your mind, Felix Faust. I can see you hopes, desires, and your fears. Behold, your own personal hell." Raven said before her hand made an odd gesture. Suddenly an unnatural shadowy portal beneath him. Faust's screams were filled with terror as he quickly sank into the black sludge like pit. Once the shadows engulfed him completely, he was no where to be seen and was silenced. And I thought she was scary before. After which the portal closed and raven fell to her knees. Kory rushed to her side. I wasn’t about to concern myself with whether or not Raven had just killed him or not (for now).

"She is out like the cold." Kory said. I told Kory to look after her for now. It was up to me and Roy to take down the real mastermind. We noticed that Slade was starting to lose his cool. Based on his unusual demeanor, I think the ritual spell Slade was counting on to transfer his mind into Tim’s body was foiled when Raven dealt with Faust. The carvings etched upon the stone table that had previously been glowing were no longer illuminated.

"Alright, Slade. The two-bit magician you hired has failed you. Give up and step away from the kid." Roy said, drawing and aiming an arrow at Slade who was standing beside the table. Slade was breathing heavily, like he was in pain.

"I swear; you cannot find good help these days." Slade said, out of breath. He was trying to maintain his calm and calculating personality, but something wasn’t right. His movements were a tad more sluggish than before. I figured the disease Raven spoke of before was the cause. How convenient. That’s why he was so desperate to find a cure, or some other crazy ass alternative. For a moment, everyone stood still. I wasn’t about to wait for Slade to surrender. His pride would keep him from it, anyway. Besides, I wanted that bastard to regret what he’d done. I rushed over toward Slade and knocked him into a wall with my shoulder. Blood began to leak from the mouth slits in his cracked mask. Then, as he was in the process of standing back up, I stomped my foot down on his shin at a painful angle, snapping his leg. He screamed in both pain and rage.

I took this opportunity to rip apart the rusty chain that bound Tim's left arm to the strange table. His right arm was swollen and bleeding from the elbow down. The sight of it made me cringe. It was most likely broken. That's when Slade half way stood up and pulled out a gun with his left hand and aimed it at me. I immediately turned in an effort to shield Tim's unconscious body, but I didn't hear a shot go off. Instead, Roy had shot an arrow through Slade's trigger hand before he was able to fire his gun. He then yelled in agony and dropped the gun.

"How dare you. You've all signed your death warrants!" He shouted while holding his left hand. He was bleeding profusely. I knew what had to be done. I gently handed Tim over to Kory. Slade's demeanor was much different than before. He wasn't his calm and collected self. I slowly began to walk toward him. Both Raven and Tim were passed out. I didn't want them to see this. Slade drew a sword with his right hand and attempted to stab me with it, but I quickly disarmed him and delivered a knee to his face, shattering his mask. More blood splattered from the blow. His face looked fucking disgusting. His skin had turned and greenish color and his hair was falling out. I took my time beating him until I grew bored. Finally, I was about to put an end to this craziness by getting rid of Slade, permanently. I broke both of his arms and shattered some of his ribs. I even dislocated his jaw.

"This isn't over, you bastard." Slade coughed up, his beaten and diseased face exposed. I was
surprised he could still talk.

"Looks pretty over to me." I said before pulling my gun out and reducing the great assassin to a corpse. After God only knows what he had put Tim through, he deserved it, and much worse. That's when I remembered that Slade had a healing ability. I didn't remember it's limits, but I didn't want to take any chances. By the condition Slade was in, that healing factor of his must have been defective. I still couldn't chance it. Slade was way too dangerous to leave even partially alive. I picked up the sword that Slade had pulled on me moments ago. I held it to Slade's neck and then did what had to be done. Even Slade Wilson, the mighty Deathstroke couldn't survive a decapitation. There are monsters in this world in the form of humans. We are truly a vile, and fucking disgusting species, but there are exceptions. Tim is innocent and kind hearted. If it means protecting those I love, then I'll gladly become the vile monster this world has turned me into.
Jason's Point of View

After killing Slade and thwarting that mad man's plan to transfer his consciousness into Tim's mind through sorcery, I put by brown leather jacket over Tim's body. He was still unconscious, and wearing nothing but underwear and a t shirt. His vitals all checked out, meaning he was alive. Right after I gathered him up in my arms, Cyborg arrived in the Titan's jet. It matched his blue color scheme of his cybernetic enhancements. Cute. Soon after he arrived, Raven began to wake up. I told her that we had won and that we had Tim back. Before I could start rushing everyone to get Tim some medical attention, Raven asked me what happened to Slade. I made a gesture with my thumb to where his corpse was. I thought this bitch was supposed to be psychic. Besides, we were standing in sandy ruins. All the blood and the severed head should have tipped her off. Both Raven and Cyborg took a short glance at what remained of Slade. “You really haven't changed, Todd” Cyborg said in a disheartening manner before removing Tim from my arms and getting in the jet.

“Jason, he was dying anyway. You didn't have to murder him.” Raven said with a creepily raspy tone in her voice. She did have a point, after all. Sure, I didn't have to kill him. I should have just let him live long enough to kill me instead right before he kicked the bucket.

“Then I did him a kindness. He would have suffered from the poison he ingested. I killed him quickly by taking off his head. Believe me, this man was a monster. He deserved way worse for his crimes. I gave him mercy.” I retorted.

“I knew who he was, what he was. His soul was indeed dark, but we never resort to killing. If you and the others can't deal with that, then we shouldn't be working together.” Where we really arguing about this? Oh, and I wasn't finished.

“By the way, what hellish place did you trap that magic bastard in, little ms four eyes? I'm sure he's not suffering at all.” I continued, sarcastically.

“I don't want to be a hero like you guys. I just wanted to save the kid. That's all.” She sighed at my words.

“You're no hero, Jason. You're practically a criminal. The spell I inflicted on Faust was one of great cruelty, but not one that will last more than a few days and will not result in his death.” She responded with zero emotion, as usual. That's her excuse for going all demon-fied and did God knows what to that guy? Not that I cared. I would have killed him too.

“You should know there are worst things than death.” I struggled to say what I was about to say. I had to know.

“Raven, what about my soul? Do you feel darkness in it?” Her eyes widened at my question. Then she regained her expressionless face

“You done horrible things, unforgivable things, but you feel in your heart and mind that because of those deeds, something might happen to Tim.” She replied, peeling back the layers of my deepest fears and desires. I could feel her. We were mentally connected. It was so trippy, like I had just dropped a gallon of LSD.

“That's not what I asked.” I said back, look down at her.
“Your not evil, like Slade was, but your soul is...” she paused

“Shrouded in darkness. There is, however, a speck of light. A sir of hopeful presence deep within your subconscious. That spark of light is Tim.” Then she too turned and made her way to the jet. It was clear that she was only helping me was because of Tim. It's not like she didn't tell me anything I didn't already know. I knew Tim was my anchor. Recently, he has been the only person who truly makes me feel, well, human, like I did before I died. Kory and Roy looked at me with slight grins.

“Thanks, guys. Couldn't have done it without you. And don't Listen to Cyborg and Raven. What we do is brutal, but necessary to the world, whether the world wants to acknowledge it or not. They're just afraid to get their hands dirty; Batman, the league, the Titans. They're all too self righteous.” I said turning away from the two of them. I felt Roy's hand on my shoulder.

“Dude, we do what needs to be done. Besides, we just killed one of the most dangerous assassins on the planet. I'm so not sorry.” He said, trying to cheer me up I guess. Roy is difficult to read at times, but he's my best friend.

“Victory is ours, although Raven seemed displeased.” Star said with a sad confusion on her orange face.

“Relax Star, that's just her face. Plus, you know that she and and the others don't approve of the type of force we use. This was a one time thing, anyway.” I responded. Then we all made our way onto the jet. Destination; Titans Tower.

Tim's Point of View

Beep...beep...beep...

I could hear the monitor beside the bed I was laying in, but I couldn’t remember much. The only things I could recall before passing out were two familiar voices. One was Jason, so I began to relax. I tried to wake up all the way, but I must have been receiving tons of pain meds through the IV that I felt penetrating my arm. I woke up after an unknown amount of time had passed. Before opening my eyes, I heard Jason's voice.

“He's waking up!” Then I saw him, kory, and Roy all standing around the bed I was lying in. I definitely felt like the center of attention. Jason pulled me up into his arms in a tight embrace. I tried to hug him back, but I was in an awkward position and felt weak.

“I thought I almost lost you, Babybird.” He said on the brink of tears. Unfortunately, I was at a loss.

“Can you explain what happened? I remember being taken by Slade and then he tried to use some spell on me. It's all still a fog.” I said after Jason laid me back down onto the bed. That's when I noticed that my right arm was in a cast from a few inches above the elbow down to my hand with only my thumb and fingers exposed. It was kind of funny because there were signatures from Roy, Kory, Cyborg, and even Raven, each signed in a different color. Jason signed his name in red and written in big letters that took up a lot of room. I found it endearing. Also, seeing as how both Raven and Cyborg had signed led me to deduce that I was in one the medical rooms at Titan's Tower. Did the titans help rescue me from Slade? Speaking of whom, where was he? As all my thoughts began to swell in my mind, another familiar face entered the room. Although, maybe familiar was too strong of a word. It was Raven.
“I sensed that you were awake, Tim. I knew it was a matter of time.” She said in a monotone voice and hardly any expression.

“Don't worry, Tim. I'll explain everything that happened on our way to our apartment in Gotham.” Jason said before Raven chimed in.

“Actually, Cyborg and I both feel that he should stay here at the tower, just for a few weeks. Beast boy, Blue Beetle, and the others won't be back for at least another month anyway.” She continued, it was weird hearing her voice after what seemed to be such a long time. I've collaborated on a good number of missions with the titans since I've been Put on the mask, but it's been over a year and a half at least since I'd seen Raven. A few years back I did fight alongside the titans and various other heroes across the globe when the interdenominational demon, Trigon attempted to take the earth. That was one battle I never want to relive. Anyway, why was Raven suggesting I stay here? I was puzzled and by the look on Jason's face, so was he.

“Hi, Raven. Long time no see. Why do you think I should remain here for a while? Is it my injury?” I guessed, scratching my head and looking down at my bad arm. I needed a shower.

“No, and Slade didn't just break your arm. You had three cracked ribs and a mild concussion when we first brought you here. Luckily, I was able to use a few of my healing spells. The only thing I couldn't fully heal was your right arm. The bone in it had been completely shattered.” It started to come back to me. Slade was roughing me up pretty good.

“I'm going to be honest with both of you.” She said folding her arms.

“What? Is there something wrong with Tim that you aren't telling us about?” Jason quickly interjected. If it wasn't my current injuries, what was the reason? I mean, besides the pain, I felt normal. Raven let out a sigh, partially out of annoyance for Jason's undeniable skills in the art of interrupting.

“I don't know, Jason. All I know is that ever since we rescued him from Slade and Faust, I've been sensing something emanating from him, but I can't tell what it is. It gives off an eerie sense of danger.” She explained awkwardly, as if I wasn't even in the room.

“Are you sure he doesn't just need a shower?” Jason smarted off. I know he hated being here and was ready to go. Plus, he's hard to convince when it comes to magic.

“I'm serious Jason. It may just be some residue left from the unfinished spell. Or it maybe something else. A great number of possibilities arise when you consider how much of the dark, Ancient magical energies that Tim was exposed to. Faust wasn't even able to fully interpret this type of magic. I just want to be sure he's okay.” she said, finishing her point. Jason sighed before letting down his defenses and turning to me.

“IT's your call, kid. I'll stay with you if you want.” He said sincerely. I personally didn't understand magic, nor did I even begin to know how to understand it. Raven, however, did. If she sensed that something wasn't right with me I really had no other logical choice but to believe her. I mean, she had no ulterior motive's that I could foresee. From what I could tell, she didn't particularly like having Jason around either. I felt like she was being genuine in her words.

“I think I should stay, Jason. Just for a little while, but you and the others don't have to.” I told him. As much as it pained me to remember Jason's occupation, I was sure that being stuck here would get in the way. He didn't seem upset, though.

“If that's what you want, then I'll stay with you.” He responded, putting his hand on my thigh. I think
he felt bad for everything that happened. I think he felt like he didn't do enough to protect me or something. Anyway, after the decision to stay Raven lead Jason and I to one of the guest rooms. Jason and I settled in, I got a shower, and everything seemed okay again. My arm was broken, but all things considered, I think I lucked out. Kory and Roy chose not to stay so that they could continue their work. They didn't complain when Jason asked them if they could pull off smaller jobs without him. He pulled them aside, but I could hear him whispering to the two of them just outside the guest room.

“Guys, I can't leave him here by himself. You two will have to pull off jobs that require less effort until I return.” Jason whispered. It's funny how this trio operated. Unless all three of them work a mission, something almost always goes wrong. It's weird because Kory can bench press a large vehicle and Roy is clever enough to formulate strategies and plans, yet without Jason they aren't nearly as effective.

“We will do what we must. As should you.” I heard Kory say out loud in response to Jason. Then Roy chimed in.

“Yeah, dude. No worries. Take as much time as you need. If you need us, just call.” He said. Then they began whispering again and I couldn't make out what they said. I was sitting on the edge of the bed, trying not to feel like I wasn't worth all the trouble that everyone was going through. Later that day Roy and Kory said their goodbyes and departed. The room Jason and I were staying in was very nice. One of the walls was a huge window, overseeing the city in front of the Tower. It was really cool. Jason returned to the room as I watched the pink and orange sunset through the glass.

“Where have you been? You just missed the sunset.” I said, sitting on my side of the bed. I noticed that he was carrying a suitcase, which was odd because we were already unpacked.

“Well, I asked Cyborg what could we do for fun here. He told me that Beast Boy's room had tons of cool shit. Since he won't be around for a few more weeks I figured I'd check it out.” He said, harboring a mischievous grin.

“You raided Beast Boy's room?” I asked, thinking we were going to be kicked out sooner than predicted.

“Hey, it's cool. Cyborg basically gave me permission. Plus, we're not stealing or anything, just borrowing.” He defended his actions. I almost collapsed at his logic and disregard for the belongings of others, but in all honesty, I wasn't surprised. His intentions were well and I was hoping Garfield wouldn't mind.

“I found video games, movies, and something else that I thought you'd like.” He said as he unzipped the suitcase and emptied its contents on the bed. The was the newest play station with tons of games, several horror movies, tons of comedy films, and lastly Jason pulled out an old box and handed it to me. I hesitated before accepting. After opening it, I saw that the box was jam packed full of Yugioh cards, a card game that I used to be quite fond of as a child.

“I figured a nerd like you would love those.” Jason laughed, as if he didn't know who the Dark Magician was. I had to admit that the cards were really cool, even if they were merely food for my nostalgia. Beast boy had collected hundreds of them. He didn't take very good care of them, though. After going through them, Jason suggested we tried playing the game. Oddly enough, he knew the rules almost as well as me. We picked 40 cards each to form a deck and began the game. After about fifteen minutes, we really got into it.

“And now I activate my face down card, Sage's Stone, allowing my Dark magician from my deck to
join my dark magician girl on the field. Then I play black magic ritual and I sacrifice my dark magician from the field, and the harpie lady from my hand in order to summon the Magician of black chaos.” I said, reliving a bright piece of my childhood, and a holographic card.

“So what? He's only got 2800 attack points. My blue eyes white dragon will demolish him.” Jason smirked. I continued with my turn.

“Now I play the magic card, axe of despair, increasing my magician of black chaos's attack points by 1000. Now he's strong enough to take down your blue eyes white dragon. I attack with him.” This left Jason with only 2200 life points left.

“You still don't have enough attack power to beat me this turn.” He said, anxiously. Jason was super competitive at everything. He was waiting for me to end my turn so he could go. Unfortunately, I was in fact about to win the game.

“Actually, thanks to Dark Magician Girl's special effect, she does have enough attack power to wipe out the rest of your life points with a direct attack. She gains 300 additional attack points for every dark magician in my grave yard, and I count one. This gives her a total for 2300 points, with which I'll attack you directly and you lose.” I said, egging him on.

“Man, one more turn and I could have revived my dragon and destroyed the axe of despair. Shit.” He cursed. I laughed a little as he pouted.
"Oh is that funny, mister 'king of games'?" He asked before tackling me onto the bed, careful not to hurt my arm. I tried to wrestle back, but he was too strong as usual. He then did the unforgivable. He tickled me in the area of my abdomen. I was almost crying.

"This means war." I said, each word between chuckles. He finally stopped and I was able to catch my breath. I leaned on him while I did so, my face buried in his shoulder. He began rubbing my back, making me relax. Then I begin to get sleepy and yawn.

"Alright, you got meds to take before bed, kid." He said, reaching over to the bedside table. He gave me three pills and got me a glass of water. I was out like a light. I remember trying to stay awake, but it was in vain.

______________________________________________________________________________

I woke up and noticed the lack of warmth beside me. I opened my eyes to see that I was alone in the bed. The clock on the nightstand read 1:07 am. I tried to go back to sleep, but I couldn't. I got up and went to the bathroom. After relieving myself, I looked in the mirror while washing my hands. I noticed that I wasn't wearing a shirt, just some green pajama bottoms and my cast. It was odd because that's not what I fell asleep in. I was wearing a pair of boxers and one of Jason's giant old T-shirts. I noticed several bruises on my abdomen and back. Then I heard something. It sounded like footsteps. It had to be Jason walking past the bathroom. I opened the door and stepped out into a dark hallway to reveal no one. It was creepy as hell. I hurried back to the bed, which was still missing Jason.

"Tim." I heard someone say in my ear. I quickly turned around and no one was there. Something wasn't right. I just dismissed it and got under the covers. Suddenly, I heard someone breathing. It was like someone was standing over the bed just watching me. I knew my mind had to be playing tricks on me, but I uncovered my head and opened my eyes. The results were quite different than before, for there was someone standing there. I could only see an outline of a body and partial coloring due to the moonlight that entered through the giant wall like window. It scared the shit out of me.

"Jason, what the hell?" I asked, thinking it had to be Jason playing a prank.

"I'm not Jason, dear boy." The person standing next to the bed said in an all too familiar voice. Before I could say or do anything, my heart rate rose out of control and I began to sweat. The man grabbed me by the throat with one hand and pulled me from the bed. I tried to fight back, but he was wearing armor and a metallic mask. While one hand held me two feet off the floor, the other punched me in the stomach. I tasted blood. I tried to call out Jason's name, but I couldn't breathe. My lungs began to burn up.

"No one is going to save you this time. You are feeble, just like the others." The man said, before pointing to a corner of the room. It was dark, but I could make out what he meant by "others." My eyes widened at the shadowy sight of a pile of bodies with several swords protruding from them. The were the bodies of Raven, Roy, Starfire, and Jason. The man then tossed my beaten body to the wayside. I hit the floor hard. My entire body was hurting, but I landed on my broken arm, cracking the cast and causing me to yell out in pain. That's when he got on top of me and began strangling me, both his thumbs crushing my throat.

All of a sudden, I could hear Jason's voice screaming at me. In that moment I noticed that I was in Jason's hold. His arms were squeezing me tight. I was drenched in sweat and tears were pouring down my face at an uncontrollable rate.
“Jason? What's going on?” I asked, my voice nearly horse.

“Are you finally awake, kid? Shit. You nearly gave me a heart attack.” He said, loosening his grip on me. I began rambling mercilessly.

“What is going on? You and Roy and all the others were dead and then he was trying to kill me next. I couldn't breathe, and he kept on beating the shit out of me—” I went on hysterically before Jason injected.

“WHOA. Calm down, Tim. It's okay. It was just a nightmare. I need you to take deep breaths.” he said, after which I got more hysterical. I wrapped my arms around him and couldn't stop rambling and crying.

“You were dead. He killed all of you just to get to me. I'm so sorry.” I cried.

“Tim, it was a nightmare. Do you understand? I'm fine. My heart's still beating and everything. Deep breaths. Tell me who was the guy in your dream was.” He said, pointing to his chest. That dream seemed just as real as anything. After taking his advice, I began to calm down.

“I'm sorry, Jason. I'm probably just over reacting. I'll be okay.” I sighed, rubbing my eyes. I wasn't really over it, but Jason was right. It was only a nightmare. When you've seen the things we've seen, it's really not abnormal to have nightmares. However, this one was different. I could feel the pain of being strangled by the man. I could feel the loss in my heart when I saw Jason's body as well as the others. It seemed all too real.

“It ain't nothing. You were having a panic attack in your sleep. Before you came to, you were freaking out for like 10 minutes straight. And here.” Jason said handing my a box of tissues. I didn't think it was that serious. Then Jason plucked a few tissues from the box and wiped my nose. I didn't know what he was doing at first. Then he showed me the blood on the tissue and raised an eyebrow. I didn't even notice that my nose had bled so much. I looked down to see that there were blood stains running down my shirt.

“This ain't normal, even by our standards. Just talk to me, Babybird. Who was the man in your dream?” He asked again. I hesitated to answer. My body shook when I began to speak.

“Slade.” I mumbled, barely loud enough for him to hear me. His expression showed that he was more concerned than two seconds ago.

“What time is it anyway?” I yawned, looking over at the clock by the bed. It read 1:07 am, which was the same time in my dream.

“C'mon, we're going to get Raven. If something is up with you, she's the best chance we have at finding some answers.” He said, getting out of bed and putting on more clothes before grabbing me by my arm and dragging me from the room.

“Jason, it's one am. Raven is probably asleep by now. Can't this wait until morning?” I asked, trying not to cause anymore trouble than I already have.

“No way. That's the whole reason we're staying here, remember?” He had a point, but still. As we made our way down the hall and to Raven's room, my body wouldn't listen to me. My hands were shaking. I was breathing quickly with short breaths. My heart was still pounding out of control. When we arrived at Raven's door I could still hear the voice of that mad man. Jason rose his fist to knock, but the door opened before he could actually knock.
“What's wrong?” Raven asked, standing in the doorway with nothing but pitch black behind her. What was she still doing up?

“It's Tim. By the way, sorry to wake you.” He said, like I wasn't standing right the next to him.

“I don't sleep. As for Tim, meet me down in the medical ward in five minutes.” She said, creepily before disappearing back into the darkness of her room and shutting the door. We did as she said. When she arrived, she had me lay on a bed and preformed many small tests like checking my pulse, blood pressure, and brain activity. I could see the results on a screen in front of me. My blood pressure was 187/134. I felt like I might explode at any moment.

“Tim, you need to calm down. Your blood pressure and brain activity is off the charts.” She said, with the first hint of emotion I've ever heard from her. I was still shaken up from the nightmare about Slade. I couldn't describe how real it felt. Raven then walked over to my bedside and placed her hand on my four head. I began to turn red simply because I don't really like other people touching me. Jason is the only exception.

“Relax, Tim. I'm going to help calm your mind.” She said as her eyes began to glow white. Suddenly, I could feel my body beginning to settle down. My breathing went back to normal. My heart rate also returned to normal, as well as my blood pressure. I began falling asleep involuntary. I tried to stop it, but it was inevitable.

*Jason's Point of View*

Tim totally passed the fuck out after Raven did her thing. I saw that all his vitals had returned to normal so I wasn't about to get in her way. The question is what kind of nightmare did he have? He mentioned something about Slade killing me in this dream. I can understand him having nightmares after what just happened. We all do, but when I have a nightmare, I get all sweaty and wake up punching something. Then I have a smoke and try to go back to sleep. A bad dream has never made my blood pressure fly through the roof like Tim's just did. Most people can't survive under that kind of stress. What the hell was going on?

“Okay, I used my telepathic abilities to calm his mind and block anymore nightmares for the rest of his nap. I also scanned his mind to experience the dream, through his eyes. It wasn't pretty. In the dream Slade was alive and stalking Tim. He killed you, me, and a handful of others before strangling Tim. That's all I was able to see. There's still something I'm missing.” She said looking down with a puzzled look.

“Thanks, Ray. Could this be some form of PTSD?” I asked.

“It's difficult to say. I think there are other forces at work here that have yet to reveal themselves. You see, ever since we saved Tim from Slade, I've sensed something off about Tim. It's like his soul is slowly being defiled and I don't understand what's causing it. What I do know is that before I calmed him down, that dark presence I sensed within Tim has grown stronger.” She explained. I hated magic. Hated the fuck out of it.

“So, what can we do?” I asked, feeling more than useless.

“We'll have to wait for this disturbance to resurface. Only then, can I know what we are truly dealing with, here.” She said, her words infused with despair, mostly at my expense. I sighed. This was really starting to get to me. I was afraid for Tim to go back to sleep.
“I'm going to take him to our room. I think he'll be more comfortable there.” I said, gathering Tim up in my arms. Raven made him chill as hell. I was trying not to wake him, by there was really no need.

“Very well. Goodnight, Jason.” She said as I headed out the door with Tim in my arms, careful not to hit his cast on anything. When we got back to our room I placed Tim in bed and covered him up. He didn't make a sound. I called Roy and told him about what had happened. I asked him if he'd and Kory could return. The thing was that I wasn't sure if I could protect Tim alone. Roy told me that Kory was pissed off at him right now and flew off after ripping a door off its hinges at the nearby hotel they were staying in. He said that he could be at the tower in 15 minutes if I needed him. He neglected to tell me what he did to piss off Kory or where she may have gone. Anyway, it was now 1:45 am. I got in bed with Tim and tried to catch some sleep, myself.

The sound of my cellphone ringing woke me up, just barely. I looked on my phone and I just missed the call. I noticed it was 3:47 AM and four other missed calls, all from Tim. I was still half asleep so I wasn't able to be shocked yet. Half a second later, the phone lit up and rang once again, waking me up more. I answered and heard someone breathing intensely and what sounded like whimpering. The part that made me jolt out of bed was that it sounded like Tim. What the fuck? I noticed that he wasn't laying next to me like usual.

“Tim, where the hell are you?” I practically shouted into the phone, fully awake.

“Jason, help me. I don't know where I am or how I got here.” He said quietly sniffling. I could tell the kid was scared as hell. I've seen Tim go through a lot of shit that normal people couldn't even think about surviving through, let alone retaining their sanity afterwards. I've never heard Tim sound as frightened and rattled as he sounded at that moment.

“I think I'm bleeding, and I don't know where I am. I don't have any gear with me. Please find me.” He whispered with more tears and fear in his voice. My fists clenched. It sounded like he was having a panic attack.

“Okay, Tim. Calm down. Calm down. Describe what you see. Are you in a room? Where are you bleeding from?” I asked, hastily trying to get as much information as possible. I quickly set my phone to record the call, before I started getting dressed.

“Alright! Alright! I'm somewhere in the woods. It's dark and there's trees everywhere. I woke up on the ground. My head is killing me. I can't stop bleeding from my nose. What's happening, Jason? Can you find me?” He went on hysterically. I pulled up his location with his transmitter. He was not too far, 3.2 miles east in some woods that surrounded Jump City. I immediately called Roy on our communicators and sent him Tim's location.

“I have your location Tim, don't move. I'm coming to pick you up. Calm down, and stay on the phone with me, babybird.” I said, trying to reassured him that everything was going to be okay soon.

“Jason, Something's wrong. Someone else is here.” He replied, with deep breaths in between every other word. Who the fuck could be behind this?

“Who? Can you tell who it is?” I asked as I made my way down to the lowest level of Titan's Tower. The weather was not on my side. Heavy rain fell and lightening cracked.

“It's Slade. He's trying to find me.” He whimpered into my ear. How was that possible? I saw him die. Whether it was Slade or not, I had to find Tim and stop this guy. I (for lack of a better word) appropriated one of the vehicles available. I wired Dick's old Mustang and headed toward Tim's
location. I think the phone was knocked from Tim's grasp as all I could hear were his cries of pain. It was like someone was beating the crap out of him. I couldn't bare to listen, but I had to. I didn't hear any other voices besides Tim's, begging "Slade" to stop. Then whoever the aslant was must have crushed the phone. I heard a loud crunch sound before the call hung up. At this point, I was only a few miles from Tim's location. All I could hear was the hellish rain and the revs of the engine going as fast as possible. Roy arrived on a motorcycle a few seconds after me. Just outside of a children's park there were a few trees that lead into a brush of woods. We had to go by foot from there. I wasn't wearing my helmet, but that was my least concern at the moment. I didn't want to scare him even more than he already was. Roy and I followed the signal further into the woods with nothing but two small flash lights we had. The rain had begun to let up a bit.

"You don't think-" Roy started, but I interrupted him. I knew what he was going to suggest and I didn't need to hear that at this moment.

"No Arrow, I don't think that. I know Tim is alive and we're going to save him." I said sternly. He nodded and followed, an arrow drawn in the unlikely event that we were to encounter "Slade."

After about three minutes of searching I saw an odd looking oak tree. Beneath it was a boy with dark hair. He was laying up against the trunk of the tree, unconscious. A few feet away I noticed that his phone. It was damaged from all the rain. Tim looked like he had just taken a beating. He was covered in scratches and bruises. His (my) old shirt he wore had several tares in it. He usually only wore this shirt to sleep in. The shirt, along with a pair of pajama bottoms were all he was wearing. He didn't even have shoes. A trail of dried blood came from his nose, but he didn't have any facial wounds. Why was he bleeding from his nose again, and how did he get here? He still had his cast on, but it was dirty and all the signatures were smeared. The cast itself was all but shattered. What kind of coward could have done this? I heard him say it was Slade, but it couldn't be. I scooped him up and checked his vitals. They all checked out. I wrapped him up in a blanket Roy found in Dick’s car. We laid him down in the back seat and got him back to Titan’s Tower. On the way back, I kept thinking that maybe I’d not been taking this whole situation seriously enough. There was something wrong with Tim beyond the bruises. Who knows what else Slade could have done to him. All this magic shit was really getting to me. I couldn't understand it, and that really made me fear for Tim. When we arrived back at Titan's Tower, Raven was already standing at the front door.

"I sensed a disturbance. What happened?” She asked as we approached. Tim was in my arms still partially wrapped up in the blanket.

"To be honest, I'm not really sure. Tim and I went to bed. Next thing I know my phone wakes me up and Tim is gone. He called and said that Slade was attacking him. Then Roy and I tracked his location and found him like this.” I answered, stepping past her as we entered the tower. Raven, the teen Titan who hardly ever shows any emotion was thrown for a loop after hearing what I just said. I could see her eyes widen.

Once again, we put him in one of the med rooms. Roy went to sleep on the Titan's couch. I knew he was tired and I might need him if some other weird shit happens again. There was also a sink and counter in the med room we were in. I thought Tim needed to get cleaned up some and get some new clothes on. I gently placed Tim down on the counter and let him lean on me for support. His chin was propped on my shoulder while I got a rag from one of the cabinets and turned the water on, waiting for it to get warm. That's when Tim started to come to. His eyes were bloodshot.

"Jason? Where are we?” He asked quietly, starting to sit up on his own. His voice sounded pitiful
“Titan’s Tower. Roy and I found you unconscious in the woods. Do you remember anything?” I asked him while carefully removing his shirt. There were more scrapes and bruises on his chest, abdomen, and back. Damn. What the hell happened?

“I remember having a nightmare. Then—” he paused and became extremely tense before freaking out erratically. I dropped the rag in the sink and grabbed him and held him close, restraining his movements so he wouldn’t hurt himself even more.

