Anti-Social

by Unpretty

Summary

Batman needs a Robin.
Pocket Friend
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 6:56 PM
uuuuugh

SpoilerAlert  Today at 6:56 PM
everything okay?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 6:57 PM
we’re at this stupid party thing and dad keeps trying to tell everyone about his new boat

SpoilerAlert  Today at 6:58 PM
oh no

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 6:58 PM
yeah like he thinks he’s being subtle but it’s like MY NEW BOAT and no one cares

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 6:58 PM
mom’s had like three glasses of wine already

SpoilerAlert  Today at 6:59 PM
you can do it! just a couple hours right?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 6:59 PM
and i have cramps

SpoilerAlert  Today at 6:59 PM
oh no :c
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:00 PM
they let me wear a suit at least so it’s not all bad

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:00 PM
sorry i know this is so first world problems

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:01 PM
wah i’m at bruce wayne’s house eating free lobster
wah

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:01 PM
don’t be sorry!

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:01 PM
you don’t have to be grateful that they let you wear pants

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:02 PM
this isn’t the fifties, anyone can wear pants

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:05 PM
the public wifi is garbage bc everyone’s trying to post videos

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:05 PM
i think there’s a private network but it’s not broadcasting the ssid
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:06 PM
i'm gonna solve the mystery of where they're hiding the good wifi

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:07 PM
maybe you can just ask?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:07 PM
that's not how mysteries work

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:08 PM
hahaha okay

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:52 PM
oh my flippin gosh i'm the worst i can't believe this

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:53 PM
what happened? are you okay?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:53 PM
i was trying to hide out in like a random hallway???

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:53 PM
idk it seemed like a good idea at the time

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:54 PM
i was on my phone hunting for wifi and being sad LIKE YA DO
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:55 PM
when suddenly BRUCE WAYNE

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:55 PM
he said he didn’t remember my name and i said it was tim and i think he was trying to figure out my pronouns

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:56 PM
oh gosh, really?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:57 PM
yeah but like i didn’t know that so i thought he was being mean so i was like I’M A BOY 😐

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:58 PM
and i said i wanted to be alone bc i had a stomachache but i think i put my hand on the wrong spot or something idk idk it seemed like it was really obvious

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:58 PM
i’m sure it wasn’t!

SpoilerAlert  Today at 7:58 PM
you worry too much, most people don’t notice that kind of thing
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 7:59 PM
but HE DID

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:00 PM
he came back and he had this tea and it's like a chamomile ginger lemon honey thing and a fancy chocolate bar

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:00 PM
that's so nice!

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:01 PM
STEPH YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:01 PM
WHEN HE GAVE ME THE CHOCOLATE HE TRIED TO TELL ME IT WAS MANLY CHOCOLATE BECAUSE IT HAD A TIGER ON IT

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:02 PM
oh no

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:02 PM
IT'S THE DUMBTEST THING ANYONE HAS EVER SAID TO ME IN MY WHOLE LIFE AND I STARTED CRYING
oh no!!

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:04 PM
he was like "sorry" and i was like "NO IT'S FINE I'M JUST CRYING BECAUSE YOU'RE NICE AND I'M THIRTEEN AND I'VE ALREADY LOST CONTROL OF MY LIFE I'M A PRODIGY" and he was like "sorry"

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:05 PM
he like was so obviously uncomfortable and wanted to leave but THEN HE TRIED TO LIKE, PAT MY SHOULDOR OR SOMETHING??? LIKE A TV FIFTIES DAD?????? AND I HUGGD HIM????????

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:05 PM
i got snot on bruce wayne's suit why am i like this

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:05 PM
he sounds really nice! i'm sure he understands

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:06 PM
he finally escaped and now i'm eating all his chocolate

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:07 PM
tigers aren't even a manly animal
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:08 PM
oh and i asked about the wifi

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:08 PM
what did he say?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:09 PM
he didn't know what i was talking about

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:09 PM
i checked though and there's no way it's a hotspot

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:09 PM
there's definitely a big stronk router somewhere

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:10 PM
doesn't he have a son?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:10 PM
yeah but he just moved

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:10 PM
why would he leave a secret router

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:11 PM
bitmining? that's embarassing enough to hide

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:11 PM
hahahahahahaha
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:12 PM
i'm hunting down this secret bit mining rig

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:25 PM
IMG OINTMENT CCRY AHGIN

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:25 PM
that was supposed to say going to cry again i don't know what happened sorry

SpoilerAlert   Today at 8:26 PM
did you get in trouble for snooping?

DreadPirateDrake Today at 8:27 PM
how dare you i've never been caught snooping in my whole life

DreadPirateDrake Today at 8:27 PM
master snooper

DreadPirateDrake Today at 8:27 PM
snoopmaster

SpoilerAlert    Today at 8:28 PM
so what happened?

DreadPirateDrake Today at 8:29 PM
heard dad asking if anyone had seen his daughter
SpoilerAlert: Today at 8:30 PM
i'm sorry tim :c

DreadPirateDrake: Today at 8:31 PM
no but then I heard Bruce Wayne like I HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU MEAN GOOD SIR BUT IF YOU WANT I CAN FIND YOUR SON WHO I HAVE MET AND WHO IS A NICE YOUNG BOY MAN WHO EATS MANLY TIGER CHOCOLATE LIKE A HE-MAN

SpoilerAlert: Today at 8:31 PM
did he really?

DreadPirateDrake: Today at 8:32 PM
i'm paraphrasing

SpoilerAlert: Today at 8:33 PM
i think Bruce Wayne might be a cinnamon roll

DreadPirateDrake: Today at 8:34 PM
too good, too pure

29.30 KB
1473131846739.jpg
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:35 PM
i will save him from bitcoin devilry

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:35 PM
maybe it's secretly bruce wayne's bitmining rig and he didn't want to admit it to you

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:36 PM
that man's never worn a fedora in his whole life how dare u

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:44 PM
i've been through this whole house but it's strongest on the first floor which isn't near anything

SpoilerAlert  Today at 8:45 PM
is there a wine cellar?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 8:46 PM
this def a wine cellar type of house

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:07 PM
uuuh

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:07 PM
uuuuuuuuuuuh

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:07 PM
UUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMM
SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:08 PM
uh oh, that doesn't seem good

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:13 PM
i might have hecked up

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:13 PM
LIKE BAD

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:14 PM
what is it?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:15 PM
okay wait i need to figure some stuff out i think bc
i don't want you to get in trouble

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:15 PM
why would i be in trouble?

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:23 PM
false alarm

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:23 PM
don't scare me like that!!!

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:24 PM
what was it?
DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:25 PM
it wasn’t a router it was just some weird interference
i guess

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:26 PM
nbd

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:26 PM
really?

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:27 PM
or are you just saying that because you found bruce
wayne’s secret bitmining rig? ;3

DreadPirateDrake  Today at 9:29 PM
i will take his cinnamon roll secrets to my grave

SpoilerAlert  Today at 9:29 PM
hahaha

31.08 KB
7e3.jpg
"Is the camera on? Is it on?"

The camera was on, and was looking at a half-eaten turkey sandwich on a croissant. The shot rose to a purple-haired young woman, somewhere between a teenager and a twenty-something. She had winged eyeliner and a silver ring in her lower lip.

"Is that the good lens? Can you zoom?" She was frantically pointing toward something behind her and to the left. The camera moved focus, zoomed in though not by much. A figure was walking down the mostly-empty side-street they were on in what looked like a dress and a parka.

"It won't zoom enough, I didn't bring the long lens," complained the slightly-lispy woman behind the camera.

"I'll just call him over."

"Oh my god, Jessie, no, what if it isn't—"

"Mr. Wayne!" Jessie had bent half-over the metal fence surrounding the cafe table. The flowers on her sleeveless romper matched the color of her curls. "What happened to you?"

There was a jump cut. The shot had changed, steady on a tripod, both girls now visible, one purple
and one pink. It was definitely Bruce Wayne in the ratty brown parka. Black hair in disarray looked
gray at the tips where the light hit it too much, he had stubble and dark circles and bloodshot eyes.
He was wearing a floral shower curtain as a toga.

"Nice outfit," Jessie said.

