Tony Stark: Genius, Billionaire, Playboy, Philanthropist...Dad?

by SharaRaizel

Summary

Tony Stark is many things. A parent isn't one of them. At least...he'd never wanted to be.

A Batman X Avengers crossover where Tim Drake is the biological son of Tony Stark.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Daddy Stark?

Chapter Summary

Tony meets Janet Drake and life as he knows it takes a dramatic turn.

Chapter Notes

Not sure how often I'll update this fic, but this idea has been bugging me for weeks and I have a couple chapters typed up and in the works. This takes place in the Marvel Cinematic Universe pre-Iron Man, with future chapters taking place during and in-between other films all the way up to Captain America: Civil War. See end of the chapter for a rough time-line of events.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

November 1996 - July 1997
Even at the age of 22, Tony Stark was known for many things. He was a genius, billionaire, playboy, and philanthropist after all. Opinions on him ranged from high praise for his many and diverse assortment of academic and engineering achievements to disgust and disapproval for his various scandalous transgressions that have landed him on the covers of various gossip magazines. There were betting pools across the country trying to predict what model or Hollywood starlette Tony was going to get caught sleeping with next.

Tony wasn’t ashamed to admit that he had slept around with hundreds of women. He enjoyed the company of the fairer sex. He wasn’t even particularly picky about the kind of girls he took to bed so long as they were fairly good looking. After several years of seeing many different women, however, he had discovered that there was a particular type that he enjoyed having sex with the most: the headstrong and confident type.

And Janet Wilson had most definitely been that type of woman. Tony had met her at a club in New York celebrating her bachelorette party. They’d both hit it off at the bar, had danced, and (inevitably) snuck away from the party for a quicky in a private room after both had a few too many drinks. It was one of those nightly encounters that Tony had never bothered to think about twice. Her name and face were long forgotten by the next morning. It had been a fling; not even something that he considered to qualify as a one-night stand.

But a month later just a week before Christmas, Janet Wilson had been waiting for him in his office. Only by that time she had become Janet Drake, the new wife of Jack Drake of Drake Industries, whom Tony was supposed to be meeting with to discuss a possible partnership in regards to a dig that the man was planing in Iraq and wanted Tony to help sponsor. At first Tony hadn’t recognized her, simply assuming (correctly he might add) that she was there representing her husband to deliver D.I.’s proposal for the dig. And for 90% of the meeting, that was true. Janet was far better at hashing out the details than Jack had ever been, but after Tony agreed to the proposition and signed the agreement contract, Janet brought up the night that he had allowed himself to forget.

Initially, Tony had had no idea what she was talking about. Fortunately for Janet, she had video and picture evidence from her bachelorette party to back up her story, helping Tony remember vague details about that night. He couldn’t understand why she was bringing it up, especially since he was 98.9% sure she hadn’t told her new husband about that night. Hell, he would have never known he’d met her before if she hadn’t said something.

Then she gave him a reason. She was pregnant. And she was 100% certain that it was Tony’s. She thought he had the right to know. Jack apparently didn’t know she was pregnant yet.

Again, Tony had no idea why she was telling him this. To give him a chance to lay claim to the kid? No thanks. Tony was pretty sure that he didn’t like children. They were loud and messy and wrecked everything. He wasn’t going to make the same mistakes his father did. Howard Stark had never been parent material and Tony was the same. No one had ever looked at Tony Stark and thought “he’d make a good parent.”

Nobody but Janet apparently. She thought he deserved to at least know his progeny. Tony had told her in no uncertain terms that it wasn’t necessary. He would be perfectly alright with not knowing the kid.

But the woman was a force to be reckoned with. Over the next few months Janet Drake made sure that she met with him in person every time Stark Industries did business with D.I. She’d dragged Jack along to several of the events that Tony himself was either hosting or personally attending, and he found himself meeting the couple at least twice a month.
By March of the new year, Tony found that he was visiting the East Coast fairly often. That was when the Drakes hit him with the news. They wanted Tony to be their kid’s godfather. It may have been Jack Drake that had asked him, but Tony was 100% certain that the idea was Janet’s. He wanted to say no.

He admired Janet’s tenacity. He could comfortably say that he admired her and even liked the woman when he wasn’t realizing how thoroughly she’d manipulated him. Hell! He even liked Jack. He really did, honestly. The man was unbearably naive and nice, but that was so refreshing in comparison to all the two-faced and pompous people that usually attended high society events. Jack was also an incredible push-over and Tony had no idea what a knockout like Janet was doing with him. Maybe it was because she got to accompany him on the various archeological dig sites that they both liked to personally excavate when they weren’t running D.I.

But the point was, Tony wanted to say no to the whole godfather thing. It was only a step down from being a normal father, wasn’t it? He was still pretty sure that he didn’t want any sort of claim on the kid that Janet still insisted was really his and not Jack’s. How could he watch the kid grow up and pretend to be of no relation? Well, easily probably, since he lived in Malibu and not Gotham and wouldn’t be raising the kid, but how could he continue facing Jack, knowing full well that the man’s kid was really his? Tony had every reason to say no. He wasn’t a child friendly person. He didn’t like kids. Didn’t want anything to do with kids.

And yet he found himself saying yes. Jack looked delighted and Janet looked satisfied. Neither Janet or Tony had told Jack of the baby’s true paternity, but honestly Tony didn’t think he ever could. He wasn’t the one that was going to be raising the kid after all. Jack deserved to continue believing that the kid was his, because for all intents and purposes, the child would be.

On July 19, 1997, Janet Drake gave birth to a tiny 6 pound, 8 ounce baby boy she named Timothy Jackson Drake. Jack was unfortunately stuck doing business in Argentina, but Tony happened to already be in Gotham visiting his old friend, Bruce Wayne, who’d recently returned from his several year long world tour - for good if the tabloids speculating about the new vigilante Batman were to be believed. Tony had no idea why the man was running around at night dressed as a flying rodent, but he figured that that was Bruce’s business. It sure as hell was fun to tease the other man about it, however.

While Bruce was out actually working as CEO of his family’s company, Wayne Enterprises, Tony visited Janet and had a paternity test taken off the record. It came back positive. Tony knew that the baby was his. Janet had logically proven that only he could have been the father given the projected conception date that predicted it happened during the time gap between her bachelorette party and her marriage to Jack a week later. It was close enough that Jack had never questioned anything (considering the fact that he wasn’t even told about the pregnancy until after Janet was through her first month and was never told said projected conception date) or suspected Janet of being unfaithful. But some part of Tony had still believed that he couldn’t possibly be the biological father.

Janet asked Tony if he wanted to hold Tim, shaking the man out of his thoughts. Tony couldn’t find it in himself to say no. It was hard to say no to Janet. He didn’t love her - hell no - but… he’d admit that he was fond of her. Maybe she was something like an estranged older sister he was only just getting to know. But considering how they met, that was kind of incestual and you don’t have sex with your sister, so never mind. Friend. Tony decided that it was safe thinking of Janet as a friend. And if she was a friend, then so was Jack. It felt a little odd thinking that considering that Bruce Wayne and James “Rhodey” Rhodes were the only two people he had ever thought of as friends. And maybe his new Personal Assistant, Virginia “Pepper” Potts. Huh. He had five people he considered friends… That nearly made him feel sociable.
Tony’s thoughts were once again derailed when Janet passed her baby boy to him, instructing him on how to hold him. Tim was tiny, weighing hardly nothing. When he opened his eyes, Tony felt ridiculously relieved to see Janet’s icy blue eyes blinking up at him instead of his own chocolate brown. Tim was also really quiet. Tony had expect a lot of crying - babies were supposed to cry a lot, right? But Tim was as cool as a cucumber, as the saying went - and why do people say that? What relevance does a cucumber have to a quiet and/or relaxed person? Tony had never understood that saying. The only noise Tim made the entire time Tony was visiting Janet was a soft squeak he made when Tony passed him back to Janet. The baby had wrinkled his tiny nose in a way that most people probably considered cute or adorable. Janet laughed and rocked him gently, humming a soft melody Tony wasn’t familiar with.

A nurse took their picture at Janet’s request. She sent Tony a copy a week later and he put it in his wallet. Rhodey had found it the next time he’d returned from deployment and teased Tony about having a secret mistress and a baby hidden away. If only his friend knew how true half of that statement was.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you've enjoyed reading this little prelude of what is to come. Chapter 2 (a more substantial chapter) will be posted soon. Below is a timeline of how I see the Batman comic verse events coinciding with the Marvel movies with some basic plot points mapped out. If you have any questions or have a prompt for this verse you'd like to see me write, shoot me a suggestion in the comment box and we'll see how this goes. :) Thanks for reading!

Story Notes:
*Tony Stark & Bruce Wayne are the same age
*Tony Stark's age (and therefore Bruce's) is 10 years younger than RDJ's age.

Timeline:
1996: November - Tony meets and has 1 night fling with Janet Drake
1997: July 19, Tim Drake(-Stark) is born - Tony 23
2000: Tim 3 - Tony 25
----- Tim sees the Flying Graysons
----- Jack & Janet start leaving a lot more frequently on trips
2006: Tim 9 - Tony 31
----- Tim deduces the identity of Batman & Robin
2008: Iron Man
----- Tim 11 - Tony 33
2010: Iron Man 2
----- Tim 13 - Tony 35
----- Tim trains with Batman & other martial masters
----- Janet dead; Jack comatose & paralyzed
----- Tim becomes Robin
2011: Tim 14 - Tony 36
----- Jason Todd returns to Gotham as Red Hood
----- Cassandra Cain joins Batfam as Batgirl
2012: The Avengers (May)
----- Tim 15 - Tony 37
----- Arrival of Damian Wayne
2013: Iron Man 3 (December)
----- Tim 16 - Tony 38
----- Bruce Wayne “dies” and Dick Grayson takes over as Batman
----- Tim is fired from being Robin and becomes Red Robin
2015: Age of Ultron (May)
----- Tim 18 - Tony 40
2016: Civil War (May)
----- Tim 19 - Tony 41
Ninja Paparazzi Stalker

Chapter Summary

Tony discovers Tim's night time hobby.

Chapter Notes

This chapter takes place a few months before Tim turns 9 and shortly before Tony turns 31 (so like beginning of May, end of April-ish). It's in Tony's POV again and I probably had way too much fun writing him. I swear I'll try to write a chapter from Tim's POV at some point, but Tony's too much fun sometimes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2006

The years certainly flew by. At least, that’s how Tony felt as he watched a now 8-year-old Tim hum to himself while they tuned up the classic car Tony had recently purchased in New York. He had driven it down to Gotham intending to visit the Drakes and later show the car off to the Waynes, but it appeared that only Tim and the housekeeper (Miss Mac-something) were home at Drake Manor. Jack and Janet were apparently off somewhere in South America at a dig site they hadn’t needed Tony to help sponsor. That was happening a lot more frequently ever since Janet had taken over most business negotiations for D.I. The company wasn’t quite up there with S.I. and W.E., but they were getting there.

Tony watched Tim as the boy carefully cleaned and refitted the parts that Tony allowed him to work on. Over the last 8 years, Tony had watched Tim grow into quite the prodigy. The kid was sharp. Intelligent. And had inherited Tony’s love for mechanics. Thankfully that was all that the kid got from him. Tim mostly resembled Janet, and any physical features that he’d gotten from Tony could easily be mistaken for Jack, who still believed that Tim was biologically his.

After they finished with Tony’s car, the two moved on to look through the additions Tim had made to his photo collection since Tony had last seen him. Tony had wanted to buy Tim the best and latest digital camera on the market for his 8th birthday when the kid had expressed an interest in photography, but Tim might have also inherited Tony’s love for classics because he’d asked for a polaroid camera instead. Janet had approved of the hobby and allowed a darkroom to be built in the manor’s basement, provided that Tony walk Tim through the process of the proper way to handle the chemical baths needed to develop the film. Tony had taken it as a challenge and had spent Tim’s birthday weekend learning and then teaching Tim how to use a dark room.