“Slade! He was in the woods. He followed us. He's after me! He said he wouldn't stop!” He shouted as loud as he could while I continued to hold him to my chest. I could feel his heart race faster than ever. His finger nails dug into my arm, almost breaking the skin. If he didn’t keep his nails clean and short they would have. I've never seen Tim act like this.

“Tim, calm down! I'm here! It's okay! You are okay! Everything is okay! I'm not going to let Slade hurt you again, Babybird.” I said, trying to calm him down. With every word he began to settle down. I think the sound of the running water helped to calm him. His body would still twitch from the shock, but for the most part he stopped struggling. Finally, he was able to relax after I made him take several deep breaths. I slowly released him and he sat there without support, fighting back tears. I picked up the rag and let it soak up warm water before I started cleaning him with it.

“You know, I can do this myself, Jason.” He looked up at me. He and I shared one strong character trait that I think was instilled in us while watching Batman. We both hated being helped and feeling helpless, but Tim really did need help at this point, possibly more than just mine.

“I know you can, but I'm not leaving you alone. Just let me help you, kid.” I said, rubbing the blood, tears, and mud from his face. He avoided eye contact and his cheeks were blushing. I washed his neck, chest, stomach, arms, legs, and back. I know he liked it when I used the warm rag on his bruise written back. He just laid his head on my shoulder as I got all the mud off. Then I doctored his wounds and put several bandages on them. I helped him into the bed after giving him a change of boxers. Although, I would've done it for him if he wasn't so stubborn, and he knew it. Raven then entered and helped me attach him to all the monitors and put in an IV. I pulled up a chair and sat beside the bed. Finally, Tim fell asleep. I still felt uneasy.

“I think I'm going to try to read his mind to see what happened. Something isn't right with him. The disturbance I sensed is still there, just faint..” She said, placing a hand on Tim's forehead. What did all that mean? Was he cursed or something? I was on the verge of losing it, myself when she said all that.

“By the power of Azarath, I beseech thee, Azarath Metrion Zinthos.” She recited, calmly and quietly. Then her eyes began to glow white again. After a few moments she gasped.

“No.” She took her hand from Tim's forehead, and slowly backed away.

“What did you see?” I quickly asked. She looked a bit shaken up. She then put her hand on my forehead.

“I'll show you.” She replied as her eyes began to glow yet again. What happened next was trippy as hell. She was actually projecting what happened from Tim’s perspective.
I woke up again after Raven sort forced me into unconsciousness. Jason must have taken me back to the room. I looked over and let out a sigh of relief as I saw Jason asleep beside me. I had this annoying headache I couldn't shake. After trying to fall back asleep several minutes I got up and went to the bathroom that was included with the room, unlike in the hellish nightmare I had. I relived myself and proceeded to wash my hands. Suddenly, I heard an echo of a voice, but I couldn't make out what it was saying. The voice then multiplied into many from all around me. Then the voices stopped abruptly. I noticed that my nose was bleeding again.

“Damn it.” I cursed before wiping the blood away with some toilet paper. I decided to just go back to bed after it stopped bleeding. I was inches away from the bed when my nightmare was realized before my eyes as a familiar masked figure stepped out of the shadows. I couldn't speak. I couldn't move. My body failed to listen to me. One thing was certain. This was no dream.

“Hello, Tim. You have something I need.” Slade said calmly, before taking another step towards me. I finally regained control and almost shouted for Jason to wake up, but then Slade appeared directly in front of me. I could hear him breathing through the mask. How did he get past me so quickly?

“Uh uh uh...I'm afraid your fighting me alone, kiddo. Wouldn't want a misfortune to befall the Red Hood while he's sleeping, would we?” He said, taunting me. That coward. I heard Jason say he killed Slade. I didn't ask him to go into details about how, but whatever he did obviously was not enough to overcome Slade's healing abilities. He then shoved me away from the bed and away from Jason, but not before I grabbed the cell phone Jason bought me from the nightstand. I got up off the floor and ran out of the room and into the dimly lit hallway in an attempt to lure Slade away from Jason. Slade pursued me, taking the bait. I was surprised Slade didn't kill Jason when he was sleeping. It would have been easy, and for that matter, how did he get into the tower? Cyborg's security system is state of the art technology. I made it to the elevator. I was about to call Jason so he could alert everyone else. I missed my chance. When the elevator door opened there stood the masked intruder.

“Going somewhere?” He asked, stepping out of the elevator and towards me.

“How did you get in here?” I replied, trying not to sound scared to death.

“Child, I am a master assassin. I thought you were supposed to be the bat's smart Robin.” He said before I made a b-line for the stairs through the door further down the hallway. I was in such a rush that I tripped running down the last flight of stairs. Pain shot through my arm at an uncontrollable pace. The cast was still intact. I could tell that I had gained a few more scrapes and bruises. I had to keep moving. As I shakily rose to my feet, I heard footsteps walking down the stairs that almost just killed me.

“Watch your step.” Slade said, his one eye looking down at me.

“Slade, why didn't you kill Jason when you had the chance? You're a lot of things, but honorable isn't one of them. What are you scheming?” I asked, glancing up, holding my throbbing arm, and breathing heavily.

“Simple. Before I kill that man, I want to see him suffer. Harming you is a good start.” He answered, like the psychopath he is. I decided to turn around and kept running towards the main entrance of Titans Tower. I knew that once I opened the door the alarms would go off. Unfortunately, no sirens went off. No lights flashed. That's when I realized that the alarms must only be set to go off if an
intruder breaks in, not when a comrade steps out. How could I be so stupid?

“Shit.” I muttered under my breath when nothing happened. On top of that, it was raining. This didn't help.

“Time is running out, Tim.” Slade startled me yet again by sneaking up behind me and talking in my ear. My eyes widened.

“You owe me something, and I will get what I deserve.” He continued as I jumped back from him, trying to create some distance from him. How was he moving so fast? And how did he get out of the tower without me noticing? Something wasn't right. Now he was blocking the door so I couldn't set off the alarm from the outside.

“Why do you flee from me? Keeping your distance from the enemy is only effective when your opponent's speed, skill, and technique are less or equal to your own, but I'm afraid that strategy is pointless with me.” He continued to say, before suddenly appearing less than 6 centimeters in front of me. It was impossible. Then he grabbed me by the throat and tossed me into a stone support beam. I was in a considerable amount of pain, but I had to get away. If I didn't this psycho was going to kill me.

“You've something I require, Tim.” Slade said, reiterating himself and taking another step closer. How was this happening? He was dead. Even if Jason failed to kill him, he was never this fast. I didn't understand.

“You can't be real. What the hell are you!?” I screamed, over the sound of the pouring rain, hoping someone in the tower might hear me as well.

“Oh, I'm very real. As for what I am...I am the thing that keeps you up at night, the evil that haunts every dark corner of your mind. As long as you live I will never rest, and neither will you.” Slade answered, before getting in my face. I instantly attempted to lunge out with a kick to the face. I succeeded. I then began throwing a barrage of kicks and punches. I even used my bad arm, working through the pain. Every blow struck Slade and even knocked him backwards. I shouted as I reluctantly delivered a fatal kick to his head. I heard Slade's neck snapped and his body fell to the ground like a rag doll. Was it over? No. My victory is short lived, as Slade creepily got back up and creepily popped he neck back into place. It was like an old scene from a zombie movie.

“It's my turn.” Slade said as he began walking towards me yet again. I felt completely helpless. I took off running away from Titans' Tower and into town, as the moonlight befell me. I suddenly lost track of time as I ran. Still, it didn't matter how far I ran. Slade was always one step ahead. I began to slow down and catch my breath when I thought I'd momentarily lost him.
Then I heard something and I looked above me, through the rain. Slade had jumped from the roof of
the small building beside me and was ambushing me from above. I jumped out of the way and into
the street to avoid his punch, which struck a crackling dent in the cement in my place. How was he
this strong? That's when I heard something else and I saw an overwhelming light. I turned around to
see that I was in the path of a moving car. I jumped in the air and tried my best to avoid it, but it
didn't work. I'm not exactly sure what happened there. The car veered to the left and I tried to jump out of the way at the same time. As a result, I was now on the hard ground as the rain continued to fall. I was shaking as I attempted to rise to my feet. I knew Slade was still lurking about. I held my side and coughed up some blood. Parts of my clothes were ripped. The left rear view mirror of the car had broken off and was shattered on the ground near me. The cast on my arm was cracked significantly, but somehow didn't shatter. My sight was getting blurry. I almost lost consciousness, but then the sight of Slade walking towards me woke me up. I instantly started running (mostly limping) in the opposite direction. My entire body ached. I made my way into an old park beside the woods. As predicted, Slade appeared once again. Why was he after me? Surely he didn't need a new body. He was in better condition than I was. It was dark and I was cold, in pain, and utterly terrified. I turned around and made a b-line for the woods beside the park.

“You can run as far as you like, but you will never escape my grasp.” I heard Slade say calmly, with the rain. At this point, I noticed that my cellphone was in my pocket the whole time. I immediately hid behind a giant oak and dialed Jason's number until he answered.
Jason's point of view

“Whoa! Shit!” I muttered as I my gaze was pulled from Tim's perspective back to the present reality.

“Tell me, does every other word you say have to be a curse word?” Raven asked, sarcastically.

Raven telepathically projected Tim's memories into my mind. It was pretty dope, but at the same time it was like I just did a shit ton of acid. I was sitting next to Tim's bed in the titan’s medical ward. Raven was standing net to me. So, Tim really was seeing Slade. Not only was he seeing him, but he was fighting him. That was impossible. I killed that one eyed bastard, myself.

“Hey Raven, how is it possible that Slade is still alive and able to torture Tim like this?” I asked, looking in her direction. Her pale face and dark eyes held the expression known as fear. She seemed hesitant to answer.

“Jason, it seems that we were seconds too late when we saved Tim. I fear that the ritual Faust was preforming began the transference of Slade's sentience. In other words, a fragment of Slade's mind, his consciousness, was embedded into Tim's mind.” She explained. All this magic mumbo jumbo was pissing me the fuck off. I sighed and rubbed the bridge of my nose.

“Ray, that's impossible.” I reacted, with a hint of anger in my voice. She sighed in response to my skepticism.

“Based on what I just showed you, we can assume that Slade is not a some sort of illusion or someone using a cloaking device to fight Tim. We can also assume that Tim's sanity is still intact for now. He didn't inflict those injuries upon himself. If this stress on his mind continues, he's likely to have an aneurysm or worse. If we can't undo what's been down there will be permanent damage to his mind.” She said, walking into another nearby room. This room had computers and high tech tracking and communications gear out the ass. In front of us stood a huge monitor. Raven pulled up an archive containing specific information about the particular spell Faust used on Tim and Slade.

There were images of Ancient Greek symbols that I recognized from that old stone table Tim was chained to before we saved him.

“I knew that I sensed something within Tim, something very dark and very powerful. I just couldn't put my finger on it.” She says with her arms crossed.

“Can't you just scan his mind or whatever, and get rid of the part of Slade that lives inside?” I asked, impulsively.

“I could, but it's more complicated than you think. If I can't isolate the fragment of Slade's consciousness, I could accidentally telepathically damage Tim's mind. Biologically, Tim shouldn't be able to survive this type of stress. This isn't a trivial game of operation. This runs much deeper than you realize.” She said, her finger stabbing my chest.

“I'm sorry, I'm just worried about Tim. If I could have protected him from Slade, this never would have happened in the first place.” I confessed, taking a few steps back from her and looking to the floor.

“I'll have to do more research on
the type of sorcery that was used before I can do anything. There might be another way.” She said, her back to me as she stared at the symbols on the monitor.

“So, What are we supposed to do in the meantime?” I asked, trying not to distract or annoy her.

“Until I can find a way to expel Slade from Tim's mind, there is very little we can do.” She said, typing into the keyboard under the giant monitor.

“How right you are.” said a voice from behind us. Raven and I turned around to see the speaker. That's when it happened. Out of nowhere, a fist was hurled at Raven. The side of her head slammed into the monitor, creating a huge, shattered dent into the screen, and knocking her unconscious. It all happened so quickly that I couldn't react, especially when I laid eyes on the culprit. It was Tim. He must have woken up and gotten out of the bed, but what the hell was this about? A small trial of blood trickled from his nose. His pupils were dilated, and his complexion was much paler than usual. I looked down in awe as a knife had just been thrust into my side, just below my ribcage. An insidious look befell Tim's face when he quickly extracted the blade.
I growled and tensed up as a result. I was beginning to shake and sweat. I recognized the knife to be one of my own. He must have taken it. I took a few steps backward, taking several deep breaths, and slowly slid down the wall, leaving a bloody trail behind. Tim's expression was cold and cruel.

“What the hell are you doing, Tim?” I spat, looking up at his face, pushing through the pain. I tried to hold my hand over the wound, but it continued to bleed out. Tim took two steps forward. He must have quickly changed clothes while Raven and I were talking. He was now wearing an old pair of ripped jeans, one of my old T-shirts, and a red hoodie.

“Tim? Tim is no longer here. It seems that I have seized control of this body for the time being. As of this moment, two minds inhabit this vessel, but as I said, Tim is no longer in control.” He spoke with a deeper, and darker pitch in his voice. His expression was calm and menacing. I knew who I was
talking to, and he was right. It wasn't Tim.

“Slade.” I exhaled under my breath, just loud enough for him to hear me. The taste of blood filled my mouth.

“Aren't you the perceptive one?” He replied with a tiny smirk, making me angrier. Even in death, this man won't fuck off.

“But how? We stopped Faust, so how can you be in Tim's body?” I demanded answers. Tim, or Slade rather, began twirling the bloody knife between his fingers.

“Ah, yes. You and your little team ruined my plan to transfer my mind into Tim's body. However, I'm guessing that the spell was still effective to a degree as a small part of my mind seems to reside within young Tim's subconsciousness. This is still a guess, mind you. Magic is so weird. Wouldn't you agree? I'm almost equally as confused as you are, not that I'm complaining.” He replied, glancing down at his blood soaked hands as if they were a new set of tools or weapons.

“Slade, you bastard.” I struggled to say as I bled out. My vision was getting blurry and I was getting light headed. That stab wound was deep, deeper than any other stab wound I'd ever had, which is saying something.

“How ironic. The very person you care about most is about to end your life. In a way, you and I are both resurrections of our former selves. Is that not so? Fear not, Jason. I'm merely returning the favor.” He sneered with an evil smirk as he looked down at me. His grip reversed the blade, pointing downward in the locked fist position. I was its target.
“Damn it.” I muttered, while struggling to stay conscious. There wasn't a way out of this. Just as the blade began to fall, it became enveloped in a shadowy glow and flew from his hand and into the wall. His eyes widened when he saw that Raven had woken up. Blood fell down her face as her eyes filled with a chilling white glow.
“My, it seems we will have to continue this reunion another time.” He said slowly backing away. 

“Raven... don't let... getting away... Slade.” I said between deep breaths in a small pool of blood. I was trying to tell her not to let him get away, but my body was giving out. Then my vision became a complete blur as I passed out from blood loss.

“Jason...”

“Jason...”

“Jason, you need to wake up.” I heard Raven's voice as I came to, her words echoed in my head. Finally, I forced my eyes open to see her face.
“Jason, can you hear me?” She asked, standing next to me. I discovered that I was in one of the medical beds that we put Tim in. That's when my memory became clear. I suddenly remembered Tim's cruel smile before stabbing me. He had become a puppet of Slade's will. I immediately snapped out of my groggy state.

“Raven! Where is he? Where's Tim?” I asked, before noticing Roy standing next to her. I also noticed that my shirt was off. My right hand immediately searched for the stab wound, but it wasn't there. It was like It never happened. “I couldn't go after Tim because I was too busy trying to save you.” Raven said, looking at me as if she thought I was disappointed in her.

“What?” I asked, my feet hitting the floor before I got up out of the bed. Roy stepped forward.

“Hey man, I heard a loud banging noise so I hurried to you guys when Tim ran right passed me. I asked him what was going on and he told me that you and Raven needed my help. I had no idea that Tim wasn't really, uh, Tim.” He said with the scowl of failure etched on his freckled face.

“He helped me get you onto the bed and stopped the bleeding from your wound long enough for me to heal it completely. Then we learned that Tim had left the tower.” She added.

“Raven, the feeling you had about Tim. It's gotten worse. Hasn't it?” I asked, clinching both my fists.

“It seems that somehow, Slade's consciousness has over come Tim's and taken over his body completely. I'm not sure how much more Tim's mind can handle. Like I said before, he is likely to have an aneurism or something. The constant stress on his brain is destroying his body. I'm not sure if Slade knows this. Either way, Tim doesn't have long.” Raven said, before she was interrupted by the phone in the blood stained pocket of my jeans. It sounded like I got a text. It was Tim's number that was texting me. The text read:

“The roof top of the old power plant near Wayne Tech and Research down town. Meet me there in a half hour. Confront me or people will die.”

I showed the text to everyone and we all got ready for another fight. I didn't feel right prepping for this confrontation. It was still, after all, Tim. We were going to have to be smarter when fighting. I had to be smarter. I couldn't just go in shooting this time. The plan was to capture and restrain him so that Raven could find a way to expel Slade from Tim. I hoped with all my might that she could save Tim. God knew I couldn't. Not at this point. At least, not alone. As I held my red helmet in front of me, I looked at it thinking about what Tim was trying to tell me. I killed Slade, and now he was threatening any chance I would ever have at peace by putting Tim in danger. I couldn't shake the feeling of being so helpless. I punched the wall, creating a giant hole. Then I heard footsteps approaching behind me.

“Hey, you sure we can trust his message? What If it's a trap and Tim's not even there? Didn't you put a microchip in his shoulder to track him a while back?” He asked, with good reason. He was most likely right.

“The chip was destroyed when Tim took that bullet for me in the fight against Castillo. And of
course it's a trap, but Slade will be there.” I responded, taking a deep breath.

“Hey, you okay, Jay?” Roy asked concerned. I could see his reflection in my helmet. He had all his gear on and was ready to go. So was I.

“Yeah.” I said, turning to face him. Then Roy surprised the hell out of me by acting so out of character. He gave me a tight hug. I think he was scared too.

“We're going to save him. He's going to be okay when this is over. Raven knows what she's doing, and so do you. We got this, dude.” He assured me as I reciprocated the hug by hugging him back. Roy and I were like brothers. He was way closer to me than Dick could ever be. We were both our mentor’s greatest mistakes and we both had a rough background. We'd both hit rock bottom in one way or another, but we've helped each other rise back up to where we are now. Roy knew how worried I was. He and I have never been the touchy feely type, unless you count leaning on each other when we're both drunk and leaving the bar and can hardly stand up.

“You know, you don't have to do this, Roy.” I said, breaking the hug.

“What do you mean? Of course I do.” He replied, with one brow raised that was visible through the mask.

“Look man, you have a daughter. I should never have asked you to come with me to save Tim from Slade. This is my fight, and I won't ask you to fight with me now.”

“You're joking, right? There's no way in hell I'd miss this. Like I said, We're going to get Tim back. Raven is going to work her voodoo magic to cure him. Nice try, but I can't let you do this without me. Call me cheesy, but your fight is my fight, brother. Besides, I have a plan.” He said with that half-wit smile on his across his face. I closed my eyes and smirked.

“Thanks, man.” I replied before sliding the helmet over my head and heading out. When we arrived on the roof of the power plant near the Wayne Tech and Research facility, Roy, Raven, and myself noticed a shadowy figure wearing a black hoodie and jeans. The building was bigger than I thought it would be. As we approached the boy, he turned to face us with his hood hiding most of his face. What was visible was the devilish smile he wore. The hood also hid his right eye, resembling Slade's orange and black mask. The daylight made it hard to miss him.
“So glad all three of you could make it. I was beginning to think you weren't going to show up.” Slade said, attempting to taunt us. I needed to distract him anyway I could. He seemed to hate me the most. Meanwhile, Roy and Raven were going to do the rest. Before I could reply to his cheap words he pulled a small device out of his pocket. All three of us gasped and froze. It appeared to be some
kind of remote detonator. How the fuck would he get that in the short amount of time he's been loose?

“Wayne Tech has developed some very interesting toys.” He grinned before glancing at us as his thumb hovered over a button.

“What is that, Slade? What are you planning?” I asked, taking one step forward.

“The instrument responsible for the chaos that is about to occur.” He answered extremely vaguely. Before I could ask what the hell he meant, it was already done. Not a second after his thumb fell on the button, an enormous explosion erupted a few blocks away causing the enormous building of Wayne Tech and Research to become engulfed in fire. The blast was so huge that we could feel the heat of it and all the death from where we were standing. We could hear the screams of several innocent people that were hurt or worse. Dark smoke filled the sky. Raven put a hand over her mouth. The building was collapsing into itself. The one responsible for all this destruction didn't even turn around to see the devastation he had caused. Instead he just stood there with that same devilish grin that clashed with Tim's face. His nose bled once again, but he paid it no mind. Raven instantly flew off in the direction of fire and death. Roy looked to me and I gave him a nod, before he took off to help Raven save as many lives as they could, leaving me alone to deal with the murderous imposter.

“You proud of yourself, Slade? This type of thing has never been your style.” I said, taking a few steps forward.

“Actually, you don't know enough about me to make such an assumption, Hood. You probably think you know everything about Tim as well.” He sneered. I couldn't fall for his mind games.

“And you do?” I replied with a small chuckle. This was going to be tricky. I couldn't fight as hard as usual because it was still Tim's body.

“I do. For example, the red helmet you wear scares him. He hates seeing you wear it because you become a killer. He fears that you'll give in to your murderous urges and lose all the features that he finds compelling and human. He also blames you for not saving him from me, even though you gave your word. How disappointing.” Slade's words made me want to choke him, but I knew he was just baiting me.

“Disappointing? This is coming from a parasite. You don't know anything about him. He's not a monster like you who kills hundreds of innocent people. He has honor. Something neither of us can say. He's a kid who is still naive enough to think he can save everyone, but he can't. You can't tell him that, though. You, you're just a deranged psychopath who kills men, women and children for money. Tim has more character than you'll ever have, in this life and in the next.” I said, both praising Tim and attempted to cripple Slade's ego.

“How observant. However, I hear you and I are not so different. You kill for money. You may not kill women and children, but you still don't hesitate to unload your gun in the name of the highest bidder. You and I have much in common. Much more than you'd care to admit, I'd wager.” He said, fucking with me with that silver tongue of his. I began to get red in the face, though he couldn't see it to the helmet.

“You'll regret that.” I gritted my teeth and snarled at him.

“Doubtful.” he smirked. That tore it. I zoomed over to him and knocked the shit out of him with a back hand across the face. Then I plunged my knee into his stomach, making him cough up some
blood. Tim was tough. I knew he could take it. His hood came off and he fell down to one knee. I reared back for another right hook to his face when suddenly, he caught my punch with seemingly little effort.

“You'll need a better fighting strategy.” Slade muttered as he slowly looked up at me with that stupid grin he's been forcing onto Tim's face. Then he twisted my wrist and delivered a solid kick to the head. My helmet spared me most of the damage. Slade knew I wouldn't inflict a fatal wound to Tim's body. His blow to the head did leave me a little disoriented for a few seconds. That's all he needed. Before I knew it, he'd thrown a small canister that instantly released a blinding smoke screen, obscuring his movements from me, even with the helmet's aid. He obviously snatched it, along other gadgets from the Wayne Tech labs before blowing it up. Out of nowhere, that son of a bitch snuck up behind me and elbowed me in the back of the neck. I retaliated with a kick, but he blocked it and unleashed a barrage of punched into my stomach and ribs. All I could do was try and block his moves.

“Fuck!” I shouted in pain. After a few seconds the smoke screen cleared and I could see him standing before me. This time it was me who was down on one knee. I didn't know what the hell to do. I needed to keep him occupied a while longer.
“What's wrong, Hood? You're awfully defensive. Too concerned for this boy's survival to fight back?” He sneered before punching me hard in the face, knocking me to the ground. He was right. I was holding back, and I'd do it again, babybird. Slade began to lay into me some more with a mixture of kicks, punches, and knees to the gut. I continued to get up and block as best I could. Slade's fighting style was much more formidable than Tim's. After all, Slade has had decades of training and life threatening situations to make him a great martial artist. Regardless, I knew I could take him, but I had no choice. Sure, I could get in some good moves, but not good enough for fear of hurting Tim. Slade was quick to take advantage of that. My nose and mouth were bleeding. My cheeks were bruised and swollen, and I could have sworn that I was getting a black eye.

Eventually, Slade's tactics overwhelmed me. Without being able to attack him back, it was only a matter of time. I could feel that a few of my ribs were cracked. I suspected that that my left shoulder was dislocated, yet there I stood with both fists up. I could take it. Then Slade moved in for a devastating blow to my head. He did a side flip with a spin, gaining momentum, and then bashing the cast on his forearm into the side of my head. Pieces of the cast flew everywhere as it busted, revealing Tim's still badly bruised and broken arm. I fell to the ground. The electronics in my helmet were malfunctioning. I removed it and threw it to the side as I attempted at standing. Midway, I heard the click of a gun being cocked. I saw the barrel of one of my handguns a foot from my face. The bodysnatcher must have taken it after creating the smokescreen. Damn it.

“Pathetic.” He said, stoically. I still needed more time.

“Slade, you need to listen to me. If Raven doesn't purify Tim's mind, his body will stroke out, killing you both. I'm begging you, just let him go. He doesn't deserve this. Either way, you've lost.” I pleaded as a last ditch effort, barely able to see him out of one eye.

“I'm aware. I heard the witch girl speak of this back at the tower.” He said before violently kicking me my already broken ribs. I was breathing heavily.

“You knew?” I muttered between breaths. Blood was dripping from my mouth.

“Of course. I'm no fool. I know my time in this world is coming to an end. My only conciliation is knowing that before I die, I get to watch you suffer and then finally kill you.” He said, leaning down to my beaten face, pushing the gun into my temple.

“That makes no sense!” I mustered all my strength to say, a tear falling down my cheek.

“That's because you're a fool. Tim is mine now and soon, like you, he shall die. Remember, you could have saved him. I want you to relish that thought before I blow your brains out, Mr. Todd.” He said, making my temper flare. That's when we both looked above us to see and enormous jet, courtesy of the Titans, heading toward the burning building. It immediately released a huge cloud of carbon dioxide to quickly descend on the still burning building, smothering most of the fire. I saw Starfire exiting the jet with cyborg to help. Raven was using her telekinetic powers to get people out of the building. Many ambulances approached the building. I could hear people crying out. I could see them, some badly burned, some dead.

“How efficient, but too late.” He said, rearing back with the gun in hand.

“It's over.” He sneered, his false eyes and gun bared at me. I had given all I had. I couldn't ever have brought myself to kill Tim. I was okay with this. I closed my eyes, waiting to hear the shot of a gun. Instead, I heard Slade dropped the gun and fall to the ground as well. It was about time. Finally, Roy came through. Tim's body was laying there motionless with an arrow in his back. I could see Roy from the next building over. He was making his way to us. The arrow Roy used on Tim was more
like a dart than a traditional arrowhead. The tip of the arrow was coated in a strong paralyzing agent, strong enough to keep someone of Tim's size unconscious for hours. I had to stall him and try not to die while Roy helped Raven get those people in the building to safety, at least until backup arrived. Ugh. I fell to the ground too, taking deep breaths and barely staying awake. Roy approached.

“Roy, you sure this drug won't kill him?” I asked between breaths. He leaned down and gently removed the arrow.

“Don't worry, this agent won't kill him. It's a powerful tranquilizer, just as we'd planned. Raven is on her way.” He assured me.

“Good. Good.” I sighed in relief.

“Damn. You look fucked up, man.” He added, out of breath. I could tell from the burns and scratches that he sustained was taking its toll on him as well. I couldn’t believe we pulled it off.

“And yet, I can still bag more ass than you, Harper.” I put on a big goofy grin, couldn't find the energy to laugh.

“Whatever you say, Jay. Whatever you say.” Was all I heard him say before passing the fuck out from the pain and exhaustion.
Author's Note:

I'm SO sorry it has taken me so long to update the story. I have been super busy with work, an internship, moving, and classes. I'm trying to graduate in December. I barely have time to breathe, but I really love writing this story and will see it through to the end. At the same time, I want to make sure to spare no detail when it comes to the story, as well as the art. The art also takes a long time for me to draw, color, fix, etc. There is one more arc left in the story. Hopefully, it won't take me as long for me to update the next chapter. Thanks for sticking with me and for reading! Please tell me what you think. I love reading the reader's responses. Enjoy!

-TimDrobin

Jason's Point of View

When I woke up I was back in a bed in the med ward back at the tower. I tried to get up, but instead cringed from the pain surging from my side. There was an IV in my arm and I saw Roy asleep in a chair to my left a few feet away. I tried calling his name, but he continued to snore. So, I woke him up by throwing a nearby plastic cup of water sitting at my bedside. He looked at me all wet and shocked.

"Dude, you're awake!" He said, shaking his hair, causing water to splash everywhere.

"What happened, Roy? Where's Tim? Has Raven, huh, fixed him?" I asked. I had no idea how much time has passed.

"See for yourself." He pointed past me. I looked to my right and saw Tim in a medical bed like mine. He also had an IV, but he was also heavily restrained, meaning that he wasn't cured yet. He also had a new cast on his left arm to replace the one he shattered in our battle. I clenched the sheets in my fists.

"Where's Raven? And what all happened after I passed out?" I asked with great haste.

"Well, you were hurt pretty bad. Tim, I mean, Slade cracked three of your ribs, and gave you a mild concussion. I know you were holding back for Tim's sake, but damn, Jason." Roy scolded, as if he could have lasted half as long against Tim when he wasn't possessed.

"Anyway, Cyborg arrived and restrained Tim for good measure, while Raven and I got you here to the medical ward here at the tower. Tim hasn't been awake since I shot him with my paralyzing agent. Now, we just have to keep him under through his IV. You've been out for two days." He explained. I had another question, but I didn't really want to ask it.

"What about the explosion?" I asked, with a crack in my voice. Roy sighed and sat back down before talking.
"It was a huge facility. We saved most of the people working there, but we couldn't save them all. According to the records, a total of 6 bodies were found burned to death, 9 that were crushed by debris, and there's another total of 11 people that are still missing. Fifty people were in critical condition, but they survived. The police think that it was an accident that happened by an incompetent employee. We've all agreed to just let them think that." He said staring at the floor. I sighed at the thought of all that. Knowing Tim, he'd blame himself.

"What about getting Tim back to normal?" I asked, concerned for Tim, also trying to change the subject.

"Well, Raven is working on it. Yesterday, she and cyborg left the tower to try and find that old stone table that Slade had Tim chained to when we saved him. They got back late last night after finding it." He answered, getting another plastic cup and filling it with water for me.

"You mean they brought it back here?" I asked, bursting up again, only to feel the pain in my side again. Raven must've thought that there was a link between Tim being possessed and that relic.

"Yeah. They put it in a special room in the basement. Apparently, Raven thinks that table can help bring Tim back." He responded, putting the cup on the bedside stand and returning to his seat. Then the door opened and Raven entered the room, holding a dirty old book.

"I felt you wake up. So, I thought I'd fill you in." She said, with no emotion like always. I did notice that there were small bags under her eyes. She probably hasn't slept since before I was knocked out.