"Thanks," Bruce said, his voice a strained hiss barely audible. "Can you believe someone threw this
out. Are you drinking that?" He pointed to an untouched glass of water sitting next to a latte,
condensation dripping paths down its sides.

"You can have it," said the girl with the pink dreadlocks. He grabbed it without another word, and
the girls exchanged meaningful glances with the camera and each other as he drank the whole thing.
As his head tipped backward to finish it off, Jessie picked up her own full glass and set it closer to
him. He set the one glass down, grabbed the other, and dumped it over his head. Jessie shrieked and
recoiled as water went everywhere, Bruce scrubbing at his hair and his face. When his hands slid
back his hair was under control, not that it helped.

"Thank you," he said again, no longer sounding like rusty pipes. "You are?" he asked, pointing.

"Jessie Jams."

"Right. You?"

"Danny Dangerous."

"Right." He scratched at his stubble. "Crimefighting, roller derby, or both?"

"We're YouTubers," Danny explained.

"Aah." Bruce nodded. "Thus the camera. Do you yell at video games or makeup."

"Do we yell at makeup?" Jessie repeated with a giggle.

"I know what I asked."

"We're an advice channel."

"JammyDanger!" Jessie said, and she and Danny both gave the camera a thumbs-up.

"So you yell at people."

"Basically," Jessie snorted.

"That's not a very intuitive name for an advice channel."

"We picked it before we knew what we were going to do with it," Danny admitted.

"Do you want to sit down?" Jessie offered.

"No. This thing is held together with sheer force of will. I sit and it'll just..." He made a gesture like
curtains opening. "No one wants that."

"I'd be okay with that," Jessie said.

"You're twelve."
"I'm twenty!"

"Eh."

"Mr. Wayne," Danny asked, "why are you wearing a shower curtain?"

He looked them over. "You want a Bruce Wayne exclusive interview."

"Yes," Jessie said fiercely.

"... yeah, sure." She clapped gleefully as he scratched his stubble again. "Well, children—"

"Twenty!"

"—sometimes, when a man and his wingman love each other very much, the wingman will still bail, because he met a redhead and now he wants to grow Fabio hair."

"This is going in a weird direction," Danny said.

"It usually does," Bruce agreed apologetically. "Then the man makes a lot of questionable life choices, some of which are legal and most of which would probably turn out fine with a wingman. But he doesn't have a wingman, so instead he's waking up with no memory of the night before and his shit is missing, including his goddamn clothes, because he is apparently a fucking idiot who can no longer be trusted to leave the house without tripping over his own dick and hurting himself."

"You said that like you were mad at yourself, but your word choice kind of turned it into a brag," Danny pointed out.

"I know what I said."

"Did they steal your underwear?" Jessie asked in hushed tones.

"If they'd stolen my underwear I'd be calling the police." Bruce stuck his hands in the pockets of the parka, and froze. Slowly, he pulled his left hand out of his pocket.

He was holding a rat.

Jessie shrieked and nearly leapt over the back of her chair. Danny scooted hers away.

Bruce held the rat up enough that he could look it in the eye. It twitched its nose at him to sniff. "Hello Templeton." He set it gingerly on his shoulder, where it remained, surveying the scene.

"Where did you get a rat!"

"The dumpster, I assume."

"It seems very calm."

"I have been called a rat before. It's possible he senses me as one of his own. Do one of you have a cell phone I can use? Mine was in my pants, where I foolishly assumed it would be safe."

Danny pulled hers out of her purse and offered it to him. He took it, but stopped to look at the case instead of using it immediately. It was covered in glitter and three-dimensional roses and bows. He held it so that Danny and the camera could both see the focus of his interest.

"Did you make this yourself, Miss Dangerous."
"I did."

"This is adorable. Good job." He offered his fist as his other hand dialed a number. Danny made a gleeful face at both Jessie and the camera as, carefully, she fistbumped Bruce Wayne. He held the phone to his ear as he waited for whoever he'd called to pick up. "Alfred. Yeah. Long story. Need a ride. No, bring the—not the Rolls, something I can mess up the upholstery in. I'm wearing a dumpster. Yeah. If you could bring pants that would be great. Any pants. I really don't care. Obviously not those, don't be deliberately obtuse. A spare phone, too. If I don't have pants why would I still have a phone. I borrowed this one. Danny Dangerous. No, she's from the internet. I'm at —" He paused to check the sign on the door, and sighed. "The Catscratch Café, apparently. Yeah. Don't start. Fine." He hung up, giving Danny back her phone.

"As long as we're waiting," Jessie said, "why don't you be a guest on our show?"

"I thought I was. Are you eating that?"

Danny pushed her french fries closer, and he immediately popped one into his mouth.

"I meant the advice part."

He swallowed his fry. "Am I supposed to ask you for advice."

"No, you'd be giving it."

"Do I look like I'm in any position to tell anyone how to live their lives." He fed a cold french fry to the rat on his shoulder.

"You could give good advice!" Jessie assured him. "We get a lot of girls who want help with their boyfriends."

"Dump him." He ate another fry.

"It's not always like that! You can't just dump a guy every time he's a little annoying."

"You can, and should."

"Maybe you could give people tips to be successful?" Danny suggested.

"Based on personal experience you should try being born a white billionaire with a Type A personality and a need for external validation that can never be satisfied because your parents are dead."

"I don't think most people can use that," Jessie said.

"I hope not."

"Do you have any advice," Jessie attempted, "for someone who wants to marry a billionaire?"

"That's a terrible idea. My first advice is don't."

"What about your second?"

"I can give you my mother's strategy."

"Is it romantic?"
"First, find a billionaire. Then be smarter than he is. Then, remind him that you're smarter than he is, repeatedly. Hit him with a sword sometimes for emphasis."

"And that works?"

"It worked at least once."

"Would it work on you?"

Bruce narrowed his eyes at nothing in particular. "... it might be."

"What?"

"Mr. Wayne," Danny asked, "what do you think about the popular trend of books about billionaires who are into bondage?"

"What."

"You know," Jessie said, "like all the books about a sexy billionaire who likes to tie up his secretary and spank her."

"That sounds unethical. Are they arrested."

"So you're not into it?"

"I have multiple secretaries in multiple offices and most of them are elderly men."

"Do old men make good secretaries?"

"That depends. Do you need a secretary that can keep people busy by telling them stories about the Great Depression, until they give up and stop trying to show you presentations about new suppliers."

"What's that scar from?" Danny asked, pointing. Bruce tried to look, but the scar in question was too close to his neck. He put a hand over it to try and determine which one it was. "I think that one's from a whip."

Jessie gasped. "You can't just say that and not give details."

"You're twelve."

Behind Bruce, a towncar pulled up to park at the sidewalk.

"Do you have any final messages for our audience before you go?" Danny asked. Bruce grabbed one last french fry for the rat as his butler stepped around the car to open the back door. "Dump him. If you're a secretary and your boss tries to spank you, call my lawyer. Thanks for the drinks."

"I suppose you'll be keeping that," could faintly be heard in the background as Danny picked up the camera again to catch Bruce's retreat.

"His name is Templeton."

"Of course it is, sir."

"He likes french fries."
"I take it we'll be calling Rex again?"

Bruce’s reply was lost as he got in the back of the car, Alfred's body shielding whatever effect this action may have had on Bruce's modesty. There was a jump cut to the window rolling down enough for a small wave as the car pulled away.