Janet had thought that it was a wonderful bonding experience for them, damn her. She was still trying (and succeeding) to get Tony to be a part of Tim’s life. And it got easier every year. The kid was very mature for his age and often Tony would forget how young Tim really was, going off on long complicated lectures on mechanics, but he was beginning to see that Tim somehow managed to keep up and understand the basics of what he was saying. Tony suspected that the kid was
studying a lot of subjects in further depth than any of his parents or teachers were aware off. The boy could probably have moved on to AP high school classes at this point. Hell, he could probably teach shop class.

Tim was very proud when he showed Tony his new photos. He certainly had a good eye. The boy was creative with his shot angles. He was a crafty child, that was for sure. As they continued to pull out folder upon folder of new and old pictures, Tony noticed that there had to be a false bottom in the box where Tim kept his photos. The dimensions were slightly off for the size of storage space that the box should have provided. While Tim ran off to get them a snack from upstairs, Tony pried the false bottom up with the nail file he kept on his person (don’t judge, hangnails are a bitch). It was ingenious. If Tony hadn’t realized that the dimensions of the box had been off, he’d never have suspected anything amiss.

There were even more photos in the hidden bottom of the box. Photos that blew Tony’s mind away. They were of Batman and his sidekick, Robin. Tony had given Bruce a lot of crap about taking a kid out on the streets when the boy wonder had appeared a few of years ago, dressed in green scaly panties and pixie boots of all things. There were also various articles about the dynamic duo clipped from various newspapers and magazines. But what really stunned Tony was a few photos he found not of Batman and Robin, but of Bruce Wayne and his ward, Dick Grayson, among the most recent photos in collection.

He heard a sharp intake of breath behind him, and turned to see that Tim had returned looking pale (well, paler than he naturally was. Tim had also inherited Janet’s fair complexion).

“Hey Timmy,” Tony said as nonchalantly as he could. “You’ve been holding out on me. Some of these are the best pictures that you’ve taken yet. Does Brucie know that you know about his nighttime hobby?”

He looked up and saw the boy staring at him, gaping like a fish.

“You… you know?” Tim whispered. “About… Batman?”

“Please,” Tony scoffed. “Personally I’m rather surprised no one else has figured it out. But, then again, no one either remembers or knows what Bruce was really like back in the day. I’ve always found it amusing how much people buy his BS Brucie Wayne persona. I swear he based that persona off me, only with a more exaggerated flair and obviously dumbed down intellect. He may have dropped out of college, but he did study law, forensics and engineering before going on his world tour.”

Tim nodded hesitantly, color returning to his face and a look of interest and curiosity replacing the fear and worry.

“...You know Mister Wayne?” Tim asked, setting a plate of cookies on the table away from his pictures.

“We met when he was a freshman in highschool and I was attending M.I.T. blowing the minds of academia with my engineering revolutions. That was the year I finished JARVIS’s prototype and I was giving a demonstration at Wayne Enterprise just to piss- err… make Howard mad. JARVIS and his systems have never been and never will be for sale, but I was willing to sell a patent on basic A.I. programing. Bruce happened to be there for the demonstration and afterwards asked a bunch of questions about the applications of something like JARVIS and what they could be used for. Wayne Enterprises didn’t buy that day, claiming it to be an expensive and time consuming investment at the time, but I started seeing Bruce at several charities and social events after that and we grew close. We even got an apartment together for a year after I graduated from MIT and took
over as CEO of Stark Industries and Bruce moved to Cali for college. You wouldn’t think it, but we got along like a house on fire. Oh, sure, we had our differences, but… we were friends. Still are, even if the moron won’t admit it.”

Tony took a cookie, taking a bite as he stared at a photo of the Batman’s shadow flying through the sky with Robin’s bright colors flashing behind him. Tony smiled fondly at the sharp white grin he could make out on Robin’s face.

“He’s always been a softy at heart,” Tony sighed. “He’s good for that boy.”

Tim peeked over at the photo.

“Have you met him?” Tim asked, pointing at Robin. “Dick Grayson, I mean.”

“Oh, sure,” Tony shrugged. “Had to come straight to Gotham the moment I learned about Robin and gave Bruce a piece of my mind. Not that anything I said had made a difference, but it was the principle of the thing! I can’t imagine letting any kid of mine out in such a ridiculous costume. No taste at all. That kid - teenager now, I guess - needs pants.”

Tim snickered.

“So if it were me, you would let me go out and fight crime so long as I remembered to wear pants?”

“No because I would never allow you to go out in the first place. Taking pictures ninja style like you do is one thing, and that’s bad enough, but actually picking a fight with the crazies that run around this city? No kid of mine would be stupid enough to do something so dangerous,” Tony cried.

“So you’re my dad now?”

Tony paused at the question. Tim had said it teasingly, but the way he had said it…

“...I know, you know,” Tim said softly after Tony had been quiet for too long. “I know that you’re my real dad and not Jack. I asked Mother and she told me that you were.”

“...Damn it, Janet, a little warning would have been nice,” Tony growled under his breath before asking, “Does Jack know?”

“No,” Tim said. “Mother said that it didn’t matter because we both love Father. But you’re my dad too… aren’t you?”

Tony sighed and set the pictures and articles on Batman and Robin back in the box, snapping the false bottom securely back over them.

“Listen, Timmy,” Tony started to say, but stopped upon seeing the kid’s bright blue eyes and the look of hope in them. He suddenly wanted to curse Janet (and maybe even Jack) to hell and back for putting him in this situation. Why did they have to be gone all the time? Why did they never take Tim with them? Couldn’t they see how lonely the boy was? And what was Tony supposed to say to the kid? The truth, he guessed.

“I’m… I’m not parent material, kid,” Tony sighed. “I… That’s why you live with your mom and dad. I’ve… never wanted a kid.” Upon seeing Tim’s devastated expression, Tony felt himself panicking and the words just started tumbling out unchecked. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t like you, Tim. I do! You’re a great kid. You’ve never been messy or fussy and you’re brilliant like I
was at your age. It’s just that I’m like a big kid myself and no one would would ever dare call me a responsible adult and I can hardly take care of myself sometimes. I swear that if it weren’t for Pepper and Rhodey I wouldn’t be able to function most days. I would make a terrible dad, Tim. I should probably tell you that you shouldn’t go out and take pictures of Batman and Robin anymore because that’s dangerous. But you obviously already know that because Janet told me that you’ve started taking martial arts lessons and you’ve gotta be super sneaky if you’re able to hide from Bruce, and I know for a fact that he trained with ninjas somewhere out east. I actually think it’s funny as hell that he hasn’t caught you yet, because you’ve been doing this for at least a year, right? Right. And that’s why you wanted a camera for your birthday last year. I wonder how long it will take him to realize he’s got his own ninja paparazzi stalker.”

Tim looked like he wanted to giggle and the hope was back in his eyes. Damn it. Tony groaned before he plopped his head down onto the work table on top of his arms.

“You’re Janet’s alright,” Tony huffed. “I have never been able to say no to her and it looks like I can’t say no to you too.”

Tim beamed.

“But let’s make something clear!” Tony said, pointing a stern finger at the boy. “Jack is your dad. He’s raised you and loves you in ways that I can’t, because honestly I’m a horrible person who should never be allowed around kids. However… I’ll try to be around more. I can’t say I’ll change. I might never change. But Janet hasn’t allowed me to forget a birthday or Christmas yet, so… we’ll see how this goes.”

“I don’t need you to change,” Tim said, leaning against him. “I already spend more time with you than I do with Mother and Father.”

And that… did something to Tony. He never thought he’d find people who were worse than Howard when it came to being parents, but… did Janet and Jack truly spend so little time with Tim? With their own son?

Tony wasn’t sure what to do - he had never been the affectionate type - but he was pretty sure this was what normal people would call “having a moment.” And you were supposed to hug during this kind of thing, right?

Tony hesitantly wrapped an arm around Tim and pulled him closer until he was pressed against his side. He must have done the right thing, because Tim reciprocated the action by turning to wrap his arms around Tony and buried his face in his side. Christ, the kid was still so tiny - his arms couldn’t quite reach all the way around Tony’s torso.

Maybe that’s how Bruce hadn’t found Tim yet. The kid was so small, the Bat and his sidekick looked right over him and they would probably never see him unless they tripped right over him, but Tim was too smart for that. Tony found himself highly impressed when he managed to get Tim to show him on a map where he liked to wait along the Dynamic Duo’s patrol route.

Tony ended up staying the whole weekend with Tim, and when he couldn’t put off leaving any longer, he left promising that he’d make arrangements with Tim’s parents for Tim to come stay with Tony the next time they left for a dig.

Chapter End Notes
Let me know if you guys have any suggestions or prompts for this verse or any character interactions or reactions to events that you'd like to see and I'll do my best to fit them in. I'll try to keep things in chronological order, but I don't mind backtracking. (there is a reason I put the year at the beginning of the chapter). :) Thanks for reading, I hope you liked it. :)}
Tony Stark has just announced that he's Iron Man. A couple people have something to say about that.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is the longest I've written yet for this fic. Again, it's in Tony's POV. I SWEAR I'll get around to writing one in Tim's soon. Tony's just so fun to write! I love his rambling thoughts. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2008

Tony was exhausted by the time he was able to return to his residence in Malibu.

“JARVIS?” he called out, wondering why the lighting in his home hadn’t turned on the moment he’d stepped through the door.

“Welcome home… s-s-ir…” the AI said, voice fading out and dying.

Well that wasn’t good. Tony felt his heart pounding as adrenaline flooded his system. Shit. He’d made the announcement that he was Iron Man only a few hours ago and he already had people breaking into his home?

“I am Iron Man,” a man’s voice said coming from the direction of Tony’s living room. “You think you’re the only superhero in the world? Mr. Stark, you’ve become a part of a bigger universe. You just don’t know it yet.”

Tony glared at the tall black figure silhouetted against the evening sky that could be seen through his wall of windows. Of course he knew that he wasn’t the only superhero in the world. The Justice League may not be very public yet (he’d even go so far as to say that they were covert except in their own cities and were therefore considered urban legends to the rest of the world), but he was friends with Batman. He’d set up the computer systems in the Batcave and helped Batman build that Watchtower satellite that the the Justice League used as a base. Not that that was public knowledge, or even League knowledge. Only the big bad Bat knew how much Tony was already involved in the so-called Superhero community. Not all of that money thrown at disaster relief and restoration projects came from Wayne Enterprises and Queen Consolidated.

Yeah, Tony knew the civilian ID behind the Green Arrow. Oliver Queen wasn’t exactly the smoothest or most subtle operator. If Tony could figure out who was behind the Batman, you bet your ass he already knew who made up the rest of Bruce’s team of Super Friends. And honestly, Superman. Glasses? That was your best disguise? Even Tim knew who you were the moment he set eyes on Clark Kent. It wasn’t hard. Normal people are just morons.
But that was totally not the point. Focus, Tony. Big tall Batman-wannabe at 12 o’clock.

“Who the hell are you?” Tony demanded, not liking other people sneaking into his home.

“Nick Fury, director of SHIELD,” the man said, stepping into the dim emergency lighting that always illuminated Tony’s home even when it went into shut down mode. He was a tall bald black man with an eyepatch over his left eye. He wore a high collared black coat over black clothes, at least that’s what Tony assumed since the rest of his body was hidden in shadow. Everything about him screamed Bond Villain to Tony. But he must work for the same SHIELD agency that that Coulson guy was from (unless there were two agencies that went by SHIELD but he doubted that) so... he had to work for the government. Tony quickly revised his initial Bond Villain assessment to Super Spy.

“I’m here to talk to you about the Avenger Initiative,” Fury said.

The what now?

Apparently SHIELD wanted to get their own little Super Friends club deal together and Iron Man was a potential member. Tony had tried to pay attention - he really had - but Fury didn’t give him much to think on. There were only a few others on the roster thus far - two super-spy SHIELD agents and an old army soldier - none of which Tony thought he’d get along with, but he’d humored Fury, and even agreed to speak to some Colonel Ross guy about a big green problem that he was having (the full details were on a flashdrive Fury gave him), and escorted the super spy out.

The lights turned back on and JARVIS was fully operational the moment the director’s nondescript back car was gone.