"I may have found a way to exorcise Slade from Tim's mind. The stone table is the key. According to my research, the table was created thousands of years ago by a cult of individuals who practiced dark magic. They sought eternal life. They were eventually defeated by others who sought the same thing. Its origin extends far beyond Ancient Greece." She explained, as she telekinetically moved a chair from the other side of the room to right behind her.

"So this old table can make you immortal?" Roy asked, as she took a seat.

"No, but it can prolong the life of another by magically implanting the mind or consciousness, if you will, of the user into the body of another. This type of magic is very old and very dark." She explained further.

"What's that supposed to mean?" I asked, trying my best to keep up. All this magic BS was not my specialty. There was no reason, no simple explanation to magic.

"You see, upon investigating the table's symbols and deciphering the spell, Faust used to activate it's magical abilities, I've discovered something that Faust didn't when he attempted to preform this magic. The stone table isn't just a magical tool. It's alive, sentient. It feeds on the souls of the victims of the spell. I can sense that there are thousands of souls trapped within it. Even the Greek gods didn't know this when Hades locked it away in a secret temple beneath the earth. That's where Faust came to possess it." She said, half expecting me to understand.

"So, the magic table is alive and eats souls?" I asked for clarification. To be fair, I was about 40% sure that I was on the same page as Roy.

"Why didn't it trap Tim's soul? And I thought the symbols on the table were Greek." Roy jumped into the conversation, not quite as confused as me.

"Maybe 'alive' is the wrong word. It's hard to explain. I can feel life within it. That may just be the souls trapped inside of it. It does, however crave human souls. Faust misunderstood how to use its
power properly. He also thought the inscriptions were of Greek descent, but it's the other way around. This language was later incorporated and helped inspire the Greek language. My point is that Faust deciphered the spell all wrong. The person who is conducting the spell must also be the person who is trying to transfer their consciousness into the victim that is shackled down to the table. Since Slade wasn't the one casting the spell, the table's magic began to activate the wrong way. It didn't consume Tim's soul. It merely began to transfer Slade's consciousness into Tim's already conscious mind. In other words, their plan wouldn't have worked. If we hadn't stopped them, Slade's consciousness would have caused Tim to stroke out completely. The physical damage to Tim's mind would've been much worse and happened much faster than it has." She continued. I nodded in response, but I was still kind of lost. I just had one question.

"So, how do we save Tim?"

"The spell must be broken in order to undo what's been done. I'm afraid that's much easier said than done." She answered, moving her violet hair behind her ear and out of her face.

"How?" I asked. Have I expressed how much I hated magic? Because let it be known that I fucking hate it. "By destroying the stone table." Roy answered, as if suddenly he was an expert.

"Uh yes, actually." Raven answers, almost surprised one of us guessed it.

"What, so all we got to do is take some sledge hammers to the damn thing? That's all?" I asked, jumping too far ahead into a solution that was too good to be true.

"Don't be a fool. There's a reason the table has existed throughout the millennia." She cut me off. Well, damn.

"Let me guess, it's made from some magic boulder that can only be destroyed by the magical sword of king Arthur? We got to find this sword along, with other magical thingies to break the enchanted table that eats souls? That's usually how these curse things work, right?" I said, half serious. I'm not kidding when I say her eyes briefly flashed red after I said that.

"You couldn't be more wrong if you were beast boy." She countered with an unamused expression. I know it wasn't a laughing matter, but I had to diffuse some of the tension. I'd go crazy if I didn't.

"It's protected by a special type of dark magic. One of the strongest I've ever encountered. Obviously, I'm the only one here who has a chance at succeeding in breaking it, but it won't be easy. Also, if I am successful in breaking the stone table then I will have freed the souls of the thousands of previous victims that are trapped inside the table. They will be free to move on, and it will also sever the link between Slade's mind and Tim's. I'll need 24 hours to rest and prepare. While he's drugged and restrained, Tim should remain unconscious and his condition shouldn't worsen." She assured me. 24 hours was a long time right now. I mean, I knew I'd be counting the minutes. I knew Raven was both physically and mentally exhausted. That explains why she didn't heal me like she did before when Slade/Tim stabbed me. My wounds weren't life threatening and she needed her energy. She was half demon or whatever, but she was also half human. I was already extremely grateful to her.

"So, you're going to fight the dark magical aura with your, uh, not so dark magic?" I asked, unknowingly making an ass out of myself again. She sighed.

"No. It's going to be a nightmare. I fear the only power strong enough to break the dark enchantment is to tap into the demonic powers that flow though my veins." She said, causing a chill to run down my spine. I saw her demon form when we fought Faust. It was scary as hell. Thankfully, it didn't last very long. I could tell that that side of Raven was difficult for her to control. I had to have faith in her, though. She was Tim's only hope. For about 30 seconds it became extremely quiet. Roy and I
were both kind of scared and intimidated by her plan. I had to break the silence.

"Okay, Raven. Go rest up. I'll be here with Tim. Just please promise me something." I requested, breaking eye contact with her. I think she knew what I was going to say.

"Save him. Please. Save Tim. I'll do anything. I'll give anything. Please, just bring him back." I muttered, quietly. I instantly looked over at Tim's body and imagined him never waking up and the despair that would cause. Raven put a hand over mine.

"I'm going to do my best, Jason. That's all I can promise you." She agreed, standing up from her chair and exiting the room. Her answer was enough. I don't know exactly how to explain it, but I could feel her resolve when her hand touched mine. She meant what she said. I just had to have faith, which was something I would usually mock. It hasn't been easy, relying on others so heavily when the stakes are so high. I mean I could always trust Roy and Kory, but that was pretty much it. I also learned to trust Tim. I guess that damn kid was causing a change in me. I remember thinking that if he would just pull out of this I'd be whatever he wanted me to be.

"Your best is enough." I quietly replied with a faint smile. That's when Raven actually showed a hint of emotion by raising her eyebrows and forming a barely noticeable grin. Then she left the room.

"Now what?" Roy asked, siting backwards in a chair.

"Now we wait." I said, pulling up a chair next to Tim's bed.

"So you really think Raven can save him? I mean, I trust her and I know she do incredible things, but she is the daughter of an all powerful, Inter-dimensional demon." Roy went on. He had a point. I remember when her father came to earth. It was like the apocalypse. People turned to stone. The earth became a living hell. Everything mankind was and had built was being destroyed by Trigon and his demon army. Fighting them was a trip. They were like zombies from a video game. Roy, Kory, and I fought along side the Teen Titans and the Justice League to take down that monster. I'm fuzzy on the magical details, but some how as we fought off his army, Raven had a moment where her powers grew into a huge array of blinding light and trapped Trigon into his own hellish dimension. It was quite the shocker, but Raven managed to save us all.

"Remember, she's the reason we're still here. Without her, Trigon would have completely swallowed the earth. I have faith in her." I said, reminding Roy that we really kind of owe our lives to her.

"You're right. I just hate all this magic and curses, man. I can't help but worry." He replied, actually making sense, but deep down we both knew we had no choice except to trust her.

"I'm right there with you. I fucking hate magic. I can't shoot it." I replied, thinking of how much easier this whole situation would be. That night Roy rode the Titan's couch again. Cyborg asked me if I wanted to sleep in a bed. I just told him that I felt better just staying by Tim's side. The constant bleeps from the heart rate machine he was hooked up to comforted me. After a while I fell asleep by his bedside with my face against his hand. A hand on my shoulder woke me up. I jumped, startled from the sudden contact. My eyes burst open and I turned to see the hand on my shoulder belonged to Roy.

"It's time. She's about to try and fix this once and for all. I looked down at Tim, still unconscious, and still just as beautiful as ever. This had to work. I ran my hand through Tim's dark hair, and then leaned over to softly kiss his forehead. Roy tried to look away so not to seem awkward. I didn't care. Normally, I probably wouldn't kiss Tim in front of him because Tim and I both hate PDA. This time was different. It was just Roy. Just moments after, I actually prayed aloud without realizing it.
"Please God, save him." I muttered with sincerity in my voice. Believe me, I'm not the religious type, but it just happened.

"Dude, you say something?" Roy asked, thinking I was speaking to him.

"Nothing. Let's go." I responded, ready to get this over with and for my babybird to come back to me. Roy lead me into the basement of Titan's Tower. As we were waking down a hallway that lead to the lower levels of the tower, there was a room dedicated seemingly to magic and spells. It was like someone ripped out a page of history from a time of knights, magic beings, and sorcery. That, mixed with the decor Raven's room. I was only in there once, but I won't easily forget that shit. I guess you could say it looked like some straight up Harry Potter shit. In each of the four corners of the room stood the armor of a knight in upright positions, each wielding a sword. There were several unlit candles and odd markings and symbols etched into the walls. In the center of the room, surrounded by a weird and precise arrangement of flower petals and what appeared to be black ashes, was that old stone table that everyone has been talking about. It was the tool Felix Faust used to attempt and fail to transfer Slade's consciousness into Tim. Well, I guess he only partially failed. Symbols were etched into it as well. It still had the chains that restrained Tim from before. One was broken, just like before. The entire atmosphere of the room gave me the creeps. The only source of light were a few tall candles. I hadn't noticed that my dumb ass had stopped walking to glance into the room to take it all in.

"Hey, no time to piss yourself. C'mon, follow me." Roy said, further down the hall, signaling me to continue with him. I snapped out of my initial gaze and quickly caught up with him. Finally, we entered a much smaller and darker room. It was like a monitoring station. In it, there were giant screens with a live video feed of the spooky room we just waked past. Each screen showed a different angle of the room, except one. That last screen showed A live feed of Tim, still in the bed, unaware of what was going on. It showed him, along with his vitals. At the base of all of the screens and huge grid they were all connected to was Victor, aka Cyborg. The glowing blue mechanics and cybernetic implants on him lit up the room.

"Everything is ready. You can start whenever you feel like it." He said, typing into the massive keyboard. Beside him, stood the cloaked and gloomy Raven. Once Roy and I entered the room, she approached me.

"It's almost time." She said, all I could see under her Hood was her big blue eyes.

"Please, save him." I pleaded, the gloom in my voice nearly matching hers. She then exited the room as we had entered. I took a deep breath. She became visible on the monitors.

"Got a visual of you. You copy?" Cyborg said, presumably into some kind of com link.

"I copy. I'm about to get started. Don't let anyone enter this room after me. No matter what you see or hear, you must stay put. No one can interfere. I cannot stress that enough." We all heard her monotone voice through the speakers laced into the two front corners of the room. Both Cyborg and Roy turned their heads at me like I'd done something already. Clearly, Raven's message was specifically aimed at me. Anyway, the time came for Raven to begin her plan, whatever that was. Through the screen, I could watch her every move. She closed her eyes for about twenty seconds, took a deep breath. She became visible on the monitors.

"Azarath Metrion Zinthos" right after those words were spoken, her eyes jolted open, glowing white like before. Her body exuded a black, fiery aura. All the candles in the room quickly became inflamed. She took a few steps towards the table, her black aura filling up the room. The ancient symbols etched into the magical, relic table began to glow as she approached, as if challenging her. Instantly, my eyes found the screen monitoring Tim. His body was squirming as if he was in pain.
and his heart rate accelerated a little. Then I glanced back at Raven.

"Hezberek Et Morine...Gost Wenthon Verbis Nex...Ind Obrium, Bis Pendrule...Paran Sic Cortis Rex!" She recited, causing the table to glow brighter in resistance to Raven's dark energy. It was so weird. All of a sudden Raven stopped walking forward. Then her hands made odd gestures until she just aimed her palms at the stone table. The look on her face showed that she seemed to be caught in some sort of struggle. Her teeth were gritted, and her blue robe was waving around, but her hood stayed on her head. Somehow, she was suddenly pushed backwards by an opposing force coming from the table. As its symbols began to glow brighter, Raven's black aura began to run away from the light. Then some straight up poltergeist shit happened, as the whole room she was in began to shake. The floor on which she stood became cracked. I quickly looked over at Tim and saw that he was still squirming around while in a drug induced unconscious state. Also, a trail of red ran down from his nose to his cheek and then down toward his ear. His heart rate was steadily rising. That's when I noticed Raven, as she was brought down to one knee. Her eyes and face pointed at the ground, hidden behind the hood as her arms stayed out stretched. Her body was shaking and I could see and hear her taking deep breaths. You would think she had just ran a mile by how she was breathing.

"Ray, you okay? Do you copy?" Cyborg said through the com link. She didn't respond for about two minutes. I could see the human half of Cyborg's face begin to sweat in anticipation and concern. That's when Raven creepily got back up onto her feet and began mumbling something. When she looked up slightly, all three of us felt fear jolt down our backs. She didn't struggle as much as she had before. Her movements became more dominant and the black flaming aura she was emitting became much darker. Before it resembled smoke. Now it lost most of its transparency, making it thicker in appearance, resembling black oil.

Lastly, four glowing, red eyes opened on Raven's face as she transformed into her demonic state. I saw her do this when we fought Faust. Her breathing became more monstrous as she regained her stamina and walked closer to the table. Every step she took made the floor beneath her hot and cracked. Finally, she stopped walking and stood inches from the table, its symbols still lit up in resistance, but was then almost swallowed up by the darkness Raven created. Cracks began forming all over the surface of the table.
"Aldruon Enlenthanel Vosolen Lirus-nor!" she screamed, her voice deep and warped as her hands came together and then violently separated. It was like she was trying to break a brick in two with her hands, and then succeeding by ripping it apart. The stone table then broke in half, sending shards of stone flying. When the smoke cleared and the darkness was gone I felt the tension drop. The symbols on the table ceased to glow. We could hear Raven through the speakers in the room.

"It's done." Raven said, now in her normal monotoned voice. She sounded completely worn out. I really didn't understand what happened, but I glanced at Tim's screen and saw that he had stopped squirming. Soon after his pulse flatlined.

"Damn it!" I cursed, rushing out of the small room and heading down the hallway. I heard Roy call my name, but I wasn't about to waste any time. He was restrained to a bed, all alone. As I ran passed the room Raven and the table were still in, she held a concerned expression. That didn't stop me or slow me down in the least. I continued to rush down the hall and up the stairs. By the way, fuck stairs! When I finally reached the floor Tim was on I continued running. I opened the door to the medical ward. All that adrenaline must've made me forget about the cracks in my ribs. I was reminded when I would stop to catch my breath for two seconds. I felt the pain as it shot through my side, nearly crippling me. My lungs were burning and my muscles ached. I kept going until I found him. I couldn't stop until finally, I saw him. Tim was still lying in the bed with his restraints still intact. The heart monitor was still flat lining. I immediately freed him and started compressions on his chest.

"Tim! Can you hear me? You have to wake up!" I shouted at him in a panic. After a few minutes of nothing happening, I touched his pale face with my hand. My thumb traced his cheek bone. Tears were in my eyes. I grabbed a rag from the nearby cabinet and wiped the blood from his face.

"Come on, kid. You can't do this to me. Wake up, Babybird. Please." I said, pulling him up and holding his limp body in my arms. Tears began falling on his shirt. I buried his face in my neck and chest, still holding him tightly. My body was shaking. I felt so useless, so fucking helpless. For the first time in a LONG time, I felt genuinely happy, and I knew it was because of him. The one thing in my life that gave me a reason to look forward to waking up and not being ashamed of who I am or what I've been through, was being taken away. Tim's scent was so nice and refreshing. I could never get tired of it. Soon, it would no longer matter. I was on the brink of a full blown breakdown, no lie ladies and gents. That's when it happened. It was possibly the most relieving moment in my life. Suddenly, I felt a heartbeat. I thought it was my fucked up mind playing tricks on me, but it wasn't. He started twitching and then coughing soon after. Then his coughs turned into breaths. I thought that this had to be too good to be true. Then the heart monitor began beeping again, signifying that his pulse and vitals were back to normal. For a good minute I just stood there thinking this had to be a dream, a cruel prank, or some sort of trick. It was real. I was just happy he was alive. He scared me. He really did. Soon after, I was joined by Roy, Cyborg, and Raven.

"Why is he still asleep?" Roy asked.

"His body needs time to recover from all the stress and shock it's been though these past few days. Based on his vital signs, and brain waves I'd give him a day or two at the most." Cyborg replied, his computer gears buzzed between his words. That's when Raven, looking like hell, stepped forward and moved past me, her hand fell onto Tim's exposed wrist. Roots of bright, glowing blue light began to expand a few inches up his arm.

"It's his energy. He's drained. However, despite the many mental scars this will leave, he's stable, and will wake up soon." She said, removing her hand, as the glowing, blue streaks of light faded away.

"And Slade?" I asked, nearly interrupting her last sentence.
"Any remnants of Slade's mind were shredded into pieces and joined the rest of him in the afterlife when the table was destroyed. He and Tim are no longer bound." She assured me with her usual blank gaze.

"Thanks, again, Ray." I replied trying to meet her tired gaze. She gave me what appeared to be a sincere look, topped with a fraction of a smile before she nodded and left the room, probably to get some rest. I decided to wait until Tim woke up. I could try and get some rest on the medical bed next to Tim's. My ribs were killing me, even after Cyborg reluctantly gave me some pain killers. Roy set off to take care of what he called a job, but I knew where he was going. He went to go spend time with his little girl, Lian. If anything Roy was a good father, all things considered. So, I laid there with nothing on but some pajama bottoms and way too small a blanket. This went on for like 4 and a half hours. Eventually, I got up and stared out into the city. It was an amazing view from Titan's Tower. I was so tired, but I couldn't sleep.

Suddenly, I started to hear something. It was a sneeze, and then another. I immediately made a b-line to the kid's bedside, nearly tripping and saw that it was Tim starting to wake up. My movements caused the motion sensitive light to come on. I stood over his bed side, praying he would finally wake up. Then his deep ocean eyes opened and were looking up into mine as he rose up rubbing his eyes. For a moment of disbelief, we just stared into each other's eyes.
Then immediately, and with great haste, our arms pulled our bodies together tight. His face was buried in my neck, my face in his hair. His cheeks became wet with tears from his traumatic experience. We didn't release each other for several moments. All I could do was hold him as he roughly gripped my sides and continued burying his face into my bare chest.

"It's okay Tim, it's okay."

I said, holding him tighter.

Both of our grips were hell bound to never letting go again. He was back. Tim was back. He survived this horrible fucking nightmare. We both did.

_Tim's Point of View_
"Tim." Said a deep, and dreadfully familiar voice. I knew who it was. I had been walking down this side walk for a few minutes in the rain when I heard it. Jason had barely let me out of his sight since the whole incident with Slade went down. I finally get him to let me walk to the damn store on my own and now I'm hearing voices again? I thought I was better. I tried to ignore his calls and his presence. I tried to just listen to the rain. Then I heard his voice so clear that I turned around thinking I'd see the silhouette of a man covered in armor. I was wrong. Maybe I was going crazy. Maybe I was just having another panic attack. Dr. Thompkins warned me about this. After all this, I was forced to see the only professional we knew that would keep our secrets. I inhaled deeply and then slowly exhaled. I tilted my face back a little so that my face could feel the rain falling. It was really only sprinkling. Then after taking a few more deep breaths, I turned back around and took another step forward when I felt a sharp sting in my abdomen. I looked down to see a blade glistening with rain and blood dripping down its handle while the actual blade was being plunged into me. Then I started breathing intensely. My body began twitching uncontrollably. I started freaking out. Tears fell from my eyes and I tried with all my strength to push him away, but the orange and black mask wearing bastard wouldn't budge.

"Did you think I was gone? Silly child." Slade said menacingly.

"This isn't real. This isn't real." I kept repeating over and over.

"It's very real. I'm very real. This is all very real. Can you feel it? Feel the pain, little Robin. Can you feel the heat from the explosion that killed all those people?" He continued before I cut him off.

"You killed them." I grimaced as the knife slid into me a bit more.

"Oh, Tim. Don't you mean, we killed them?" He asked in a sinister tone before I started thrashing around and blatantly attacking him.

**Jason's Point of View**

One second, Tim was lying next to me in bed like he usually did, curled up in my chest, when out of nowhere he began to stir a little and murmur words I couldn't make out. I was almost asleep, but not quite. Whatever Then like a strike of lightning, Tim struck into a fit of terror. He was just freaking the fuck out. He punched me a few times in the chest before I wrapped my arms around him in an effort to restrain him. His face became wet with sweat and tears and he wailed around uncontrollably.

"Tim! Wake up, Tim! It's just a nightmare, just a dream! Calm down!" I shouted, still trying to restrain him. We struggled for a few seconds until we fell off the bed, his twitching body landing on top of mine. That's when his eyes, bloodshot as hell, shot open as he quickly scampered off of me and slid back against the wall with his face in his knees and his arms wrapped around them. I noticed that his hands were bleeding from his fingernails stabbing into his palms. He was clearly in extreme emotional distress, but had calmed down somewhat. I leaned against the wall and slid down beside him. He didn't move or say anything. I gently placed my hand on his small shoulder, making Tim flinch and reflexively shrug it off. Tim was weird as fuck. He liked physical affection, but only on his terms. That's normal, but his terms always seemed so apprehensive. He was getting better at it, but now it's only gotten worse.

"Tim, you need to calm your self down before you have another panic attack. Breathe. Everything is okay now. Everything's fine." I said softly, in an effort to get him to simply look up at me. He didn't. In fact it made it worse after I tried again.

"Don't touch me, right now!" He flinched, stumbling to his feet.
"God, I thought was getting better." He said with a sniffle and a crack in his voice.

"You are, babybird. Dr. Thompkins said this wasn't going to be an over night thing. It's going to take time, kid." I tried to reassure him.

"You don't understand! I feel like everywhere I go, he's there, waiting." He said, staining his shirt with tears.
I understand more than you think. You're suffering from PTSD. Listen to me, Tim. You have to calm down and breathe.” I responded, taking a step closer to him. I tried to embrace him, but he pulled away.

"Tim, have you been taking your meds?” I asked, ready to force them down his throat at this point. They were anti-psychotic and anxiety reducing drugs.

"Yes, Jason. I'm hardly that irresponsible. Those pills won't stop me from having night terrors." He snapped back at me. He sighed again and rubbed the bridge of his nose with his fingers, his hands still had remnants of dried blood.

"Tim, I think-

"Jason I really need to be alone right now, okay?” He cut me off, his face still wet from crying, his body still shaking. He slipped on some jeans and a hoodie before opening our bedroom door and closing it behind him, leaving me with an oddly mixed feeling of both confusion and concern. Where the hell was he going? It was like 3 am. He had been far jumpier since we left Titan's Tower. He would sometimes be afraid to go anywhere alone. I'd make sure to book really nice hotels with good security. I really couldn't blame him after all he's been through, but then why is he storming off alone now? I had a feeling I knew where he was going, same place he always goes.

**Tim's Point of View**

Jason was right. I needed to calm down, but that's much easier said than done. I didn't really know where I was going when I left out of the hotel room. I wanted to go somewhere I could think. The roof came to mind. As I walked up all those flights of stairs I couldn't help but hear Slade's voice still whispering in my head.

"We killed them, Tim. They died by your own hand."

With every step, my mind grew darker and darker. My eyes began shedding more and more tears.

"It was you. You killed them." I whispered to myself.

"Oh no, dear boy. It's your fault. I may be the villain, but you were supposed to stop me, boy wonder." Slade taunted in my head. It was like my thoughts were being dictated. When I made it to the roof his voice suddenly stopped. I could hear the world around me without interruption. I walked over to the edge and looked down to see the beautiful sight of the city below, buildings, cars, and lights. Even at this hour, big cities stay busy. Then I started to stare at one of the buildings a few miles away. I had a bad feeling about it. Suddenly, I saw it burst in an orange and red blaze. Screams filled the air with the smoke. I started breathing heavily again and closed my eyes as tight as I could. My hands dug into my hair so hard. I opened my eyes to see that the burning building was upright and safe.

My cheeks and sleeves were drenched in tears and sweat of panic and guilt. I turned around and began walking back toward the entrance. Then my fists hurled at the metal door until they bled. I was so angry and sad about what has happened. I looked up to see dents in the door. That's when my mind began to wander into the darker corners of my psyche and then entered a sort of daze like state.

"My fault. My fault. My fault." I repeated to myself without really realizing it. As tears kept involuntarily running down my cheeks, I walked back over to the side of the building and gazed down into the city once more. I took and deep breath and climbed up onto the ledge. This was the only way to make amends. Those people died because I couldn't handle a responsibility that I took on. Those people suffered. They were either burned alive or crushed by falling debris. What would
my parents think? What would Dick think? What would Bruce think? They'd all be disappointed and angry. What did Jason really think? All those innocent people didn't have to die. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, possibly the deepest I'd ever taken. I could feel the cold wind against my face. It was even colder due to how wet my cheeks were. Then I just let go of all thought and emotion, as I began to fall forward into what I'd hoped to be a better place. Maybe this would bring me some peace and relief. I was okay with this. I was ready to die, to make amends for the lives that were lost because of me.

"Forgive me," I whispered to myself, as if I were talking to all those who died in the explosion I'd caused. I felt a larger rush of wind hit me. After that, and only for half a moment, I felt complete bliss. I was about to become one with the city lights I looked down upon and admired so often. There were no thoughts triggering in my head, no fear, just a forlorn welcoming of death.
Then out of nowhere, I felt a strong, large hand grab my arm, yanking me back over the ledge and slamming me against a wall.

"What the hell, Tim? You trying to kill yourself you stupid little bastard?!" Jason practically shouted with both hands cupping my face in an ungentle fashion. More tears began to form.

"I don't know what to do anymore, Jason I killed all those people. I can't-"

"You can!" He cut me off abruptly.

"You don't understand!" I yelled back, shoving his hands from my cheeks.

"Oh, would you stop saying I don't understand? I was there. I saw what happened, okay. I saw him take over your body. I get it. I also know how much fucking smarter than me you are. But what you just did, was real fucking stupid." He scolded, grabbing my upper arm with one hand and using the other to tilt my face up to look at him. His thump squeezed my chin. I almost spoke, but couldn't find the words.

"Do you think that was some sort of way to help settle your conscience? I got news for you, babybird. Dying, especially offing yourself, don't do shit for your conscience. Trust me. I've been there. All it does is hurt the people that care about your stupid ass." Jason's voice raged at me before I even saw his face looking down at me in a mix of anger and love, and still gripping my arm so much so that I knew it would bruise.

"But there were people in that building, good, honest, innocent people. I've seen the records you tried to hide from me. There were fathers, mothers, sons, daughters. Dozens crippled, seventeen people DEAD, and that's on ME." I argued, trying and failing to yank my arm out of his grip.

"Wrong, you hard headed little fuck. You weren't in control of the situation or even your own body at the time. None of us were. That was Slade. I know you're confused, hurt, and scared, but I need
you to focus on my voice and what I'm saying. Those deaths were NOT your fault. You are a kind
hearted, naive, kid who would never have let that happen, had you been able to stop it. There were
other supernatural forces at play that you and I don't understand and couldn't fight alone. The man
responsible for those deaths, as well as many others, is dead. His motives were all for his own
personal gain. He failed. His death is on Me and I'd do it again. But see Tim, you aren't like me, And
that's a good thing. The world needs more people like you. Besides, suicide ain't the answer. There's
no honor or redemption in that. Please, stay. If not for that reason, then do it for me. Deep down, you
know that if I hadn't caught you just then, we'd both be street pudding right now. I mean, besides
you, what else do I really have to lose?” He said, his thumb caressing my cheek softer than before as
I glanced up into his eyes.

"If you go down, we go down together." He said intensely before he kissed me hard and full on the
mouth.
Suddenly the shadowy panic that had raced throughout my entire body had ceased. He began
strok[ing my back with his large hand, knowing that it might help me relax. My breathing slowed and I could even sense a drop in my blood pressure. When it came to me, Jason was right, like always.

"By the way kid, if you ever try this again I'll actually kill you." He said, breaking the kiss with slight, inappropriate humor.

**Jason's Point of View**

The next few months I made Tim continue to see Dr. Leslie Thompson, a psychiatrist and friend of the bats, and loosely me. She was one of the few people who knew our identities, but felt like we were needed by not only Gotham, but the world. From my understanding, she and Bruce had been friends for years before he even dawned his cape. She was able to help Tim through this and he began returning to his former mental state. She sometimes wanted me in there too. At first I was like fuck that, but she said it would help Tim so whatever. I stood over by the door, arms folded while they talked. There were pretty fucked up days. Tim had admitted to some pretty dark stuff he'd done before I even met him, not that I could talk. He admitted how lonely he'd felt, before and after we met. His parents never had time for him and then they died. He talked about how badly he'd been bullied in school because of his small build and academic stature. He even talked about how hard it was to come to terms with his sexuality with no one around. He admitted that when his parents weren't around he would resort to self mutation, such as making small cuts in his arms with a razor. He talked about how before he became Robin, he would take pictures of crime scenes in an effort to solve it at such a young age. This lead to him uncovering the true identities of the original identities of Batman and Robin all by himself.

I will say that this entire deal with Slade has left Tim a little different even with aid of Dr. Thompkins help. He doesn't have nearly as many night terrors as before, but has become a lot less interested in sex and he seems to be sort of angry a lot of the time. Privately, Dr. Thompkins told that this was normal, all things considered, and to give him more time to readjust. It has been a month and a half. Maybe he's just now getting over this whole fucked up situation. Anyway, while in Gotham, Roy, Kori, and I began work again, which didn't make Tim any happier, but it couldn't be helped. We needed the money. Tim and I weren't so much drifting apart, but there was definitely some tension going on, mostly on his side. I was beginning to suspect that it was all the nights I worked. Speaking of work, I had a drug bust to deal with downtown. Tim decided to turn in that night. Usually, he stays up and waits for my return. Lately, he just goes to bed while I prep for the mission. Before I left, I couldn't help, but stand there and watch him. I love watching him sleep. He looked so innocent and peaceful, no nightmares or anything. He didn't snore or move much. His soft breaths always made me blush. That's how I knew when he was really asleep. The lamplight didn't do Tim any justice. Tim looked so perfect laying there, blankets covering him up to his chest as he slept on his side. I wanted to join him so badly.

"C'mon, Jay!" Roy shouted from the next room, making Tim stir a little. I sighed, grabbed my helmet and gently closed the bedroom door behind me.