Everything after the subsequent jump cut was nothing but a high-pitched retelling of what had just happened, spanning another five minutes.
help

if you've been following my blog you probably know by now that my situation isn't great. i am 14 and trans and that is going just... so great... for me... anyway i've been talking to some friends and we think if i can get the money together i might be able to get out of here and get some help? if you could donate to my paypal that would be amazing and if you subscribe to dreadpiratedrake on youtube that helps too. i mostly post vlogs and parkour videos but i'm trying to get into lets plays. anything helps i am just so tired i don't know how much longer i can do this.

queerjabberwocky

don't you live in gotham? ask bruce wayne to adopt you. (but seriously i am so sorry tim i wish i had money)

dreadpiratedrake

i know you meant this as a joke but you just gave me an idea

dreadpiratedrake

the butler's name is alfred and he calls me mister drake i'm gonna cry

queerjabberwocky

TIM ARE YOU SERIOUS WHAT THE FUCK

dreadpiratedrake

i actually met him before so it's not like i just showed up like HELLO MISTER WAYNE MEET UR NEW SON but also that is what i did. no one else try it this mansion is mine now. i have dibs.
Bruce was walking through a hallway, reading something on a tablet. The camera filmed him from around a doorframe. "Think fast!" Tim shouted, and the shot shook as he threw a basketball with his other hand. When it stabilized, Bruce had not only caught the ball one-handed, but was twirling it on his fingers. He had not stopped walking. The phone lowered as Tim started after him. "Are you—"

The caption read: [WHAT]

→ → →

[bro what]

Tim was standing in front of Bruce, who had only just stopped in his tracks as a result. Tim took a step back so the camera angle wouldn't be quite so steep; Bruce was clearly much taller than he was. Bruce was still reading, and the basketball was still spinning on his free hand. "Okay, how'd you learn to ball in the Munster Mansion?" Tim demanded.

"Hm?" Bruce looked from his tablet to Tim, then to the ball. He looked taken aback, as if surprised to see it there. "Oh. Huh." He shrugged. "I did go to college, Tim."
[is that paris hilton??????]

The shot was too far away to tell, and Tim's attempts to zoom only made things blurrier and shakier. The figure on the left could safely be assumed Bruce Wayne. The figure on the right was small and blonde and scantily clad. On the grounds of Wayne Manor this meant almost nothing. They were in the garage, between shining rows of sports cars, discussing a difficult to identify piece of equipment.

[IT IS °hearteyes°°hearteyes°°hearteyes°]

It was a still selfie of Tim, Paris' arm around his shoulders. Paris was also taller than Tim.

[someone save him]

Paris had draped herself on Bruce, who was rolling his eyes. She had her lips pursed toward him, but he was too tall for her to reach. Tim had applied the dog filter. Bruce had dalmatian spots.

[what is this??]

It was a blurry photo, taken surreptitiously, of an SCR-528. Also, Bruce Wayne's legs. They were impressively long, and much easier to identify than a WW2-era radio.

Tim had the camera on selfie mode, his voice low as he glanced around, suggesting he was trying to be stealthy. "So, Dick is back visiting from college this week but I guess he dropped out and it is so awkward here right now."

[AWK. WARD.]

Only the unsteady motion of the camera gave it away as a video. Bruce stood in silence in what might have been the parlor, his hands on the back of a chair. Dick could have passed for his biological son, though leaner and darker, his hair long enough that it was beginning to curl. He was sitting in a loveseat, also silent. It was almost a staring contest.

The camera crepted slowly closer to where Dick was sitting.

The camera came close enough to Dick to be uncomfortable. Soon it would hit him in the cheek. Dick suddenly broke from his staredown with Bruce to look at Tim's phone and cross his eyes. Tim tried to stifle a snort, panning to where Bruce still regarded his wayward ward with narrowed eyes.
Tim had backed away, but not by much. Bruce sighed. "I just don't know what I did," he said, and Dick's shoulders hunched, "that made you think it was acceptable," and Dick pressed his mouth into a thin line, "to have a party in the back."

Tim barked a noisy laugh as Dick's eyes went wide and his face went slack and his hands went defensively to his hair. "It's not—"

"—see you are you going to be pulling up in a Dodge Charger and some cutoffs?"

"It's not a mullet!"

"It looks like you've got a duck's ass on the back of your neck."

"My hair is not the issue here."

"Unless you're David Bowie or a lesbian it is very much an issue."

"Between what? John Stamos and a poodle?"

"I'm growing it out, it's just in an awkward in-between place right now."

"Between what? John Stamos and a poodle?"

"The LSD thing or the Venezuela thing?"

"Both."

"No."

"I'm so mad I missed it"

Tim had his phone in Bruce's face. "I missed it, say the thing you just said again."

"The LSD thing or the Venezuela thing?"

"Both."

"No."

"This is what it looks like when everything's fine"

Dick was sitting on top of a cabinet, his legs dangling far above eye level. Bruce had his hands on his hips, his neck craned to maintain a conversation. The phone wasn't close enough to either of them to make out what was being said.

"Okay, so like, backstory: when I was a kid, my parents never got me Lunchables, I don't know why. They could definitely afford it, they just didn't."
"Like maybe they thought Lunchables were for poors? I don't know, man, but the other kids got Lunchables and I was so jelly like you don't even know."

"So like, I roll up in here like the Fresh Prince, and Alfréd is the man. He's like Santa. I make a list and he checks it twice. So I said Lunchables."

"Why not, right? I mean if I'm getting all this other stuff then why not some Lunchables? I can be in high school eating Lunchables, everyone loves Lunchables."

"If you're a Lunchables hater you can just unfollow me right now, I don't need that kind of negativity in my life. No haters."

The camera moved unsteadily as Tim opened the fridge. "Alfréd comes back from the store, and you know what he gets me? You know what I find when I go looking for my Lunchables?"

Tim had switched the camera view to show what he'd retrieved, sitting on the granite countertop. It was a sealed plastic tray, but it was not a Lunchable. Besides being the wrong brand, it contained prosciutto and a spreadable goat cheese with figs.

"What is this load of barnacles. Oh my god."

"Look at this thing. Baguette toasts. What is a baguette toast? I want to shove myself in a locker for this."

He'd put another of the imposter lunches on top of the other. "This one has caviar! Caviar. And water crackers."

"Water crackers sounds like something you'd call white people with houseboats."

"Beluga caviar. That doesn't even make sense. Whales don't lay eggs. This is a scam. I'm blowing the lid off this conspiracy."

The camera looked out from a balcony to a sprawling green lawn edged by thick forest, the city of Gotham visible in the distance. The phone shook as a little plastic tray went flying, Tim flinging it as
far as he could into the grass.

"Whales don't lay eggs!"

[he's gonna banish me to the shadow realm]

Tim was recording a very dignified man with white hair and a thin moustache. He was polishing silverware. It didn't look like it needed polishing.

"Alfred, I demand satisfaction."

Alfred paused. "Are you suggesting that you'd like to duel?"

"Explanation. I meant explanation."

Alfred sighed a long-suffering sigh perfected over decades. "They did not have the item you requested at our usual grocer, so I'd hoped you'd be willing to settle."

"Have you ever even seen a Lunchable?"

"I apologize for thinking prosciutto di parma could ever replace the wonder of a machine-pressed ham."

"Alfred, I've decided to accept your apology."

"Very good, Master Tim."

Tim had the camera on himself, standing outside in the blinding sun. "For mysterious reasons the guy who takes care of the grass was caught in some kind of caviar explosion, somehow, so now I have to mow."

"Did you guys know Beluga caviar is sturgeon eggs? Why is it even called Beluga? That's a whale."

The camera followed the slow advance of a robotic lawnmower. "I used my allowance to get this but this is actually slower than just mowing the lawn myself."

[WE CAN REBUILD HIM °tools°]

It was a photo of the lawnmower, half-disassembled in what might have been a shed.
Some kind of rocketry had been attached to the lawnmower, and joysticks on the workbench suggested he was planning to steer it from afar.

The camera went between the controller and the lawnmower. "Okay, moment of truth!" He pressed a button, which was small and gray but had been labeled "BIG RED BUTTON". Flames shot out from the back of the lawnmower as it took off at top speed. Tim, and thus also the phone, leapt victoriously into the air.

Nothing could be seen but blurry grass, the camera shaking and bouncing.

"I hecked up! I hecked up bad! Myth busted!"

The shot followed the lawnmower traveling along the edge of the forest, trailing fire. It panned to Bruce, standing impassively near the patio.

"Is that a renegade rocket robot."

"Maybe."

Bruce put a hand over his eyes and dragged it down his face with a sigh.

Bruce was still wearing pressed black pants and a dress shirt. He'd rolled his sleeves up to his elbows, and had a length of rope looped around one arm.

"Are ya gonna lassoo the varmint?" Tim called from a safe distance.

Bruce did not answer, but did start to twirl a loop in the rope above his head. It looked like the platonic ideal of a twirling lasso.