“I need a drink,” Tony huffed as he reentered his living room and headed for the wet bar. Just as he was pouring himself a generous amount of bourbon the lights cut out again. “Oh come on!”

“What were you thinking?”

“Jesus Christ!” Tony swore, nearly spilling his drink as the Batman materialized behind him. “Goddamn it, Bruce! What the hell is up with tonight and black dressed creeps that like to hide in the shadows? Are you trying to give me a heart attack?!”

Batman didn’t say anything, choosing instead to glare at him from behind the creepy white-out lenses on his cowl.

“For fuck’s sake,” Tony growled, before downing half his drink. “I’m not interested in joining your Boy Scout Justice Club of America, Bats. Director Dick Fury already asked. I’m more of an independent lone wolf, like you were for all of two years before Robin number one appeared. How is he by the way? I can’t help but be concerned about his new costume. Disco died for a reason. And that mullet of his? He truly has terrible taste in fashion. And speaking of fashion faux pas, how could you let Robin number two out in the same pedo bait suit? I feel so sorry for your boys.”

“Can it, Stark,” Batman huffed. “Why on Earth would you make a public announcement that you were Iron Man? I knew all these years of drinking and living frivolously would give you brain damage eventually, but I wasn’t expecting you to become nearly this stupid.”

“I thought you wanted me to stop talking,” Tony huffed, downing the rest of his drink. “Really, Brucie, make up your mind. And as for the whole, civilian ID vs superhero ID? Really not my thing. I can’t not be who I am, and I am Iron Man and Iron Man is Tony Stark. No point in hiding that. Someone would figure it out eventually, so why bother hiding? It’s out there. They know who I am.”
“And that makes you a target.”

“I already am a target, damn it all! Afghanistan taught me that,” Tony shouted, throwing his glass and watched the crystal shatter as it hit the wall.

Batman sighed. “Tony…”

“Save it, Bruce. It’s already done,” Tony snapped.

“They will target your loved ones,” Bruce said.

“Who? Rhodey? Pepper? That’s two people. And that’s it, Bruce. That’s all I have. You and I don’t hang out publically unless it’s for charity and we already know you’re as safe as can be. Safer even, because who fucks with Gotham besides the Arkham crazies? I know your security is good, because I helped install it and upgraded it in January.”

“And Colonel Rhodes? Miss Potts?”

“Rhodey works for the Department of Defense,” Tony scowled. “He’s up to his elbows in Pentagon level security - it’s not like yours or mine, but it’s better than average. Like you, though, we only see each other whenever he’s not on assignment or deployed somewhere. Most of our conversations these days happen over the phone. As for Pepper, she’s only my PA and has her own security - which I will be upgrading - and isn’t a very public figure. Few know who she is. I’m not known for my socializing, Bruce. Only my scandals. Or have you not been watching the national news for the last decade?”

“Tony…”

“Look, Bruce,” Tony huffed. “I appreciate the concern. Really, I do. But I’m out. It’s public knowledge. There is nothing to do about it. What I am going to do is a complete overhaul on all of my security, because clearly I’ve been slacking on the upgrades to my own defenses if both you and Directory Eye Spy are able to shut JARVIS down like this within minutes of each other. You can either help me do this, or leave, because I have nothing else to say.”

Bruce ended up staying the entire weekend helping upgrade Tony’s security in the house, at S.I. and in the Iron Man suits. No one on Earth was hacking that shit. It had a combination of Martian Manhunter and Cyborg grade tech integrated into it, and not even Bruce or Tony had learned how to get past that without pre-programming their own back doors into the JLA’s system. Tony may or may not have also used parts of the same tech to beef up both Rhodey and Pepper’s personal security.

A week after the whole, “I am Iron Man” spiel, Tony found himself playing host to his…Tim. To Tim. Apparently Janet and Jack were going to check on a dig in Egypt and could Tony please watch Tim until the end of summer break? Tony agreed and had his driver and head of security, Happy Hogan, pick the kid up from the airport. The only people that knew about Tim were Rhodey, Pepper, and Happy and they all thought that Tim was his Godson (which was technically true) and that he only saw the kid once or twice a year. If they only knew. Tony actually saw Tim several times a year depending on how many times he made it over to the East Coast for business or to bug Bruce. Tim had only come to visit him in California twice after Tony found out that the kid knew he was biologically Tony’s a little over two years ago. Those visits had been for several weeks during the summer, around the kid’s birthday. This year, Tony had been stuck in Afghanistan, so he supposed it was only fair that Tim visited now if only to see that Tony was indeed alive.
“Can I see the suit?” was the first thing Tim asked Tony when he arrived.

“Hi Tony! It’s great to see you. I’ve missed you so much. How have you been doing?” Tony said sarcastically. “Oh I’m just dandy, Timmy. I’ve been real swell.”

Tim giggled as he gave Tony a hug. Tony patted the kid on the head - still awkward about the whole showing affection thing even after all these years - before dismissing Happy. The man grinned at him and even had the audacity to “Aww” before leaving in the company car. Tony was so going to reprogram the man’s music playlists and change his ringtones to play nothing but something obnoxious. Tim could help. It’s be good hacking experience and bonding time.

God, he was such a horrible influence, and the kid knew it, but loved him anyway because Tony apparently gave him more attention during the few dozen times a year that he saw the kid, than the boy’s own parents. Tony was actually surprised that the Drakes wanted Tim to visit him at all now that he was Iron Man. Wasn’t being in his presence practically automatic child endangerment now?

“Toooony!” Tim whined, breaking him out of his thoughts. “I wanna see the suit!”

“Okay, already,” Tony huffed. “You wanna see the suit? Fine. I know when I’m only wanted for my tech.”

Tim giggled again, latching onto Tony’s arm as they headed down to the workshop. The kid raced over to the cases where the Iron Man suits Mark I thru III were displayed. The pieces from Mark I had been recovered from SHIELD only a few days ago and Tony had reassembled it for display in the case, but Tony had no plans to get it running again. Mark III was still pretty beat up from Tony’s fight with Stane, but Tony figured fixing it up would make a good project for Tim to help him with while he was visiting.

He had recently finished the new Mark IV suit, but that armor was stored in the assembly line, waiting for him to have need of it. Tim would only get to see that one should an emergency arise. Or if he felt like showing off. He was probably going to show it off.

“Wow!” Tim gasped, pacing before the three suits on display. “Dad, these are amazing! What sort of alloy did you use for the outer shells? Is JARVIS hooked up to the HUD systems? How do you handle flying in these things? How much did you have to practice that? What are its defensive capabilities? Can it break the sound barrier?”

Tony felt a stirring of… something in his chest as he watched his son bounce from suit to suit spouting questions, observations, theories and other assorted comments in an excited explosion of technobabble that rivaled his own. It was during moments like this that he really could see himself in this child. This boy who was half made up of his DNA. His… son. This kid was really his son. And he was brilliant. So utterly brilliant. How could Janet and Jack want to spend so much time in other countries digging up dirty old relics when they had this amazing child? They should be so proud of Tim. Proud and amazed by just how smart this kid was.

Proud… That was it. That was what Tony was feeling. Pride.

In a rare show of affection, Tony joined Tim in front of the Mark II armor and wrapped an arm around his shoulders, pulling him close to his side, and began to answer all of the boy’s questions. They spent the whole afternoon talking about the Iron Man armor and Tony’s exploits in the suits. Tim’s eyes had nearly popped out of his head when Tony had actually taken the Mark III out of it’s case and brought it over to the work table for them to work on.

Tony’s feeling of pride rekindled ten-fold while they worked on fixing the left arm. Tim worked
the wiring like a pro even though he was only 11 years old. When Tony needed to work out the
dents and bent plating with the heavier tools, Tim played fetch with DUM-E, U, and Butterfingers.
It was kind of adorable watching them. The silly bots were like big dogs.

Tony was always amazed at how well these visits with Tim went. He knew that he wasn’t a proper
parent figure. He was a horrible influence and let Tim do things he was about 78.5% sure other
normal parents wouldn’t let an 11 year-old do. Like follow Batman at night to take pictures. Or
take apart and reassemble various electronic devices just to see how they worked. Or even build
various things from what he could find in the scrap piles in Tony’s workshop - though he was
smart enough to never let Tim work around tools like the soldering iron or blow torch. That was
just common sense.

This visit ended up being a little different, however, because for the first time in the kid’s life, Tim
sought Tony out after he was supposed to be in bed sleeping. See, Tony knew that he should set an
at least decent example for Tim and actually retired to his bedroom at night whenever Tim was
visiting. He wasn’t always sleeping, but he did dress in comfy sweats and a T and got between the
covers while he fiddled around on his Stark-pad. That’s what Tony was doing when around 1 AM,
Tim entered Tony’s bedroom and crawled into bed with Tony.

“Tim?” Tony said, confused by this development.

“Sorry,” Tim said, voice sounding watery like he’d been crying.

That freaked Tony out more than anything. He’d never had to deal with a crying Tim. Tim never
cried. Like ever. He pouted, his lip might tremble a bit like he wanted to cry, but he had never ever
actually cried.

“What’s wrong?” Tony asked, pulling the kid up and held him against his chest. Because that’s
what you were supposed to do with crying kids, right? Hold them?

“Nothing,” Tim hiccuped. “I-I’m sorry. It’s just…I thought…I had a bad dream.”

“Yeah?” Tony asked, rubbing Tim’s back. The kid just kind of went lax in his arms, so Tony
assumed that what he was doing was right and kept up the action. God, he wished that children
came with a user manual. “What about, Timmy?”

“…You were dead,” Tim said softly, a couple tears leaking from his eyes and getting Tony’s shirt
wet. “You…never came back. Mom was saying that you were killed in Afghanistan. …That’s what
she told me, you know. After we found out that your convoy was attacked. We thought you were
dead.”

Tony held the boy closer, shuddering as he remembered being trapped in the cave with Yinsen.

“I’m sorry, Tim,” Tony whispered. “I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

“Why should you be sorry?” Tim asked, looking up at him confused. “I didn’t go through
anything. You were the one trapped in a cave with terrorists for three months.”

Tony huffed. “Yeah, perhaps, but you thought I was dead, and that made you sad, right?”

Tim sniffed, nodding.

“So we both had a tough time,” Tony reasoned. “But I’m alive and you’re here, and we’re together,
right?”
“Right,” Tim sighed, smiling slightly as he smushed his face against Tony’s chest, only to frown and pull away. He tapped Tony’s chest, directly over the glass cover of Tony’s arc reactor.
“What’s that?”

Tony sighed. He had hoped Tim wouldn’t find out about the arc reactor for a while yet. It still freaked Tony out to see it there sometimes. He gently moved Tim down onto the bed next to him and hiked up his shirt and removed the cover he usually put over the reactor so that the light didn’t shine through.

“What is that?” Tim gasped, his tiny fingers reaching out to trace the outline of the arc reactor.

“That, Tim, is what’s keeping me alive,” Tony said softly. “You see, when the convoy I was riding with was attacked, a missile practically detonated in my face and shards of shrapnel found their way into my chest. When the terrorists found me, they had this man, Yinsen, who was a surgeon, remove as many of those shards as they could. However, some could not be removed, so he put a magnet in my chest to keep the shards from traveling further into my body and into my heart.”

“It’s so big,” Tim whispered. “How is it affecting your lung capacity? How much of your ribcage did they have to cut out to put in the casing for the magnet?”

“I…really try not to think about that,” Tony admitted, shuddering again. “I haven’t worked up the courage to consult a doctor.”

Tim bit his bottom lip and stared at the arc reactor for a little while before climbing up into Tony’s lap and wrapping his small arms around Tony’s neck.

“I love you, Daddy,” he said and Tony found himself crying a bit and held his son close to him.

“Love you too, Buddy,” he gasped.

“…Can I sleep with you tonight?” Tim asked.