**Tim's Point of View**

I woke up next to a cold and empty bedside. Jason and the gang weren't back from their mission yet. I glanced over to the clock and saw that it was only 11:37 pm. I had taken some NyQuil around 5:30 while Jason was getting ready for his mission that evening to make it easier for me go to sleep quicker and earlier. I knew Jason wouldn't be back until morning. I wound up falling asleep while reading a really good book Jason gave me called The Perks of Being a Wallflower to keep my mind, uh, preoccupied. Dr. Leslie says that I need to keep my mind from wandering. She says I should stay away from violent situations, even the ones in books or movies. Otherwise, I could have a panic attack, or worse. Ever since Raven expelled Slade from my mind I've been overly sensitive to
different things. Dr. Leslie prescribed me pills that make me chill out whenever I start freaking out. Anyway, I only made it through the first quarter of the book before I passed out. Now I was awake again and it wasn't even midnight yet, damn it. I tried to fall back asleep, but it was no use. My head hurt and I felt groggy from taking the NyQuil. So, I got up and continued to delve deeper into my book. Finally, I had to stop around 1:30 in the morning because my headache was starting to develop into a migraine. There wasn't any medication for that in the hotel room, and I really needed it. Migraines suck. I get them from time to time because I don't wear the glasses I'm supposed to keep up with. Ever since my vigilante days I more or less gave up on wearing them. I will say that Jason has gotten me a pair or two since we've been together, but I keep losing them. In any case, I needed to go pick up some Excedrin Migraine pills or something before it got worse. In the past, when I've gotten migraines I've been completely incapacitated. I'm not able to deal with light or sound of any kind without feeling the veins in my head constrict and tighten, causing intense pain and sometimes nausea. I put on an old white T-shirt with grey sweatpants, and tennis shoes before heading out. There was a convenient store a few blocks away. I left the hotel and began walking. It was a bit of a rough neighborhood. I saw several guys that looked like they were either pimps, drug dealers, drug users, or just super sketchy in general. An older homeless man was laying up against a dumpster, his dirty beard and torn jacket made me feel sorry for him. Several flies were buzzing around him.

"Hello, young man." He said with his long hair and bearded smile that was missing more than some teeth.

"Hello, sir." I greeted him in response. Not too long after that, I made it to the store and bought some Excedrin, along with a water and a warm hamburger they had on display. On my way back to the hotel, I saw the same homeless guy I saw on my way to the store. I handed him the water and hamburger I just bought and offered him a smile. My headache was steadily getting worse, but I figured this wouldn't take long and it was worth it. I felt for the guy.

"Thank you! God bless you, boy!" He said, excitedly before unwrapping the burger from its foil wrapping and taking a bite, his dirt covered hands shaking. I smiled at him and continued to be on my way. After a few minutes I got an ominous feeling that someone was following me. I saw drops of rain descend on the pavement I was walking on. Then it began raining harder and harder by the minute. I glanced back behind me through the rain and didn't see anyone overly suspicious that could have been following me. I sighed and thought I was just being paranoid. Just as I turned my head back around I felt a large hand pushing against my chest and another over my mouth. A hooded man pushed me into an alley I was passing and threw me onto the ground behind a dumpster before I knew what was happening. I dropped my shopping bag in the process. I was pissed. I looked up at my hooded assailant. He looked like he could have been in his mid to late 40s. He was causation, had a slender, yet muscular build, with a white supremacy symbol on his left cheek. His hoodie had the sleeves ripped off, exposing his muscular arms, as well as all the physical signs of shooting up.

"Now, what's a kid like you doing roaming my streets at this hour?" The man sneered, his teeth yellow and crooked. I deduced that he was most likely on meth. I knew this man wasn't going to be dealt with easily.

"Please dude, I don't want any trouble. Just let me pass." I sighed, my head in so much pain, that I was beginning to see spots. The man grinned as a response and leaned his face in toward mine.

"That sounds like an order, boy. No one gives me orders, especially not on my turf. I might just forgive you if you, uh, let me have some fun with you tonight." He said before stroking my cheek, ignoring my disgusted expression. Then his other hand found its way to my backside at the same time and pulled me closer to him. I immediately pulled away. This man just looked like a walking STD. I kid you not.
"As tempting as that is, my head is killing me, and I'm actually seeing someone right now." I said, standing to my feet with a half smirk, ready to totally kick this guy's ass. The man put both arms against the wall on either side of me, attempting to trap me. Just as I was about to let him have it, someone else interfered. Suddenly, a rock hit the brute in the head, causing his hood to come off, revealing his grayish brown hair that was was slicked back. We both turned to see the person responsible for throwing the rock. Surprisingly, it was the homeless man from before. The brute grabbed me by my hair and slammed my head against the brick wall, hard. My head was now pounding harder than before, so much so that I couldn't bring myself to speak. I fell to the pavement and saw the brute walking toward the homeless man.

"Damn it!" I cursed, before getting back up, slightly disoriented and grabbing that bastard's shoulder.

"Leave that man alone, you sadistic asshole!" I said, my head still pounding and even bleeding in the back. He stopped and turned to face me.

"I like you kid. You got spunk." He said, with perversion in his eyes. He acted like he and I were about to square off, but then he quickly turned and sucker punched the homeless man in his abdominal area. I could've sworn that I actually heard the man's ribs crack.

"No!" I shouted. The thug kept on kicking the man in his ribs, but something happened to me. My body froze. For a few moments I lost control of my body and simply couldn't move. I could hear the old man cry out as the thug kept stomping on him mercilessly. Finally, the man stopped kicking him. Instead he pulled out a switchblade and moved in to stab him. That's when something inside me snapped. I felt it. It was rage, like a fire growing uncontrollably. I instantly closed the little distance between us, placing myself in front of the helpless man on the ground who was struggling to breathe. I caught the hand of the knife wielding man by the wrist and strategically twisted it swiftly, causing several of the tiny bones in his wrist to break. He dropped the knife. Before he could yell out in pain, I plunged my elbow directly into his face breaking the cartilage in his nose and knocking out many teeth. He held his bloody face with his good hand and proceeded to back off. Then I delivered a roundhouse kick to one of his arms, violently breaking it above the elbow. The kick sent him crashing into a wall and then onto the ground. He screamed in pain, but I ignored him. I felt the urge to continue my onslaught, but I heard Bruce's voice inside my head, telling me "that's enough." I caught my breath and switched my attention to the homeless man. I used my phone to call an ambulance. The poor man was quietly crying out in pain. I knew he had some internal bleeding going on. Now we just needed to wait until the ambulance arrived. I started to realize that this was my fault. I could have helped him much sooner, but I was too weak, too scared, or worse. I didn't know why I didn't take out that thug while he was beating this man who tried to help me. Why couldn't I attack? Why did I hesitate? These thoughts were racing through my still pounding head. I noticed that tears began to fill my eyes.

"Can you hear me, sir? You're going to be okay! I promise. An ambulance is on its way." I squalled over this man I didn't even know. I held his dirt covered hand trying to get a response, but his pulse was weak and getting weaker. He stopped breathing and his eyes rolled back. I figured that one if not both lungs were collapsed and that numerous ribs were broken. He could've also suffered several other injuries to other internal organs.

"Hey, stay with me! Stay with me! You're going to be okay! I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry I didn't save you! Please hold on!" I shouted, continuing to try and get a response. Then I heard footsteps behind me between my sniffing. I turned my head to see the thug responsible for this man's injuries, his tattooed face covered in blood and slightly misshaped. Apparently, he still had one good arm because it was pointing a gun at my face. The other arm was dangling, assumingly dislocated. The gun to my head didn't phase me. My eyes narrowed at him.
"You're nothing but trash." I said looking up. One of his eyes were closed due to all the swelling from the beating I gave him. He laughed and cocked his gun. At that sound I sprung into action, shoving my elbow into his forearm, yet again shattering a bone in his arm. I snatched the gun and unloaded it, throwing the gun and bullets in different directions. The fool didn't know when to quit, but now he was screaming in pain yet again while backing away. I was about to charge at him again through the tears and migraine when the back of a familiar brown, leather jacket dropped down in front of me. Jason stopped his screaming by grabbing the man by his throat and lifting him up.

"If I were you, I'd move to a new city, change your hair, change your name, and change your pants. I should slit your throat right here, but I'm not going to. Don't let me catch you in Red Hood territory again, or I'll put you through a fucking wall you sorry piece of shit." Jason in an intimidating tone, through the crimson helmet before letting go of the thug's throat. The man fell to his feet and coughed a few times as Jason turned his back and looked towards me.

"Red Hood?! How was I supposed to know this kid was with you?" The thug coughed up, grabbing Jason's shoulder using his shattered arm to make Jason turn and face him. Jason sighed through his helmet before proceeding to hurl the poor fool through the nearest, yet not the sturdiest brick wall, making a loud noise and tons of dust. All I could see were the legs of the broken man sticking out from the huge, rumble and remnants of the brick wall. I wasn't sure if he was dead or not. Then Jason made his way back over to me. I was bent over the homeless man, my eyes still filled with tears.

"I warned him." Jason said, not lying. I was silent because I knew what he was about to say. Then we both heard an ambulance approaching. We both knew that there wasn't anything they could do for the poor old man. Jason basically threw me over his shoulder before shooting a grappling hook and getting us out of sight just before the sirens and lights appeared. We made our way back to the hotel and neither of us said a word. On the way, Jason put his leather jacket over my shoulders. His scent calmed me somewhat. When we arrived back at the hotel, he wanted some answers. Turns out, Jason had also grabbed the Excedrin I dropped in the alley. I took a tad more than the appropriate dose due to the circumstances. After about an hour, the pain from my migraine lessened by a large amount. Jason also made me take two of my anxiety pills Dr. Leslie gave me. We both sat on the edge of our bed, Jason's jacket still around my shoulders. Roy made me some herbal tea like I like it. Jason put his arm around me and just sat there with me for a while.

"So, you going to tell me what all just happened?" He asked into my hair. I sipped my cup.

"Same story. I got into trouble, and someone got hurt. The only difference is that the thug that attacked me was nothing. I could beat him, and I knew it. Yet, I didn't stop him from killing an innocent man. I just stood there like a helpless child. I hesitated. Why? I knew I could beat him. I did beat him. " I went on, starting to shake a little. Jason cupped my hands and settled them. I told him what happened in detail.

"Tim, none of that was your fault. You always have to blame yourself. You did nothing, but try and help that man. So, you hesitated. I know you don't want to hear this, kid, but you have PTSD. Dr. Leslie confirmed it herself, and warned us both of the symptoms. Besides, it's like I always say, there are very few innocent people in this world." He explained his point, which was very debatable, but definitely had some validity.

"I know Bruce instilled this ideal image of how the world should be into your head. He did the same thing to me, except I wasn't as smart as you. See, no matter how many bad guys are killed or incarcerated, the crime, the chaos, the innocent bloodshed won't ever end. Batman is an idea that gives people a false sense of hope." He said, his words like rigid stone. He and I both hated talking about Bruce's beliefs because it just made us argue.
"One should not dwell on how dark the world is, but rather, aspire to change it into how it should be. That homeless man believed this. He proved it by trying to help me, even though he knew he could get hurt. He fought for justice, same as us." I said, my hands firmly gripping the cup.

"Yeah, he did. And now he's dead. You would've beaten that goon's ass without his help. By the way, do you think he would've helped you if you hadn't have fed him? Maybe, he was trying to look out of his meal ticket. Tim, my point is that you can't save everyone no matter how much you may want to. That's not the way it works. And the fast majority of them aren't worth saving." Jason signed with his rebuttal.

"And how is killing everyone and anyone that you deem unworthy to live any different? You're just angry. You're so angry at the world and you use that anger to fuel the hate you have for most people. You use that hate to justify how you handle criminals, not setting you too far apart from those you fight against." I exploded before Jason's fist collided with my face, knocking me onto the floor. The cup of tea went flying. I looked up at him with the tears still in my eyes and for a moment I saw that look of anger, hatred, and sadness in his. It was the same scary look he gave when he and I first met. Maybe I went too far. Then he immediately changed his expression after realizing what he just did.

"Holy fuck, Tim! I'm so sorry. Are you oka-" was all he had time to say before I let go of the restraints once again, and sprung into action, striking him back in his face. I have no memory of making that decision. My body just reacted. Suddenly, I was breathing hard and fast and my heart was beating at an alarming rate. He only lost his footing for a second. His cheek was red and the marks of my knuckles were imprinted. He wiped some blood from his mouth and just looked at me in shock. I had both fists up in front of me, expecting him to come at me. All my muscles tensed up and I couldn't stop breathing hard. We both just looked each other in the eye intensely for about three minutes. Finally, my body started listening to me again as I began taking longer, deeper breaths, helping me calm down. Dr. Leslie wasn't kidding about the PTSD. That had to have been what was causing my body to react the way it did. I closed my eyes and dropped my arms, breaking eye contact with Jason. Then I calmly, yet angrily walked past him.

"I'm taking a shower." I said quietly heading into our bathroom, slamming the door behind me. He just stood there. I immediately turned the shower on and took off my shirt. I stared into the mirror at my red, swollen cheek that would soon form a bruise until the mirror became too foggy to reflect. I stepped into the warm shower and let the water rain down my face.

**Jason's Point of View**

"You decked him in the face?! What the hell?" Roy asked, shocked that I would ever hurt Tim. I was shocked too.

"I didn't mean too, man. I just kind of let my anger get the best of me. I snapped." I explained, holding an ice pack over my still throbbing cheek.

"Dude, you can't beat up on him like that. You're twice his size and if Dick finds out you know that'll start some shit." He stated, like I didn't already know all that already.

"I know, Roy. He just pushed some old buttons and I lost it. I hate hearing Tim talk like Bruce. I'm not making excuses for hitting him. I feel bad enough about it." I replied with a sigh.

"Good. I'm glad Tim had the balls to dish your shit right back at you." He said, taking a sip of beer. I wasn't going to drink because I know that would just make Tim even more pissed at me.

"The kid knows how to throw a punch. I just wish he didn't have to." I said, looking at Roy's beer bottle with envy.
"If you're going to beat him up every time he disagrees with your ideals, then I hope the next punch puts you in a temporary coma." Roy said coldly and half serious. I knew he was team Tim, but that was harsh. It wasn't like Tim was defenseless.

"Shut the fuck up, Harper. You make it sound like I beat the shit out of him. It wasn't like that and you don't know what was said." I defended myself, hanging on by a thin thread. I mean, yeah. I hit him, but he hit me back. Plus, I was totally ashamed of it. I felt like I was less than a piece of shit. I felt like I don't deserve Tim, which is kinda true. My original reasoning for taking Tim away was for his own protection. How did it turn into all this? Fuck. I still couldn't believe I hit him.

"I don't have to know what he said to know that he didn't deserve to get a punch to the face, let alone by you. In fact, Tim's a sharp kid. He probably hit the nail on the head when he got that reaction from you." He said back, knowing he was absolutely right. I just quit arguing with him. Smug ginger bastard. He's lucky I didn't deck HIM in the schnoz.

"Okay fire crotch, I get it. I'm a piece of shit. Now, where do I go from here? How can I make it up to him?" I asked, in my rare, sincere voice.

"You can start by apologizing and by giving him some space. That'll give him some time to consider your apology." Roy advised while sipping his beer in front of me like a first class jackass. Still, his advice wasn't unreasonable. I just couldn't think of what words I could use to describe how sorry I really and truly was. I ran a hand through my hair in hopelessness. That's when Tim came from the bathroom in our bedroom into the living room area where Roy and I were sitting. He got in front of me and looked down at me as he stood up and I slouched on the sofa. His dark hair was still wet and he smelled really good. I love it when Tim bathes. He was swimming in another one of my old T-shirts. It had holes in the front and back. He was also wearing a pair of grey sweatpants and flip flops.

"Hey, Roy. How was the mission? Tim said to Roy as he sat there almost as shocked as me. It turns out that my fist did leave a small bruise on his cheek from where I'd punched him.

"It was actually pretty boring. Only used three arrows." Roy responded, looking at me as he spoke.

"I guess that's a good thing." Tim responded back like I wasn't even there.

"Yeah. Heard you had a little adventure too. How's your migraine?" Roy sipped his beer between words. He knew he was in the middle and he didn't want to be there.

"Better, for the most part." Tim responded before I'd had enough. They both looked up at me after I stood up.

"Can I talk to you in the bedroom, Tim?" I snarled, mostly towards Roy for some reason. Tim sighed before speaking.

"Jason, I really don't feel like talking. Right now, I don't have anything to say. I'm just going to go to bed. Wake me if you guys have to leave on another mission." Tim answered quietly and sort of sad, while avoiding eye contact, which was a big deal for both of us. He crossed his arms defensively before attempting to walk past me. Instinctively, I grabbed his shoulder and stopped him. He flinched a little when I did that. I couldn't just let this go. I hate dealing with emotions and feelings and all that bull shit, but even I knew it would be fucked up to act like it simply didn't happen or that it's not a big deal. I pulled Tim close to my chest. My chin was in his hair. I could feel his body tense up and his heart pounding against my stomach as he grew more uncomfortable. My hand held the back of his head while the other kept him in my embrace.
"Tim, please forgive me. I shouldn't have hit you. That was fucked up. Your deduction skills hit home as usual and I lost it. I'm going to start seeing Dr. Thompkins regularly to try and get my anger under control. Everything you said had nothing to do with what i did. I'm so so so SO sorry. I will never lay a hand on you like that again. You have my word, for whatever that's worth to you." I stated completely serious, emotionally castrating myself. As I went on, Tim's body began to relax more and more until his arms were wrapped around me.

"I know. We both have issues." He said, simply and without any emotion. I kissed his head and let him go on to bed. We didn't say anything else. I figured I'd just let him have the bed and I'd ride the couch, which was so small that my legs hung off the end at my knees. Roy eventually past out on the floor. The last I could do was get him a blanket. The couch only had one pillow and since I was the only one conscious, I chose to use it instead of sticking it under Roy's head. Asshole shouldn't have been so cocky with his booze so it was fair. I finally fell asleep for maybe an hour. When I woke up there was Tim's sweet face laying on my chest. He was all curled up on and between me and the couch, sleeping like a little puppy on my chest. I laughed a little, which made him stir somewhat. After about 30 minutes of several agonizing attempts to get comfortable I gave the fuck up. I scooped Tim up and headed for the bedroom.

"Stop leaving." Tim muttered, slipping between sleep and reality. I gently maneuvered my way into the bed while Tim still slept on me.

"I'm not going anywhere, babybird." I whispered before assuming a more comfortable position. I assumed that he forgave me? It was, at least, a start. I faded into unconsciousness more and more by the second. My eyelids became heavier and heavier as I looked at Tim peacefully sleeping on my chest. For now, everything was okay. I was out within a minute. Feeling his heart beat was the last thing I remember before I passed out.

The next few weeks were more or less awkward. I was glad to see that the bruise on Tim's cheek had faded. I felt like total shit every time I looked at him. I tried my best to make it up to him. I took him to the movies to see the new Wonder Woman movie. Roy and Kory came too. Tim loved it (so did I). I've actually met Diana and they pretty much nailed it. Even though Tim loved it, he had his complaints. I tell you, he can't watch a movie without analyzing everything in it. Plot holes, character development, theoretical physics, and whatever else he pays attention to. Meanwhile, I'm sitting there like 'I liked it when she punched and stabbed the bad guy.' Hell, I wanted me one of them god killing swords! If I'd asked, Tim would've said that he would rather have the lasso of truth.

Luckily, I think Diana has the only one in real life. After the movie, I planned on taking Tim to a fancy restaurant in Gotham. I knew he was a health nut and my eating habits have somehow made him "out of shape." The only bad thing was that we had to take a bus to it because Roy and Kory had to take the only vehicle we had that wasn't a stolen motorcycle. Tim didn't seem to mind. We sat in the second row back. It was pretty packed and Tim took the window seat. Little ass. I looked around to see all of the other people they were all loud, obnoxious, and of all ages. Plus, this kid sitting behind me wouldn't stop kicking my damn seat. His mom didn't seem to notice as her face was glued to her phone. Then, just after the bus budged two feet it stopped and abruptly, making everyone fly forward a bit.

"You got lucky. I almost left with out ya!" The obese bus driver said to the person who waived the bus down after it moved two feet.

"I am very lucky, but you're not." A voice, that was barely audible uttered from beneath the hood before the stranger pulled out a gun and shot the driver. The poor guy's brains and skull fragments
were splattered all over the window behind him. The lifeless body fell over, still in a seated position. It wasn't a pretty sight. Everyone got quiet, with the exception of a few gasps and screams. I immediately reached into my jacket when I remembered that this was the one fucking day I didn't bring any weapons. That's right, no guns. I threw my arm across Tim's chest. I knew the kid would try and fight the stranger to protect the other passengers. My problem with that is that I didn't want Tim to end up like the driver. This guy was no expert marksman, but he wasn't an amateur either. He shot the driver point blank in the face. I could tell by the way he handled the gun in his gloved hand that he was un-fucking-predictable. What was even more unpredictable, and way more terrifying was when he pulled his hood off.

"Now then. I want to play a little game." The man muttered from beneath an old silicone mask, resembling the face of a creepy clown. His other gloved hand slid back his greasy, black hair, leaving a small path lingering over the white mask. "And the only funny business," he said as he slowly turning to face the rest of us on the bus.

"is going to come from me."
Tim's Point of View

This mask wearing psychopath was now waiving his gun around as if to a piece of classical music.

"Everyone calm down!" he shouted through the plastic mask.

"Not all of you are going to die. I promise. I'm a man of my word." The man said before letting out a deranged, yet some what awkward laugh. Then he shot a man that ran at him from the back of the bus. I couldn't see, but I heard the man's body fall into others on the bus. This guy wasn't bluffing. Jason still had his arm across my chest like a huge, muscular seat belt. He knew that I wouldn't be able to just sit idly by while this maniac went on a murder spree. It was a tricky situation. It wasn't a coincidence that this masked lunatic chose a bus full of people to be his victims. When you have a small area with this many people you know that hesitation is likely due to fear of a trigger happy moment or a ricochet bullet rebounding and hitting someone else. Strategically, it wasn't a bad move, but there was a downside. With this many people turning stir crazy, you're likely to either get jumped or run out of bullets. What was his plan? He didn't demand everyone to empty their wallets or take off their jewelry, so what the hell did he want? I gasped as he approached a young woman with a little boy no older than five. They were in the seat behind us. He pointed the barrel of the gun at the mother.

"Hmm, I wonder what is worse. An orphaned child growing up after witnessing the murder of his dear mother, or..." he went on, slowly switching his aim to the boy, who was crying into his mother's neck.

"A mother seeing her child die before her very eyes. Forced to grow old with his death replaying in her head. One of you has to die."

"Why are you doing this?!" The woman asked frantically with tears filling her eyes.

"Because you happened to be at the wrong place, at the wrong time. I think we have a winner! What's your name, kid?" He prattled on with more nonsense, whilst making his decision. The gun was pointed at the boy. I guess he thought the death of the son would have more of an impact on the mother more so than the other way around. At least, that's what I got from his drunken logic.

"What's your name?!!" He suddenly shouted through the mask.

"His name is-"

"I was talking to him!" The man shouted over the woman's trembling voice before shooting out the window behind them. Shattered glass flew everywhere. The kid was trembling and was crying profusely. So much so, that he couldn't bring himself to speak.

"Fine, no name child. I'm going to kill you. I'm going to shoot you in the head." The man said quietly and coldly. He was holding the gun up against the young boy's head.

"Jason." I whispered, ready to lunge out at the masked psychopath.

"I know." He replied. The man was about to pull the trigger when Jason stood up, making the man back off a few feet. You could tell he was a bit startled through his movements.

"Hey, what the fuck do you think you're doing? You can wait your turn." The man shouted at Jason,
who was a good six inches taller than him, at least. Then Jason slowly took a step forward, making the masked gunman even more nervous. He wasn't shooting at him. I wonder if Jason knew something I didn't.

"What are you waiting for, Bozo?" Jason sneered at him, taking another step. What the hell was Jason doing? If he didn't make his next move carefully, he was going to die. If I had to guess, I'd say he was trying to distract the maniac from the kid. The rude comments and apprehensive body language was a way to place the opponent's full attention, anger, and odd obsession with death solely on Jason so that the kid wasn't a target for the moment. I knew that he didn't want me to do anything, even though I could have been of great use. I was ready to attack the gunman, myself. The only thing stopping me, and Jason for that matter, was the fact that we were in such a confined space and one stray bullet could mean the death of anyone on the bus.

"You...you aren't scared of dying?" Asked the clown as he tilted his head slightly to the side, as if intrigued by Jason's behavior. While intriguing, he was on the borderline of foolish. What was wrong with this guy?

"Nah, it's more of a 'been there, done that' kind of thing." Jason smarted off. He wasn't wrong, but it wasn't the time for that kind of behavior. I suspected this deeply disturbed man was very unstable and unpredictable as hell. Jason was, however, unpredictable as well.

"You think death is funny, but you won't be making jokes with a bullet in your skull." The odd man in the mask continued.

"Tell me why you chose to wear that mask." Jason asked calmly as he took a slight step forward.

"Are you kidding? You know. Everybody around here knows." The guy answered with a chuckle between every sentence.

"So, you working for him?" Jason asked, his hands making folding into fists.

"Working for him? Man, you got it all wrong. He's working through me. He's shown me a better way." The man went on while still pointing his gun at Jason. What did he mean? He was out of his damn mind.

"He's a psychopathic monster, and a fucked up one at that." Jason replied, taking another step forward. He was closing the distance between them.

"That's just what a piece of shit nobody like you would think. He's more than a person. He's an artist, a symbol, a god." This guy was a fool. I knew better than to flat out talk about the clown maniac that had scarred Jason forever. I wasn't sure what his reaction would be.

"Jason-" I started to take a step toward him before I was interrupted.

"Shut up!" Jason growled at me before I could finish taking another step. He turned looked at me for half a second. His face and eyes looked like they did the first night I met him. It actually scared me a little, even more so than the gunman. His scowl and hateful glare stayed in my head.

"You're a fool and you deserve what you get." Jason stated in an emotionless, monotone voice. The man turned his head sideways and started to say something. What happened next made his words inaudible. The sound of glass shattering made everyone except Jason jump in bewilderment. Before I could blink, the fletching and rear part of an arrow was sticking out of the masked man's throat. His voice gurgled as he tried to talk. His clothes became soaked in a deep red. After a few seconds, his body fell. Before that, however, Jason had swiped the gun from his grasp and quickly unloaded it
before tossing each piece aside.

"Where's your 'god' now?" Jason asked quietly, kneeling down to where the bleeding man could hear him. His coughs and sudden jolts of attempted movement signified that he heard Jason. He was merely too busy drowning in his own blood to make a rebuttal. Also, there was something else at play. I looked out of the shattered window and saw Roy waiving. Kory was with him on the roof of the building near the bus. Jason must have somehow contacted them without my knowledge. Clever dick. Jason then yanked the arrow out of the man's jugular, splattering blood everywhere.

"Come on. We can't stay here." Jason said, grabbing my upper arm and pulling me behind him. His grip wasn't gentle and sort of hurt. I wasn't about to say anything, though. I felt a sense of pity as Jason and I stepped over the man's bloody body. He died in a very painful way. I noticed that the veins in the man's neck had faded into a greenish color. I suspected that the arrow Roy shot him with was some sort of fast acting, tranquilizing agent. That must have been why his hand didn't fire the gun after being shot. Jason kicked the bus doors open and we got off. I could hear sirens approaching fast.

"Shit." Jason cursed. Right after that, Roy's voice got our attention from the roof of the building next to us. It was a small apartment complex. Then Kory descended down and grabbed us both by the back of our shirts and then flew us up to the roof, joining Roy.

"Could it have taken you any longer?" Jason asked, looking over at the police and ambulances arriving at the scene.

"Dude, I had to go by the apartment and grab my gear while Kory pinpointed your exact location. I think we did pretty good, man" Roy fired back.

"Did you use a poison arrow?" I interjected to Roy.

"Yeah, dude. Good eye." He answered, confirming my suspicions.

"What did the man in the clown mask desire? Money?" Kory asked with a hand on each hip.

"No. He just wanted to kill people for shits and giggles, I guess. Fucking lunatic." Jason responded, after letting out a great sigh. Then his eyes turned to me.

"Those people were lucky you were on that bus, kid. Because if you weren't I would've just snapped his neck at the beginning and not given a shit about any stray bullets hitting anyone." He spouted out, his index finger stabbing me in the chest hard enough to leave a bruise. He spoke as if there was a bad taste in his mouth. I was speaking as if he was trying to convince me, but I suspected that he was trying to convince himself for the sake of his pride.

"You're right. I'm sure saving that little boy had nothing to do with it." I argued sarcastically, as I pushed his finger away and looked him in the eye. He sighed and turned away from me. I was right and he knew it.

"Shut the hell up, Tim." He responded. Like it or not, I'd changed Jason for the better. Rather, Jason had chosen to change because of how much he cared about me. Also, deep down, Jason has a kind heart. Why was that so hard for him to see? Furthermore, why did he openly reject it?

"Let's go. I'm exhausted." Jason said, looking down at all the people getting off the bus. We could hear all their cries, their words, and testimonies.

*Jason's Point of View*
It was a nice night out. I gazed at the stars from the roof of an old building far from the bright busy lights of the city. This way the clear night sky was visible. I really wish I could see it like this more often. I took another swig of my beer before kicking back on the roof, still watching the stars in the sky. It was so relaxing. The only thing missing here was Tim and a bottle of wine. I bet I can get him to drink that. We'd have a fun night. We'll get a little fucked up, maybe fool around some. I've always wanted to see Tim drunk. He's always so uptight. It wouldn't hurt him to have a drink once in a while. I thought about how funny Tim would be with a little booze in his system as I took another gulp of my beer. That's when I heard it. It was laughter. It was that fucking psychotic laugh that made the very hairs on the back of my neck stand up. My breathing began to speed up with my heart. Sweat was accumulating at my palms. To think that I, Jason Todd, would be scared of this demonic laugh made me angry. I knew who that laughter belonged to and I was about to forever silence him. I wanted to snap his neck. No, that would be too painless. I wanted to make that bastard suffer. I could set him on fire and watch him burn alive. Or I could drown him, ensuring that his lungs fill up with water so he can no longer laugh. Whatever I was going to do, I needed to do it soon because the laughter was getting louder with each step I took. Out of the corner of my eye I saw something move. I immediately turned completely in that direction and fired my gun several times. When I stopped firing I found myself breathing extremely hard. It was like I had just ran a mile. I heard a noise behind me, but before I could turn my head I was struck by something hard and metal.

I woke up inside an old shed or warehouse. There were tools on the wall. It was dark. The only light was from the full moon shining in through a half shattered window. There was only one door in this small I had no idea where the hell I was. I tried to get up, but I discovered that my hands and feet were bound by metal cuffs. Any gear I had before was gone, along with my jacket, shoes, and gloves. The concrete floor was cold against my bare feet and hands. I could see my breath. It was too familiar. I’d seen this place before. I’d been here. This place was too creepy. It was like I knew where I was, but I didn’t want to remember. Then I noticed two things. The first was that I was not only missing some articles of clothing and some guns. I was in another outfit, an outfit I had grown to despise and curse. I was wearing my old Robin suit, minus the belt, cape, gloves, and shoes. The second thing I picked up on almost made my heart stop for a few seconds. I was not alone in this room. I looked up, helplessly as a tall, lanky figure approached from the shadows. I heard something else that I couldn’t quite make out. It sounded as though something metal was being dragged across the concrete floor by the mysterious man. The screeching sound was very unsettling. Coupled with the metallic screeching was that insane, murderous laughter. The mad man stepped partway out of the shadows before lifting the crowbar over his head. I could barely make out his white face and abnormally large smile, but there was no mistaking who he was. I began to freak out. I immediately scooted back on the stone floor until I felt my back hit the wall. Numerous screw drivers, wrenches, and other tools descended from higher up the wall due to my panic. He slowly approached me with the old, blood stained crowbar ready to strike. His laughing ceased as he spoke.

"Here’s to old times. Let us look back and remember them fondly." He said, starting to laugh again. As he moved to strike, my eyes slammed shut.