"Oh my god he actually is."

Tim hadn't managed to start recording until the rope was halfway through its arc toward the lawnmower. It managed to hook around the body without sliding underneath it, tightening as Bruce pulled on it. Tim was shouting inarticulately. Rather than stop, the lawnmower started to move in a loop around Bruce as he dug in his heels. When he let go of the rope, it was at just the right point to slingshot the mower into the duck pond. Ducks quacked indignantly as they took flight.

Bruce was pulling on the rope, but the lawnmower wasn't coming up.

"Maybe the rockets are still going?" Tim suggested.
Bruce emerged from the water of the duck pond, the rope wrapped around one arm and the lawnmower hanging from one hand. He dropped it unceremoniously on the ground, and it made a grinding and sputtering noise. He stomped on it, and the noise stopped with a crack of its chassis. His hair was dripping and his shirt was stuck to his skin.

Snapchat had mistaken some of the cracks and vents on the lawnmower for a face, and so Tim had taken a picture with a golden butterfly crown on it.

"Where did you learn how to do that?"

"Do what?"

"The rope thing."

"I did go to college, Tim."

"You learned how to do rope tricks at Yale?" Tim asked, amused and incredulous. Bruce sighed. "I was young. It was college. I did a lot of things I'm not proud of."

"At least the lawn kind of got mowed?"

"The blades actually flew harmlessly over the grass. You get to use the reel mower now, by the way."

"The what?"

It was a selfie of a sweat-soaked Tim sitting in the grass. He'd taken off his shirt to leave only his binder, which was patterned to look like outer space. Behind him was an old manual reel mower, small and with slightly rusted blades.

The reel screeched as Tim pushed the mower forward, the shot shaky as he tried to hold his camera while pushing.
"What even is this? Is this how the pioneers mowed the prairies? Did they carry their mowers in their covered wagons? Was there—"

→ → →

[BIG BRO HAS THE HOOKUP °thumbs up°°thumbs up°°thumbs up°]

It was a picture of Dick, sitting on top of a minifridge in one of the many rooms in Wayne Manor. There was a poster of Beyoncé on the wall behind him. The door to the minifridge was open and full of pizza Lunchables.

Though his hair was still long, Dick had clearly gotten a trim in the back.

→ → →

Tim was using the selfie camera to record himself and Dick singing along to music with Lunchables packages in their hands.

"—pick it up and tell me if you really wanna dance some more we're borderline wasting time—"

→ → →

[oh no i'm too old]

"These are actually kind of gross?" Tim admitted to his phone. Music still played in the background.

"Really?" Dick asked, his mouth half-full after taking a bite of shelf-stable faux pizza. "I like 'em. Remind me of when I was a kid." Tim shook his head sadly.

→ → →

[i just wanted rocky road why this]

It was a picture of a pint of balsamic fig and mascarpone ice cream in front of a gleaming chrome refrigerator. There was a glittery magnet of Wonder Woman's logo. It held up a piece of paper that said:

DAYS SINCE LAST INCIDENT:
THERE ARE NEVER ANY DAYS BETWEEN INCIDENTS
More readable on mobile via Imgur.
FineMess
What's wrong?

DreadPirateDrake
helllllp

FineMess

DreadPirateDrake
i don't know what happened in singapore but i think he's really messed up about it bc he still hasn't eaten and i know i should have said something sooner but i was hoping it would sort itself out and it hasn't help

FineMess
Shit
Babs mentioned he was bitchy but i was hoping she was being oversensitive

DreadPirateDrake
she was not
i don't know why you would ever assume that

FineMess
Incurable optimism
You told him you wouldn't have dinner without him?

DreadPirateDrake
yes obviously that is the first thing i tried but i think he could tell i was lying bc i am weak
FineMess
Yeah, he can tell

DreadPirateDrake

FineMess
You're not weak!
You shouldn't have to starve yourself, that isn't your responsibility
It shouldn't matter anyway, it should be enough that you tried

DreadPirateDrake
it wasn't
he's been on the caveputer p much all week
it's just empty shake cans and i think he's been eating peanut butter with a spoon
i don't think he's using it to make the bats look like they're talking
alfred tried talking to him and i think they had a fight bc now they're both mad
and i'm kinda avoiding him bc i'm worried he'll yell at me and i'll die??????

FineMess
I don't think he would, but yeah, you're kind of at DefCon Fuck
Time to initiate emergency procedures
Time to initiate emergency procedures
I'm going to call in an order, all you have to do is pick it up at the door

DreadPirateDrake
okay

19:52

DreadPirateDrake
why is this just a huge bag of sesame balls

FineMess
Trust me
Just put them on a plate and leave them on his desk

DreadPirateDrake
what if he yells at me 😞

FineMess
You'll be fine
Don't try to say anything, just leave it there for him
Check back in an hour, and if none of them are missing let me know and I'll head out there

19:58

DreadPirateDrake
okay
FineMess
What's wrong?

DreadPirateDrake
everything?

FineMess
This isn't your fault

DreadPirateDrake
i know!!!
you don't have to tell me

FineMess
 Seriously, what's wrong?

DreadPirateDrake
i am SO BAD AT THIS
all of this
i can't do anything

FineMess
Should I call?

DreadPirateDrake
no
phones are the devil
FineMess
Haha okay
Seriously, don’t beat yourself up about this
He does this sometimes

DreadPirateDrake
it isn’t just this it’s everything
he never lets me do anything
i’m bad at fighting and i think i’m just getting in the way most
  of the time
but i’m not even good at normal son stuff
i know he didn’t want me but i thought i would prove i was
  worth it and i’m not

FineMess
Whoa hey
If he didn’t want you, you wouldn’t be there

DreadPirateDrake
i liter a l l y had to blackmail him

FineMess
He let you
If he really didn’t want you around, no amount of
  blackmailing would work
You think he ever wanted a Robin at all?
You think i wasn’t a huge liability?
None of this was ever his idea
None of this was ever his idea
You’re way more useful than I was when I first started
You’re like Babs that way

DreadPirateDrake
but you two are closer
like you can actually fix things

FineMess
I have years of practice and a lot more in common
That’s not always a good thing, either
You’re better at making him laugh

DreadPirateDrake
no way
you guys banter and stuff and he just gives me this look like
I’ve shamed my ancestors

FineMess
Nooooo
I told you, we’re too alike
He sees all my punchlines a mile away, he sets up most of them on purpose
You actually make him laugh because you surprise him

DreadPirateDrake
he’s so bad at laughing
I didn’t think you could be bad at laughing
FineMess
He’s bad at a lot of things
Laughing, eating, having basic survival instincts

DreadPirateDrake
i just didn’t think it would be like this i guess
i thought it would be dangerous but safe bc you were fine
but it seemed like it would be a job? not this

FineMess
It is a job
Your job is to take care of the genius whose solution to gun
violence was to put himself in front of all the guns

DreadPirateDrake
omg 😪
when you put it like THAT

FineMess
Yuuuuup

DreadPirateDrake
i’m going to leave some food out for him wish me luck
FineMess
Any luck?

DreadPirateDrake
okay well
he ate a couple
but like
he’s just sitting there
with a sesame ball in his mouth
like a dog with a tennis ball
not eating it
just holding it in his mouth

FineMess
In costume?

DreadPirateDrake
costume but w the cowl down
u kno how he do

FineMess
...
...can you get a picture?

DreadPirateDrake
i
am
TRYING
The camera swept through the room. Specifically, it swept over empty vodka bottles. A lot of empty vodka bottles. And eventually, Bruce Wayne sprawled out on the couch and holding something to his head.

A jump-cut closer revealed that it was a raw steak wrapped in plastic.

"Sooo," Tim asked, "you look like you had fun."

Bruce sighed. "Is this going on Snapchat again."

"YouTube. Why is there meat on your face?"

"I think I have a concussion."

"Does meat help with concussions?"

"No."

"Does it make you feel like a boxer in the 1930s who's big and tough but he's the underdog and he's gotta win one last fight before he can retire but he's getting his butt kicked?"

"Yes."

"Because that's what you look like."

"Good."

Tim panned over to the bottles covering the floor. "How much did you even drink?"