Tony thought about that for a moment. Tim was a little old to be sleeping with his parents, right? Wasn’t it like some unwritten rule that once you were ten, you didn’t need your parents as much anymore? But then again, Tim was hardly a normal kid, and he somehow doubted that Janet and Jack had ever let Tim sleep with them when he was younger. It made Tony think of his own mother. She’d let him sleep with her a few time when he was little. And Tim was tiny. If Tony didn’t know that his son was supposed to be 11, he would swear the kid was 7. That’s how tiny Tim was. He looked 7. But did age really matter? Tim wanted comfort and, frankly, so did Tony. Afghanistan was a rough topic for him to think - let alone talk - about.

“Yeah, sure,” Tony said, sliding down in his bed until he was lying down with Tim on top of him. “Lights, JARVIS.”

“Goodnight, sir,” his AI said as he dimmed the lights until they were off.

“Night, JARVIS!” Tim called, making Tony chuckle.

“Goodnight, Master Timothy.”

“Night, Dad,” Tim whispered, his hand lying flat over the light of the arc reactor, dimming it’s glow.

“Goodnight…son,” Tony whispered, finding himself drifting to sleep.
So what did you think?

I was originally going to just dive into the Tim part, but Bruce decided that he was going to pay Tony a visit and actually have a part in this fic. So yay! First Batman sighting! XD

I just have this really strange head-canon that Tony pokes fun at Dick all the time. And Dick HATES it. So he and Tony don't really get along, and Dick hates going to galas and charities that he knows Tony is going to attend as well. But Jason LOVES Tony, BECAUSE of all the shit he gives Bruce and Dick. Jason actually puts up with going to galas and charities if it means getting to see Tony.

Also, in case you guys are wondering, Dick and Jason do NOT know about Tim. Tony doesn't talk about him, and Tim rarely attends galas and charity events unless Janet and Jack want to present a family image, and usually Tony's not at those, so neither is Jason. Dick and Tim have technically been to some of the same galas, but Tim's usually off in the corner or off to the side by himself until his parents are ready to leave, and Dick is usually either playing son of the host and/or socializing. As for Bruce, he kind of knows about Tim. He's aware that the Drakes have a son, and knows that Tony was designated as the kid's "Godfather", but as far as Bruce is aware, Tony's hardly ever seen the boy. That, and Tim's gotten awfully good and keeping out of sight. It's a habit that carried over from spying on Batman and Robin at night.

Next time, I'm thinking of writing about either the first time Tim met Rhodey, Pepper, and Happy, or the first time Tony met Dick and Jason. I plan on writing both, but let me know in a comment or something which I should write first. :)
Mr. Hogan, Col. Rhodes, and Miss Potts

Chapter Summary

Tim meets Mr. Hogan, Colonel Rhodes and Miss Potts for the first time. And the bots. Can't forget the bots. And JARVIS. Because where would Tony be if it weren't for JARVIS?

Chapter Notes

Wowza! This chapter turned out pretty long! I decided I was going to write a Tim chapter this time, which was a little harder than I thought. Tony is just easier to write I guess, so I hope I did a good job with Tim.

This chapter takes place a few months after Tim and Tony's chat in chapter 2. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2006

Tim was excited. He was currently aboard a plane on his way to see his dad - to see Tony Stark - in California. He’d be landing at LAX airport any minute now where someone would pick him up and take him to the house in Malibu. Tim peeked out the window and couldn’t keep the grin off his face when he saw the sprawling city of LA beneath the plane as it made it’s descent. In a couple of hours he’d get to see his dad and the workshop that Tony had told him about so many times.

The stewardesses had kept an eye on him the entire flight because he was an unaccompanied minor and one - her name was Judy - was apparently assigned to make sure Tim found Mr. Hogan - Tony’s driver - who would be picking him up. Tim wasn’t sure if this was normal procedure or not when it came to unaccompanied minors, but he was too excited to really care. It was his first time on a plane. Hell, this was his first time traveling outside of Gotham.

After the plane landed and taxied over to the terminal, Judy the stewardess was there to get his carry-on luggage down from the overhead compartment for him and guided him out behind the other first class passengers. He kept close to her as they found their way to the passenger pick-up lobby where a man in a suit held a sign that said “Timothy Drake” on it in big bold letters.

“That’s me,” Tim grinned up at the stewardess before striding over to the man. “Mr. Hogan?”

The man blinked down at him in surprise. “Uh…”

“Timothy Drake,” Tim said, reignining in his grin as he thrust out his hand.

Mr. Hogan shook it hesitantly. “…Hi?”

“Tony didn’t warn you, did he?” Tim huffed. “That I’m 9, I mean.”

“You’re nine?” Mr. Hogan gapped.
Tim scowled. He knew he was small for his age, but really!

“Ok, maybe I’m not 9 yet, but I will be in a week.”

“Uh… right,” Mr. Hogan stuttered. “Of course. Uh… Do you have any extra baggage we need to pick up from baggage claim?”

“No.”

“Then, uh… we’ll head right for the car.

Tim nodded, gesturing that the man should go ahead and lead the way while Judy handed him Tim’s suitcase. Tim wanted to giggle, because the man seemed to be at a loss. Tim obviously wasn’t someone that his dad usually sent Mr. Hogan to pick up.

They made their way to a nondescript black car that Tim knew had to be a company car. It wasn’t flashy or sleek enough to be one of his dad’s personal cars. The moment they were on the road, Mr. Hogan called Tony using the car’s bluetooth system, putting it on speakerphone so that Tim could talk as well.

“Yeah?”

“Hi, Boss,” Mr. Hogan began. “I, uh, picked up Mr. Drake.”

“Hi, Tony!” Tim piped up from the back seat.

“Timmy!” Tony’s voice cried, sounding delighted. “How was the flight, kiddo? Were you able to find Happy alright?”

“His name is Happy?” Tim giggled, watching the back of the man’s neck flush red.

“My name is Harold,” Mr. Hogan corrected. “Mr. Stark just calls me Happy.”

“I’m not the only one!” Tony huffed, air whooshing through the speaker. “Pepper and Rhodey do too. As well as everyone else at Stark Industries. I don’t think anyone actually knows that your name is Harold except for Pepper and I. And now Tim.”

“And whose fault is that?” Mr. Hogan muttered.

“What was that?”

“Nothing, boss!” Mr. Hogan said louder, causing Tim to snicker. Tim liked him. “So, uh, where am I bringing him? You didn’t really say when you called me about picking him up this morning.”

“Malibu, of course,” Tony said in that tone of voice Tim was used to hearing Tony and his mother use when they thought people were being particularly moronic.

“Right… Of course,” Mr. Hogan muttered. “So, uh, do you mind if I ask who this kid is, sir?”

“He’s the Drake’s kid,” Tony answered as if that meant anything to the driver. “He also happens to be my Godson.”

“Ah,” Mr. Hogan said, nodding, but looked surprised. “I… see.”

Tim grinned, seeing how confused Mr. Hogan was. He wondered what the man’s reaction would have been if Tony had said that Tim was actually his son. He knew why Tony would never openly
claim him - it would upset his parents for one thing (his father especially) - and honestly he was just glad that Tony wanted to spend time with him. His mother and father rarely ever did. So, if the only price for being able to spend time with his bio-dad was to never be able to address him as such in public, then it really wasn’t that big of a deal to Tim.

About another hour later, Mr. Hogan was pulling off the main road onto a long private drive that brought them to a cliffside modern house by the ocean. Tim found himself staring in awe at the structure. It wasn’t as big as Drake Manor, but it was a lot more open and inviting, he felt.

Before Mr. Hogan had even stopped the car, Tony Stark was opening the front door and coming to meet them.

“Timmy!” the man cried with a beaming smile.

Tim grinned back, seeing smudges of oil and grease all over Tony’s shirt and sweatpants. It was a side of Tony he’d only had small glimpses of over the years. Most of the time his dad was dressed in a suit or formal-casual wear, looking neat and put together. He’d never seen his dad in sweats before. Mother would be horrified. Tim loved it, especially when Tony came up and ruffled his hair, messing up its neatly combed style. Tony smelled of motor oil, metal and fried wiring.

“No trouble I trust, Happy?” Tony asked.

“There was a little traffic getting out of LA, but smooth sailing otherwise, Boss,” Mr. Hogan reported as he got Tim’s bag out of the trunk.

“Great!” Tony said, clapping his hands together before leading the way inside. Tim followed right behind him. “I have so much to show you, Timmy. We’ll get your things settled in your room and then I can show you the workshop. It’s like Candyland!”

“Ah, Boss?” Mr. Hogan said hesitantly as he followed them in with Tim’s bag. “Isn’t it kinda dangerous for kids down there?”

“Tim helps me with any spare projects I bring with me when I visit Gotham. He knows what he’s allowed to touch,” Tony said, shrugging off Mr. Hogan’s concern. And you know I never keep any weapons projects in my own home, Happy. That’s what the company testing labs at S.I. are for. It’s quite safe for Tim downstairs. Just cars and the bots.”

“Bots?” Tim repeated, feeling excited. “As in real robots?!”

“Oh, it’s going to be like Christmas!” Tony whooped. “But, let’s go to your room first. I’ve spent all week making sure everything is in order.”

That was when they reached a door at the end of a hall. Tony threw it open and beamed down at Tim. “So how’d I do?”

Tim gaped in awe as he looked around the room he would be staying in. It was a lot bigger than the one he had back at Drake Manor. The bed was a queen, just inside the door. On the other side of the bed there was a side table and a walk in closet that was nearly as big as his mother’s back in Gotham. The whole far wall was a single floor to ceiling window with a spectacular view facing the ocean and the drop down over the cliff that the house sat on. There was a work table/desk in front of that window/wall and all around the room were various sets of kits, ranging from Lego and Bionicle to tinker toys and link-n-logs. Various constructs had already been built and were displayed all around the room on the various shelves and other work tables that lined the other two solid plaster walls. There was even a couple of Sky Chairs hanging from the ceiling in the middle
of the room.

“Oh my God! This… is so cool!” Tim shrieked.

Tony laughed. “Glad you like it, kiddo. Happy, just set his bag on the bed. He’ll unpack later. C’mon, kid! Let me show you the rest of the house.”

“Will that be all, Boss?” Mr. Hogan called after them.

“Yes, thanks, Happy! You’re free to go!”

Poor Mr. Hogan still looked a bit lost when Tim looked over his shoulder to wave goodbye.

“Thanks for picking me up, Mr. Hogan! Have a nice day.”

The man looked even more confused and surprised that Tim had thanked him.

The lab was amazing. Tim couldn’t stop his jaw from dropping as he took in all of the classic cars that lined the parking section of the lab/garage. He recognized the one that Tony had bought and brought through Gotham just a few months ago. Then there was the shop itself. He’d never seen so many tools and gadgets lying about, not to mention all of the floating holo-screens. They were like something out of Star Wars.

Then there were the robots. Real honest to God robots.

“Meet DUM-E, U and Butterfingers,” Tony said, as he pointed to each bot. Tim noted the names on their individual chassis. All three robots had one single arm with three pincers that made up their “hand”. “Boys, meet Timmy. He’s my son, but that’s top secret so you can’t tell anybody.”

The three bots let out a trill of beeps, their hands moving up and down as if they were nodding before moving closer to Tim as if to inspect him. That was when he noticed the cameras installed on their arms above their “hand”.

“Those are funny names,” Tim said as he ran his fingers down U’s arm.

“I’ll tell you the story behind them later,” Tony said, watching Tim as he interacted with the bots. Then he clapped his hands together and said, “now for you to meet the last member of our little family. JARVIS! Meet Tim.”

“Hello, Master Timothy.”

Tim’s eyes widened as he looked around, trying to find the source of the voice that had spoken with a British accent.

“Who…?”

“I am Sir’s personal AI. I run the house and assist him with his projects,” the voice informed him, coming from the speakers Tim was starting to notice in the ceiling.

“An AI? …As in artificial intelligence?” Tim gasped, turning to face his grinning dad. “You built an AI?! Dad, you’re amazing!”

“I know,” Tony said.

“Sir is modest as well,” JARVIS said dryly.

Tim’s mind was blown. JARVIS sounded so… real. That was sarcasm. His dad had not only
programed a fully functioning AI, he’d programed it to have emotions and speech inflections like sarcasm.