When I opened my eyes again, I saw Tim hovering over me. His face held a concerned expression. I immediately noticed that I was drenched in sweat. I was lying in the bed Tim and I shared. Tears filled my eyes and my heart was pounding. Damn.

"What the hell happened?" I asked, as if it weren't obvious as hell.

"You were having a nightmare, and bad one I think. You were practically screaming in your sleep." Tim answered, worried and slightly frightened. The only light in the room was a lamp on the bed stand, Tim must have clicked on before I woke up.
"What the hell was I saying?" I asked, scared and curious at the same time.

"Things like 'stay away, leave me alone, I'll kill you, stop laughing,' and-" 

"Okay, I get it." I interjected, rubbing the bridge of my nose. I sighed, realizing that it was all just a dream.

"You think I'd be used to this by now." I said, getting up.

"I don't know how anyone can get used to any of it. Even Batman has had sleeping fits like that, worse." Tim said back. I guess he was trying to make me feel somewhat better. I went to the bathroom and took a quick shower while Tim changed the sheets on the bed. I didn't really care if they smelled like sweat, but Tim couldn't stand it. I came out of the bathroom in nothing but boxers.

"Your nightmare was about him, wasn't it?" Tim asked, looking up at me from the bed. I really didn't want to talk about it at the moment, or ever to be honest.

"I don't remember, kid." I replied, rubbing my bloodshot eyes.

"You kept yelling out, 'stop laughing.' It had to be him." He went on. I kept thinking of how to change the subject.

"So, what about your bad dreams? You think I don't notice you freaking out in your sleep. What's that about?" I sort of blurred out, desperate to get the spotlight off of me. I wasn't lying. Tim has had nightmares, even before Slade psychology scarred him for life. Tim would talk in his sleep too. He's a light ass sleeper so he's never too deep into them. If he didn't wake up on his own I would usually just turn him on his side and massage his back and neck until he calmed down. Still, I was curious to know what his dreams were about. By the look on his face, he wasn't too eager to share. He and I had that in common. He let out a sigh before speaking.

"Mine are usually about my parents." He uttered, quiet and with no intention of going into anymore detail. Not that he needed to. I could just use my imagination. So, it was time to change the subject yet again. That's when I noticed a dark spot on Tim's arm. Tim was wearing an old shirt of mine to sleep in so it was kind of big and baggy on him. I still saw something on his arm just barely passed the sleeve.

"What's on your arm?" I asked, grabbing the sleeve and lifting it up. Tim tried to back away, but I wouldn't let him.

"It's nothing." Tim replied a little too late. I knew he was lying. I pulled his arm out and moved his short sleeve up over his shoulder. His arm was small, but had good muscle tone. I saw that there was an enormous bruise running down his shoulder and arm.

"What the hell is this, Tim?" I asked, making him wince as I gently ran two fingers over his bruised shoulder and upper arm. I then put two and two together.

"You've been sneaking out playing hero, haven't you?" I asked, looking him dead in the face. His dark blue eyes didn't find mine, making me believe my guess was right on the money. I was so pissed off. I turned around away from him in an effort to calm down.

"Chill out, babe. I didn't sneak out...the first time." He confessed, a guilty little smile forming. Little shit. I knew that I should have put another tracking chip in his shoulder. I glared at him, not sure where to start.

"Turn around." I said, not amused.
"Jason, I didn't-" Tim started to say before I grabbed his arm that wasn't bruised and turned him around, myself. With his back to me, I lifted his shirt up over his head. It was just as I thought. The bruises were a multitude of dark colors that had no place on his skin. All down his back, there were garish purple splotches, roughly the size of a fist, while others were more grayish, but still looked just as bad. It was horrible. The bruises only complemented the many scars already etched into his pale skin. The muscles in his small upper back tensed up as I gently placed a hand on them. I could hardly bear to look at him like this. Clearly, someone beat the crap out of him.

"Damnit, Tim." I cursed, letting his shirt fall down over his new bruises.

"You should've seen the other guy?" He joked, actually making me want to meet the other guy and
then proceed to break his neck.

"I'm okay. Nothing happened." He quickly replied, turning to face me.

"Sure as hell doesn't like nothing. Who was it?" I raised my voice slightly without realizing it. Why couldn't Tim just obey me? It's not that hard to not go out and start fights with criminals on the streets.

"I'm fine, okay. I took care of it." He said back, ignoring my question.

"Who did this?" I asked again, my hands clenched into fists.

"It was some biker gang. I'd gathered that they'd also robbed a jewelry store last week. One of them in particular was wanted for attempted rape. When I tracked them down they were harassing a woman. At one point, the wanted man forced himself on her. That's when I intervened. I would have attacked a few minutes earlier, but I was waiting for a strategical opening." He said, looking up at me with those deep blue, puppy eyes.

"You shouldn't have even been there, you idiot. How many were there?" I knew I'd regret asking that question. He could tell I was pissed, making him less likely to give me the honest answer, seeing how it was obviously more than two or three.

"Not that many." He danced around the question, as I anticipated. I glared at him, my temper getting shorter.

"Ehem. Uh, twelve." Tim cleared his throat, knowing I was about to get even more pissed off.

"You took on twelve men, alone?! You can't be doing this, Tim. I forbid it. Do you hear me?" I said, gripping his chin and looking into his eyes. He kept looking away from me. I knew what that meant.

"I wouldn't have to sneak off if you'd just let me join the team." He said, pulling his face from my grip.

"Really? We've talked about this. It's too fucking dangerous. What would you even do?" I went on, not wanting to rehash this sensitive topic. Tim was capable, sure, but he'd only slow me down. I'd be worried about him the whole time. Or he'd try and stop me from killing the bad guys and then get pissed off when I do it anyway. I knew coming back to Gotham was a bad idea. I only did it so Tim could see the others more often. He said he'd gone out to eat with Dick a few times. My instincts told me this was where he really was. Don't get me wrong. I'm not over joyed, about not letting him do shit. I can't just keep him in hotels every night.

"I don't know. Maybe, I could be a sort of Robin to you, you know?" He replied, seemingly from nowhere, his eye brows raised and his mouth forming a small grin. I immediately felt the blood go to my head as I blushed. It was really kind of sweet and flattering. I think my heart skipped a beat.

"Wait, are you serious?" The words slipped out of my mouth by mistake.

"I am." He muttered, blushing harder than I was. Tim sure is beautiful, especially when he blushes. I honestly didn't know exactly how the hell to respond at first.

"Precious, but still no, Babybird." I answered, riddled with temptation. I'm not going to lie. That sounded really nice, and it's not like I haven't thought about letting Tim join us on some (seriously low risk) missions like crowd control on occasion. However, his reluctance to kill and his presence would only cause problems. Instead of focusing on the job, I'd mostly likely be concerned with his whereabouts. Plus, I can hear Dick now.

I was not about to put Tim in harms way and I never wanted to give Dick the satisfaction. It would just be another way to look down on me. I was already the bat family failure in their eyes.

"It's not fair, Jason. I am Robin. You can't take that away from me." He said, defiantly.

"Why not? It was taken from me." I snapped back, impulsively.

"We all have to move on, sometime. Your time as Robin is over. Get over it." I added, dragging his head up a few inches by his hair so that he was looking at me. He didn't like that. In fact, I think he wanted to hit me. I really didn't get him. He kept on begging me to not treat him like a kid, but then he made all these stupid ass decisions.

"Well, who the hell are you?!" He blurted out of nowhere. I let go of his hair as he jerked away, stepping backward. I took a deep breath and sighed.

"Tim, calm down. You're making a bigger deal out of this than it needs to be." I said, slowly reaching a hand out to cup his cheek. His hand caught my forearm before I could reach his face.

"No. You don't understand." He spat, starting to really get pissed off. What the hell was he talking about?

"What? What don't I understand about you endangering yourself just for the good of other people who don't appreciate or even really acknowledge what you do? You, Dick, and Barbra risk your lives for people who wouldn't waste two seconds helping you if the roles were reversed. The way you all have been taught to see the world sickens me. All of you and Bruce, trying to be something you're not, a solution to the evils in this world. I understand perfectly, Tim. You need to grow up." I roared back, gripping both Tim's wrists so he couldn't push me away. I pulled him closer and tried to look him in the eyes. He just looked at the ground until I was done.

"You don't mean that. You're lying. If you really meant what you just said, then why did you save that little boy from that lunatic in the clown mask? You're the one that needs to mature. Maybe then you'll see the world through something other than the cynical lenses that you force yourself to look though." He snapped, now glaring into my eyes. Tears gathered in his eyes with every word.

"I don't-" was all I could say before he cut me off.

"By the way, have you ever taken how I feel into consideration?" He tried to get out of my grip, but I didn't let go. I was now holding both of his forearms in place.

"Of course, Tim. You know I'd do anything for you. I'm just not willing to put your life on the line." I said angrily, gritting my teeth and pulling him closer.

"Is that why you disappear every other night?" That was a low blow on his part. He knew that was basically how we made our money and that what I did was necessary violence. Once again he cut me off, but this time it was before I could even respond.

"You think it's okay to just leave me here while you go on missions and kill drug bosses? I'm stuck here wondering if you're going to come back through that door again. I mean, it's no secret that most of the drug lords, including the ones you protect, want the Red Hood dead. So, I sit here, unable to sleep. All I can do is just pray that you're okay and that you'll come back to me. It's fucking cruel." He went on, tears continuing to fill his eyes. I could tell that he was trying hard not to cry. His face wasn't sad, though. It was more angry. I was more or less speechless. He'd just get even more riled
up if I told him to calm down. He hated that. I couldn't help but notice that I may have been missing his point. I wasn't a huge fan of Tim's logic.

"So you can get shot, again? If I get hurt, I'll walk it off. You almost died the last time you took a bullet." I exclaimed, holding his arms tighter.

"Stop talking like that!" He snapped again, ripping his arms from my grasp. His forearms and wrists were red and swollen. I knew they were going to bruise, which was not my intention.

"Like what?" I replied, clueless.

"As if your life is worth less than mine is"

"Look at me. Look at what I've done. Trust me, kid. My life is nothing compared to yours." I said, shame and guilt coursing through every word. Tim rested a hand gently against my still damp abdomen. For a moment we were silent.

"Not to me." He said as his expression softened. His hand then turned into a fist seconds later.  

"How the hell do you think I would feel if you died, and I could have been there to help you?" He asked, quieter than before. The tension thickened.

"Alive." I answered stoically, looking into his eyes. His eyelids closed slightly, as if he was disappointed in what I had just said. Then, he tuned around and started walking towards the door without a word. I still didn't understand what I did wrong. I did, however, notice Tim's forearms. They bared red imprints of my hands and fingers. I knew in the back of my mind that it was going to leave bruises. Damnit, I really didn't mean to keep leaving bruises on his body. Surprise, I still needed to work on my anger. Tim suggested I see Dr. Leslie, myself. I didn't like that idea. Still, Tim wasn't making a fuss about his arms even though I knew they had to hurt. Also, I wasn't about to let him just walk out of the room and be mad at me. As Tim barely opened our bedroom door, I quickly slammed it shut and leaned against it.

"C'mon, Tim." I sighed.

"I don't want to fight." I pleaded, still leaning against the door and preventing him from exiting the room. I'm not going to lie. I really thought that if I tried to put the moves on him, he may chill out a little bit. It beats fighting and arguing, anyway.

"I don't understand you, Jason. You brought me along with you and the others just so I could remain in an apartment for the rest of my life? I'm still technically missing, so I can't go back to school in Gotham. You strip me of my identity as Robin. Then you get mad at me when I continue to fight crime. How am I supposed to feel about all that?" He went on, his arms folded and his eyes diverted from mine. I immediately pushed him against the wall. Both my arms were on either side of him, boxing him in. He seemed surprised, but now he was looking me in the eyes with such intensity.

"Protected. I want you to feel protected. Obviously, you still feel trapped." I said with a soft expression. As I moved in closer, Tim began to blush. He smelled really good.

"I wouldn't say-" he attempted to argue, but I didn't let him.

"It's okay, babybird. We'll figure something out." I whispered into his ear, making his heart pump quicker. I could feel it pounding.

"Don't move." I muttered into his neck before I began softly kissing the space where his shoulder and neck met. His breathing become much deeper. The kisses turned to playful nibbles that made
him let out a soft moan. My hand pulled his head to the side by his hair to give me more room. His body was trembling. This was the first time we'd fooled around in a while. The whole incident with Slade left Tim damaged and he was still getting over it. My hand went under his t-shirt to caress his tight little chest and torso. Tim really took to this, as his mouth interlocked with mine. Before he and I met, Tim didn't receive much romantic attention. Mostly, because it wasn't very high on his priority list. As far as I know, his only crush was on Superboy, and those feelings were not reciprocated. Lucky for me. As a result, his self image wasn't the greatest by any means. I've learned that he responds best to me showing him that I am insanely attracted to him. He wasn't too big into getting verbal compliments, but I never give a shit. As we kissed, my tongue found Tim's, opening his mouth more so I could deepen the kiss. I knew he liked it when I did that. I felt his hands run down my chest and abdomen. I think it's so funny that I he loves those diagonal dents that run from my hip bone to my groin. To this day, I don't know what those things are called, but my babybird loves touching them. My hands found Tim's waist and then slowly slid down his lower back, grabbing a handful of Tim's butt over his sweatpants. I can never get enough of it. It's so tight and hard. Tim always got a little nervous when I first touched him. After making out for a few more hot minutes, one hand made its way down the back of Tim's sweatpants and boxers. That's when I really got turned on. Tim's bare ass felt so amazing in my hand. Then I nudged him over to the bed, almost tripping over a pair of my shoes. Then I pulled him on top of me with a leg on either side of me.

"Take it off, babe." I said, lifting up his shirt as his thin legs straddled me. I couldn't help but become aroused as his ass hovered over my lap. I wasn't alone. However, he seemed just a little reluctant for some reason. I know he wanted to fool around. Trust me, if he didn't we wouldn't have been doing it. I just wrote it off as aftermath from everything he'd been through evolving Slade. Besides, Tim has always been insecure about his body for some strange reason. I don't mind being patient, but it was different this time. His hands proceeded to follow my suggestion while I sat back and let my eyes take it all in. His tight, lean torso was nothing but muscle, baby. He blushed the entire time as my hands traveled up and down his compact, muscular chest and tight stomach.
"Oh my god, I don't deserve you, Tim. So beautiful." I managed to get out, making Tim blush down to his chest. I don't know why Tim always seemed put off when I use the word 'beautiful' to describe him. It's funny because it is a gross understatement. I always got the feeling that not many people ever told Tim how special he really was. Not Bruce, Barbara, Dick, or even any of the Titans. They all just took advantage of him as Robin, and he has the scars to prove it. Speaking of, I noticed that he had a few new scars. Tim had to have acquired them from his little skirmish with some of the thugs he'd fought in secret, recently. My fingers felt the sudden different texture with each gentle and loving touch. My lips found his chest as I pulled him closer to me. His arms wrapped around my neck as his breathing gradually became deeper and more sensual. I felt the warmth of his breath against my ear, instantly making me melt. This was an instant turn on. I instinctly flipped him over onto the bed. I restrained both hands above his head with one hand while the other cupped his angelic face as I hovered over him. His naturally smooth body was calling for mine. Just as my free hand had made its way to Tim's pelvis I heard the door open. There was no knocking before hand. I turned to look at who the fuck was interrupting this moment. It was Dick. Dick Grayson was standing in the doorway as Nightwing, tights and all. At least I assume he was standing in the doorway before I turned my head. It was a bit of a blur because just as my head turned, a fist
forcefully connected with my jaw, knocking me off the bed.

"What the hell, Jason? What's wrong with you?" Dick whined in a voice that even a mother could kill. Tim quickly put his shirt back on and tried his best to hide the guilty expression on his face, which was a deep red from embarrassment. Great. I wanted to answer Grayson's question. I really did, but for the life of me, I couldn't resist. I immediately returned the favor with a right hook to his pretty boy jawline, knocking his black and blue ass to the floor with a thud. He instantly got to his feet, pulling two short stick like staffs out from the pouches in the back of his costume. As I understand it, those weapons are escrima sticks made from a high density polymer, making them nearly impossible to break. I was about to violently shove them up his bat cave and see how he liked it.
"What the fuck are you doing, Grayson?" I shouted with the taste of blood in my mouth. He rose up quickly and answered.

"I couldn't help it. He's my brother kind of thing, you know? My bad." He smirked, wiping away the blood on his chin. His voice was electric with sarcasm, that tights wearing, cock blocking mother fucker. Tim jumped between us, facing Dick.

"Can't the two of you act even slightly more mature than the average caveman?" He scolded us, his face still red as hell.

"I'm not the one who just showed up outta nowhere and started decking people for no reason!" I exclaimed, holding back the urge to punch Dick again.

"Oh, I can find a reason." That smug asshole said.

"Enough." Tim said, as if a parent to small children. He turned to Dick, glaring at him. He went ahead and sheathed his little toys after that.

"What is it, Dick? It's not like you to show up unannounced or at all, really." He asked, giving me a second or two to simmer down.

"Sorry for the intrusion. Roy let me in. And as much as it pains me to say, I'm actually here for your help." Dick sighed, taking another shot at me. I knew he was referring to more than just Tim because of his wording. What kind of mullet wearing asshole punches you in the face and then asks for your help? (He didn't currently have a mullet, but he did once. I'm never letting it go.) Why in hell would I want to help him?!


"C'mon, I'll explain it to all four of you in the other room." He urged us to all scurry into the living room. Meanwhile, I put on a shirt and sweat pants.

"Three." Roy corrected him.

"Where's Starfire?" Dick asked, like a disappointed child on Christmas morning.

"With the Titans." Roy replied, almost as equally bummed out. They'd become close recently. Then we continued into the living room that also merged with the kitchen. As I walked past him, I really tried to contain it, but I couldn't help myself.

"By the way, it was exactly what it looked like." I smirked, his eyes burning with anger at me. I think he was about to try and land another sucker punch on me, but Tim intervened.

"Jason, shut up!" He scolded me, before rubbing the bridge of his nose with his fingers. Dick then followed us into the living room where Roy was awkwardly standing around. He had guilt all over his face. He knew he shouldn't have just let Dick in without giving me a little warning.

"Okay" Dick sighed.

"GPD Officer, Donald Peak, was taken from his apartment two hours ago. We suspect the ones who did it were under the orders of the Joker." He said, suddenly making the air thick with tension. It just become much more serious.

"What makes you think that?" I asked, interrupting him.
"Well, the clown has been busy. We think that he has been recruiting numerous young adults into some sort of new group or gang, unlike his previous ones. You recently had a run in with one of them." He explained. Then I pictured that weird fucker wearing the clown mask on the bus. I thought that guy was just a lunatic.

"Unfortunately, because you killed him we weren't able to question him." Dick looked at me accusingly.

"We save a bus load full of civilians. Where the fuck were you?" I asked, glaring back at him. He broke eye contact and continued to explain.

"I, along with Babs, were actually interrogating others that we were able to apprehend. A young woman in northern Gotham attempted to plant a bomb in a public school. She recently graduated from college and landed a job as a third grade teacher. It was amazing we caught her. Another guy who had actually killed his children and wife, and stored their bodies in a shed he kept in his back yard." Dick pulled out a touch screen phone and showed us a gruesome photo taken from the scene.

"My God." Roy muttered. This was some pretty deep shit, even for us.

"We didn't just kill the man on the bus because it was easy. He was shooting people point blank. Excessive force was..." Tim paused, trying not to say what he was about to say.

"Necessary, I'm afraid." Tim finished, looking downward at the floor ashamed at what he'd said. Dick's eyes widened through his mask. Then they darted at me.

"Really? It's not enough that he stays with you, but now you have him thinking like you too?" Dick said, trying to make me feel guilty. It wasn't working. That man in the mask had it coming. If we didn't kill him there would've been more casualties and then the police would've shot him anyway. Dick and Tim both knew that. Dick was just acting stupid by denying that.

"That's enough." Tim interjected, stepping in front of me and looking Dick in his face.

"Back to the matter at hand, please." He requested in an irritated voice. He was getting more and more pissed as Dick and I went back and forth. I was hoping he'd have enough and tell Dick to get out.

"You mentioned the Joker. What is his connection to these people?" I questioned, with good reason. There were tons of crazy people in Gotham. If this really was the work of that demented clown, I had a legitimate interest.

"They were all wearing clown masks." Tim answered a fraction of a second before Dick could.

"That, among other things." Dick added, before the coffee maker beeped. Tim went over and poured me and Dick a cup.

"Can we rule out a Joker copycat? Many people emulate the Joker and share his views." Tim asked, hoping that was the case.

"It's him. All these people we've apprehended have admitted to being entirely dedicated to the Joker. They have totally embraced his psychopathic ideals and even view them as if they were a full blown religion." He said before taking a sip of his coffee. Just thinking about the Joker made my blood boil. Now the freak was starting a club?

"If that weren't enough, the man who had murdered his family had also carved permanent smiles into their faces. The coroner suspects they were still alive when he did this." Dick continued, as Tim's
eyes widened and fists clenched. I knew what he was thinking.

"About two days ago, a 26-year-old woman showed up at Gotham PD in pretty bad shape. Her face was carved up almost beyond recognition. She was badly beaten as well. She was raving about the Joker. According to her statement, he has acquired access to a large number of people for reasons unknown. She said her boyfriend of two years had stopped talking to her all of the sudden and then just disappeared. His medical records show he'd been diagnosed with severe mental issues in the past. He's been in and out of psych wards all his life. Supposedly, the girl was one of his psychological anchors. She helped him get and even let him move in with her." This man and I seemed to have more in common than I thought. We've both needed overs to keep us grounded, sane. Without Dick saying, I knew where this story was going.

"One night after meeting with her to break up, she decided to follow him and he led her into an old, run down hospital. She said that it looked like a meeting place for several people of different genders, all wearing creepy clown masks. Once discovered, her boyfriend carved up her face with a pocket knife, screaming that it was in the name of the Joker. After numerous beatings, she pretended to be dead. They left her there in the hospital. After they left, she managed to get a ride to the police station. Somehow, she survived." he continued.

"She is lucky to have been able to survive in such condition." Tim muttered, almost to himself. It's sad because not only did she suffer, but she's going to have to live with it until she dies. Tim was wrong. She wasn't lucky. As a mental note, I gave her five years before she commits suicide and I didn't even know her name.

"Her boyfriend was 25-year-old Tyler O'Brien, paranoid schizophrenic with a history of heroin use. This was the man who attacked the bus you were on." Dick went on, making me wish I'd snapped that bastard's neck on the bus, myself. This whole situation was scary and infuriating.

"If the Joker really is involved, we're going to need everyone, especially Batman." Tim stated, glancing over to me. He still seemed reluctant to admit the Joker was really behind this, probably for my sake.

"The Joker's involved, alright. We believe he's gathered numerous people, ages 15 to 35, with a history of serious mental issues and formed some kind of cult like group." I almost choked on my coffee when Dick said that.

"What the hell do you mean, a cult?" I asked, freaked the fuck out.

"I mean that the Joker is taking advantage of these people by preying on the weaknesses of their poor mental health. He's putting crazy truths and ideas into their head that make them want to go out and kill for him." Dick answered.

"I've heard of these sort of tactics. Military leaders and historic dictators have used such barbaric methods. Being able to get people to go against their own will, their instincts, is a dangerous ability in the hands of anyone, let alone the Joker." Tim stated, looking anxious as hell.

"Not everyone has the talent to reprogram the minds of others." Dick added as he took a seat.

"The Joker can. He can do it without even trying." I accidentally let my thoughts translate into words. It was quiet for a minute. Tim broke the silence. He seemed to know a lot about this, just like always.

"Brainwashing. Some groups, like cults and extremist organizations, will take people who are suggestible and feel a need for belonging, isolate them, indoctrinate them, and affect their beliefs in
certain ways, but usually the shifts in belief are accomplished more by peer pressure than by any kind of advanced mind control technique or technology. In this case, it's more likely that peer pressure has taken a back seat to mental illness. It would almost be ingenious if it were not so disgusting." Tim spat, probably recalling what it was like to be under the complete control of another. I could tell he was taking it personally. I put a hand on his shoulder to try and help ease his state of mind. He recoiled at my touch, so I simply moved slower.

"Well, we know that the crazy bastard has managed to brainwash at least fifty people, maybe more, into thinking that he is some sort of god. That's the most information we can get out of any of them. The ones we've captured and questioned are all completely and utterly subservient to him. They'd die before they'd talk." He finished. I almost said something, but held my tongue.

"So, you're saying that all these mentally unstable people have drank the Joker's cool-aid?" Roy asked, blatantly. After he said this, we all just sort of looked at him.

"That's more or less exactly what I'm saying." Dick answered, with an eyebrow raised beneath his mask. Then he turned to Tim and cleared his throat.

"As for Batman, we haven't heard from him." My eyes widened at what he'd just said.

"You haven't heard from him? What the hell does that mean?" Tim demanded, just as confused as me.

"You heard me. He's been gone for almost seven months now."

"Explain!" Tim cut him off, making me want to actually tape his mouth shut for a brief second.

"Calm down, Tim. After Jason," Dick looked over at me accusingly. I leaned against the wall, my arms folded.

"Appropriated you, Batman, Barbra, and myself went through hell trying to find you. We turned over criminals that aren't easily dealt with. We busted Cobblepot, and basically started a gang war. That's still a pretty big issue in Gotham right now, so you know." His glare met mine and our gaze fought it out. It wasn't my fault they can't handle their precious city. Still, messing with Penguin without good reason is not good for business, I've been told. That's why if I were to deal with his organization, I would have him swimming with the fishes in the metaphorical way.

"After no leads for nearly two months, Bruce almost lost it. He questioned almost every thug in Gotham until he went too far and gave a burglar a severe concussion. He recovered, but Bruce began to become more aggressive just like the, uh, last time." Grayson cleared his throat before speaking. He was, of course referring to my death. Apparently, before he recruited Tim, Bruce went on a violent streak after I died and came back. His reasoning was ridiculous. The bat giving a crook a concussion is the equivalent of a boo boo, tops.

"So, he and Selena went to an island located somewhere in the Caribbean Sea looking for you. He's searching for Ra's al Ghul. He thought he might somehow be involved with your disappearance. I tried to go with him. We all did, but he insisted we continue the search for you elsewhere." Dick took another sip of his coffee, smug prick. I could have punched him in his perfect jawline.

"Damn, dude. Did heat least tell you anything else?" Roy asked, dumbfounded once more.

"All I know is that he's deep under cover, so deep that we can't reach him. He's not alone, though. Selena is with him." He answered, seemingly responding politely to Roy only.

"We have to find him and tell him to call off the search!" Tim exclaimed, pissed off at Dick for not
going anyway. I think he was pissed off at me too because I wouldn't let him contact them. I sighed.

"We can't." Dick said simply.

"He had ulterior motives for going after Ra's. I don't know what, but he's working a case, a big one." He continued, egging Tim on.

"So, you aren't even worried about him?" Tim asked, instantly with rage behind his usual timid voice.

"Of course I am, but we have a responsibility to protect Gotham. Besides, you know Bruce and Selena can handle themselves." He said, just before catching Tim's right hook to his jaw. He actually beat me to it. Dick fell over backwards in his seat. Shit. I was waiting for him to get up and come at Tim because I was ready for an excuse to wreck his face.

"You told me he didn't want to see me, that he was too busy. You made me think this entire time that he has been disappointed in me for being kidnapped and disapproves of the rest." Tim shouted out, standing over Dick who was still on the floor rubbing his jaw. I'm surprised he could still talk.

"I couldn't trust you then, okay. I mean, look who you're hanging around these days, Tim. I had my reasons, okay. I know Jason has ties with Talia Al Ghoul." He stood to his feet, only to tempt me to knock him back down.

"I'm sorry, Tim." He said in a sort of nasty, bittersweet way.

"You're only telling us this now because you need our help." I stated the truth. It was written all over his masked face. Meanwhile, Tim walked past him, heading to our bedroom. Dick grabbed his arm, but Tim snatched it away as if he was expecting it.

"Don't touch me. Come on, Jason. We can't let any more cops be abducted. We're leaving tomorrow." I knew exactly what Tim meant and I really didn't like that shit. There was no way we were going to the fucking mansion. I was in no position to argue at that moment, but it was coming. I just needed to wait for Tim to simmer down. I curled a noticeable grin on my face while passing Dick, behind Tim. It was immature, sure, but I couldn't help it.

"Oh, and you can go now, Nightstick." I told him as I looked at him and gestured toward the entrance to the hotel room.

"Fuck you, Jason." He uttered in defeat. Then it was quiet as he made his way toward the door.

"So, does this mean I get to meet Alfred?" Roy blurted out, making me wonder what the fuck he was on and why the fuck he wasn't sharing.
Tim's Point of View

We made our way to the mansion, more than reluctantly, I might add. It took a great deal of begging, screaming, and then reasoning with Jason in order to get him to even consider such an endeavor. I was still majorly pissed at Dick, but dealing with the killer clown was more important. Even Jason knew that if we were going to find the Joker we would need to work together with Dick, Barbra, and whoever else would help. To do that, we couldn't be cities apart. Having access to the bat cave meant having an all but forgotten treasure trove of resources. Although, I would try and put up a front, I was not overly eager to return either. I did not exactly know why. Perhaps, shame? Pride? I couldn't put my finger on it exactly, but I did recognize that my time spent with Jason had set off a great change within me, and I was beginning to become aware of it. This became even more apparent just before entering Wayne manor for the first time in almost a year. From the outside, I always thought it resembled a giant castle with balconies and a gloomy demeanor.

That, however, could be attributed to Gotham's weather or Bruce's lingering taste in aesthetics. It was amazing how much impact Bruce's influence was still very much present, even though he was not. Stone gargoyles stood guard on either side of the main doors, as if looking down on me for doing something wrong. I'd seen them a hundred times before. I suppose they had never had this sort of impact. After one look, my gaze guiltily avoided them. As soon as I set foot onto the beautify sculpted marble floor of the mansion I felt plagued with an unwelcoming feeling of disdain and contempt. It was if my presence here was not really wanted and that every step I took was an insult to everything Batman ever stood for. I soon realized that I was not alone in feeling this way. Jason had to have been close to popping a blood vessel due to his anxiousness. After arriving, Dick threw an arm over Roy and seemed to avoid Jason and I.

"Come on, I'll show you to the guest room, dude. You'll love it. 60 inch TV and video games out the wazoo!" I heard Dick say to Roy before the two of them strayed from us. Roy and Dick did seem to hit it off pretty well, though I think that just made Jason a little jealous, a quality that is quite predictable for him. I had forgotten how large this place was. I had also forgotten how overwhelming it can be. I had become so used to hotels and condos. No matter how extremely nice they were, the manor never failed to be the most extravagant. Of course, the Maine hall housed long and winding staircases, each leading to different corridors and rooms on each side of the enormous Wayne house. Beautiful new paintings were arranged along the walls and exquisite red curtains lined every window. There in the main hall, I admired the ornately carved scroll and leaf columns upon the dark brown mantle for the massive fire place.