"I wasn't drinking."

"Uh-huh."

"I needed solvent."

"And you used vodka?"

"It's what I had."

"Why do some of these bottles look like skulls?"

"They were gifts."

"So you definitely didn't get really drunk and then get socked in the face by an angry ginger."

"Tim. I know exactly what you're trying to do here."

"Calling you out?"

"You're not as helpful as you think you are."

"Bruce, the internet and I are worried about you. This is an intervention."
"God, you're a little shit."

The camera shook as Tim laughed. "You can't do that!"

"Do what?"

"Call me that!"

"I just did."

"You're going to lose custody because you're an alcoholic who swears at impressionable young children."

"No I'm not. Look at him." Bruce pointed, and Tim turned the camera to where Dick Grayson was standing in the doorway. He was holding foam takeout containers.

"What about me?" he asked.

"I never lost custody of you," Bruce said, "and I spent six years calling you a dick."

"That's because that's my name, Bruce."

"That's a weird coincidence."

"Is that from Dimitri's?"

"Have you told him?" Dick asked Tim.

"No, he distracted me with 30s boxing."

"An important part of being a Wayne is learning how not to let him do that."

"How is that my fault. I barely said two words."

"That's how he gets you," Dick said. "Bruce, you're doing an AMA."

"A what."

"The internet has a lot of questions for you," Tim said, "so you're going to answer them. While drunk."

"I'm concussed."

"He always says that," Dick said.

"You're awful children," Bruce told them. "I could have brain damage."

"You're drunk," Dick corrected.

"I could have alcohol poisoning."

"You're drunk."

"I could be dying."

"You're drunk."

"You're a drama queen when you're drunk," Tim accused.
"He's always a drama queen. And he's not getting this food unless he agrees to do an AMA."

"... what did you order."

"I told him you were shitfaced and this is what he gave me."

There was another jump cut. Bruce was sitting upright, and Dick was on the couch next to him. One of the takeout containers held nothing but gyro meat—more than it seemed possible to fit within the space given. What had looked like a soup container held tzatziki. Everything else went into its own tray, and Bruce was busy wrapping absurd amounts of everything in pita bread.

"Okay, I'm looking at the questions people have sent in," Tim said from behind the camera. Bruce grunted. "I told everyone not to send in relationship questions but a bunch of them did anyway."

"I give great relationship advice," Bruce said.

"Your only advice is 'dump him'."

"Yes." He crammed gyro into his mouth.

"Ummmm... so, 'Panda-mic' says, 'how do I get girls to like me?'"

Bruce held up a hand to indicate that Tim would need to wait for him to finish chewing.

"Wow, you were hungry."

"I'm actually extremely nauseated," Bruce corrected once he'd swallowed. "I might vomit later. What was the question."

"Getting girls to like you."

"You don't."

"He gives the worst advice," Dick warned.

"That's not even advice," Tim agreed.

"It's not advice. It's a fact. People like you or they don't."

"Maybe find a question that doesn't involve asking Bruce for likability tips," Dick suggested. Bruce grunted and took another bite of his pita.

"Um—oh, here's a good one. DoctorWitch wants to know who you think would win in a fight, Batman or Superman."

"Wonder Woman."

Dick looked like he might protest this answer, then shut his mouth and shrugged.

"Ooh! Maybe I should ask about that!"

"About what."

"About you and Diana," Tim taunted, bringing the camera closer. "That's one of the things people asked about a lot."

Bruce squinted. "One of?"
"Yeah, everyone wants to know all your deepest, darkest secrets."

"Huh."

"Do you have any?"

There was a jump cut to a 'technical difficulties' screen that had clearly been lifted from the Simpsons.

On return to the camera, the angle suggested that Tim was now filming from the floor. Dick was hunched over the armrest of the couch, shaking. Bruce was chewing, placid and faintly cow-like.

"Not that deep!" Tim shrieked.

"You didn't specify."?

"You asshole," Dick muttered, still smothering laughter.

"No more secrets!" Tim declared.

"Hm." Bruce took another bite of gyro, then continued speaking with his mouth half-full. "So I definitely shouldn't say that I'm—"

"No!" both boys shouted at once. The shot went shaky as Tim sat upright. Dick leapt sideways to
clap a hand over Bruce's mouth. Bruce looked indignant; Dick was unmoved.

"This is going to be an editing nightmare," Tim complained.

"Find a safe question," Dick said. "Otherwise he's just going to try to embarrass us again." Bruce narrowed his eyes at him.

"Is a hot dog a sandwich?" Tim asked. Dick took his hand off Bruce's mouth.

"Legally, or philosophically?" Bruce asked.

"What?" Tim asked.

"They're distinct questions."

"Both," Dick said.

"Legally, no. Philosophically, yes."

Dick made a face. "That feels like a slippery slope."

"That's a fallacy."

"It doesn't have two slices of bread," Dick pointed out.

"Neither does an open-faced sandwich."

"Is pizza a sandwich?" Dick asked, clearly intending to catch him in a contradiction.

"Yes," Bruce said, with no hesitation.

"A calzone?"

"That's an empanada."

"Why would you even—"

There was another jump cut to the technical difficulties screen. This time the text had been crudely covered in Paint, so that it read instead: this man went to yale to talk about burrito precedent for twenty mins.
"Next question!" Tim demanded after the cut. Whatever path the debate had taken, Dick seemed unsatisfied with the results. "KissKissFallInLesbians—who has a really good username—wants to know if you would rather fight one horse-sized duck, or a hundred duck-sized horses."

Bruce’s eyebrows furrowed and his mouth cut an incredulous line as he spread his hands in confusion. "How is that even a question?" He looked to Dick for support, who offered none. "I don’t even want to fight a duck-sized duck. Have you met a duck? As for the horses—do they specify what kind of horses?"

"Seriously?" Tim asked.

"No, he's right," Dick said. "That's an important question."

"I'll pick the horses either way," Bruce said, "but the breed determines my strategy."

"Oh my gosh," Tim said.

"If they're thoroughbreds, I just have to pretend to be an aggressive leaf and they'll bolt. If they're Clydesdales, then I'm going to keep them."

"That's not an option!"

"Why would I fight a hundred tiny Clydesdales when I could have lap Clydesdales."
"He has a point," said Dick.

"You're not helping," Tim said. "Weedhorse69 wants to know if you know what Batman looks like."

"That username doesn't make any sense."

"I think it's ironic."

"What do you think the word 'irony' means."

"His irony levels aren't high enough for that level of internet," apologized Dick.

"Is it a duck-sized weedhorse."

"I thought I saw Batman once," Tim said, in an effort to get back on track, "but it might have been a trash bag, so I think the answer to the question is 'Batman looks like trash'."

"Looks like, or is?" Dick wondered. "Maybe some nuclear waste hit some regular waste and it got superpowers."

"That's not how radiation works. Or trash. Nothing works like that. This is why you were supposed to stay in school."

"Ouch," said Tim, zooming in on the expression of pained resignation on Dick's face. Then he zoomed back out. Bruce had started eating tzatziki with a spoon. "SpaceAce asks: why doesn't Bruce use his Twitter account?"

With the spoon still in his mouth, Bruce retrieved his phone from his back pocket. After a moment, he held it up. He had his mentions tab open. It was scrolling constantly.

"Oh no," Tim said, genuine horror as he zoomed in on the phone.

"Why don't I use Twitter more," Bruce asked rhetorically.

A significant number of Bruce's mentions consisted entirely of variations on the phrase 'choke me daddy'.

"Why don't you turn on the quality filter!" Dick demanded, horrified. He'd covered his face and was watching it scroll through splayed fingers.

"It is on," Bruce said. "You should have seen it before."

"You could at least block the weird scar guy" Tim said. The same message kept appearing on Bruce's phone and scrolling down it, sent from an account with the same photo each time. It just said 'show us your scars', followed by a link. Tim zoomed back out as Bruce turned his phone around to look at it.

"That's actually about twenty different bot accounts run by the same guy," Bruce said. "He's—have you seen this guy?"

His words had developed a barely-detectable drowsy slur. Dick frowned. "No. Are you feeling okay?"