“Oh my God,” Tim gasped, smiling so wide he thought his face might split, but he couldn’t stop. He knew that Tony Stark was called a futurist. That his technology was known for being years ahead of it’s time, but this…his lab…the bots…JARVIS… It was more than anything he could have imagined. He had no words to describe how incredible everything was. And the fact that the genius behind it all was willing to share it, to show Tim what he’d made… it was more than what his mother and father had ever done. They never showed him anything they’d brought back from their digs unless it was on display in Gotham’s museums. He never heard the stories behind the artifacts or what went on at the archeological sites unless he happened to be in the same room as his parents when they were giving a story to the journalists interviewing them.

Tony Stark was the complete opposite. He let Tim play with DUM-E and U and Butterfingers. He showed him their blueprints and explained how their AIs and JARVIS worked. He told Tim when he built them and the stories behind their names. He told Tim about how lonely it was for him and the pressure that came with growing up the son of Howard Stark. About the family butler, Edwin Jarvis, who was more of a father to Tony than Howard had ever been and for whom JARVIS the AI was named after.

Tim and Tony spent the entire day down in the workshop playing with the bots and talking about anything and everything. Because Tony didn’t just tell Tim about the things he’d done and the things he’d built. He asked Tim about his pictures, who had he’d watched Batman and Robin fight since they’d last seen each other, had he gotten caught yet? (“No? Still? Bats is loosing his touch”), how he was getting on in school and gave him advice on how to handle bullies that didn’t understand him because of how smart he was - Tony had used the word “genius,” but Tim wasn’t so sure he’d go that far. He knew he was smart, but nowhere near as smart as his dad.

They were so caught up in building a box with a better hidden and protected secret storage compartment (because Tony believed that Tim needed to have a safe place to keep his Batman and Robin photos) that they had lost track of time and weren’t aware that it was nearing 10 o’clock. They probably would have continued even into the early morning if it weren’t for a late-night visitor.

“Sir,” JARVIS said suddenly. “Colonel Rhodes is here to see you.”

“Thanks, JARVIS,” Tony called, before frowning at the darkness he could see outside the high windows that lined the cliffside end of the lower level workshop/garage. “What time is it.”

“It is 9:47 PM, Sir. Way past Master Timothy’s usual bedtime I’m sure,” JARVIS responded promptly. And if Tim wasn’t mistaken, there was a hint of disapproval in the AI’s tone.

“It’s alright, JARVIS,” Tim said. “I’ve been up later than this before. And it’s the summer. I’m generally allowed to stay up until midnight. One in the morning at the latest.”

And that wasn’t including hours he spent sneaking out and following the dynamic duo, but JARVIS didn’t need to know that.

“I see,” JARVIS replied. “Be that as it may, I would recommend eating something, sirs. The two of you have been down in the workshop for nearly 9 hours. Surely you must be hungry, Master Timothy.”

Tim’s stomach chose that moment to let loose a loud and ravenous growl. Tim smiled sheepishly.
“Well then it’s a good thing Rhody’s here with pizza, if my nose isn’t mistaken,” Tony laughed, turning his head towards the glass walls and door to his workshop just as said door opened revealing a tall black man with short hair that was cut close to his head (military crew cut, Tim noted) in a navy blue polo shirt and faded jeans with a box of pizza in hand. “Hey, Rhody.”


“Where else would I be?” Tony laughed. “What kind of pie didja bring?”

“Pepperoni pizza with black olives and mushrooms,” Col. Rhodes said, setting the pizza box down on a clear spot on Tony’s main worktable.

“That fine with you kiddo?” Tony asked Tim.

“Yes,” Tim said, even though he wasn’t a big fan of olives.

“Tony,” Col. Rhodes said slowly, drawing out the name. “Who is this?”

“I’m Tim,” Tim said, putting down the tools he’d been handling before heading over to the workshop sink to wash his hands.

“Nice to meet you, Tim,” Col. Rhodes said, nodding, before glaring at Tony. The two then began to have a hushed conversation that Tim couldn’t hear over the running water from the sink. DUM-E was there to hand Tim a clean towel.

“Thank you, D,” Tim said, patting the bot’s clawed hand before handing the towel back. He called DUM-E “D” because he didn’t feel comfortable calling the bots by the funny, but demeaning names Tony had given them, especially after hearing the reasons behind their names. Tim was glad that he’d never get to meet his biological paternal grandfather. Howard Stark didn’t sound like a very nice person.

DUM-E chirped in what Tim interpreted as a happy manner before rolling away.

“So,” Col. Rhodes said as Tim approached, “you are Tony’s Godson.”

“Yes, sir,” Tim said, with a polite smile, before turning to his dad who was opening the pizza box and reaching for a slice. “Tony, you should wash your hands before you eat. We’ve been working with the bots and tools. You wouldn’t want any of the oil and stuff on your hands mixing with your food. It’ll taste yucky.”

Tony blinked at him in bewilderment for a moment before shrugging and heading over towards the sink.

“Damn, kid,” Col. Rhodes said, hand covering his mouth to hide a smile, “I’ve been trying to tell him that for years, and he’s never listened. How did you get him to do that?”

“Really?” he said. “My mother tells him that all the time whenever he comes over for a visit and he’s never listened. How did you get him to do that?”

Tim stared up at the Colonel in surprise.

“And what’s because your mother is one scary lady when angered, Timmy,” Tony said as he came back over while drying his hands, DUM-E trailing behind him. “The last thing I need is for you to tell her that I’m displaying bad habits in front of you when you’re here. Then she’ll lecture me to death and never let you come back, even for my funeral.” Tony tossed the towel behind him and DUM-E
just barely caught it on the edge of one of his pincer claws, beeping in distress before whirling in an irritated manner before rolling away.

Butterfingers rolled up beside Tim and pressed a stack of paper plates into his side.

“Thanks, Butters,” Tim said, patting the bot much like he’d done earlier with DUM-E before taking the plates. After taking one for himself, he passed out plates to Col. Rhodes and Tony, before handing the rest back to Butterfingers, who beeped happily before rolling away.

U was there with plastic cups a minute later and DUM-E had a two liter bottle of Coke-a-Cola.

“I’m surprised you have soda down here, Tones,” Col. Rhodes commented before glancing at Tim. “You usually have something much…stronger.”

“Then what would Tim be able to drink?” Tony scoffed. “Honesty, Rhodey, I’m not *that* irresponsible.”

“Will wonders ever cease?” Col. Rhodes asked with a teasing grin before turning to Tim. “So, kid, how long are you staying?”

“Just a couple of weeks,” Tim said. “I’m here for my birthday and until the end of my summer break.”

“The kid has never been to Disneyland, Rhodey,” Tony declared. “We are fixing that.”

“We?” Col. Rhodes asked, raising an eyebrow.

“I need you to help me to convince Pepper to allow me to have a few days off to take the kid. You can come along of course. I know what a big fan you are of Goofy. We’ll buy those silly round-eared hats and everything.”

“You want to take a few days off to go to Disneyland,” Col. Rhodes said.

“Of course it wouldn’t just be Disneyland, Rhodey,” Tony huffed. “We’ll go to the neighboring sister park, California Adventures, and go to Medieval Times as well. It’ll be a blast. Pepper can come too if she wants.”

“I don’t know Tony,” Col. Rhodes sighed.

“I’ve been good all month. I think I deserve a break,” Tony pouted, making Tim grin. “And Timmy deserves to have an awesome 9th birthday. This is the first time he’s ever been outside of Gotham. Do you know how creepy and depressing Gotham is? Look at the kid. He’s pale like a vampire. He needs some California sun.”

Col. Rhodes looked at Tim long enough that Tim started to feel nervous before the man sighed and nodded. “Fine. I’ll help you with Peper. You owe me, Tony.”

“I’ll pay for you for the whole trip,” Tony assured.

After they ate, Tony sent Tim off to bed. Tim said goodnight to the bots before heading upstairs to his room. He said goodnight to JARVIS after he slid into bed and grinned when the AI wished him a good night and turned off the lights, but left the windows clear so that he could see the stars. He never got to see many stars in Gotham because of the bright city lights, and so he was amazed by how many of them there were in the night sky. With a big smile on his face, Tim curled up in bed and dropped off into a deep sleep.
The next morning Tim made his way into the kitchen and got himself a bowl of cereal. JARVIS had informed him that his dad was still asleep, so after he finished eating, Tim brought a few of the many lego kits Tony had bought him out of his room and started assembling the Death Star on the living room coffee table while JARVIS queued up A New Hope on the TV.

Just when Han, Luke, and Leia were aboard the Millennium Falcon having a space dogfight with a few Imperial Tie-Fighters, a pretty redhead lady walked through the front door. She was wearing a nice green dress that made her green eyes pop a bit, and matching high heeled shoes that clacked as she made her way past the living room and into the kitchen dining area. Tim heard the moment her footsteps abruptly paused, before slowly coming back towards the living room. He ignored her staring in favor of putting the last touches on the Death Star and looked up in time to see Han blow up the last Tie-Fighter.

“Excuse me.”

Tim finally looked up at the woman who was staring at him as if she was unsure of what she was seeing.

“Good morning, ma'am,” Tim said politely.

“…Good morning,” she said slowly.

Before either of them could say anything, Tony came stumbling sleepily down the hall in a different pair of sweatpants and band T-shirt than what he wore yesterday.

“Morning, Tony,” Tim said, grinning as his dad plopped down behind him on the couch.

“Morning, Timmy,” Tony muttered between yawns. “Whatcha building?”

“The Death Star. The first one obviously,” Tim said.

“Obviously,” Tony nodded in agreement.

“Tony,” the woman said sharply.

“Mmm?” Tony hummed, rubbing his right eye, before looking a bit more awake. “Pepper? Oh hey, Pepper! Have you met Timmy, yet? Tim, this is Miss Virginia Potts, but Rhodey, Happy and I call her Pepper. Pep? This is Timothy Drake.”

“Tim,” the boy corrected, “Only Mother calls me Timothy, and that’s only when she’s mad or is being very serious.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Tim, but Tony why is he here?” Miss Potts asked.

“He’s visiting,” Tony said. “He’ll be nine this weekend. Oh! Speaking of, cancel all my appointments Friday through Sunday. We’re going to Disneyland. Timmy’s never been. Isn’t that awful?”

Miss Potts pursed her lips and looked mildly irritated.

“Oh, come on, Pep!” Tony pouted. “I’ve attended every board meeting, and made sure that all of my projects were submitted to the labs on time for nearly the a month and a half. I deserve a little break. Rhodey’s coming and you can join us. It’ll be a nice little break.”
“I thought everything was running a little too smoothly this summer,” Pepper huffed.


“Godson?!” Miss Potts repeated, looking startled. “Since when did you have a Godson?”

“Since July 19th nine years ago,” Tony said. “You remember Janet Drake? Incorrigible woman. Managed to talk Jack into thinking I’d make a good Godfather. Horrible idea then, horrible now, but here we are.”

Miss Potts shut her eyes tightly for a moment, before nodding. “Please get dressed, Mister Stark. You have a meeting at noon.”

Tony sighed, but nodded. “And this weekend?”

“…I’ll reschedule your appointments for later in the month.”

“Isn’t she the best, Timmy?” Tony said with a bright grin, before ruffling the boy’s hair and getting up from the couch. “I’ll be back in a jiffy.”

After Tony was gone it was just Miss Potts and Tim again. The woman shifted uneasily on her high heels.

“You can sit down if you want. Tony’s probably not going to be ready for a little while. He’s not the fastest in the mornings. Mother always complains and wonders how he ever gets anywhere to do anything,” Tim said.

Miss Potts laughed softly, the tension in her shoulders lessening. “That is very true.” She took a seat on the end of the couch and watched him for a minute as he started another kit and began assembling a Tie-Fighter. On the TV, the rebels were taking off to take out the Death Star. “I never knew Tony had a Godson.”

“It’s okay. Neither did Mr. Hogan or Colonel Rhodes, but you all know now, Miss Potts,” Tim said.

“How much do you see him?” Miss Potts asked.

“Whenver he’s visiting Gotham,” Tim said. “So, a few times a year. He helped me set up my darkroom for my birthday last year.”