Above the mantle's marble stone top, hung a giant familiar portrait of a young Bruce Wayne and his late parents, a beautiful young woman with piercing eyes wearing pearls around her neck, and a strapping dark haired man in business attire that strongly resembled Bruce, say for the mustache. Then there was a young Bruce, all dressed up in a little suite with the hand of his father resting on his little shoulder. Even in the painting I could see the child like wonder that used to fill his blue eyes, a wonder that has since rotted away into a deep foreboding, analytical gaze that you're not sure is even really alive anymore. This painting had been in this room well before I was even born. Its immaculate condition was truly amazing. I looked over and saw Jason gazing at the portrait as well. I was not sure when the last time time Jason had been here. All I know, is that it was before my time as Robin. Suddenly, a familiar glimmer of comfort and nostalgia erupted within me as I saw Alfred.

"My word. Master Timothy." He said, wide eyed, his small mustache and nearly bald head being exactly as I remembered it. I instantly ran up to him and squeezed his waste, wrinkling his suite a bit.
He didn't care. With a smile, he reciprocated the hug.

"I trust you've been eating well, sir." Alfred nagged, but it was his nagging that I had missed, among other things.

"Oh, he's eating well. In fact, he's got us all on a huge low calorie diet. It'd be a bigger issue for me if his cooking wasn't so damn good. I take it that's your fault, huh Alfred?" Jason walked up behind me with his over sized duffle bag swung over his shoulder. Alfred's face immediately lit up like the frick'n Fourth of July.

"Master Jason, it's been such a long time." His old eyes became wet with tears and exposed a part of him that seemed tired and weary. This was very unusual for the man.

"Come, let us all sit down. I've prepared a pot of tea." Jason could not help but blush at Alfred's response to seeing him. He quickly pulled Jason close into a well over due hug. At first Jason awkwardly stood there, not knowing what to do, but then leaned into the hug with a small, endearing grin, making the moment even more heartfelt. Alfred has never been the type judge any of us based on any mistakes we may have made in the past. He always valued family above all else and never hesitated to call even Batman out when he thought he was in the wrong. He had always had this warm, loving, glow surrounding him. I could talk to him about anything, and it had been far too long since we'd had one of our conversations over his delicious tea.

Jason's Point of View

After Alfred and I became re acquainted, he insisted on taking everyone's dishes to the kitchen to be washed. I noticed that Roy was no where to be found. I assumed that Dick had showed him to a room. Roy and Dick used to be close back in the day. I guess that's why he can dismiss the whole killing thing when it comes to him. Me? No way. He'd never go easy on me for killing criminals, especially now. Dick and I were never as close as he was with Roy or even Tim for that matter. Hell, he treats Tim like his actual kid brother. He never made me feel like that. Instead, he always made me feel like I'd never be good enough to be a Robin. There has always been this wall between us. We never were close, and he and I rarely saw eye to eye on anything. So, not much has changed in those ways. I was about as happy about being here as Dick was. Spoilers: not very much. I hated returning to this place. So many memories were rushing through my mind at once. The only positive distraction was seeing Alfred again. He really was the type to keep it real. I knew this from experience. Truthfully, I hated putting him though so much pain, but we all have our own personal truths and they are not all the same. None the less, he didn't seem to care. All he cared about was my well being, as well as Tim's. Alfred truly was the only part of being Robin that I miss. And here he was, still holding Bruce together by some miracle. Hopefully, Bruce didn't do something stupid like get killed by Ras'. Alfred would break into pieces. Bruce didn't deserve Alfred. Some people in this world are indescribably amazing. Alfred is in that category, as is Tim, who ironically enough dozed off on the fine leather couch sitting up, his head leaning on me slightly. Of course, I didn't mind. I took notice that Tim did need a haircut. His dark bangs swept down over his eyes. He was still adorable as ever, though. Not five minutes after Alfred exited the room, Dick came strolling in with a coffee cup in his hand. He was in pajamas. It had to have been at least 2 am. Tonight must have been his off night. Or, he just purposely took off to bug the shit out of me, which was entirely possible. Either way, I rolled my eyes when he walked into the enormous living room. For the first 2-3 minutes it was quiet, the calm before the storm. However, it was awkward as fuck. I resisted the urge to violently let out a loud

"What?!" but I didn't. Tim's ass would have been proud had he been conscious. I actually tried to wake Tim by awkwardly shrugging a couple of times. It didn't work. He continued to nap with his head still using my shoulder as a pillow. Finally, Dick broke the god forsaken silence. If there were
ever a time for a super villain to attack, this would have been the absolute best time to do so. Hell, I'd settle for the Kool Aid Man breaking through the wall. Dick and Tim had been emailing and making phone calls since we were discovered. I know that every time they talk, Dick just criticizes the hell out of me and the relationship that Tim and I have. I also happen to know that Barbra seems to be firmly against it for some stupid ass reason. I think Tim said she had been avoiding talking to him. I don't know. It all makes me mad.

"So" Dick stated, pacing around the sofa.

"So, What?" I asked, ready to get this over with if it's got to fucking happen.

"I'm going to be honest. I don't like you and Tim being together. I'm not trying to start a fight. You know, for Tim's sake." Bitch knew I'd kick his ass. I had to at least try to talk it out.

"I get it, Dick for brains. You don't approve. Neither does Barbra. We all know, even Tim. And I'm sorry the two of you can't just be happy for us. I'm not sorry for me. I'm sorry for Tim. He's the one you're hurting, not me. You think I really give two shits about what you guys think? Tim, however, does." I shot back, trying to inflict damage, yet also be truthful to the situation. I think this made Dick mad.

"You know, we're eventually going to have to stop hating each other, for his sake." I sighed, looking down at Tim's dark and messy hair, and shifting it partly out of his sleeping eyes. I looked up at Dick, who held a pissed off look on his stupid face.

"And What is that, Dickie bird?" I sighed, growing ever so tired of this bullshit. All of a sudden, Tim started to stir. Incomprehensible words began to come from his mouth. He was having a nightmare. Dick's gazed shifted from me to Tim.

"What's wrong with him?" Dick asked, startled. I doubt he wanted Tim to hear our conversation. I knew Tim was asleep though. I could always tell. His breathing gives it away.

"He has nightmares, like the rest of us. That's all." I began to gently stroke Tim's lower back. A few moments later he didn't stir anymore. Dick let out a sigh of annoyance. Personally, I thought he was jealous of how I could be there for Tim and he couldn't. He only had himself to blame for this. He had far more time to get to know Tim than I had, and yet he didn't. That's the way I see it anyway.

"What's the deal? Why are you doing this, Jason?" Dick pleaded, both hands plunged onto the expensive, glass coffee table in front of us. I was fighting an overwhelming urge to knock him though a wall. Then, however, Alfred would just have to clean it up and sew his stitches and I didn't want to add to his work load. At first I tried ignore him. He was trying to trigger me.

"You and Tim. What are you getting out of it? Sex? Revenge? What?" He spat maliciously. I slowly stood up, carefully gathering Tim up over my shoulder. I wasn't going to listen to this. Miraculously, Tim didn't wake up. He only quietly moaned for a second. Little guy was tired as hell. This was most likely due to he and I arguing the entire night before.
"Yeah, because it's so impossible for someone like me to legitimately care about anyone else, let alone Tim. You're such a patronizing asshole. I don't know what I can do to prove to you that there is no ulterior motive here. There is no money, no plan, nothing except Tim's protection and well being." I replied, starting up the giant staircase.

"I just have trouble believing that someone who kills for money has Tim's best interest at heart. Besides, I know you. If you're not getting anything out of it, you're not interested." He continued to try me.

"The best thing you can do FOR TIM is accept it and not act like it's a big deal." I started, Tim's unconscious body over my shoulder.

"Tim and I are by no means perfect, but we're happy. Is that not enough for you, Grayson?" I glared into his deep blue, envy filled eyes and puzzled expression.

"You're happy? You've just tricked Tim into thinking he's happy. People don't change, Jason. You're manipulating the boy for some selfish end goal." Dick spat, nearly spilling his coffee.
"What the hell are you on about?" I rolled my eyes again.

"Alright, tell me Jason. How can someone be happy if they aren't free?" He glared at me triflingly, my hand silently cracking the teacup in my grasp.

"Tim is free. In fact, he can leave whenever he wants. The moment he wants us to end, I will end it. I promise." Dick still looked at me with a gaze of disbelief.

"He's the best thing that's ever happened to me. I just," I sighed.

"I just want to protect him." I assured him with all my might, trying not to sound too sappy and bitchish.

"Is that why you kidnapped him? People want you dead, you know. Having Tim tag along with you and your little gang is not exactly what I'd call a save environment." He spat back. Before I could go off on him some more, he started again.

"By the way, I happen to know that he's been getting into fights lately in the streets at night while you're 'protecting' others." In that moment, I almost lost it, but I kept my composure.

"He dresses up in whatever he has available, without proper protection." My eyes narrowed angrily at his words.

"He wants to be Robin, but you won't let him. He's going to get himself killed if you keep on letting him go out and fight crime in nothing but a hoodie, jeans, and a mask." Dick smarted off to me, trying to say that he had Tim's best interests at heart. And more so, that I didn't.

"You think I let the little bastard do all that? You know how resourceful and crafty he is. And I'm not letting him be Robin again because of what happened to me. You can't protect him. Neither can Bruce. What is so wrong with me wanting him to have a relatively normal life? He deserves it. We all do. Eventually it's going to end, Dick. You've been in it longer than all of us former robins. What's next, huh? What's after Nightwing? Nothing. All the capes and kid stuff is going to lose its luster after the years pass, but it's not too late to spare Tim. He can have a bright future ahead of him. He doesn't need Robin for that." I exclaimed, catching my breath afterwards. For a moment or two, it was quiet as hell.

"Normal life? How's he supposed to come close that when all you do is move from hotel to hotel? He was just fine before you interfered." He continued, gaining volume with each sentence.

"Really? Want to know how I found him the night we took him?" Tim didn't even know what I was about to say. I took a step closer to Dick. His face held a sense of doubt written across it, like what I was about to say may have been his fault. What I was about to tell him was only known by Roy, Kory, and myself. Until now, I didn't want it known, but I was sick and tired of being labeled as Tim's kidnapper. We did take him, but the circumstances were not so black and white.

"We didn't plan to have anything to do with any of you when we arrived in Gotham. We were hired to take out a talented assassin, a sniper hired by Black mask from inside prison. His past killings included children, adults, and anyone in between. His price was high, but he was good. His mission was to kill Batman and as many of his associates as possible. We found the guy before he was able to kill any of you. He was set up in an appointment in a bad neighborhood where Batman is known to have been seen. His riffle was set up at the window. I busted through the door and took him out after Roy located him." I went on. Dick now looked baffled, and slightly pissed.

"Before raiding his apartment for an ID, contacts, etc, I took a peek through the lens of the sniper
riffle, only to see Tim, as Robin, arguing with one of you through his com link. He was only two buildings over. This guy would've killed Tim without my interference. I knew you people couldn't protect him so I took matters into my own hands. That was the original plan." I finished revealing what really happened and why I took the actions that I did. Turns out, the disguise Roy used to stage the crime scene to lure in Tim came from this sniper dude. Dick let out a big sigh. What were we even arguing about anymore? It was making my head hurt.

"Jason, I don't know why I'm even trying to reason with you." He sighed again.

"For once, we agree. We're arguing in circles. The fact is that Tim and I are together. You don't have to like it. That would just be the right thing to do." I spoke last because I went ahead and headed for our room, which happened to be Tim's old room. I forgot how many damn stairs there were. Shit. Tim's room was actually next door to my old room, which I dared not enter. Too many memories and not enough gun powder. As I walked down the hall with Tim over my shoulder, I noticed another room across from Tim's. The door was open. There, lying in a big, comfy bed was Roy, remote control in hand and a huge TV in front of him. He noticed me immediately and jumped up.

"Is this where you've been hiding while Dick has been laying into me this whole time?" I asked, with a slight twitch in my eye. I knew there wasn't much Roy could do, but it would've been nice if he was there.

"Hey, it's not like that. C'mon. Tim's room is right here." He said gesturing to across the hall.

"I know, dip shit." I uttered under my breath. He followed me into the room. Tim's room was small, but comfortable looking. I almost tripped over of the legs of the rolling chair in front of his computer desk. Next to it was an enormous bookshelf that extended to the ceiling and seemed to go on for most of the room. This kid had a problem. It's not healthy to read that damn much. His bed was a queen size with a green comforter. Green was Tim's favorite color. I gently put him onto the bed before quietly closing the door behind us. I lit a cigarette after opening the only window in the room. I knew Dick wouldn't approve, but I also hated his fucking guts at this point. The night air was cool and calm. I wondered how many times Tim snuck out as Robin using this window.

"So, did you and Dick have it out yet?" Roy asked, sitting backwards on the rolling chair that almost tripped me.

"More or less. He's never going to stop being a prick about me and Tim." I replied, exuding a puff of smoke into the night air.

"Yeah, but maybe you should give him some more time." He said, fidgeting in the spinning chair.

"Well damn, it's nearly been a year." I argued, leaning on the window seal.

"Technically, it's only been about five months since they've actually known Tim has been with us and that you and he are involved. Hell, I'm just glad Batman is still MIA.

"You and me both, buddy." I put the smoke out on the seal and tossed the bud out the window. I watched as some remaining orange ashes continued to glow and burn out into darkness.

"I'm just ready to get this mission over with so we can leave." I closed the window back.

"If we do come across the Joker, are you going to be okay?" He asked, a bit too directly.

"Yeah, though I might kill him. Even the odds." I said awkwardly, as Roy pretended to chuckle along. In reality, I was not sure what I'd do. Let's just say, killing him would be an understatement.
"What about you? You and Kory having problems? It's not like her to just up and rejoin the Titans. Who knows how long she'll be there?" I changed the subject. I really was curious. I knew that Roy and Kory had a thing, but I tried to stay clear of it. Kory left us shortly after we had that run in with that crazed lunatic on the bus. I think they were having issues before that, though. She told me that she would be returning after a few months of clearing her head.

"I'm okay, I guess. Ever since Dick and the others found us I had a feeling that she had been flying off to see him without telling me. Turns out, I'm just a jealous asshole." He said, looking at the carpet. He sounded so sad.

"I'm sure you'll patch things up when she comes back." I assured him before a pat on the back. The two of them were very good together.

"If she comes back. Ever since my last girl, I've been hesitant to get into anything deep. That whole 'fear of commitment' thing is like woman repellent. It even applies to alien chicks. I think she'd had enough." He said, getting up from the chair and rolling it back under Tim's desk.

"Come on, man. She's coming back. Want me to talk to her?" I asked, not realizing how stupid that sounded until it was said it loud.

"No way. That'll just piss her off more." He replied, heading to the door. Poor guy seemed to have a storm cloud over him now. I shouldn't have brought it up. I understood both sides. She wanted something more than a partnership with benefits, and he wanted to stay in that nice little rut in their relationship. In all honesty, I've always wished he would go for it. I get his reasoning too, though. The mother of his daughter has not been kind to Roy no matter how he's tried to change himself for her. She's the type to re-open old wounds just to make him look bad in front of his kid or anyone else, like bringing up his past drug problems. No one wants to rehash that shit. So, the guy doesn't want to get hurt again. It's not fair to Star, but who am I to judge? Look at how fucked up I am.

I took a deep breath and then yawned. It had been quite a day. As Roy left and closed the door behind him I looked over to the bed. I gazed down at Tim's sleeping face. He looked so innocent. His chest rose and sank with every sleeping breath. That face of an angel made me feel content, home, even in the place I swore I'd never come back to. I could have found myself staring at him for hours no matter what he was doing. As I gazed, I felt that I had been taken over by a strange calm and the desire to hold him close to me began to churn up inside me again.
I laughed a little at how hopeless I was. Then I looked around and saw that there wasn't a TV in his room. What was that all about? I sighed and stripped down to my boxers and got into bed with him. For a while, I just laid there, awake in the dark with Tim all nestled up on my arm. Today was a lot to take in. I was actually kind of proud of myself. I honestly didn't think I could handle it, but I did. I think most of the credit went to Alfred. Thank God for him.

"Smoking, really Jason?" I heard Tim's voice while still waking up. I yawned and sat up.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Tim. Do we really have to be up this early?" I yawned again, rubbing my eyes. Tim was getting dressed by the window. He must've seen the burn mark on the window seal. I didn't think that one through, I'll admit.

"It's 10:30 am. We can't sleep all day." He nagged. I knew how to handle this situation. I stood up and wrapped my arms around Tim from behind.

"Sure we can. You just need a little incentive." I smiled with his hair in my face, before falling back onto the bed, taking Tim with me. He let out a gasp and started to talk. I'm sure he was saying that it was irresponsible to sleep in this late and other noble stuff. I wasn't listening. I was just holding him as he squirmed. Drastic measures were needed so I began tickling him all over his bare stomach and ribs. I'm a black belt in tickling. Tim can attest to that. He started laughing and struggling, but eventually he'd had enough and just laid there with me for a few minutes.

"Jason." Tim's voice shattered the silence.

"Mmm." I murmured into his hair. It was damp and smelled of fresh shampoo. I couldn't tell what kind. He'd obviously already had a shower this morning. I could never understand his love for mornings.

"You know, I've been thinking. And I wanted to apologize for being so selfish. I am also curious about the future." He seemed to struggle to say.

"Selfish? You're kidding? You've got to be like one of the most selfless people I know." I almost laughed at the idea.

"I know that coming here was not easy for you. I'm sorry I guilted you into it." He muttered, adjusting his position so that he was facing me. I placed my hand against his cheek as he blushed.

"No need to apologize. I do hate it here, but I wasn't going to leave you to fight this battle without me." I smirked at him.

"So, you mean to say that if we do encounter the joker, you will be alright?" He hesitated to ask. I could see it in his eyes. He was deeply concerned about this. Why was everyone asking me this? It's not like I'd lose my sanity at the sight of that green haired freak. It's not my well being they should be concerned about if that madman and I met.

"Of course." I answered simply, as my smile left me, and my hand slid from Tim's face.

"What will you do?" My mind went blank for an instant. I planned on ripping the joker apart, limb by limb. After I'm finished with him, not even the Lazarus pit can restore him. Tim didn't need to know all the details, though I'm sure he already had an idea.

"That's a bit presumptuous, don't you think, Babybird? After all, he may not be behind this. There are plenty of Joker copy cats." I cleared my throat after speaking. Then I had a sudden urge to
"And what's all this about the future? What do you mean? Stop being so vague." I looked down at him. Tim has always had a bad habit of worrying himself with things that don't concern him. Why worry about something that doesn't involve you, especially if you can't change it.

"Yes, well I did mention the future. I was actually referring to our future. What role do you think I'll play?" He laid it all out at once. Did he have doubts about us? I mean, I can't really blame him, but what did he mean? I also think he was alluding to his future as Robin and the team. I honestly didn't know for sure if Kory was going to come back.

"I guess I'm asking what's next for everyone?" He continued nervously. I let out a small chuckle.

"You think too much. Your guess is as good as mine, probably better. I do know one thing for sure, though." I pulled him a tad closer.

"You are my future." I smiled before kissing him on the mouth. He smirked and laughed softly before breaking the kiss.

"You're so predictable." He continued to laugh. I loved watching him smile and be happy. It really shines a bright light on my bleak existence before I met him. This little twerp brings forth a feeling of contentment and happiness in me. That's probably the best I can describe it. I know, it's all mushy and crap, but the truth is what is it is. Even if the truth is cheesy as hell.

"If I'm so predictable, then I guess you saw this coming." I taunted before tickling Tim's ribs harder than before. He tried to fight it, but all his efforts were useless. All he could do was laugh and turn red.

"What? No contingency plans?" I teased while tickling him mercilessly. He couldn't hear me over his own laughter and pleadings for me to stop. Suddenly, we both heard someone knocking on the door. We both glanced at it as the voice on the other side spoke.

"You guys okay in there?" It was Dick, of course. Tim quickly and awkwardly cleared his throat and regained his composure.

"Yeah, Dick. Everything's cool." He said, tears still in his eyes from laughing so hard.

"Alight. We still on for training?" Dick asked through the door.

"I'll be down in a few minutes." Tim replied. I rolled my eyes. What was this shit?

"So, you and Dick are sparing partners now?" I asked, resisting the urge to vomit.

"You are more than welcome to join us. It was my idea. My skills have gotten rather dull lately. It's not a bad idea to sharpen them." He rushed to put on a t-shirt and sweatpants. Before I knew it, he was out the door. He passed Roy who entered just as he left.

"Whoa. Where is he off to in such a hurry?" Roy asked with a puzzled look. He wasn't a morning person either.

"Dude, I need you to come spar with me." I blurted out, impulsively.

"Huh? No way. Is that where Tim is going, now?" He asked, but my attention immediately became divided as my nose inhaled the delicious smell of sizzling bacon coming from downstairs. It was coming in through the open doorway that Roy was standing in. Alfred was a God sent. I jumped up and ran to the kitchen.
and threw on some sweat pants and a T-shirt in a similar fashion as Tim.

"Forget it, let's just get breakfast." I interrupted whatever non-bacon related thing Roy was saying. I decided that I would join Tim and Dick to train in the cave after I took a gander at Alfred's heavenly cooking, of course. Roy didn't hesitate to join me with that. We basically pigged out. When it came down to the last piece of bacon, Roy and I decided to flip a coin. I called heads. It was tails, but it didn't matter. Just as Roy flipped the coin into the air I took the bacon. To be fair, he'd eaten more than me, I think.

Tim's Point of View

"I just don't get what you see in him." Dick carried on after about an hour of sparing in the cave's training area. We were both covered in sweat. I was growing so weary of listening to Dick belittle the relationship between Jason and myself. To top it off, I was exhausted from training with him for hours.

"I don't understand why you keep on bringing it up. You never like my answer." I said, giving him a sour look.

"I'm just looking out for my kid brother. Out of everyone, you had to pick Jason." He prattled on while sipping a bottle of water.

"It may have escaped your notice, but I'm not a kid anymore. You can't control me. You know, I used to hold your opinion higher than everyone except maybe Bruce, but now I don't because you don't ever have anything positive or encouraging to say to me. Why is that?" I smacked the bottle out of his hand. Water splashed across the floor. He seemed surprised by my words and actions.

"Tim, I know you're smart, funny, and trusting. You have a big heart, and you deserve someone who doesn't kill people or sell drugs. You're the one who's changed. All of a sudden you're okay with murder and drug gangs?" He threw back at me. Classic Grayson.

"I'm not okay with it, okay. I don't exactly go along with it. Unlike you, I'm aware of the fact that you can't control the actions of another." I spouted back. I was trembling slightly from the tension and the workout.

"But you can influence them." He added, taking a step closer and slabbing his index finger into my chest.

"I've been trying to do just that. People aren't something you can just give up on because they seem hopeless." I said, calmly. I know I hit a nerve with that one.

"Really? You're trying to influence him to change? The only thing I see you doing is sneaking out at night and getting all bruised up. Are you sure Jason isn't influencing you?" He replied, implying that I'm becoming corrupted by Jason. I sighed.

"You are ridiculous. I can't talk to you when you're like this." I turned away and started walking. I could feel his eyes on me.

"Come on, Tim. Come back." I heard him say. I was so pissed at Dick at this moment. If Dick would only open his eyes. I may be his younger brother, but so is Jason. Why doesn't he look after him the way he looks after me? He doesn't even try. He only ever tried to demonize Jason and I was growing sick of it. Finally, I reached the stairs leading up to the mansion. I climbed them and came out of the old grandfather clock in the mansion. I quickly turned around after closing the door behind me. That's when I bumped into someone. It was Barbra. She was in her black and yellow batgirl getup,
minus the mask and headgear.

"Tim!" Her face immediately lit up.

"Babs, hey. Long time no see." I responded, with a few surprising stutters and a crack in my voice. The last time I saw her was many months ago, when they finally tracked me down. It wasn't the best memory.

"You okay? You seem rattled?" She said, while brushing her fiery bangs out of her face.

"Rattled? No. I'm fine. How are you? Have you talked with Jason yet?" Words were flying out of my mouth as if I had no control.

"I'm okay, I guess. And no, I haven't seen Jason yet. I just got back from patrol." She replied, smiling at me. It was sort of an awkward reunion.

"How did that go? Any new leads?" I asked, after clearing my throat and avoiding eye contact.

"I managed to put a tracker on one of the Joker's followers. It's actually pretty sick how they recruit those with a history of mental illness and drug addiction." She was right. It was sick. The Joker is nothing like anything I'd ever faced before. He was like chaos incarnated into a human being. Something still bugged me about all this.

"How do they know who to target?" I asked, hoping Barbra would have an answer.

"We suspect Harley is somehow getting access to their medical files through past connections she had as a psychiatrist at Arkham." She answered. That was a good point.

"Sorry to rush, but is Dick in the cave? I need to fill him in." My eyes darted to the floor, as I remembered the argument we'd just had. I just nodded.

"Cool." She said, opening up the grandfather clock door.

"Oh and Tim, it's good to see you again." She pulled me into a tight hug.

"You too." Was all I could manage to say while hugging her back, not as tight. She then proceeded into the cave and shut the door behind her. I wasn't trying to seem like I hadn't missed her. It was just a lot for me to take in at once. I went upstairs to take a shower. Jason was asleep on the bed. After I was clean I slipped into some sweatpants and a shirt. Steam left the bathroom when I opened the door. Jason was sitting up and yawning adorably. I sat on the bed.

"What's wrong with you? You're being too quiet." He asked, rubbing his eye. I thought about all the things Dick had said, but I chose not to tell Jason about it. There was enough animosity between them already.

"It's nothing. I'm just tired from training." I said, leaning back onto the bed.

"Yeah, Roy and me were going to join you, but Roy made me stay behind and help him eat Alfred's breakfast. Then I crashed here. Sorry about that." He laughed, and gave that smile that I couldn't resist.

"Yeah. I'm sure that's exactly how it went down." I said, raising an eye brow.

**Jason's Point of View**

Not going to lie. When Tim emerged from the bathroom and woke me up I noticed that I had a bit of
that old slumber lumber, if you know what I mean. Plus, I could smell Tim. He was nice and clean. I couldn't resist. He seemed stressed so maybe he needed an outlet.

"Babe, come here." I said, sitting up on the bed. He was all sprawled out on top of the covers with his arms above him, making his shirt rise a bit. His smooth stomach was somewhat exposed.

"What is it?" He asked, innocently. I didn't answer. I gestured for him to get closer. He hopped up and sat next to me, gazing at me with those midnight blue eyes. I could see Stars in them. My hands slowly grabbed his torso and pulled him on top of me. Now sitting in my lap, I'm fairly positive he was made aware of my predicament. I ran my fingers down his cheek and brushed over his thin lips. He then leaned in and our lips met it was slow at first, but then escalated to pure passion. Suddenly, he pulled away. Tim's lips were millimeters away from mine when he whispered,

"This is a terrible idea." I could feel his hot breath on my face. I knew he was nervous about fooling around in the mansion. He had a point, but I had a boner.

"Shhh" I replied with my eyes drawn to Tim's lips. A few moments later, Tim was sat fully in my lap, our lips pressed hard together. Tim had his hands buried in my hair, running his fingers through it. Meanwhile, my hands were gripping Tim's hips almost possessively. Unfortunately, I had to break the kiss in order to breathe. That's when I pressed my lips against his cheek, slowly trailing down his neck to his collar bone.

Tim's hands dug under my shirt and trailed across my chest and abs. I noticed that he paid special attention to my happy trail, before moving up my torso, and back to the hair on my head. Then I let my own hands slide up Tim's back under his loose fitting shirt, feeling warm skin beneath his palms, following the length of his spine with my fingertips. Then they slid down under Tim's sweats to his butt, tenderly squeezing it while also pulling him closer. Tim let out a small moan against my mouth. Next thing I knew, my hands had slowly worked Tim's sweatpants and underwear down until they were gone, exposing his perfect ass. My hands wasted no time as they caressed both cheeks. After a few minutes of passionate kissing and butt founding, I gently inserted a finger inside him. He quietly whimpered into my mouth. I silenced him by deepening the kiss. I pulled away from the kiss long enough to mutter,

"You're so beautiful," before latching our lips together again.
After which, I slowly lifted Tim's shirt up until it was off and tossed it clear across the room. Tim's hand was gently tugging me through my boxers. I could feel him trembling. I ran a hand across the
sharp edges and jutting bones of his torso. Tim then lifted my shirt up and tossed it aside. He hopped up and began pulling my underwear down. His sweet lips left a trail of kisses down my torso. The way Tim's mouth was slowly moving down my body was orgasmic. Finally, he reached his destination, forcing sharp moans from the very pits of my stomach.

I couldn't help but gasp, as Tim took me into his mouth. His nose was pressed against my abdomen as he tried to take it all. After a few seconds, he began to choke some. Then his hand wrapped around me. He looked up at me with those mischievous, dark blue eyes and a dangerous grin before taking me back into his mouth. I couldn't help but thrust into his scorching mouth as it wrapped around the head of my dick. I closed my eyes tight and moaned in pleasure as Tim's tongue circled the head, before slowly taking my throbbing cock further into his mouth. With one hand, Tim jerked whatever he couldn't fit into his mouth. Then he moved back up my body with gentle kisses until he was looking directly into my eyes. His pupils were so big and filled with lust. Tim was once again straddling my thighs. I could take a hint. He deliberately hovered his butt over my cock. So, I responded by gripping Tim's waist with one hand to hold him steady, and made shallow thrusts into his hole. I very gently massaged his entrance, not breaching too far to begin with. I slowly breached deeper and deeper. Tim wrapped his arms around my neck and let out a couple of high pitched whines and moans from his mouth. I could tell he was trying to hold some of it in.

"You okay, babe?" I whispered into his ear, scared I might have been hurting him or going too fast.

"I'm okay." He managed to get out between labored breaths. So, I took it a little farther. With each inch I inserted, I felt pleasure in every single ounce of my being. After slowly entering him I finally ran out of inches. Tim sat firmly in my lap.

Tim let out more whimpers and dug what little fingernails he had into my back. Tim yelped as I continued thrusting in and out.

"I know, babe." I muttered before running my hands up Tim's back and down again. I instinctively pressed a kiss into Tim's lips, temporarily silencing him before wrapping my arms around Tim's waist to hold him still. There was a skin smacking skin sound, along with Tim's continued whimpers and heavy breathing. After several more minutes of love making, my body jerked with pleasure as I shot my seed inside him, letting out a huge moan. Afterwards, I felt him smile as his mouth pressed against mine. I pulled him as close and as tightly as I could. I couldn't ever express how good it felt to have Tim's body pressed right against mine. It was so peaceful, so surreal. Tim felt warm against me. His body was still trembling. We made our way to the bathroom to clean up. I made fun of Tim having to take two showers within the same hour. I think he was really tired because he was quiet, more so than usual. I did get him to laugh after I snapped him with my towel. After showering, we got back in bed. Tim's head rested on my chest. That was his favorite way to sleep. He Was basically using me as a body pillow. I wasn't complaining. Soon it became obvious that he was fighting to stay awake. His eye lids began to weigh heavier every second.

"You okay, Babybird?" I asked, softly. His thin lips formed a gentle grin.