"I'm fine," Bruce said unconvincingly. "This guy," he said, pointing to his phone. "Here, I'll just show you his website. His deal is that he runs a conspiracy forum about how I'm actually
Superman."

Dick covered his face again. Tim started laughing so hard that the camera was completely unstable. Bruce held his phone up again, and Tim tried to zoom in on the screen, but failed and only made it shake more. The shot changed to a static image of the website that Tim had added to the video later. The header image was of Bruce Wayne's head poorly photoshopped onto Superman's body. Then the shot returned to Bruce.

"The theory goes," Bruce said, "that my parents were part of the Illuminati, because they were rich."

"Of course," Dick said.

"The Illuminati, in turn, were in charge of covering up the fact that aliens exist and have been in secret contact with Earth governments."

"Right."

"When someone needed to secretly raise an alien baby, my parents volunteered to do their patriotic Illuminati duty. Which is how an alien was raised on Earth without anyone knowing."

"Makes sense."

"Except the Russians knew about the plan to raise a super alien baby as an American, so they assassinated my parents."

"Oh, no," Dick said, looking genuinely unhappy at this turn the conspiracy had taken.

"The assassin didn't know that, as an alien, I would be bulletproof, which is how I survived the shooting that killed my parents." Bruce rubbed absentmindedly at his temple, squinting at his phone.

"The tweets are because he says the proof of his theory is that I should have a lot of scars. From jumping off cliffs, and crashing cars, and... whatever the fuck I do. He says the reason I don't take my shirt off in public is to hide the fact that I don't have any scars."

"But then all you have to do is show one scar and he'd shut up," Tim said.

"I don't negotiate with terrorists," Bruce said, and Dick snorted. Then Bruce yawned. "It's happened before, he always says it's makeup."

"I think it's nap time," Dick said firmly, putting a hand on Bruce's shoulder.

"This feels backward," Bruce said.

"Say goodnight to the internet, Bruce!" Tim said, bringing the camera closer to his face.

"That's not what I want to say to the internet."

"What do you want to say to the internet?"

"Get the fuck out of my mentions."

The video ended abruptly while Tim was in mid-laugh.
The camera came uncomfortably close to Bruce's face. He was very good at pretending not to notice it. He was reading a book about, of all things, the history of denim. It was not the sort of book that made it easy to ignore cameras, but he remained stoic.

The caption said helpfully: [been doing this for 30 mins]

"Bruce. Bruce. Bruce. We need to go Walmart. Bruce. I need it."

"Ask Alfred."

→→→

"It's a surprise for Alfred."

"You can’t surprise Alfred."

"Bruce, please."

→→→
"It's not a matter of permission, I'm saying you literally can't surprise Alfred."

→ → →

[he hates when i say that]

"Bruuuuce."

"No."

"This is bullroar."

Bruce finally set down his book with an expression of the most profound disgust.

→ → →

[oh no now we'll be here all day]

"—either curse or don't, just commit one way or the other instead of—"

→ → →

The camera took its time panning over a black BMW.

"Can I drive?"

"No."

→ → →

[after this he took away my music privileges]

Bruce was driving, looking stoic again. His face lent itself well to stoicism. The radio played, at high volume, "Sandstorm" by Darude.

→ → →

"I'll play something different this time."

"You had your chance and you blew it on a meme."

→ → →

[SJGJDH;FUKC "crying laughing"]

"I'm boooored."

"Hi, bored," Bruce said, eyes still on the road, and Tim groaned loudly. "I don't give a shit."

The view shifted and audio clattered as Tim dropped the phone, barking a laugh.

→ → →

The phone was wobbly as Tim followed Bruce into the store. "Can I get a trampoline?" he asked, camera pointed to one outside the store.

"We have three trampolines."
"But I want that one."

They were in the chip aisle. "Have you ever had a Dorito? One Dorito? In your whole life?"

"I am a person. I eat food for people."

The camera followed a bag of Nacho Cheese Doritos into the cart.

"We're not getting those."

"We need to get sour cream, too."

"No."

"You'll love it."

"No."

Tim had put the seatbelt of the cart's seat, intended for toddlers, around a giant plastic jar of orange cheese puffs.

"I thought you were getting something for Alfred."

"I'm getting groceries while we're here."

"None of this is food."

Bruce was holding a gallon jar of pickles with an expression of incredulity.

"—costs extra to not waste food?"

"It's Walmart."

"Even taking into account the economies of scale—"

"—it just makes no sense even as a loss leader, unless the goal is to drive the competition out of business and hope they don't go bankrupt in the—"

Bruce had every appearance of furiously texting on his phone, or possibly composing emails.
Bruce was now on his phone, looking impassive as ever as he contemplated the giant jar of pickles.
"—the business itself is perfectly sound. Yes. Obviously. Dead serious. Look, if you—"

Tim put a gallon jug of ranch dressing into the cart.
"Absolutely not."

Tim was in the frozen section, his reflection visible in the glass.
"I bet Alfred would love some pizza rolls."
"Your lies demean us both, Tim."

Bruce was standing in the toy aisle, rubbing the bridge of his nose. "I understand the concept of blind boxes perfectly well, thank you."
"Then why are you acting confused?"
"Why does Thomas the Tank Engine—"

Bruce was making a face of disgruntled bafflement at a display of baby clothes.
"—disturbed by the amount of aggressive heterosexuality being foisted on these babies."
"Yeah," Tim agreed. "What about the gay babies?"
"I can't tell if you're joking but I'm unironically concerned."

The camera panned over a display of hero-themed hats. Most of the Batman hats had sold out, while the Superman display was nearly full. It panned back to Bruce, who was taking a picture with his own phone.
"Who you texting it to?"
"Friend in Metropolis."
"Metropolis sucks."
"Yes. Yes it does."

[no escape]

The camera peered out slowly from behind a clothing display. Bruce was surrounded by enthusiastic and friendly women. It was impossible to tell what they were talking about.

[??]

Bruce was holding a dress up against himself. The women around him seemed delighted and were nodding their approval.

[i'll strike while he's distracted]

Tim dropped another two four-movie collections of Shrek on top of the considerable pile he'd already amassed. He panned up to check that Bruce had not caught him before grabbing another.

[busted]

While Bruce put DVDs back on the shelf, Tim surreptitiously grabbed a Shrek coloring book.

[he's gonna get a fish]

Bruce was frowning at the wall of fishtanks in silence. Finally he said, "These fish are very unhealthy."

[HE'S BUYING ALL THE FISH]

The man attempting to help Bruce looked baffled. Bruce gestured to the entire display of fish with a nod. The man shook his head. Tim brought his phone close to a betta, blue and red with a tattered and graying tail.

"We're here to save you," Tim stage-whispered to it.

Bruce was now engrossed in conversation with multiple employees.

"—if I bought some tanks—they're much too small but as a temporary measure—we could transfer them directly and it might be less distressing for the fish."

"Maybe I could get one of the big dolly carts from the back?" one young man suggested.
The low camera angle suggested Tim was trying to be surreptitious.

"—for trying to unionize is completely against the law," Bruce was saying, his voice low. He was helping three other employees transfer fish into large plastic tanks.

"At-will employment," one woman said.

"We'd have to prove that was why they fired us," someone clarified. "Otherwise they can say it was for no reason."

"You're shitting me."

"—fucking with my hours hoping I'll quit."

"What? Why?"

"If they fired me, they'd have to pay unemployment."

"That's why they won't let me work full-time."

"What the fuck."

"—fucking with my hours hoping I'll quit."

"What the fuck."

[omg he's stealing the employees now]

"—in Gotham, but there's more opportunities outside of manufacturing if you're willing to move."

"Wait, so do you mean like for management?"

"No, no, that's the starting wage for someone working assembly, quality control, that kind of thing. We're all unionized, none of this at-will bullshit."

"So if I—"

The woman from earlier was showing Bruce her phone while the others continued moving fish.

"You painted this?" Bruce asked. She nodded. "That's fantastic. Are you showing it anywhere? I know a guy with a gallery—actually I know pretty much everyone with an art gallery in Gotham. I think I have a friend who'd really love this, if you don't mind me making some calls for you."

Four more employees had joined the menagerie.