“Darkroom?”

“For developing photos. I like to take pictures using old polaroid cameras.”

“I…see.”

“No you don’t, but that’s okay. Tony doesn’t either. He wants to buy me a digital camera, but I like being able to develop my own film. There’s something therapeutic about it. Tony at least understands that I like using the equipment. We had fun setting up my darkroom.”

“Don’t darkrooms use chemical baths?” Miss Potts asked, an edge to her voice.

“Yes, but I know what I’m doing. Mother made sure that Tony taught me lab safety first. He was very thorough. And Miss Mac - she’s my housekeeper - supervises me when he’s not visiting.” Well, not really, especially when Tim’s developing his Batman photos, but Miss Mac really had
watched him in the beginning and Miss Potts didn’t need to know that he wasn’t regularly supervised.

“Ah-huh.”

“You don’t believe me.”

“Kind of hard to,” she smiled warily. “You remind me of Tony.”

Tim stared up at her in amazement. “I’ve never been told that before.”

“Told what before?” Tony asked as he came back into the living room in a nice charcoal grey suit with a red tie.

“That I’m like you.”

Tony blinked owlishly for a moment before snorting.

“He’s nothing like me, Pep. He’s too well mannered to be anything like me.”

Tim cocked his head to the side, wondering about the strange expression on Tony’s face. If he didn’t know better, he’d say it was panic.

“You speak as if being like you would be a bad thing,” Tim said.

Tony smiled at him ruefully. “Trust me, Timmy. You don’t want to be like me. Be like your mom. There’s someone to emulate.”

“But mother doesn’t build cool robots and AIs,” Tim pouted.

“Perhaps, but, then again, she’s never needed them.”

Tim was left to ponder that for the rest of the morning and most of the afternoon while Tony was gone with Mr. Hogan and Miss Potts for Stark Industries business. Col. Rhodes stopped by around lunchtime to check on him, but Tim was fine by himself, playing with DUM-E, U and Butterfingers down in the lab. He knew better than to touch any of the tools when Tony wasn’t there, but he hadn’t been forbidden from playing with the bots and played a few games with JARVIS on some of the holo-screens.

He thought about what he knew about his biological dad. Tony had grown up very lonely. Kind of like Tim. His parents weren’t mean to him or anything, like what Tony had said Howard Stark was like, but they were gone for most of the year, like Tony’s parents had been. Tim had Miss Mac, but she was only the housekeeper and left for her own home most nights. Edwin Jarvis had at least lived in Stark Manor with Tony. Neither Tim or Tony had had any friends at school however.

Tim found himself feeling sad. Tim at least had Tony and because of Tony he now had the bots and JARVIS… but growing up, Tony hadn’t had someone like that. He’d built DUM-E and U and Butterfingers and JARVIS as he grew up because he’d had no one apart from the family butler. Tim tried to imagine what his life would be like if he only had Miss Mac. The thought made him cry.

Poor DUM-E and U and Butterfingers didn’t understand why he was crying and he couldn’t find a way to put his feelings into words. He let the bots fuss over him, and listened to JARVIS say nice calming things, though he turned down the AI’s offer to call Tony or Col. Rhodes.
All the same, the AI must have tipped his dad off that something was amiss when he got home because Tony went straight to Tim and actually scooped him up into a rare hug. Tim didn’t cry, but it was a close thing. He hugged Tony back and felt safe. He wasn’t alone. He had Tony, his dad.

Before Tim got on a plane back to Gotham two weeks later, Tony gave him a smartphone with JARVIS programmed into it. Even though Tim didn’t get to see his dad very often, he knew that the man was only a phone call away. He felt content the entire flight back to Gotham.

Chapter End Notes

So what did ya think? I'm not quite satisfied with how this chapter turned out, but because I wrote it in Tim's POV, I didn't get to really reflect on Happy, Rhodey, and Pepper's reactions and feelings towards Tim. I'll have to do that in another chapter. :P

Anywho! This is how Tim met Tony's closest companions for the first time. Writing Tim interacting with the bots was probably my favorite part of this chapter. It's like having all of Tony's children in one place, and yes, I definitely count the bots as Tony's children. He created them, gave them AI to give them life, so as their maker, he is their father.

Next will be Tony interacting with the Waynes! Not sure how that's going to turn out, but it's sure to be interesting. ;)

Chapter End Notes
Two Robins and a Nightwing

Chapter Summary

A 4-parter where Tony meets Dick and Jason for the first time and their nighttime alter-egos.

Chapter Notes

Happy Halloween everybody! I hope you all have a fantastic evening. I'm so happy I got this chapter done in time for Halloween. I'm just passing out candy for my grandparents this year, but I'm doing it as the Black Widow! :D Not that you care about who I'm dressing up as for Halloween. :P

ANYWHO! New chapter, which is more like 4 tiny chapters put together into one big chapter. Big thanks to Jacobra for giving me the idea for this 4-parter. I was originally just going to write about Tony meeting Dick and Jason for the first time, but then I realized that they could also meet Tony for the first time as Robin! Hence the chapter title. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2002

Tony rang the doorbell and waited patiently for Alfred Pennyworth to answer the door to Wayne Manor. He was surprised, however, when a boy with wavy black hair and bright blue eyes opened the door instead.

“Uh…hi?” the boy said, fidgeting nervously. It was then that Tony noticed the slight bruising on the boy’s cheek and around the eye. It was well hidden by make-up, but Tony was used to finding such well concealed injuries whenever he visited Bruce. Seeing them on this boy only confirmed his suspicions. It was official. Bruce had lost his mind.

“You must be Dick Grayson,” Tony said, smiling politely. He’d heard Bruce talk a lot about the kid, but he’d never thought that they’d meet face to face like this. It should have happened much sooner. “Is Bruce home? I really must speak to him.”

“…Who are you?” Dick asked.

Tony blinked in surprise. “You don’t know who I am?”

“…Should I?”

Tony was about to speak when he heard Alfred Pennyworth’s stern voice.

“Master Richard, please don’t be rude and let Mr. Stark in.”

Dick startled, but instantly opened the door wider and stepped aside to let Tony in.
“Alfie!” Tony said, grinning. “You’re looking as dapper as ever.”

“Thank you, Anthony,” Alfred said, lips quirked up in a small smile. “If you are looking for Master Bruce, he is in his study. Will you be staying for supper?”

“Sure am, thanks Alf!” Tony said as he passed Alfred and Dick, heading straight for Bruce Wayne’s study. He threw open the door in a dramatic fashion before slamming it shut behind him. “Are you insane?”

“Hello Tony,” Bruce said, mildly.

“Are. You. Insane?” Tony bit out. “It’s a valid question, Wayne. You dress up like a Bat and go out at night to fight crime, and that’s dangerous enough for you to be doing, but dragging a kid along?! Don’t think that I didn’t see the bruises on the boy’s face. Alfie might be a master at hiding that crap by now because of all the practice he’s had with you, but I know what that shit looks like.”

Bruce sighed. “He wanted to help.”

“Help shmelp,” Tony growled. “He’s a child.”

“A child very capable of handling himself in a fight,” Bruce said firmly. “It’s not like I allowed him to go out on the streets without training, Tony. He comes from a family of acrobats and was raised in a circus, meaning he’s a natural athlete and adaptable. I trained with him for two years before letting him help me on patrol. And I don’t let him do any solo jobs. I’m with him throughout the entire patrol.”

“And that makes it alright?” Tony growled.

“Better to take him under my wing as a partner, Tony, than finding him sneaking out at night to fight on his own. His parents were murdered,” Bruce said softly. “He wanted answers but after he got them…”

“He wanted to help prevent what happened to him from happening to somebody else,” Tony sighed. “Kinda like this asshole I know.”

Bruce chuckled.

“Fine, I get it,” Tony huffed. “He assists you in fighting crime. What I don’t get, Bruce, is his costume. He’s dressed like a fucking traffic light in shorts so short, they’re practically a speedo. Are you trying to get him snatched up by every pedophile in Gotham? And what’s with the pixie boots? I knew your taste in fashion was questionable, but seriously, B? What were you thinking? I don’t care if that tunic is outfitted with the highest grade of kevlar, that poor boy’s legs are going to freeze and get shot up because they’ll have no protection. At least give him some pants to wear!”

“Dick designed his own costume,” Bruce said, smiling in amusement. “It’s colors are reminiscent to the costume he wore as a Flying Grayson in Haley’s Circus.”

“You seriously let him design his costume on his own? You’re the adult here, Bruce,” Tony scowled. “Make the kid wear some pants. No wonder there are rumors circulating that Robin is Batman’s boy-toy.”

Bruce choked, nearly falling out of his chair. “What?!”

“You heard me,” Tony smirked. “Half of Gotham thinks there’s something more going on between
Batman and his new sidekick than a new partnership. It’s a particularly juicy and disturbing piece of gossip going around. You can understand why I’m concerned. You’re not doing anything… inappropriate with the boy behind closed doors, are you, Brucie?”

“Tony!” Bruce growled.

Tony laughed. “You’re too easy, B. Just thought I should give you a heads up. Better to hear from a friend first, right?”

Bruce sighed, glowering at the other man, but before either of them could continue their conversation, there was a knock at the door before it opened to reveal just the boy they were talking about.

“Alfie says dinner is ready,” he said.

“Excellent!” Tony cried, clapping his hands together. “Come along, Brucie! I haven’t had Alfred’s cooking in ages!”

Bruce let out a heavy sigh, but nodded and led the way to the dining room, where the table was covered in food and set for three.

“Alfred, you needn’t have gone through all this trouble,” Tony said, grinning at the elder man. “Not for little old me.”

“Nonsense, Mr. Stark,” Alfred said, “You are a guest and we haven’t enjoyed your company for some time.”

“At least eat with us,” Tony said, gesturing to the empty seat next to his usual spot on Bruce’s right.

“Yes! Please, Alfie?” Dick begged, adding a small pout.

“Yes, please, Alfie?” Dick begged, adding a small pout.

“Please join us, Alfred,” Bruce added.

“Very well, sirs,” Alfred agreed, adding another place setting and joining them for the meal.

“So, uh,” Dick said halfway through dinner, speaking up for the first time since they’d started eating. “What do you do, Mr. Stark?”

“He really doesn’t know who I am,” Tony pouted. “Brucie, I’m offended! I thought we were friends. He’s been your ward for nearly two years and he’s never heard of me?!”

Bruce rolled his eyes, ignoring him.

“Anthony is owner and CEO of Stark Industries,” Alfred answered instead. “It’s main function is weapons manufacturing for the military. However, it is a lesser known fact that his company also produces a line of high end electronics and hospital equipment.”

“I’m a genius,” Tony announced, making Bruce snort. “You know it’s true, Brucie. I have one of the top 5 highest IQ’s ever recorded. My tech is revolutionary and years ahead of it’s time. Look me up sometime, kid. I’m a national treasure.”

Bruce chuckled, shaking his head. “And modest too.”

Dick snickered.
“Modesty is overrated,” Tony huffed. “Especially when what I say is true. Anyway, enough about me. What about you, kiddo?”

“Huh?” Dick said, staring like a deer caught in headlights.

“What do you do? For fun? For school? To drive Bruce crazy?”

“Uh… I’m an acrobat,” Dick answered. “So I guess I do a lot of gymnastics? Bruce even put in a trapeze in the gym for me.”

Tony hummed around a mouthful of food, nodding and made a gesture for the boy to continue.

“I, ah, started going to public school this year. I was tutored the years before to catch up.”

“Not much schooling in the circus, huh?” Tony said, ignoring the warning glare Bruce sent his way.

“I had lessons,” Dick said, scowling.

“I’m sure,” Tony said. “Has public school been hard to adjust to?”

“Some,” Dick said shortly.

“Are you bullied?”

“I don’t see how that is any of your business,” Dick snapped.

“Master Richard, don’t be rude,” Alfred scolded. “And Anthony, please refrain from such personal questions.”

“Yes, Alfred,” Dick muttered, still staring stonily at Tony from across the table.

“Sorry, Alfie,” Tony said, smiling wryly. “Had to ask. I noticed the kid’s bruise.”