"No. I'm more than okay." He yawned before passing out on top of me, a sweet, little smile still etched on his face. His little cheeks were pink and his dark brown hair was still wet. I couldn't help but feel content, which was weird. Tim made it so easy.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tim's Point of View

I wish I could say that everything was fine after that night, but it wasn't. It was only the beginning of an unpredictable nightmare. It started with several banging knocks on our door. I opened my eyes to see Jason getting out of bed, in only his boxers, to go see what was going on. The banging persisted until Jason opened the door. It was Barbara. Her freckled face was flushed and crying.

"What the hell, Babs?" He asked, taken a back.

"He has him. He has my dad!" She blurted out before Jason had finished his question.

"We'll be right down." Jason answered almost immediately. She nodded and raced back downstairs. Jason turned to me after closing the door, concealed anger behind his bright blue eyes. We both knew what was about to happen. I sprung from the bed.

"Let's go." I said, getting dressed. Jason joined me, but didn't say a word. Two minutes later we were downstairs with the others. Dick, Alfred, and Roy were all gathered around the enormous flat screen in the den. I noticed Barbara wasn't with them.

"What's all this about?" Jason asked abruptly, looking up at the giant TV.

"This." Dick answered, clicking a button on the remote. We all looked up at the TV as a dark video began to play. It was filmed from the camera of a smartphone. The quality was grainy and pixelated in some areas. The video began by panning across three police officers whose faces were covered in bruises. A fourth person was tied to a chair with what looked like a blood stained pillow case over his head. The officers were bound and gagged and their badges were noticeably torn off. At first I thought the camera was being held upside down, but it soon became clear that unlike the masked person bound to the chair, the three men were hanging upside down. Their bodies swayed slightly into each other periodically. Blood was rushing down to their head resulting in their faces retaining a reddish color. Then an unusually creepy voice began to speak.

"Is everyone comfortable? Good." The voice laughed, making the men tense up as the camera came in closer and began to pan across so we could view all four of them. Their faces were bloody and beaten, but still recognizable. No doubt, these were the missing officers. That's when the camera zoomed out all the way, revealing a tall, lean man in a purple suit standing beside the first man hanging up by his feet. The Joker stood at eye level with the man, who could do nothing but create a muffled yell through the strip of duck tape covering his mouth. The Joker adjusted his tie and took a bow as if he were a host of a bad talk show. There were cheers and applause from off camera.

"You're too kind!" He shouted as the cheers began to simmer down.

"Joining us tonight is Officer Stanton, of Gotham P.D." Boos erupted from the off screen audience.

"Can we get a close up, Harley dear?" The Joker said with a venomous smile.

"Sure thing, Pudd'n." A woman answered in a high, annoying voice from behind the camera. The shot zoomed in on Officer Stanton's bruised and terrified face. Sweat was pouring down his face and he was shaking.
"Come on now, Officer. Surely you aren't afraid of little old me." Joker said as the camera zoomed back out. The Officer didn't try to talk again. He remained as still as possible.

"You certainly didn't seem too afraid the other night on the 10:00 news. I believe you said that I was, and I quote." The mad clown cleared his throat.

"A sick piece of human garbage.' I gotta admit, that really hurts my feelings." Joker said, leaning in closer to his face with a slight frown. The poor man's face was dripping sweat as he stayed silent. Joker's red frown dramatically turned back into it's unnatural smile. Then the clown's purple gloved hand pulled a small gun from within the folds of his purple jacket. I looked away for the moment I knew was coming. There was a bang, followed by a sickening laugh.

"It's all good, officer. All is forgiven." I heard the Joker say before looking back at the video. I had expected to see blood splatter, but the camera followed the Joker over to the second cop. This one was much younger than the last. He couldn't have been much older than me.

"Oh, relax. There's no need to lose your head." He snorted, igniting more laughter from the crowd. The young officer didn't appreciate the pun. He dangled there helplessly, trying not to show fear, but his eyes were swimming with tears. His face wasn't quite as bruised as the others.

"I'm sorry, but I can't remember your name." Joker spoke before violently ripping the tape from the man's upside down mouth. He was still shaking.

"It's S-sam Harris, sir." The young cop struggled to get out. His insistent trembling was getting worse.

"Oh my, do I detect a hint of stage fright, Officer Harris? Not to worry. Uncle Jay has just the thing to take the edge off." Joker snapped his long fingers, as if he'd stumbled upon a great idea. Then the man began to speak again, this time with no stutters.

"Please let me go! I won't tell anyone, I prom-" before he could finish his plea, the lavender flower placed on the left side of the Joker's jacket began to spew a trail of green liquid from its center onto the cop's face and even into his mouth. His gurgling cries of pain made my fists clench. I looked away again to avoid having to see the man's face being melted away by the acidic liquid.

"How unprofessional. We'll have to edit that in post, ha ha!" Joker snickered toward the camera as the stream of liquid finally ceased.

I looked back up to see the young man's body no longer trembling. It merely hung there upside down, lifeless. I kept my eyes from viewing what remained of his still dissolving face.

"Shall we move on to contestant number three?" Joker smiled before walking a few feet down to the last man strung up by his feet. This man seemed heavier than the previous two. His graying hair made it easier to see a bleeding head wound. His face had become almost completely red from being hung upside down for so long. Like the others, his face was bloody and bruised and the badge on his police uniform had been ripped off. The only difference was the anger that was present behind his expression. Without warning, the Joker violently ripped the duck tape from his mouth, making the man's eyes seem to bulge.

"I do apologize for the slight discomfort, officer." He said before the middle aged man actually interrupted the Joker just as he stared talking.

"If you're going to do me in. Just do it and get it over with. You crazy fuckers are going to get what's coming to you in the end." The man spat with a heavy New York accent. The Joker's grin became
"Wider at his words.

"Wow. Everybody's a critic these days. Does no one appreciate the unique and artistic ways anymore?" Joker clinched his fists and kicked something small in front of him before turning his back to the man.

"I'm going to have to come up with a new way to reinstate my status that will be so huge, it'll give the whole city the wedgie it deserves." He said, talking into the camera.

"Really?" I heard Harley say from behind the camera. For a moment the Joker paused. He stood there with a puzzling look on his face as if he was thinking hard about something complicated.

"Nah, I'm just going to shoot this guy in the face. Ha!" He replied before doing just that and laughing insanely. I looked away again. This time I glanced up at an enraged Jason. An old fire had reignited within him and was now burning hotter than ever.

I looked back up at the TV. There was blood splatter covering the lens.

"Oh wait, hold on." I heard Joker's voice. Some kind of cloth was used to wipe the lens off. It didn't get all the blood off, but it removed enough to where we could still see the his long, smiling face.

"Now to the big man, himself." The clown's unnatural grin seemed to have gotten even wider as he pulled the camera close. We then saw the person bound to a chair. The bloodied sack on his head masked his identity, but I think we all knew who it was. The Joker was now handling the camera. It was now being shot from his point of view.

"I wonder who it could be." Joker said off screen, his purple sleeved arm outstretched. The moment the pillow case was quickly yanked off our suspensions were proven correct.

"It's dear old Commissioner Gordon. Just the guy I wanted to see." the mad man continued, zooming in on the commissioner's face. There was a trail of dried blood down one side of his beaten face. One of his eyes were swollen yellow and purple and his nose looked painfully broken.

"As anyone could see, he's had a big day." The clown's voice was infuriating. Commissioner Gordon was unconscious, maybe even near death.

"Oh, and I believe these are yours, good sir. Carry on!" The Joker jeered while clumsily pushing a pair of bent and broken glasses onto the man's face, causing him to stir a little due to the pain. Then the Joker turned the camera around to film himself.

"We've got quite the party going on here. Just to up the ante, let's play a game. If Gotham's pointy eared hero doesn't show up in the next, I don't know, 12 hours, the commissioner will suffer the same fate as his former employees. If you don't show, old man Gordon will join the giant police force in the sky. Oh and B-man, bring a mop." The deranged bastard laughed louder and louder until the screen went to static. It was true insanity. This couldn't really be happening, I thought. What would Batman do? I doubt the Joker would have gone to all this trouble if he'd known that Batman hasn't been in Gotham for months.

"My word." I heard a voice shriek from behind me. Alfred had walked in holding a silver tray with five cups of tea sitting on it. I didn't know what to say.

"That was posted online to The Gotham police Facebook page about an hour ago from an untraceable source. Babs has already seen it." Dick began informing us before he was interrupted.

"Where is Barbara?" Jason demanded, looking at Dick.
"Right here." Barbara interrupted, standing in the doorway fully dressed in her batgirl gear.

"And I'm not waiting." She specified, implying that she was about to leave at that moment whether we were geared up or not.

"Come on, don't be stupid, Babs. You can't go alone. Give us ten minutes to prep and we'll be ready." Dick pleaded, knowing she couldn't take on the Joker alone. Her eyes were still full of tears.

"No. I'm not stupid. I'll go head and confirm their position. I won't get caught." She promised before walking towards the entrance to the cave. Dick sighed.

"Okay, we need to hurry. Everyone suit up."

I approached Dick, with an obvious question.

"How am I going to suit up? I haven't got a costume or gear." I asked, avoiding eye contact with Jason.

"Actually, while you were still, uh.." Dick cleared his throat.

"Bruce and I tracked down the Robin suit. It was nearly ripped to pieces and tucked into a dumpster." He continued, as I purposely avoided glaring at Jason. I knew that I probably shouldn't have been angry and actually should've expected it, but there was still some resentment there.

"Alfred restored it soon after we found it. It's stored in the cave." Dick tried to avoid the awkward chill in the air. I continued to not look at Jason. Instead, I looked over at Alfred and felt a smile.

"Thank you." was all I could say while resisting the urge to wrap my arms around the old man. He was truly one of the best people on the planet, but I already knew that. Alfred gave a nod in return and smiled at me.

"Let's head out." Dick's voice snapped me back into the situation. He started toward the entrance to the cave. Roy and I followed. Suddenly, I felt a large hand take hold of my arm. I sighed. I knew this was coming.

"Sorry, Tim. You aren't coming. We can handle this. You'll do better to operate here at the cave." He ordered, his mind made up. His excuses were exhausting. Dick and Roy paused and glanced back at us.

"I'm going. That's what I came here to do." I tried to snatch my arm from him, but his grip only tightened.

"Kid, you're sitting this one out." He commanded again.

"You can't stop me. We will need all the man power we have. Did you not notice the crowd of followers the Joker had in the video? I have to go." I bellowed, looking up at him.

"Did you not notice him melting that guy's face off? No way." He glared back as my gaze met his brilliant, bright blue eyes. The tension between us was becoming a battle of wills, and I had no intention of backing down. I knew I was right and so did Jason. I glanced over to Dick to step in. He avoided eye contact before speaking.
"Tim is right, Jason. We'll need everyone we can get." He agreed, rubbing the back of his neck.

"I don't care." Jason said coldly.

"And no one asked you." He cut off Dick from speaking. Jason's face was becoming red with frustration. Dick sighed and continued out of the room.

"I don't have time for this." I heard him say from the next room.

"Jason, please let me help you. Please. I don't want you to face him again without me." His expression softened at my words. He wasn't expecting me to say that. He let go of my arm.

"Tim, you know I can take care of myself. With you there, I'll be worried and distracted." He tried to bend my logic. He wasn't wrong, but neither was I.

"I understand, really I do. But you can't expect me to sit here twiddling my thumbs while you all are out risking your lives. I can't do that anymore, Jason. I won't let you just leave me behind again. I can't take not knowing if you'll ever come back." I snapped, fighting back tears. It was true. The feeling of not knowing is worse than receiving a brutal beating. I would know. Besides, I was able to handle myself too.

"Just let the kid come, Jay." Roy interjected from across the room.

Jason and I were both taken a back. I think we'd both forgotten he was still in the room after Dick left.

"Are you insane, Harper?" Jason groaned, looking at Roy with disbelief.

"No. I'm just being logical. We don't know how many people the Joker has waiting for us. Plus, you and I can protect him. He can take out the smaller threats. That sounds fair." Roy explained while rummaging through a large duffel bag.

"He won't be taking out any threats because he's not coming." Jason looked at Roy as if he'd just committed treason. This was getting stupid.

"Look, I'll just sneak out anyway." The words left my mouth before I could stop them. Jason immediately grabbed me by my arm, just above the elbow, and pulled me close to him. I winced as his grip tightened. I hated when he grabbed my arm like that.

"You little-" Jason growled inches from my face. I held my ground and held a fierce expression.

"Jason, now isn't the time." Roy interjected, placing a hand on his shoulder. I thought Jason might blow a blood vessel at any second. Suddenly his grip loosened and he ran his fingers through his dark hair before letting out an exhaustive sigh.

"Fine, but you have to stay close to me or Roy. And I need you to promise me that if I tell you to run, you'll get the hell out of there no matter what." Jason demanded, his bright blue eyes once again staring into mine.

"Yes." I breathed, with the intent of saying it louder before breaking eye contact. We were wasting time.

"I need your word, Tim." He demanded, taking hold of my chin and forcing me to look him in the eye again.
"I promise." I blurted out, my voice cracking a little. Jason always scared me when he's like this. His face was tight with the tension and seriousness of the situation. He looked at me with a sour look on his face instead of that warm smile he usually had when looking down at me. It reminded me of back when he would chain me up and make me sleep on the hard floor. That seemed so long ago, but the fear from those nights were curved into my memory.

"Alright, glad that's out of the way. Now, let's suit up then." Roy grinned impatiently, dragging Jason up the stairs to where their suits and gear were stashed. I made my way down into the cave. My Robin costume was behind a glass case near the long staircase. A mannequin was sporting my red and black design. I could tell it had been modified, but only by a few stitches. Alfred never ceases to amaze me. I immediately opened the glass case and took back a part of my identity. That costume was more than material and battle gear. It was an extension of my soul. I'd been without it too long. The mask, gloves, boots, and belt slipped right back on with ease. Finally, I was whole again. I knew who I was. A strange, thick fog had lifted, allowing me to see clearly. I was not a bystander, or a victim. I was not someone who needed constant protection and supervision. I was a fighter. I was a protector. Robin was back. I was back.
After everyone was all geared up we took off into the night. Roy rode shotgun with Dick in the bat-mobile. He wanted Jason and I to ride with them, but Jason refused. Afterwards, he basically stole a motorcycle from the bat cave. I sat behind him on the seat, wearing a black helmet over my mask. Jason, of course donned his signature red helmet. The wind rushed against my cape as it flew behind me. I held on to Jason's midriff for dear life. His driving was scary as hell. We could all hear each other through our comm-links while speeding towards our destination.

"Would you chill out, Tim. This ain't the first time I've driven one of these, you know." Jason's voice spoke in my ear after just straight up running a red light and dodging an oncoming 18-wheeler. My grip tightened when he did this. I'm surprised I didn't break a rib. His careless driving was making me queasy.

"Yeah, tell that to my stomach."

"Hey, not so tight." I held tighter just to spite him.

We continued to dart past other vehicles on the road. I heard Dick's voice over the roar of the motorcycle. "Alright guys, Batgirl is there already. She says the place is loaded. At least thirty people wearing Joker masks have entered the hide out."

"Just what is this placing they're using as a hide out, again?" Jason interrupted.

"It's the old Whitfield hospital in downtown Gotham. It's been abandoned for decades. The area is known for being dangerous." Dick's words made me more uneasy than Jason's reckless driving.

"I know the area." Jason added, switching gears with his foot.

"How do you know?" I asked, stupidly.

"I used to hang out there. I've hunted gang leaders and drug dealers all through there." I don't know why I asked, honestly. It was fairly obvious.

"Anybody got a plan?" I heard Roy chime in, changing the subject.

"Yeah. We'll separate into teams. One team will enter through the roof. The other will stay on the ground. Once we're all in position, we'll disarm and take them out." Dick's plan was surprisingly simplistic.

"And the Joker?" Jason scuffed in a deep tone.

"I'll take care of him." Dick assured him. Jason began to speed up.

"Okay, I got another plan. I don't think you're going to like it much."

I already wasn't overly fond of it. "Don't mess this up, Todd. Lives are on the line."

"Yeah, yeah." He responded so nonchalantly, dismissing Dick's orders as an annoying nag. I agreed with Dick. The only way to fight the Joker without Batman was together. I was just hoping Jason wouldn't go crazy this close to the Joker. I, as well as everyone here was aware of their history. At least I'd be there to help him hold it together, I thought.

We met up with Batgirl at a nasty looking storage facility near the hospital. We were only a few blocks away. The hospital was surrounded by the rusted remains of a tall gate. The nearby streets
and old buildings were deserted. An assortment of cars, vans, and trucks were all parked in a large parking lot in front of the entrance. I could smell the rot coming from the massive building. This place predates Arkham Asylum. Apparently, people stopped going to this hospital when the crime and gang violence took over this part of town. Two large men, armed with machine guns, stood guard at the front entrance. Above them was a dingy old sign with writing that was barely legible anymore that read "Whitfield Admissions."

It was hard to tell at night, but it became obvious that the building had been partially demolished.

The five of us hid behind a large van in the parking lot and watched the two guards. From this distance, I could see them more clearly under a dull, buzzing, yellow tinted light. Both men were wearing clown masks, similar to the guy on the bus. I wasn't a fan.

"You sure this is the place?" Dick whispered, looking unconvincingly at Barbara.

"Positive. Listen." She replied, ready to make a B-line into the building. She hadn't said a word since back at the mansion. We were all quiet. I focused on my hearing. I could hear it. A faint cry of screams coming from inside. It sounded like a group of people cheering at a concert.

"We may need a distraction." Dick announced, viewing the pair of masked men through the windows of the van. The two men didn't seem too bright. They were too busy talking and laughing to notice us. The reckless way they held their weapons screamed they weren't experienced with them.

"Okay, on my signal, I want-" Dick started to state his plan, but was interrupted when both Jason and Roy acted without warning. Both leaped from behind the van and fired their weapons, each taking out a guard. I didn't even hear Jason's pistol go off. I'd never encountered a silent gun before. In less than a second, both guards were on the ground, a pool of blood filling up around their heads. One with an arrow in his throat, the other with a bullet bullet to the face. Say what you want, both men were excellent marksmen.

"Todd, what the hell? We had a plan." Dick put his hands in the air in surprise and disapproval.

"Sorry Big Bird, but Roy and I don't report to you." Jason voice sounded robotic through his helmet. He tossed the gun away and began walking up to the bodies. My guess is that the silent gun was limited to one shot before reloading.

"Where are you going? Shit! I knew this was a bad idea." I heard Dick from behind me before Barbara cut him off.

"Just come on. We don't have time to argue." Her voice was cold and almost ruthless. Her desire to save her dad was likely the cause. I followed behind her as we approached these two huge, metal doors.

I saw Roy with his ear to to one of the doors, careful to avoid the dirt and rust. Jason scooped up both machine guns from the dead grips of the two men and examined them for a moment. After he gave Jason a quick nod, Roy pushed the door open. We entered into a giant room that used to be the lobby. The farther we stepped in, the darker it became. Suddenly, my nostrils cringed as a foul odor filled the air. It reeked of what smelled like rotting meat.

"Guys, I think they're expecting us." Jason's voice sounded shocked in the dark. Then with the click of my tiny flashlight I saw why. Suddenly, I found myself fighting the urge to vomit.

"My God." Barbara put her hand over her mouth. The small flashlight revealed the body of a man
sitting up in one of the old chairs meant for waiting patients. Two gruesome cuts had been carved from the corners of his mouth up to his ears, making him appear to be broadly smiling. It quickly became clear that there was more than just one body. I quickly shined my light around, revealing dozens of others in the same shape.

The bodies were all propped up in their seats and positioned as if they were waiting to be seen by the hospital. Hundreds of flies were seen buzzing around the corpses.

"That's fucked up." Roy muttered, his voice cracking a little. He wasn't wrong. Many of the victims were covered in dried blood that had begun to crack and flake. That, and the decaying flesh lead me to think these people had been dead for weeks, meaning that Commissioner Gordon was likely not among them. I couldn't bring myself to check every one of them. This was turning into a true nightmare. Barbara stepped forward and scanned each of the victims to be sure her father wasn't one of them. Out of the stunning silence Dick cleared his throat.

"Let's keep moving." There was nothing we could do for them at this point. We entered into a wide hallway. The cheering was becoming more noticeable. It sounded like it was in the center of the hospital. The stench of rotting flesh was still present, but fading.

Then we heard a door open a few feet ahead of us. Two more men wearing clown masks stepped out into the hall way. They were both almost as tall as Jason. One was wearing a "Beavis and Butt-head" T-shirt. Barbara instantly leaped at them. Her elbow connecting with the first masked face thug, breaking his nose. She then delivered a low sweeping kick to the other guy's legs, causing him to fall to the ground.

"Damn." Roy muttered, sounding slightly intimidated. She yanked the mask off of the one that was still conscious. His face was skinny and rat like, giving him a gaunt skeletal appearance.

"Where are you keeping the commissioner?" Batgirl's knee violently dug into his chest as she leaned over him. The man tried to let out a scream, but Batgirl shoved her hand over his mouth.

"Answer me!" She commanded, inches from his pain riddled face.

She removed her hand. The man was sweating and taking deep, heavy breaths.

"He has him in the cafeteria with the others." The guy struggled to get the words out due to the pain. Batgirl instantly removed her knee and rose to her feet. The man sat up and began laughing between his heavy breaths, revealing his oversized bucked teeth.

"You're all going to die with a smile on your faces." His ominous words and high pitched voice made me sick. He was referencing the fate of the corpses we past. Suddenly, the man's teeth flew across the hall after getting the full brunt of Jason's foot against his rodent like face. I flinched at the brutal thud created by his head slamming into the tile floor, rendering him unconscious.

"He was done." Jason smirked, still holding the two machine guns.

"Let's go." Barbara's eyes were completely consumed with a disparate sort of anger. Her expression was burning through the cowl. As we raced further into the broken down hospital, passing several painted smiley faces and "HA!"s graffitied all over the walls, I couldn't help feel as though we were being lured into a trap. Technically speaking, the Joker did invite Batman so he's was expecting to trap someone. Most of the doors to the rooms we ran past were either missing or severely damaged. It was creepy as hell. It was certainly not the kind of place I'd want to visit alone, or at all actually. The florescent lights (that worked) were far and few in between. There's no way they were the original bulbs. What little light we had was interrupted periodically and when the bulbs flickered,
making this place seem like a haunted house on Halloween. Almost every room we passed was occupied by someone shooting up heroine or smoking meth. There were several rats scurrying out of our path. Occasionally, I’d see a couple of people having sex in plain sight, but I tried to refrain from seeing that while rushing past the doorway. There were people littered throughout the hallway as well. Many of them were unconscious and probably on verge of an overdose. The ones that weren't were stammering around tweaking. None of these people were wearing clown masks. Even so, I tried not to look at them.

"Are they with the Joker?" I asked between breaths as we ran.

"No, kid. This is just the usual scenery here, I'm afraid." Jason answered me in my ear.

"Shouldn't we help them?"

"There's nothing we can do, Ti- I mean, Robin." I felt a swell of pride growing inside me after Jason corrected himself.

"These people can't be helped, trust me. I've tried. They've chosen this life." He continued, his voice striped of all empathy. I didn't argue, nor did I agree. We had no choice but to step over their bodies. These were drug addicts that needed help, but finding the commissioner took precedence over helping them at that moment. I pushed my feelings to the back of my mind. The five of us climbed up three flights of stairs before reaching the correct floor. The cheering was much louder now. Finally, we'd made it to the source of the noise. We were forced to stay hidden along the corridor because the doors to the cafeteria were missing, revealing a wide open doorway. Standing in front of the doorway was a tall, muscular man wearing a clown mask and holding a machine gun. Beyond him, dozens of masked thugs were gathered around a stage built in the center of the enormous room. It was at least 70 people by my count, not including the guard. The bright lights filled up the old, retired lunch room. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the sudden immense brightness. On the stage stood an unfamiliar man.

"The man has had his day. His time is over. It's time for a new regime to take control of this city." This Guy was sort of lanky and youthful in appearance, from what I could see. He was preaching psychotic propaganda and the crowd was eating it up. His face was covered in white paint and red lipstick forming a giant grin across his cheeks. His greased back orange hair shined under the light. He was almost like a Joker knock off. There was a mix of boos and cheers from the masked crowd. What the hell was going on?

"Soon, Gotham will no longer punish those who only seek relieve. Soon, we will be led into a new world centered around the chaos that true freedom brings. I will be the god of this new world! No more hiding! No more laws or systems! No more Batman! Only smiles!"

Most of the crowd cheered ignorantly at his words. Then the crowd slowly began to hush until everyone was quiet. Their sudden silence revealed a series of slow claps coming from one individual. Everyone turned their heads to the source. A pair of purple, gloved hands emerged from a dark doorway on the other side of the cafeteria. They continued applauding as the rest of the person stepped out from the shadows.

"Bravo, my good man." A low husky voice filled the room. It was him.
"What a truly moving speech. I'm impressed. You dressed up all nice for your old uncle J." The purple suit strutted into the crowd. I let out an intentional gasp. Jason must have seen it coming because before I made the noise his hand covered my mouth.
"Shhh." I heard Jason say softly through the commlink. This was my first time seeing the Joker in person. His tall lanky form and unkempt green hair climbed onto the stage, joining the orange haired man who took a few steps back before speaking.

"With all due respect, you've been top dog for long enough. It's time you retired. I'll lead us into a new plane of existence. Everywhere you look will be Joker territory! Sorry, but it's time someone else took up the mantle." the ginger clown pulled a handgun from his coat and aimed it at the real Joker. The man was prattling on like his words made sense. Then the Joker's horrific grin widened across his white face. It was that same yellow toothed smile I'd gotten to know so well over footage from the bat cave. What was he about to do?

"That's precious, my little cinnamon bun." Joker chuckled, while steadily walking up to him. The gunman seemed shocked that the clown wasn't taking his gesture seriously.

"I mean it!" He exclaimed, still pointing the gun at the Joker's smiling face.

"Listen kiddo, I'm flattered. Really I am, but your little psychopathic heart just isn't in it. If it were you'd have done it by now." Joker continued, walking closer to the younger man, who was shaking. Soon his nervous sweating would wash away his white make up.

"You don't know what you're talking about, old man." He cocked the gun. What happened next seemed like it came from a cartoon. Suddenly, the end of an enormous mallet crashed into the side of the false Joker's head. Holding it, was a petite young woman wearing a red and black outfit. It had to be Harley Quinn, the Joker's right hand woman who was completely dedicated to him in every way. The records in the cave say she was a psychologist for Arkham before the Joker poisoned her mind.

"Sorry, hun. There's only one Mister J!" Harley grinned while twirling a finger in her blonde hair. She wore it up in two pig-tails with the tips dyed clownish colors.
"You bitch." The orange haired man whimpered from the ground. Harley growled before rearing
back with the mallet once more. Then, with a crash, his head was reduced to a bloody pulp on the wooden stage floor. That looked like a very unfortunate way to go.

"And they say I'm mad." The Joker said, addressing the crowd.

"Now that our little rebellion is over, let's get back to business." He outstretched both of his long arms.

"When the bat arrives, everything must be perfect. All of you must be ready. Uncle Joker is going to need all of you. After tonight, no one will remember this city and all its disgusting people. I wouldn't have let you in my little club if I didn't believe in you." He shouted to the crowd, evoking mass cheers. What was his end game? There had to be more to his plan than gathering a hoard of followers to ambush Batman.

"In fact, if I were a bet'n boy, I'd say Batman and his hatchlings are already here." After he said that, Jason jumped forward, rushing the guard who was distracted by the Joker's speech. The poor man never knew what hit him.

"You're half right!" Jason shouted, before relentlessly firing both machine guns into the giant crowd.

"Shit!" I heard Dick yell before he and Batgirl joined into the fight. Complete and utter chaos ensued. All three of them weren't holding back, especially Batgirl. Bodies were flying everywhere and I'd lost sight of the Joker and Harley. I saw her break several arms and a few collarbones. Nightwing's escrima sticks surged as he fought several masked thugs at once, stunning them with the electrically charged ends. The machine guns Jason stole quickly ran out of bullets, so he resorted to his own firearms. Before I could look up there were thugs running at me and Roy, who was reaching for an arrow from his quiver. I acted a fraction of a second before he did and drew my bo-staff, fighting them off.

"Nice, kid." Roy complemented, before shooting a barrage of arrows. I smirked slightly as his remark. Amongst all the chaos, I saw a hint of purple. I saw both Joker and Harley heading into the dark room he came from. I couldn't let him escape. I had to go after them.

"Robin, no!" I heard Roy shout after I quickly ran after them. He had his hands full with fighting more masked thugs. I wanted to stay and help, but if I didn't act against the Joker at that exact moment we risked losing the commissioner. I couldn't let him slip through my fingers. I knew Jason would be furious with me, but we'd deal with that later. Deep down I sort of knew this could end up being a mistake. I noticed Batgirl was tailing me. We chased them up a flight of stairs. The floor above was basically a wide hallway with several hospital rooms littered throughout. It wasn't unlike the first floor, except it was darker and a little bigger. The only light came from the moon as it shined through the large, mostly broken windows. He atmosphere was creepy as hell.

"Where are they?" Batgirl heaved after climbing all those stairs. Then I heard what sounded like coughing coming from one of the rooms. The door to the room was locked. My immediate reaction was to kick it open, causing a loud crash. In the room was a familiar man tied to a wooden chair. His face was badly bruised and he was covered in blood, just like in the video. We could hear Commissioner Gordon wheezing as he struggled to breathe. He likely had a collapsed lung. Barbara wasted no time cutting his free. She put his arm over her shoulder and lifted him onto his feet. I think he partially came to because he was all his strength to try and stand.

"Lookie what I found, Mister J. A couple of bat kids decided to crash our party." A female voice said once we were back out into the hall.

"Quite right, poo. But the question is, where is their brooding leader?" That voice was unmistakable.
I began to sweat when I heard it. Then the two stepped out of the shadows and into the moonlight. Seeing him up close made me take a step back. There stood a tall, lanky man dressed in a purple suit, with unkept green hair, and a demonic smile set on his white face. Harley stood a little more than a foot shorter than him. Her face was painted just as white as his, glowing in the moonlight. She was resting a slightly sinister looking metal baseball bat decorated with red and white stripes on her shoulder.

"Take him!" I shouted to Barbara, gesturing towards her nearly crippled looking father. Harley suddenly zipped passed me and grabbed Barbara's shoulder.

"Hands off, Brat girl! We ain't done with him yet." The she clown commanded, the baseball bat still in hand. Instinctively, I rushed between them and caught Harley by surprise. One kick was enough to send her flying into a wall.

"Go!" I spat. She wasted no time. Meanwhile, the mastermind behind this entire endeavor, as well as the monster responsible for destroying so many lives was standing before me. This man has proven to be a match for even Batman in both skill and wits. I knew that I, alone would not be able to defeat him. My intention was merely to stall him until back up arrived. Dick, Jason and Roy were still taking out what remained of the masked goons. I could still hear gunshots and screams from the battle.

"What the crap?!" Harley snapped on me after getting back up to her feet. I could tell she was losing her patience. Barbara was far too preoccupied with her dad, so that left only me to face him. My palms began to sweat just thinking about it. I'd never met the Joker before. I'd only known him through stories and video footage from the cave. After Jason's death, I was never to go near the Joker no matter the circumstances. Even so, he was absent, and the Joker was not. If I could fight him just long enough to gage his attack and fighting style I could possibly mount a counter move. My skills have grown dull in my time in captivity, and I knew that. I didn't stand a chance, especially after going all these months without regular training sessions. I also knew that if both clowns attacked me at once, I was done for.