"—almost always hiring in Gotham. People are always moving to cities with fewer evil clowns." Everyone laughed. Tim snorted. "Employee insurance totally covers acts of supervillainy, though."

[trying to crush the revolution]

The employees had not dispersed. In the distance, someone managerial was talking to Bruce. He
looked much less amused than Bruce did.

→ → →

[THEY CALLED THE COPS]

Tim had switched to the selfie camera, his face pure glee. He turned bodily to show the employees wheeling out tanks of fish out of the store, police lights in the parking lot.

"The manager tried to make Bruce leave but he insisted on paying for his fish and he wouldn't stop giving people better jobs so the guy said it was corporate espionage and called the cops."

→ → →

[WE'RE BANNED FROM WALMART FOREVER]

Bruce was laughing with the police officers about something. The manager from earlier had been joined by men in suits. None of them looked happy. Some of the employees from earlier were yelling and flipping them off. One man pulled off the shirt of his uniform and started setting it on fire.

→ → →

Bruce was on the phone in the parking lot.

"They're small, most of them are tropical. You can figure out what they are when you get here. How is that racist? I'm not suggesting you already know them, I'm well aware you don't personally know every single fish—"

→ → →

"Either you take these fish or I toss them in the sewer and Killer Croc can eat them. It will be a merciful death compared to what they were getting. It doesn't matter where I found them."

→ → →

[i'm not allowed near toxic waste]

Tim held the betta from earlier in front of his phone, bringing it dangerously close to Bruce's face. Bruce had hung up, but seemed to be dialing another number.

"I'm keeping this one," Tim said.

"Fine."

"If I drop him in toxic waste do you think he'll get powers?"

"We've already had this discussion."

→ → →

[the pettiest man in gotham]

Bruce was on the phone again, looking out at the empty field beside the Walmart parking lot.

"Yeah, just buy the whole thing. Yeah. Absolutely sure. Green Market's doing good, we'll build another one of those. Can we put up a billboard while it's under construction? A really big
"First of all, if it's in writing, it's libel. Second, figures taken directly from their report to shareholders can't be libelous. What's the most they could even sue me for? See, that's nothing. Bad PR for them, good for us, it's—"

Tim had switched to the selfie camera again, and was using a sparkling purple filter that made his eyes look huge. He backed into Bruce so that Bruce's face would be in the shot. "Bruce, look! You're a pretty pretty princess!"

Bruce raised an eyebrow as he looked at his face on the screen. "I'm always a pretty princess," he said seriously.

Bruce was driving again. He was listening to 100 Little Curses without any apparent irony. This did not mean there wasn't any irony.

The Walmart betta was now in a tank that held at least a hundred gallons. His underwater castle was resplendent. His tail had grown in, a shimmering gradient of red and blue. Bruce could be seen in the background above the short walls of the tank, sitting on the couch and reading a book.
Tim was in a small corner of the screen, the rest of it taken up by miniature fantasy troops marching into battle.

"—and that's when I—Bruce!" Tim's attention went away from the screen. "Wanna stream with me?" He checked the screen again, just long enough to be sure that nothing untoward was happening to his armies. "It's a charity stream!" Tim added. "You'd be helping sick kids. It's not actually for sick kids, it's for puppies. I don't know why I said sick kids, before. Here, I have a chair."

Tim briefly disappeared from view. When he reappeared, he was adjusting the camera, until Bruce was visible. He was wearing a rumpled grey suit. He looked tired. He'd propped his cheek up on one fist. There was a flat lollipop sticking partway out of his mouth.

"Say hi!" Tim coaxed the chatroom, which had not been saved with the rest of his stream. "Chat says hello," Tim said to Bruce, pointing to where they were doing so. Bruce squinted. Slowly, suspiciously, he waved at the webcam.

Tim's armies were in the midst of a heated battle. Bruce pointed at something. "Oh—good idea," Tim said. "Thanks. Some people in the chat were asking about the lollipop—did you want to explain?"

Bruce said nothing.

"Right, so—for people who aren't in Gotham, and maybe missed it, there was a whole Joker gas situation last night. Which is, like, not a big deal, because what else is new, but somebody didn't want to wait in traffic and cut through one of the quarantine zones."

Bruce narrowed his eyes at Tim, who was too busy handling skirmishes to notice.

"If you're from a city where clowns actually try to make people laugh by being funny—"

Bruce snorted derisively.

"—then this has probably never come up, but. Protip: if you get poisoned by the Joker, you've got to get treated right away, but the... antidote? Is it like an antidote?" He looked to Bruce, who said nothing. "I know it's not a vaccination, it's like, you get poisoned first and then they give you a thing, I think that's an antidote. Antivenom? Anyway, it takes a while to kick in, so in the meantime, seasoned Gotham veterans know you've got to keep lollipops around. Like, big ones, so you can put it between your teeth. There's other stuff you can do, but a lollipop is the easiest thing. It keeps you from cracking your teeth, or clenching your jaw too hard, or biting your tongue, or your mouth drying out, or all sorts of stuff. They make special ones, now, even. They're like the perfect size so you don't drool all over yourself. You're not drooling on yourself, right?"

Bruce looked down at himself. Then he looked back to Tim.

"Yeah, I think that's one of the nice kind."

Bruce held a hand out, as if covering part of the monitor.

"What? What's happening? Did someone say something?"
Bruce tilted his head so he could see the chat while shielding it from Tim's vision.

Tim frowned at the webcam. "Don't get inappropes about my dad!"

Bruce raised an eyebrow.

"Father figure. Parental... legal guardian. Reverse ward. Warden?"

Bruce shook his head. He checked the chat. He shook his head again, and kept the chat covered.

"What are they saying? Is it bad stuff?"

Bruce shrugged non-committally.

"Is it suggestions for what to call you? Is it—the whole chat is just calling you Daddy, now, aren't they."

Bruce nodded. It was not a happy nod. It was a nod of resignation.

"Okay, that's—I'm closing the chat, you've all lost your chatting privileges. I hope you're all proud of yourselves."

Bruce shook his head at the webcam. He conveyed, in perfect silence and with a lollipop in his mouth, the depth of his disappointment.

Tim was wearing a hoodie that made him look like a dragon. Bruce wasn't wearing a suit jacket, but was still wearing a blue tie. Bruce was sitting in the main computer chair, Tim lurking gleefully behind him, the majority of the screen filled with simulated security cameras.

"Is this the whole game."

"Basically," Tim said, barely restraining his amusement.

Bruce yawned.

"Just wait."

Instead of a jump-cut, the footage went on fast-forward. Bruce yawned several more times. Tim grew increasingly agitated.

"Okay, this isn't right," Tim said as the video returned to normal speed. "It's five and nothing's happened, there's a glitch."

"Is something supposed to have happened."

"Here, just move so I can mess with it."

Bruce shrugged, and stood. His head was no longer in the frame as Tim sat.

Almost as soon as Tim had made himself comfortable, an animatronic bear appeared, screeching. Tim screamed, recoiling with such force that the chair tipped over, taking him with it.

After a moment of silence, Bruce bent enough that his furrowed brow was visible. "Was that supposed to happen."
Bruce and Tim were sitting on a couch. Tim was wearing pajamas printed to look like a tuxedo. Bruce was wearing most of an actual tuxedo, though his coat was missing and his tie was undone. He looked at least mildly intoxicated, with slouched posture and the controller in his hands resting on his stomach. Tim was much more intense, leaning forward with his brow furrowed.

The screen was mostly dominated by an intense battle.

"This can't be happening," Tim said. "You are not kicking my butt with Princess Zelda right now."

Bruce shrugged. Zelda knocked Pikachu off a platform.

"Not even Sheik! Just Zelda! You're just button-mashing!"

Mostly, he was twiddling his thumbs.

"Okay," Tim said, as it went to Zelda's victory screen. "This isn't fair. You have princess magic."

Bruce shrugged again. The corner of his mouth tilted upward.

"You're switching characters," Tim informed him.

"What is happening!" Tim wailed, as King Dedede sent Starfox flying. Tim's hair was all askew, barely sitting on the edge of his seat. His eyes were wild.

Bruce had acquired a champagne flute, which was now empty.

"Nononononoooooo!"