Dick stiffened in his seat.

“I know what kids his age are like,” Tony continued, running with a plausible normal life excuse. “Anyone different is potential bullying material, whether it’s a young pre-teen genius attending high school, or a kid who's spent his whole life traveling and is now settled down enough to get a consistent education regimen.”

The tension bled out of Dick’s shoulders a touch after he said that.

“You should have Brucie teach you some of that martial arts stuff he learned while globe trotting,” Tony said to the boy, knowing full well that the kid was already trained, but he and Bruce had agreed long ago that Tony would act ignorant of his friend’s night job when they were in the company of others not in the know. It was safer for both of them that way. Tony and Dick didn’t know each other yet, and Bruce obviously wasn’t going to say anything, so neither would Tony. “I prefer boxing, personally, but either works so long as you know how to stand up and protect yourself.”

Dick nodded.

“Be that as it may, Anthony,” Alfred said, “let us please move on to a different topic of conversation. Edwin taught you better than to pry like that.”
“Yes, Alfred,” Tony said, smile turning sad. “He did.”

“Edwin?” Dick repeated, looking at the adults around the table curiously.

“Edwin Jarvis,” Tony said softly, putting his eating utensils down. He didn’t feel all that hungry anymore. “He was my family’s butler… until he died in a car accident with my parents. … God, that was over ten years ago now.”

“Tony…” Bruce said softly, hand reaching for Tony’s shoulder from where he sat at the head of the table next to him, but Tony shook his head and Bruce aborted the movement.

“I’m fine, Bruce,” Tony said, putting on his best press conference smile, even if it didn’t fool anyone at the table. “It was a long time ago. And speaking of time, I’m afraid I must be off. I have a board meeting early tomorrow morning in New York. Thanks for the meal Alfie. Everything was delicious.”

“Do take care of yourself, Anthony,” Alfred said, also rising from the table. His expression looked guilty and sad beneath the usual nonchalance.

“I always do,” Tony smirked.

2003

Tony had been attending a conference for Engineering Majors in Gotham as a guest speaker. He had been in the middle of his speech when the doors had been blown out and a large group of thugs in ski masks started shooting up the place. They grabbed him off the stage and shoved a sack over his head as they dragged him out. He was rather astounded by the sheer brazenness of the thugs. Only in Gotham would this kind of thing actually happen. Tony was rather surprised that this was only the first time someone had actually tried to abduct him during one of his increasingly frequent trips to Gotham.

What wasn’t surprising was what the thugs wanted. They wanted him to build them weapons. How unoriginal. Tony had told them what he normally told psychopaths who tried to abduct him. To go fuck themselves. They didn’t take that response well. No abductor ever had. Thankfully this was Gotham and it wasn’t long before the Batman showed up. His now ever present sidekick was there too. Tony watched, amused, as this little 13 year-old circus brat kicked grown men’s asses wearing a bright red Robin Hood tunic and what was basically a scaly green speedo. What had Bruce been thinking OK-ing that costume?

“Are you alright, Mr. Stark?” asked the kid - Robin. The boy was in uniform (or at least what amounted to one), so he should be calling him Robin.

“Just dandy,” Tony sighed, waiting for the k-Robin to untie him. “Nice footwork there. I think at least two of them have a concussion. Not bad for someone your age.”

“Thanks,” the k-ROBIN (why was that so hard to remember?) said with a cheeky grin.

“Any particular reason you’re dressed like a traffic light? That color combination is astoundingly loud. Considering that Bats is all dark and doom and badass, I’ve always wondered why his partner is such a clashing contrast when you two are in juxtaposition to each other.” Tony rambled. He tended to do that when he was antsy. He really just wanted to get out of the warehouse the ski mask wearing buffoons had taken him.

“For distraction purposes,” Robin said. “Nobody sees him coming if all their attention is on me.”
Tony hummed noncommittally. “I suppose. You’re kinda hard to miss. How do you even manage to sneak around with the Bat unseent? Does he hide you under that big ass cape of his?” Now wasn’t that a funny image? Robin tucked under Batman’s cape like a baby bird under a mama bird’s wing. The thought made him smile.

“Glad to see you in such good spirits,” Robin said dryly. “Most kidnapped victims are freaked out when we get to them.”

“I was abducted, not kidnapped. You have to be a kid to get kidnapped. And you get used to it after the first dozen times. I’m a high profile target,” Tony said, shrugging. “Besides, I would have found a way out of here within the next hour even if you and the Bat hadn’t showed.”

“Oh really?” Robin muttered, struggling with a particularly stubborn knot in the rope the abductors had used to tie Tony up. Tony was so over these amateurs. Because, really? Rope?

Tony huffed, twisting his wrist to activate the hidden blade in his watch (seriously, his kidnappers didn’t even try to properly disarm him. Just because he didn’t have an obvious weapon on him, didn’t mean he didn’t have a hidden means of defense) and said, “watch your fingers,” before he sawed through the rest of the knot and was free within twenty seconds.

“And yes, really, Boy Wonder. How do you think I’m still alive today if I weren’t able to find a way to free myself, especially when my abductors are such incompetents?”

Robin stared at him in surprise from behind those freaky white-out lenses before scowling.

“Couldn’t you have done that earlier?”

“With them watching me like a hawk?” Tony tisked. “I needed something to distract them. And if your purpose is to be a distraction, then you certainly excelled in that tonight, kiddo.”

“Then why didn’t you try to free yourself while I was fighting them?” Robin asked.

“I was enjoying the show. It’s not everyday that I get to see grown men get their asses handed to them by a 10 year old,” Tony said.

“I’m 13,” Robin growled.

“A bit small for your age, then, aren’t you?” Tony asked. “Or maybe it’s the bright colors. They certainly give you a younger persona.”

Robin opened his mouth to say something scathing, Tony was sure, but Batman chose that moment to literally drop in on them. Tony could admit that the way the cape flared out like a giant pair of bat wings was very impressive and intimidating in person in a dimly lit warehouse. It certainly gave Batman a more demonic and forbidding aura than what Tony had previously thought possible. For some reason, the sight of a large man dressed as a bat worked more in this setting than it had as a mental concept. Sure, he’d seen the costume in it’s case back in the batcave, but it was much more real in his current situation.

“I take back everything bad I’ve ever said about that costume,” Tony blurted. “It really works on you. No wonder you have the saner half of Gotham’s criminal element pissing themselves at the mere thought of the Batman. That is a truly formidable silhouette. And how do you get the cape to flare like that? Mono filaments in the fabric?”

“I see that you are alright, Mr. Stark,” Batman said in a rough voice. The fuck? Tony knew that it was important for Bruce to disguise his voice, but why did he sound like he was a chain smoker
talking around a mouthful of marbles? That’s it. Tony was so building Bruce that voice changer. It’d have the same effect without ruining his friend’s vocal cords. Goody. That took care of what Tony was going to get Bruce for Christmas this year.

“Not even a scratch.” Tony smirked. “Robin took care of my guards and helped me with the ropes.”

Batman nodded, as he examined Tony’s forearms. Other than light abrasions on his wrists, Tony was fine. A minute later, Gotham’s finest were on the scene arresting his abductors and carting them off. After Batman and Robin spoke briefly to the Police Commissioner - Jordon or something like that - the two shot off their grappling hooks and disappeared into the night. They certainly made quite the team, and it surprised Tony how fast Robin managed to disappear in spite of his brightly colored uniform.

After he gave his statement to the police he was allowed to leave and was dropped off at Wayne Manor where he was staying for the night. Bruce and Dick greeted him and acted properly worried when he was escorted to the door. Dick was all too happy to leave, however, as soon as he could. Tony snickered at that. Poor kid. He couldn’t help poking fun at him at times. He made it so easy. Bruce only shook his head and led the way to the study where they enjoyed a couple glasses of good scotch before calling it a night.

2007

Tony was feeling rather bored. It was just another charity event that Bruce had invited him to at Wayne Manor. He normally didn’t care to come all the way to Gotham for one of these trivial things - having so many others he could attend in California without having to take a long flight - but this time he had a little incentive and he was standing by the food table, glaring out at the rich and fancy crowd milling about the gallery.

Jason Todd was Bruce Wayne’s newest ward. It had intrigued Tony that his fellow Billionaire had opted to adopt another child, this time a street kid from Gotham’s infamous Crime Alley.

The kid looked bored and angry at the world. He clearly wasn’t comfortable in the nicely tailored suit he was wearing (Alfred’s handywork no doubt).

“Awfully stuffy in here isn’t it?” Tony drawled.

The boy jumped in surprise, staring wide-eyed at him before scowling.

Tony grinned. “You know, Bruce would probably scold you if he found you hiding away at the food table being anti-social and scowling at a guest. Lucky for you, I’m not Brucie and could care less. I really hate these kind of things. Everyone here only shows up to boast and flaunt their wealth. I already know how wealthy I am and everyone else knows how wealthy I am, so I hardly need to advertise it when I could be back home in Malibu in my lab. There are much more important and entertaining things I could be doing than hanging around these ignorant snobs.”

His comment seemed to surprise Jason. The boy blinked in confusion before asking, “Then why are you here?”

“I’ve known Brucie since we were teenagers,” Tony said with a smirk. “I’m only here because he asked and wanted us to meet. I’m Tony Stark, by the way.”

“I know who you are,” Jason mumbled before clearing his throat. “I’m Jason.”
“I know,” Tony said, grinning. “And you’re already better than Dickie boy. He had no clue who I was when we first met.”

“How could he not know who you are?” Jason laughed. “You’re only in the news every other day for something or other.”

“And only 15 percent of the time is it for something I’ve invented,” Tony sighed. “Meaning 75 percent of it is vicious lies.”

“And the other 10 percent?” Jason asked.

“Totally true,” Tony chuckled. “Only, I’m not sleeping with half the women they say I am. I’m sure you’re familiar enough with the media by now to know about their tendency to exaggerate even the tiniest trivial thing.”

They both looked over to where Bruce could be seen with several women.

“Yeah,” Jason said softly.

“How’s he treating you?” Tony asked.

“Fine, I guess,” Jason said, shrugging. “He’s not bad.”

Tony hummed, grabbing a glass of champagne from a passing waiter’s tray. As he took a sip, his eyes scanned the room before catching sight of Dick Grayson (standing on the far opposite end of the room from Bruce) and nearly choked.

“Good lord, what is that boy wearing?” he coughed.

“Who?” Jason asked.

“Dick,” Tony snickered. “That kid has no fashion sense. And what is up with that mullet?”

Jason grinned, seeing Dick Grayson in a sky blue (nearly neon) suit and a matching zebra print dress shirt and matching cuffs surrounded by his own swarm of women. “Teenage rebellion?”

“No, that kid’s always been a certain type of special,” Tony snorted. “How he’s become such a ladykiller is beyond me, but I guess it’s all a part of his charm.”

“…I guess,” Jason sighed. “Everyone loves Dick. …Bruce misses him.”

“Are they still fighting?” Tony scoffed. “I swear to God, those two are too much alike for their own good.”

“Don’t tell them that,” Jason huffed, lips twitching into a smile.

“And Bruce says I’m the emotionally constipated one,” Tony grumbled.

Jason laughed. “You’re alright for a rich dude.”

“I know I’m awesome.” Tony smirked, draining the rest of his drink. “What say you and I ditch this little party and go do something more fun? I bought an old hot rod before coming here that could use some tuning.”

Jason stared up at him for a moment before beaming. “Do you even have to ask? Anything is better than this.”
“Then let’s go. Alfie’s got us covered,” Tony said, winking at the Wayne family butler, who nodded back, as he led the way out of the ballroom and over to the garage.

“How do you know?” Jason asked, jogging to keep up with Tony’s quick steps.

“Butlers know everything,” Tony said solemnly. “I bet Alfred knew we’d skip out the moment we started talking.”

Fifteen minutes later Tony and Jason were out of their suit jackets and in coveralls with their dress shirts’ sleeves rolled up to their elbows while they tinkered with an old 1932 Ford Hi-boy Roadster with flames on the hood. Tony made sure that he handled the messiest tasks so that Alfred couldn’t get mad at Jason. He was both surprised and unsurprised by how much the kid knew about cars.