"Hello there, bird boy. Come to see your old uncle Joker?" The madman said in a high voice with his deranged smile front and center. Fear was causing my body to tremble, but I held on to my composure.

"Actually, we've never met. I'm Robin." I replied, extending my bo staff and assuming a battle position. The Joker's eyes widened with excitement when I did this. I guess it reminded him of "old times."

"Hey puddin, isn't the bird boy been MIA lately?" Harley said, her head tilted to the side and baseball bat still in hand.

"Yes, Harley dear. It looks like he's growing into his own." Joker said, making a sadistically proud expression.

"I wonder if he's bullet proof." Harley gave an open mouth smile and pulled out a handgun from a holster strapped to her thigh. I instantly hurled an electric baterang at the gun, exploding it on contact and burning her hand. She let out a yell of fear and pain before becoming enraged.

"Fine. Let's do this the old fashion way." She sneered, aiming the bat in my direction and began approaching me.
Sorry for the wait! Please let me know what you think in the comments :)

Jason’s Point of View

“Get the hell off me you clown bastard!” I shouted at the top of my lungs before kicking one of the more muscular lunatics off me. His expression was a painted smile, but I could still see the pain in his face. This guy was asking for it. I thought about putting a bullet in his head, but now this was personal. I put my guns in their holsters and held my fists up. His wife beater made it easy to see his bulky arms and chest as he lunged at me in anger. I dodged his amateur punches and struck him in his abnormally large collar bone, cracking it. He cried out in pain and backed away slowly. I couldn’t resist. I swung my leg right across his big, stupid face. The sound of multiple teeth hitting the floor sounded like music to my ears and I had that shit on full volume. This guy was down for the count. Then, amongst all the chaos I see Batgirl with Commissioner Gordon’s arm around her. I thought it was a bit odd to find him so quickly. To be honest, I actually expected the Joker to have executed him by now or at the least killed him in front of everyone. Gordon was roughed up, but alive. Dick was flipping around while taking out multiple henchmen like a fucking show off. I quickly ducked as one of his kicks sent a clown flying my way. His flailing body missed me by an inch.

“That was on purpose!” I shouted out at him while pulling my guns back out.

“No way, man.” he winked smugly while cartwheeling through the air. I began shooting more of the clowns. Suddenly, a short and skinny girl approached me. Her face was caked with make up, resembling a skull. Half of her head was shaved. She had blue hair extending down one side of her head and down to her shoulder. Also, I don’t think I’ve ever seen so many piercings on one ear before in my life. I pointed my gun at her and she stopped in her tracks. Her torn blouse was covered in blood and her fishnet leggings were nearly ripped to shreds. I wanted to pull the trigger. This girl was following the Joker. She was just another psychopath, another stain on this earth and in this city. With all that in mind, I couldn’t do it. In that fraction of a moment the world seemed to move on without the two of us. Bodies were flying and people were running all around us, but we were focused on each other. I didn’t even know the little punk’s name. I wasn’t even positive she was a girl, but she did look young and scared.

“There’s another way, Jason. You don’t have to pull the trigger.” I heard Tim voice echo in my head. I lowered my weapon and she took a step back, her eyes wide with shock at my actions.

“Go home, kid.” I warned her, as my eyes began scanning the giant room for Tim. That’s when I heard a loud gunshot and a cracking sound. I briefly lost my footing as my head felt like it had collided with a moving vehicle. The next thing I knew, my helmet was breaking apart and falling off my head. I quickly looked back at the girl. She was holding an extremely powerful handgun a foot from my, now unshielded face. Smoke was still rising from the barrel as she finally spoke.

“This is my home.” She smiled, making her cheek bones stick out more than before. My head was ringing from the shot to my helmet. Then her expression quickly changed as an arrow suddenly darted into her chest. She didn’t even know what happened before falling to the floor.

“You okay?” I heard Roy ask as he approached me from behind. We stood back to back fighting off more of those freaks. They just kept coming.

“Yeah. Where is the tiny car all these freaks are coming out of?” Roy smirked as I knocked the hell
out of a really tall guy only wearing a red ball over his nose. He went down after a few more blows. Roy stood behind me.

“Have you seen Tim?” Small mechanical sparks zapped from the circuitry of my destroyed helmet on the floor. I still had the red domino mask I always wore underneath, but it felt weird fighting without the helmet.

“No, but Batgirl looks like she could use some cover.” Roy shot another arrow before we both raced over to Barbara who was practically carrying her father. She had just been spotted and several clowns were cornering her. Me, Roy, and Dick all leaped to the front lines to protect her.

Some of these psychotic nut jobs wore clown masks or simply had their face painted creepily in clown make up. It was sickening. Some of them had guns while others were swinging chains and metal pipes. I wanted to not shoot them all in the face. I only used my guns to wound and disarm to save bullets. My main concern was finding Tim.

“Batgirl, where is Robin?” I asked Barbara, who was still carrying her father towards the exit. She gave me an angry look, as if she thought I should help carry him. I ignored it.

“He’s fighting off Harley and Joker. He gave me time to save my dad.” My jaw dropped.

“And you fucking left him?” I was disgusted with her. I didn’t care how badly she wanted to save her father. In my eyes, this only proves I was right for taking him away from them in the first place.

“I had to get my-” I stopped her mid-sentence. I was furious. I honestly could not have cared less about her, her dad, or this stupid mission.

“Fuck you and your dad! Where is he?” My voice overcame hers which seemed to shrink with shame. She knew what she did. She knew she might as well have left him for dead.

“Go through the doorway in the back and up to the next floor. That’s where they were.” She pointed at the doorway, stuttering with her sentence.

“You and all the bats better pray he’s still alive.” My words were meant to be threatening. I wanted her to be scared of me. I wanted her to feel the gravity of what she did. I wanted everyone else to feel it too. I knew letting him come was a bad idea. Hell, I never should’ve let Tim talk me into helping them. I should have just forced Tim to go into hiding and lay low until this blew over. I hurried over to Roy, who was firing arrows relentlessly. Most of which he’d pulled out from the dead and injured to use again.

“I’m going after Tim. She left him alone against Harley and Joker.” Roy’s eyes widened through the mask. Even he knew that was some bullshit.

“Need backup?” He offered, ready to do whatever I asked of him.

“Just make sure none of these fucking lunatics follows me.” I said, tossing him one of my firearms. Just as I was turning away from him I felt his hand on my shoulder.

“Be careful, Jason. End this.” His voice was firm, but still full of worry. I couldn’t waste anymore time.

“It’ll be over in an instant.” I said before racing off into the darkness.
“Too bad Batman’s not here to save you, bird boy.” Harley said, a grin etched on her angry face while stroking her baseball bat and narrowing her eyes. Her wooden bat bore several red and black designs. The barbed wire tied to the end of the bat was stained with blood.

Harley wore her blonde hair in pigtails, one side dip dyed blue while the other dip dyed red, although it looked like it had faded to a slightly pinkish shade.

She wore a red and black leather underbust corset that left her hips exposed. Both her hands had an elbow length leather glove, one red and one black. Her matching leggings had playing card inspired diamond imprints similarly to her bat. There was a heavy duty belt below her waistline that had all kinds of pockets filled with ammo and a variation of sharp objects. I wasn’t intimidated by her appearance.

“We’ll see who needs saving, you deranged carny reject.” My words struck a nerve. I could see red searing from under the white face paint. She swung the bat several times at me with great haste and minimum tact. After dodging, I went for her legs, knocking her to the ground. She didn’t move after several seconds. That’s when I turned to face the main threat. The clown, himself was lingering in the shadows watching me approach him. Then my old training kicked in. I heard a small sound of movement from behind me and then a swoosh. My body moved instinctively as I leaned as far back as possible, dodging the rusty barbed wired wrapped around the bat.

“I play a good game of opossum, bird boy!” She bragged, kicking me in the face before I could regain my posture. I jumped back several feet and drew my bo-staff.

“You’re not wrong, but I was prepared.” I smirked, wiping some blood from my lip.

“Huh?” She looked at me confused. Then a smoke like gas erupted from her metallic belt. I had placed a small magnetic tear gas bomb on her belt before she faked being unconscious. According to the files I’d read in the cave, Harley Quinn was a loose cannon. She’ll do anything for the Joker. Going in, I knew extra caution would be required on my part. I also thought it was too easy to take her down.

“You sneaky little bastard!” She coughed, while frantically swinging her bat. I charged her and with a swing of my bo-staff she was knocked out for real. The colors of her makeup mixed and trailed down her cheeks, giving her the appearance of sad clown. I looked over to see the joker eating a bag of popcorn. Where did he even get it? He quickly threw the popcorn behind him in a childish manner.

“Must be nice having others fight your battles.” I huffed, keeping my distance.

“I could say the same about the big man upstairs. So, he got himself another boy wonder? You know what they say, kid. Third time’s the charm.” He laughed, before studying me. I didn’t think his demonic grin could get any wider, but I was wrong. He then reached into the folds of his purple suit. I stayed on guard.

“You’ve definitely got the look down. The tights, dark hair, cape. You’re a tad on the small side, but not bad. Not bad, at all. There’s just one thing I can’t help but wonder.” The Joker pondered out loud, as if putting on a show. His lanky body made such dramatic gestures with every movement. I needed to block out all of his distractions. That was his play. I didn’t reply this time.

“How long will it take for me to clip your wings? Papa bat should really learn to keep an eye on all the spare kids he has running around.” He was starting to get to me with his demented taunting.
“You’d think he’d learn, considering what happened to the last one. Ah, memories. I can’t promise you the special treatment I gave him, but I’ll do my best.” He laughed his iconic, psychotic laugh. I couldn’t contain my inner rage. I charged at him, closing the distance between us in seconds. My brain told me that this was stupid and reckless, but at my core I wanted to make this fiend suffer for what he did to Jason. Just as I was a few feet away from him, he quickly threw several tiny smoke balls that exploded once they hit the floor, obscuring his movements from me. It was already dark enough. I heard his footsteps run the opposite direction through the grey smoke. I was careful not to inhale and immediately pursued him. When I was out of the smoke I saw an open door that he had to have gone through. I entered the large room, which included an operating table and tons of rusty, old surgical equipment. It was more than creepy. It was like something from a horror movie.

“The doctor is in!” I heard him say from behind me just before his hand took hold of my throat. I felt a cold, metallic ring on his middle finger. It shimmered in what little light entered the room. Then I felt a high voltage of electricity surging throughout my entire body. I felt as though every cell in body was on fire. For a few seconds, all I could do was scream as the pain electrified my entire being. Accompanied with that pain was that same horrifying laughter. Somehow I was able to spasm hard enough to get free. I was still on my feet, but just barely. Every muscle in my body ached uncontrollably. I could even smell some of the singed flesh. I should have seen that trick coming. It was his ring, disguised as a children’s joy buzzer. I took a few steps backwards before falling back onto the table, causing it to collapse. I jumped back up and took a fighting stance as fast as I could. He was now holding a switchblade in each hand which he drew from his sleeves.
“Time for some surgery.” The Joker laughed as he spun the blades in his fingers. This haunting laughter was incredibly disturbing and off putting. You could hear the insanity in his voice. The recordings in the bat cave did not do it justice. I knew I had to stay focused. Like the ring, the blades gleamed in the moonlight as he spun and twirled them in his long, gloved fingers. I really started to get nervous as the Joker continued to show off his blades while merrily walking toward me and whistling a tune that sounded like _twinkle twinkle little star_. I took a few more steps back, trying to create more distance. I nearly tripped over some old hospital equipment. My blatant fear only seemed to make him even more blood thirsty.

“Oh no, you look worried. No need to be afraid of your old uncle Jay.” He chuckled as he stopped twirling the knives. I grinned even though I was still in pain.
“Who said anything about being worried?” I managed to get out, my voice cracking.

“It’s all over your face. Even with the mask, I can see the fear setting in. By the way, do you feel a sudden sense of ‘been there, done that?’ No, wait. Different bat brat.” He grinned sadistically at me, taking a few more steps forward. Then he started laughing again, this time the laughter started quieter and then built up into this sinister scream. My body wasn’t listening to me. The only light was from the large doorway that the joker was standing in front of. All I could really see was his silhouette. I continued stepping back as he quickly closed the distance. One of his blades slashed across my chest. My suit was able to take the brunt of the damage. I was able to reach into my belt. Then he kicked my bo-staff out of my grasp, flinging it across the dark room. The hard metal clanking noise echoed through the room. That’s when both blades sprung into action. The gleaming blade tried to stab me in the stomach. I was able to dodge the first thrust, but not the next. Not a second after the first blade retracted, the second blade pierced my shoulder. I cried out and then angrily delivered a kick to his knee. The constant laughter was replaced with an angry scream. The wound caused serious pain to the muscles in my right arm, making it virtually useless to me.

“That’s not funny!” His voice was now deeper and scarier. Blood was running down my arm. I ran past him and almost made it to the doorway despite the harsh pain. He kicked my legs out from under me, causing me to fall to the hard tile floor. I had a plan, but it was risky.

“Whoops! Did you fall down? Let me help you.” He laughed, just before plunging one of his blades into my back, just below my shoulder.

I felt the knife pierce my skin and plunge in between my bones. I let out an enormous scream from the pain. With his hand still gripping it, the monster twisted the blade deeper into me. I cried out again before he released the knife, leaving it still sticking out of my back. I had to act now or I was going to die.
“You know kid, you really are a cut above the rest. I’m glad I got to take a stab at you, though I do so wish your daddy was here instead.” He joked before laughing again. I took this opportunity to act. In my palm, was a small with a small syringe with a concreted steroid. It wouldn’t heal me or anything like that, but it would temporarily restore my stamina, strength, and reduce my pain. It would only last about a minute, but it was my best chance of I could defend myself. I hastily injected the liquid into my arm. It felt like a small pinch. Within a few seconds, I could feel the change taking
place. After jumping to my feet, I interrupted the clown with a kick to the face as I did a back flip and landed with the knife still in my back. Then I went to punch him, but just as I thought I had gained the upper hand the joker caught my fist in his palm.

“You should’n a did that.” He said, his white face looking straight at me. I immediately kicked the other blade from his hand. I heard the metallic clang when it hit the floor. I punched him in the face, slightly breaking his long, crooked nose and knocking him backward. Suddenly, I felt it. I felt the pain starting to return. The steroid was wearing off. My vision began blurring and my body felt heavier. The taste of blood was lingering in my mouth.

“Damnit.” I muttered to myself. I used my remaining strength to leave the dark room and enter the moonlit hallway. I leaned against the wall and tried to make my way back to the stairs. I knew Jason and the others were probably still fighting the Joker’s gang. I made it past Harley’s unconsciousness body when I lost my footing and fell onto the floor. I could hear footsteps approaching from behind me.

“It’s not nice to take things that don’t belong to you.” He took hold of the blade sticking out of my back and yanked it out. I couldn’t help but scream yet again. My breathing was becoming extremely heavy and I was drenched in blood and sweat.

“You know kiddo, this shindig wasn’t any fun at all. I was hoping for papa bat to show his pointy ears tonight, but I guess killing you is the next best thing. After all, it wouldn't be the first time.” The Joker snickered before digging his heel into the stab wound on my back. I cried out as loud as I have ever screamed in my life. Tears were streaming down my face. I couldn’t fight back. I could barely breathe. I didn’t want to die like this.

“Waaaahhhh!” He mocked before laughing at my pain. The bastard was enjoying it. I glanced back to see him rear back with the switchblade in his hand.

“Oh relax, bird brain. I'm not going to kill you yet. What fun would that be? No, I'm going to cut you up into several pieces and then hide those pieces around Gotham. That'll get the bat’s attention. Oh, I love scavenger hunts.” He snickered excitedly, before breaking out into another fit of uncontrollable laughter, the large heel of his shoe still digging into my back. Tears continued involuntarily leaking from my eyes. I closed them tightly and awaited my fate.

Out of nowhere, the sound of loud gunshot filled the hallway. The laughing was replaced with a painful scream. I opened my eyes and looked up.
“Get the hell away from him, you sick mother fucker.” Jason walked out of the darkness and into the light. His helmet was gone, but was still wearing a mask similar to my own. The joker was holding one of his hands close to him. I saw his blood glimmering in the light.

“You shot my second favorite hand!” He whined, acting like it wasn’t a slight annoyance. Jason stepped past me and grabbed the Joker by his long, skinny neck. Without any warning he smashed the clowns face into the stone wall. He cried out in pain, but Jason didn’t care. I don’t think I’d ever seen him this angry. He was beating the hell out of the Joker. He was killing him.

“You bastard. It all ends tonight. No more games. No more innocent people will die because of you. Tonight, I’m your judge, jury and executioner!” Jason shouted over the choking laughter of the clown before tossing him across the room like a giant rag doll. The green haired man tried to get up, but didn’t make it in time. Jason ran at him and delivered a hard kick right to the guy. Blood began pouring from his mouth as he struggled to breathe. Jason shouted before crashing his fist into the clown’s snowy face, sending him smashing back down to the floor. The joker groaned in pain. Miraculously, he was still able to talk. His white face was swollen and badly bruised.

“The big man upstairs wouldn't like it if you killed me.” The Joker spat blood as his haunting laughter started up again.

“He’s not here is he? Just so you know, this is going to hurt.” Jason spat, gripping the clown’s purple
caller and tossing him into another stone wall. The Joker began to get up, but before he could Jason
plunged his foot into his face, knocking out a few teeth and further breaking his long, pointy nose.

“Jokes on you. I have fantastic dental insurance.” The Joker laughed, blood gushing from his nose
and mouth. Jason then used his foot to break his leg. I didn’t like seeing Jason this hostile, even
against the clown. He was beaten. That was enough. Then he broke his arm. The Joker, the sadistic
madman continued to laugh as his bones where being snapped. After beating him some more Jason
picked him up by his collar with one hand and pulled out his knife with the other. The clown’s
laughter was suddenly replaced with coughs of blood. He was struggling to breathe.

“I should really stop smoking. It’s a real crowbar to the lungs.” He coughed, while still chuckling.
Jason lifted him up by his purple collar and held a blade to his throat. I had to intervene.

Jason’s Point of View

Finally, I had this maniac right where I wanted him, at my mercy. He was about to pay for all the evil
shit he’s done. Droplets of blood were leaking from his white throat as I pressed my knife against his
skin.

“I got a joke for you, clown. Knock. Knock.” I gritted my teeth, ready to smack his already fucked
up face if he didn’t answer. He took a few breaths before responding.

“Alright. Ha ha, who's there?” The Joker coughed. One of his eyes was so swollen he couldn't open
it.

“Not you. Not anymore.” I replied. Just as I began to slit his throat, I felt a hand on my shoulder. I
looked back to see Tim holding his wounded arm and breathing heavily. How the hell was he still
able to stand?

“Robin, don’t try to stop me. This has been a long time coming. This piece of human garbage will
die tonight. Nothing you do or say will stop me.” I announced, not looking at him. I knew if I saw
his face, he'd be looking at me with that innocent, naive look I'd grown to care for.

“Killing him will not bring you peace.” Tim said, his grip getting tighter, yet shakier.

“It’s too late to change that.” I still didn’t look at him.

“No it isn’t. You’re not too far gone. It’s never too late.” His words were getting to me, but I
couldn’t listen, not this time. I had to do this. I had to kill him.

“Do you know what this monster has done? He deserves this. He deserves to die a slow and painful
death. In case you forgot, he murdered me. And he was just in the middle of doing the same thing to
you.” My hands were now shaking with indecisiveness.

“Yeah. Those were some good times. I wonder how the crowbar is doing after all these years. Well,
I hope.” The Joker briefly interrupted. I backhanded him hard in his face.

“This thing’s a cancer on this earth! He ruined me. It's time for him to die.” I shouted in anger, trying
to shake Tim’s hand away.

“No. You've changed. There's so much more to you than just pain and rage. Please, do the right
thing. You've beaten him. You can stop now. This is batman's war, not yours.” Tim pleaded. I didn’t
know what to do. I could feel the rage going to my head.
“Awe, how sweet. It'd be funny if it weren't so pathetic.” Those were the joker's final words before I delivered a solid right hook to the clown's face, knocking him out cold. The crazy laughter finally ended. A few silent moments passed. I let out sigh before tossing the clown to the floor, still alive. I looked over at Tim, and noticed his wounds.

“Tim, you need medical attention.” Up until this point, I hadn’t noticed exactly how bad Tim’s condition was. Can he go one day without bleeding half to death? After looking back at the unconscious body of the murderous clown, I found myself tempted. One bullet could stop this. One shot could put an end to his scourge.

Seconds later, the enormous glass window shattered as a dark, shadowy being came crashing in. I couldn’t believe it. After all this time, it was him.

“Batman!” Tim’s face lit up slightly. The caped crusader didn’t even look at him. Instead, the dark knight was staring me down as I stood over the Joker’s body.
“What did you do?” The brooding voice echoed through the large hall way. I assumed he was referring to the mangled state of which the joker was in. I couldn’t help but let out a small sarcastic chuckle.

“He’s not dead. But he should be.” I responded, walking towards Tim as he tried to get to his feet again. He just glared at me from under the cowl. I could feel the heat of his eyes fixed on me.

“By the way, your little Robin over here is bleeding out thanks to that monster.” I put an arm around Tim and we started walking to the stairs. He wasn’t in the best shape.

“Something’s not right.” Batman said, racing to the Joker’s body and rummaging through his pockets. A faint ticking sound caught my attention. I looked back at Batman as he pulled out a small device with a screen featuring big red numbers counting down. The numbers read “00:00:15.” In that moment, the clown came to, with a mixture of laugh and a coughing noise.

“Now, it’s a party.” The Joker muttered to Batman before with a giant, bloody grin. There was no time and everyone knew it. We had less than fifteen seconds to escape the blast and none of us even knew the extent of the damage it could cause.

“Hood, The window!” Batman gestured toward the broken window here entered through. Batman scooped up Harley Quinn’s unconscious body and threw her over his shoulder. He then shot a line from his grappling hook and secured both sides. This was all happening in seconds.

“Move!” He shouted, rushing Tim and I to the window. I gathered Tim up with one arm and took hold of the line with the other. Using my gloved hand, I was able to slide down the line. Batman was right behind us with Harley over his shoulder. I could tell all this moving was causing Tim pain, but I couldn’t help it. He held on tight to me. We could still hear the joker laughing when we made it to the ground.

“Jason. Jason, the others!” Tim practically shouted. Not a second after those words left his mouth, numerous explosions went off throughout the old hospital. We took cover behind a vehicle parked nearby. Debris was flying all around us. I looked up to see the entire building come down on itself. When the the explosions stopped I hopped up and raced to the demolished building. I heard Tim yelling something, but didn’t have time to listen. The old hospital was in ruins. Parts of it were still unstable and falling down. The others were still inside when the bombs went off. I was taken aback by the level of damage the building had taken. It was now a pile of rubble and dirt. I didn’t even notice Batman beside me until moments after we’d both been moving debris. Suddenly, there was movement. Nightwing emerged from beneath an enormous piece of stone.

“You alright?” I asked, pushing the remainder of the debris off of him.

“I’m okay. I took cover last minute. Barabra and her dad made it out before the building came down.

“Where’s Roy?” I interrupted, helping Dick to his feet.

“I’m not sure.” He coughed, while holding his injured ribs. Dust filled the air, making it hard to breathe. I didn’t care. I knew I had to find Roy. Batman and I were the only ones able to dig through the building remains. We uncovered some of the bodies of the Joker’s followers. The was no sign of Roy, or even the Joker. I remember thinking that maybe Roy got out with Barabra. However, after several minutes of franticly digging through rough fragments of stone, brick, and concrete, I came across a hand in a familiar red archery glove sticking out of the wreckage.

“No. No. No. No. No. No.” was all I could say to myself as I franticly dig sifted through the rubble and dirt. Broken arrows were scattered around him. His bow was somehow still in his grasp. The
bowstring was severed. I removed the mask to see that his green eyes were vacant like lantern without a flame.

His broken body was cold and still. His uniform was torn in many places. Dried blood trailed from his nose and mouth. The usual vibrant orange hair was grey with grit and dust. Worst of all, he wasn’t breathing. There was no pulse, no heart beat. I immediately began preforming CPR on him, but nothing was working. All I could do was stand there over his body. I was trying desperately to hold back my tears. All of sudden, my pain turned to anger.

“This is your fault!” I pointed at Batman who made no effort to change his expression. Both my body and voice were shaky and sore. I jolted at him with everything I had. I couldn’t stop myself. My rage took over.

“If you would have dealt with the fucking Joker before now, Roy would still be alive!” I shouted, throwing sloppy punches and kicks at the shadowy costume. I know I was angry, but I wasn’t wrong.

“Where the hell were you during all this? Why weren’t you here?” I went on attacking him. He merely dodged, or strategically blocked all my blows.

“Answer me, you coward!” I pulled out a knife and held it in a reverse grip.

“I’m sorry, Jason.” These were the only words he could muster.
The dark knight was sorry. His words meant less than nothing to me. Just like him, they were empty and good for nothing. I was about to lunge at him when out of nowhere, I felt a pair of small arms wrap tightly around my waist.

“It’s okay, Jason. It’s okay.” I heard Tim’s voice, already crying. I dropped the knife into a pile of dust, creating a small cloud. I fell to my knees, blind with tears. Tim held me as close as he could. I could still hear the fire crack as parts of the building was still burning. I was going through so many emotions in that one moment. I was in a state of shock and disbelief. This had to be one of my dreams, one of nightmares. Why did I let Roy come? How could I be so stupid? What was I going to tell Kory? These were all questions flowing through my mind. I began leaning on Tim for support, forgetting his injuries. He didn’t say a word.

**Tim’s Point of View**

Why must it always rain during funerals? The setting should already be bleak enough, and yet the rain, along with all the black umbrellas made it seem all the more real. Roy’s funeral was held two days after the mission. The Joker’s body was never found. There were some interesting faces at the funeral. Of course, Barabara, Commissioner Gordon, and Roy’s ex along with their daughter showed up. Jason is not a fan of Jade. He says she always treated Roy like he wasn’t ever good enough even though he provided ample financial support for both her and his daughter, Lian. From what I could tell, Roy was a great dad. The saddest part of the funeral was seeing his little girl. She would now have to grow up without her dad. She couldn’t have been more than seven or eight. Her dark hair was inherited from her mother, but her eyes and freckles resembled Roy.

After I placed a flower on the casket Bruce made his way through the crowd and stood beside me. He chose this moment carefully. Jason wasn’t nearby. Jason didn’t want Bruce there, but he didn’t make a scene when he showed up. The two of them simply avoided each other. Neither of us looked at each other and we were both dead silent for a minute or two.

“It’s amazing, isn’t it?” His voice still a bit raspy from the explosion that took place two nights beforehand.

“What is?” I replied, still watching as people added to the flowers atop the casket.

“You know, how people change.” He stated, as we both watched Jason place the final flower. Bruce really hadn’t known Jason for a long time. In his mind, Jason was his greatest failure. Not only, because he died, but because of his actions after being resurrected. Yes, he has done horrible things in the past, but Jason’s heart is pure. I think Bruce was finally able to accept that he wasn’t a failure.

"Bruce, why weren't you there?" My words hardly registered an expression from Bruce, as if the Batman persona took over without the cowl. We would later find out that Batman had been working a case across the world. He was looking for me when he stumbled upon a global terrorist threat. Ra’s al Ghul was planning to release a highly contagious and incurable disease by contaminating the water supplies of other countries. The United States was going to be their first attempt. Bruce and Selena Kyle, also known as Catwoman, put a stop to his plans. Apparently, they had help from Talia, the daughter of Ra’s al Ghul, and a previous love interest of Batman.

"I was needed elsewhere. I'm sorry, Tim, truly I am." His words weigh heavily on my heart, but so does Roy's death and Jason's despair.

"My friend is dead.” I sighed, clinching my fists.
“Consider this my resignation. I'm not Robin anymore.” I said, careful not to talk too loud. This time he seemed like he was actually taken a back by my words. He didn’t try and argue. A few seconds later, I felt Bruce’s hand on my shoulder.

“Take care of him. He needs you more than I do. He listens to you. Don’t forget that.” He muttered, just before walking away. The service was nice. Obviously, it was sad. To be honest, I was still in shock by it all. There were still people hanging around after the burial.

I saw Kori standing over by herself looking down at the tombstone. Before I could begin walking over to her, Jason had sped past me. She turned to face him. Her green eyes were glowing with less intensity than usual. Her vibrant orange skin was now a dull shade of what it once was. She stood just as tall as him. In her hand was a very unusual, yet still beautiful breed of flower. Jason went in to hug Kori and she quickly returned the gesture. For a moment, I thought she might lift him from the ground.

“I’m sorry, Star. I couldn’t save him.” He muttered into her flaming hair, his eyes shut tightly.

“I know. I know.” She said still tightening the embrace. It was heartbreaking. The three of them had been together for so long. Roy meant a lot to them both. Now I wasn’t sure what their group was going to do. Perhaps, it would disband. I don’t see how it could continue without Roy. There was no replacing him. When they broke away from each other Jason walked away without a word. She merely turned back to gaze at Roy’s tombstone before gently placing the mysterious flower on the ground in front of it. I approached her slowly, trying not to startle her.

“It’s beautiful.” I told her, looking down at the flower. Its purple petals swirled into a luminous red center.

“It’s called a Karanborthom (coran-bor-tham.) It means ‘flower of mourning’. On my planet we present them to a loved one after they’ve moved on.” She said, holding back tears with her hand over her mouth. I didn’t know what to say. I opened my mouth to try and talk, but she unintentionally interrupted me.

“Roy and I fought a great deal, but I cared for him like no other. Perhaps, if I had joined you all in battle he would still be here.”
“You don’t know that, Kory. Roy wouldn’t want you to feel that way. No one else feels that way either.” I tried to reassure her. Given our dangerous life styles, death isn’t entirely unexpected. That’s a cold way to look at it, but extremely logical. Bruce is a miracle in a bat mask. In fact, most of us already have our funeral plans ready incase something happens on a mission and we don’t make it
out alive. Jason and I both have funeral arrangements planned.

Kory was quiet for about a minute. I heard footsteps walking through puddles behind us as the silence became more uncomfortable. Suddenly, she raised a hand into the air. Then she spoke again.

“The clown will pay.” She said ominously, her face still crying and swollen. Then with a crack, a blast of green light erupted from her palm up past the clouds, singeing the sky. Everyone stopped what they were doing when she did this. Some even took cover under tables and chairs. Everything went quiet again. With furious green eyes, she brought down her arm and walked away. The people in her way instantly cleared a path. I looked back down at the tombstone. There was a beautiful bow and arrow design carved into it. Carved below the bow and arrow were three short descriptions;

“A brother in arms”

“A loving father”

“A true friend”

Below that were two quotes;

“Raise, aim, shoot”

“No fear”

At the base of the massive tombstone was his name and lifespan.

“Roy William Harper Jr.”

“1989 - 2018”
To be continued in the final chapter....

End Notes

Thank you for reading! Please tell me if you like it and if you want more! :)

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