Tim had given up on sitting and was standing up. Bruce was lying on the couch, taking up the room that Tim had surrendered.

Tim collapsed out of frame and onto the floor.

"I did not just lose to Jigglypuff!"

"Is that what that thing's called?" Bruce asked. "Weird."

The game exited back to the main menu.

"... wait a minute," Tim said, rising back into frame. The view switched so that the shot of the couch took up most of the video, while the game screen was relegated to a small corner. "You didn't even press a button that time."

Bruce threw up his hands in either triumph or disgust. It may have been both. "Two. Hours."

"What?"

A door on the other side of the room opened, and a woman wheeled her chair inside.

"Oh my flippin' gosh you weren't even playing."

"Two. Hours," Bruce repeated, hands raised in supplication to the sky.

"I did not expect it to take that long." Text at the bottom of the screen identified her as: Barbara, alias HypatiaLives, alias Traitor.
"It was supposed to take ten minutes," Bruce said, running his hands through his hair and on the verge of ripping it out.

"We seriously thought you'd notice," Barbara agreed.

"Two."

"I can't believe this," Tim said, burying his face in his hands and shaking his head.

"Hours."

"Was he even moving the thumb sticks in the right directions?" Barbara asked.

"I don't know!" Tim said. "It made total sense to me that he'd be some kind of Smash genius who could kick my butt without even looking like he was playing!"

Barbara shook her head, then pushed her glasses higher on her nose. "Oh, Tim."

"Ten minutes," Bruce repeated. "You'd figure it out, you two would play together and I could leave and get some fucking work done instead of playing a goddamn video game for two fucking hours."

"Language," Barbara scolded, reaching out to smack Bruce gently upside the head. He shrank away and covered his head with his arms, and she rolled her eyes.

"Your controller isn't even on!" Tim realized with horror.

Bruce sighed as Barbara waggled her controller, custom gold with black decals.

There were then several jump cuts to slow motion footage of Bruce not even pressing any buttons, Tim too engrossed in the action on the screen to notice. The final vignette zoomed in on Bruce's increasingly blurry thousand-yard stare.

In the corner of the screen, Tim was wearing a sweatshirt meant to make him look like an astronaut.

So was Bruce.

They were in a fort made of bedsheets.

Tim was playing a game about running a farm.

"It's the first day of the new season," Tim said. "What should I plant?"

"Kale."

"What?" Tim frowned. "I thought the profits on that were kind of bad. Did you do fancy business math on it?"

"No. I just like kale."

"Oh my goodness, I am not just planting kale because you like it. Which of these crops will actually make us money?"

"I don't even know what crops are in this game," Bruce admitted.

"What! Then how did you know kale was in it?"
"I just assumed."

Tim started buying some of every kind of seed in the shop. "Really? Because, like. Most video
games don't have kale in them."

"Are you sure."

"Pretty sure, yeah."

"That seems like a glaring oversight."

"You think more video games should have kale?"

"More video games should be about kale."

Tim's character climbed onto his horse to head back to the farm. "Maybe you should call Bill Gates
about it."

"Is he in charge of video games."

"Yes."

Bruce pulled his phone out of his pocket, and started tapping on the screen.

"Wait, are you actually calling Bill Gates right now?" Tim laughed, pausing the game.

"Maybe. Yes." He held the phone up to his ear. "I had to check the time first to make sure he
wouldn't answer. I don't actually want to talk to him."

The view changed so that the camera took up most of the screen, the audio of the game turned down.
"Why not?"

"He sounds like Kermit on the phone and it's weird. Bill! Hey. It's Bruce. I'm calling because I'm
concerned about the lack of kale in video games."

Tim grabbed a pillow and buried his face in it. His snorts of laughter were still audible, if barely.

"I think this is a serious issue. For... millennials."

Tim's shoulders shook. Bruce rubbed his hand over the lower half of his face, hiding his mouth and
looking thoughtful.

"I'd appreciate it if you could do something about this, as the head of all the Nintendos."

Tim screamed into his pillow.

"Don't call me back." Bruce hung up abruptly.

"Bruce." Tim shook Bruce's shoulder frantically. "Please tell me you did not actually just prank call
Bill Gates." Bruce showed Tim the screen of his phone. "Nooooooooo."

"Can we get back to our kale farm."

"We're not running a kale farm!"

"Are you saying I left that voicemail for nothing."
"Yes!"

"I emailed the guy who made this game," Bruce began.

"What!" Tim paused in the middle of planting rows of cauliflower.

"I asked him how much it would cost to make kale the most profitable thing in the game."

"Don't offer people kale bribes!"

"He sent me a mod," Bruce continued, ignoring Tim. "He said it will increase the sale price of kale and said we could have it for free." Bruce showed Tim the email on his phone, tilting it away from the camera. "How do I install this."

"You don't! We're not installing O.P. kale hacks!"

"Can I email the mod to our character."

"No!"

"Can I print the mod and then scan it."

"That's not how mods work! You are not that old, don't pretend you don't know how it works."

"I'm starting to feel like you're not one hundred percent on board with the kale thing."

"I have never been any percent on board with the kale thing," Tim said. "You need to make your own kale game."

"Who do I call to make a kale game."

"Don't—doesn't Palmer Technologies make apps?"

"I don't know."

"I thought you talk to Ray Palmer sometimes."

"Not on purpose. Should I call him."

"It's not like I can stop you," Tim said, exasperated, as he tried to resume farming things that weren't kale.

This time, when the phone rang, it was on speaker.

"... hello...?" The voice on the other end sounded half-asleep.

"You're on speakerphone and being recorded."

"... Mr. Wayne?"

"Yeah."

"It's the middle of the night on a Wednesday."

Tim shook his head as his character cleared out weeds.
"I need you to make me a video game about kale."

"What?"

Tim hung his head in shame.

"Which aspect of my request is giving you trouble?" Bruce asked.

"All aspects?" Ray said. "I don't—kale?"

"Tim says there aren't any video games about kale."

"Don't bring me into this like it's my fault!" Tim protested.

"Are you drunk?" Ray asked.

"I don't understand why you'd think that. Can you make me a game or not?"

"Mr. Wayne, I'm a physicist."

"Ray, it's three in the morning. Call me Bruce."

Tim had to pause the game so he could bury his face in a pillow again.

Ray sighed and groaned in equal measure. "When do you need this? Can it just be any kind of game?"

"Don't encourage him," Tim said, muffled by pillow.

"Ideally within a couple of hours. It can be anything, as long as it's a game about kale. And good. In exchange you get nothing."

"... okay."

"If you're watching this," Tim said as his character cut down trees, "go on Twitter and say something nice to Ray Palmer. He is a very nice man and he doesn't deserve this."

Bruce shook his head.

"He emailed me," Bruce said, looking at his phone.

"Already? It's only been an hour!"

"Yeah, and it shows. This game is terrible."

"Bruce."

"It's just a Flappy Bird clone, but he's replaced the bird with kale. Kale can't fly. The obstacles are stacks of kale. That makes kale seem dangerous. It's a bad message. And Flappy Kale is the least appealing name for anything I've ever heard."

"Don't tell him that!" Tim said. "Making games is hard."

"I already emailed him. He just emailed me back."
"What did he say?"

"It just says 'Mr. Wayne I have never made a game before and I am very tired', with no punctuation."

"We should send him an edible arrangement. He has a company to run and instead he's letting you waste his time with kale games."

"I have a company to run, and he's wasting my time with bad kale games."

It was a camera shot of an office. It panned slowly over desk after desk of people working at computers. It stopped at a sign on the wall: Kale Studios.

Then it moved over to find Bruce standing nearby in immaculate business attire.

"Have you ever just casually made a joke?" Tim asked from behind the camera. "Have you ever not just immediately dialed everything up to eleven?"

"I have no idea what you mean," Bruce said. "Tell your YouTube friends that World of Kale will be coming out soon—"

"This is ridiculous."

"—it will be free to play and the in-app purchases will go toward funding our mobile food bank project."

"You are a ridiculous man."

"I am a ridiculous man with a billion dollars."

Works inspired by this one: [BRUCE WAYNE LET'S PLAY - Youtube Video](#) by [Moncube](#)

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