Bruce had told Tony how he’d met Jason, of course, and Tony had laughed a great deal when he’d heard that the kid had stolen the tires off the Batmobile. The kid had balls, that was for sure, and that was one of the main reasons Tony had wanted to meet him.

It was nice talking shop with Jason. It reminded him of the times he’d spent tinkering in the Drake’s garage with Tim. Jason was more hands on than Tim was with cars, but Jason had an outstandingly good understanding of basic car mechanics for a street kid. He was definitely smarter than Tony had anticipated, considering where the kid had grown up.

And that’s how Bruce and Alfred found them. Tony wasn’t surprised to see that Dick had left already. Dick didn’t like Tony very much and from the way Jason talked, he probably didn’t like the kid much either. The older teenager wasn’t used to having a little brother. Wasn’t used to having to share his father figure with someone else. Dick might show up to galas and balls like he had tonight to show his support for Bruce’s charities, but with all the in-fighting Tony had heard was going on between Bruce and Dick, he was surprised that the teen was coming around at all.

Now, Tony wasn’t a psychiatrist or anything, but even he could see that the core of the problem stemmed from a lack of communication. Whether it was mainly because of Bruce, or Dick, or both of them, it was clear that both man and teen still cared about each other. And poor Jason was caught in the middle of their drama. He’d vented quite a bit while he and Tony had been fixing up the Roadster. Tony would have to have a word with Bruce about that.

Jason was a street kid. His kind didn’t trust easy, but apparently Tony had earned enough trust to get the young teen to open up a bit. Tony figured that was due to all the time he’d been spent with Tim over the last few years. Some kids just needed someone to listen, and Tony didn’t mind. At least, Tony didn’t mind listening to Tim and Jason. They weren’t whiny and annoying, and they both could keep up with Tony for the most part when they assisted him with fixing up his cars.

“Hey, Brucie. Alfie,” Tony greeted the two men when he became aware of their presence. He wiped his hands off on the coveralls he’d put over his nicer clothes. Alfred had been kind enough to keep a few pairs handy after he kept finding Tony tinkering in the garage every time he visited. Tony was especially glad that there had been another spare set of coveralls for Jason when he saw the fresh oil and grease stains on the pair the kid was wearing. At least their dress shirts were still clean, but considering the way Alfred was eyeing their rolled up sleeves and the inevitable creases there were going to be when they removed their shirts, it was a small consolation.

“And what are you two up to?” Bruce asked.

“Making a pizza,” Tony deadpanned. “Whatzit look like we’re doing, Bruce?”

“Pizza sounds really good, actually,” Jason said, looking up from where he’d been fiddling with a
wrench.

“It does, doesn’t it?” Tony mused. “How about it, Alfred? Mind if I commandeer your kitchen? I can make a mean pie.”

“Shouldn’t you be asking me that?” Bruce asked.

“You may own the manor, Brucie,” Tony smirked, “But we all know that Alfie runs it. And, no offence, but you can’t cook shit. Don’t ever let Bruce cook for you, Jason. You’ll die of food poisoning.”

Jason snickered.

“You’re not much of a cook yourself,” Bruce huffed.

“Excuse you,” Tony scowled. “My food is at least edible. And my Italian is amazing. Maybe not five star restaurant amazing, but my mom did teach me a thing or two about Italian cuisine, being Italian herself. Just because I choose not to cook regularly, doesn’t mean I can’t.”

“I’m sure your cooking skills are quite satisfactory, Anthony,” Alfred said mildly. “And you may use the kitchen, provided that you and Master Jason wash up before doing so.”

“You got it, Alf,” Tony said with a cheeky grin before shedding the dirty coveralls, taking care not to smear the oil and grease onto his nice clothes underneath, and headed to the sink in the garage. Jason did the same.

And hour later, Tony was pulling out one of his specialty pizzas from the oven, like the ones he used to make as a child with his mother, beaming when Alfred praised his food and Bruce admitted it was good. Jason loved it, scarfing the food down almost as if he was afraid it would disappear. And boy did it hit Tony hard to realize that before living with Bruce, that that had likely been a reality for Jason. Bruce and Alfred’s sad eyes said it all.

Before Tony left the next morning, he gave Bruce a check for $500,000 for the fund for Gotham’s food shelters and orphanages.

2008

It would just figure that during the coldest time of the year, Tony would find himself abducted by Mr. Freeze. This was a first for Tony, however. He’d never managed to find himself the captive of a metahuman, let alone a member of the Batman’s Rogues Gallery, whom Tony had read up on in his spare time. He thought he’d better know more about the kinds of people his friend was facing on a semi-regular occurrence and who could potentially hurt his son. Dr. Victor Fries was on the lower end of that spectrum in contrast to higher profile criminals like Two Face, Killer Croc, Scarecrow and the Joker. Dr. Fries usually kept a low profile whenever he managed to escape Arkham Asylum.

Tony did feel for the guy though. The reason Fries had abducted Tony was to help stabilize his wife’s cryogenic chamber, which had become damaged after he’d “liberated” her from the laboratory the police and hospital personnel had stuck her in until a cure for her illness could be found.

Other than being rude and threatening to freeze Tony should he damage the container even further and kill his wife, Dr. Fries was perhaps the most accommodating abductor Tony had ever met. He had provided Tony with the necessary materials, allowed him to do his work, and hadn’t bothered
to try restraining him. Tony himself wasn’t an expert in cryogenics like Fries was, but after speed reading through a few texts and manuals, he understood the basics. After that it was simple engineering to make sure that the container was functioning as it should. He had to replace a few damaged circuits and wires, but for the most part it was a straightforward repair job and one he for once didn’t mind doing for the person who’d abducted him. It was so refreshing to be wanted for something that didn’t involve weapons.

Batman and Robin 2.0 did eventually find them, however, so Tony needn’t have worried about how he was going to try to escape from Mr. Freeze alive once he was finished with this little project. He kept on tinkering up until Robin number two dropped in on him while the big bad Bat and Mr. Freeze were off fighting somewhere else in the warehouse.

“What are you doing?” the second Boy Wonder asked. This Robin was very different from the first - he was certainly a touch bigger than the other one had been at 14. The damn costume was the same, however, even though there were minute changes to better suit the boy’s build, which was more solid than the original Robin who was all willowy limbs that bent and stretched like Laughy Taffy.

“Helping a pretty lady sleep peacefully until prince charming can wake her with a cure,” Tony said simply. “You guys take care of Dr. Fries?”

“Batman and Nightwing have him covered,” Robin replied.

“Nightwing, huh?” Tony mused. “I haven’t seen him in person since he stopped being the first Robin. Tell me, does he really wear the disco suit and is it as bad as the rumor’s say? There is a reason that few look fondly back on the 70s. That decade was a disaster all around, aside from Star Wars. Star Wars is one of the few good things to have come out of the 70s.”

Robin grinned. “It’s pretty bad.”

At that moment the door was blasted open and Nightwing tucked and rolled inside the lab they were in, avoiding a blast from the Freeze Ray.

“Get him out of here!” the older vigilante shouted, when he spotted Robin and Tony just standing there.

“Christ, he has a mullet. You’re just full of fashion faux pas aren’t you?” Tony groaned ignoring the frustrated scowl on the younger man’s face. Of course he knew that Dick Grayson had had a mullet for the last two years, but it looked even more ridiculous in addition to blue glitter and shiny gold accents. “And I thought the Robin costume was bad. That collar, though. Seriously? What were you thinking?”

Robin laughed as he gripped Tony’s hand and practically dragged him along out of the lab and made their way outside where Robin could use his grappling hook to lift them up to a third story fire escape and climb up onto the building’s roof.

“How does anyone take him seriously?” Tony huffed.

“It’s part of his charm. He’s unbelievably popular,” Robin snickered.

“It’s his ass,” Tony said, waving dismissively. “That uniform left nothing to the imagination.”

Robin tried to contain his laughter behind his hand, but snorts kept slipping out.

“I like you,” Tony said, grinning. “Night-butt couldn’t stand me back when he was wearing the
green panties. I don’t think he likes my constructive criticism.”

Robin lost it, letting out muted gasps of laughter before regaining his composure.

“It’s a leotard actually. The red tunic covers most of it,” Robin explained.

Tony hummed, noting that the green short-sleeves weren’t actually attached to the red tunic and were, in fact, beneath it.

“Still, aren’t you cold?” Tony asked. “It’s fucking January. At least put some pants on during the winter. I’m freezing my balls off just looking at you.”

Robin snickered, but straighten immediately, looking behind him. Tony turned with him, ready to run if he needed too, but it was only Nightwing.

“You’re a little out of your normal territory, aren’t you?” Tony asked, realizing why it was that he hadn’t ever seen the older vigilante after he stopped being Robin. “You take care Bludhaven don’t you?”

“Mrs. Fries was being kept in a special hospital in Bludhaven until Mr. Freeze took her,” Nightwing said, voice clipped and tightly controlled to maintain a civil tone. Tony wondered how long he’d been standing there.

“Ah.” Tony nodded. “Her cryo-chamber didn’t get damaged again did it? I spent a good hour fixing that. I’ll be pretty pissed if I have to do it a second time because you got clumsy and crashed into it.”

Nightwing glared. It was not nearly as effective as the Batman’s, but it was impressive nonetheless. To someone who wasn’t used to being glared at by more formidable people, perhaps. Tony was pretty much immune to glares by now.

“Mrs. Fries remains unharmed,” the blue clad vigilante bit out. “The police should be here any minute. Robin, stay with him until they arrive. Batman has taken care of Freeze, but you never know if he has any more henchmen running around.”

“Where are you going?” Robin asked.

“Back to Bludhaven. I’m done here.” And with that Nightwing was gone.

“Back to Bludhaven. I’m done here.” And with that Nightwing was gone.

“Well isn’t he a ray of sunshine?” Tony chuckled.

“Usually he is,” Robin said, looking confused. “I’ve never seen him glare that much unless he’s arguing with the Boss Man.”

“Must be my own charm,” Tony said, amused. He was starting to doubt that he and Dick Grayson were ever going to get along. He irritated the young man too much. Always had. And it only seemed to get worse as the years moved on. “I’m told I have that effect on people.”

Robin merely grinned.

Like Nightwing said, the police showed up and Dr. Fries was once more shipped off to Arkham Asylum. Tony made sure that Nora Fries’ cryo-chamber was properly loaded up before leaving. Bruce and Jason were perfectly worried for him when he showed up later at Wayne Manor with police escort (again), and Tony was all too happy to regale them and Alfred about his time with Dr. Fries and being rescued by Robin.
So what'd ya think? I was going to write more, having Tony meet Jason as the Red Hood for the first time as well since I kinda squeezed Nightwing into the Jason-Robin part, but that thought led to meeting Damian and Cass and Steph... and then I realized he never met Barbara in either of these Robin pieces and so that means he probably never would have met her when she was Batgirl... Can you see what I mean? Total plot bunny overload, so I kept it simple with just Jason and Dick. :P

That, and the Red Hood part of the chapter was starting to become it's own entity because of all the angst on both Tony and Jason's parts. Those two really meshed well. I'm kinda surprised by just how much Jason liked Tony in this AU. Tony is totally Jason's favorite person. I'm totally going to have to return to the Red Hood chapter at a later time, but I feel I really need to get back to Timmy soon because Red Hood takes place much further along than what I've previously written. Mentioning Tim is just not the same as writing him in a scene. That, and I need to write about Tony's reaction to finding out that Tim became Robin after Jason died. THAT'S going to be a lot of fun, but I have a chapter or two to write before I get to that. So... yeah. Tons more to write and I hope you're all looking forward to it. Let me know if you have any character interactions or reactions to scenes from the movies that you'd like me to write. Next chapter is going to be multiple parts as well and takes place before, during and after the events of Iron Man 2.

Well, that's it for now!

Happy Halloween!
Chapter Summary

Tim’s mother is dead, his father is in a coma, and Tony is dying of Palladium poisoning... so who’s going to look after him now? Bruce bleeding-heart-for-orphans Wayne of course.

Takes place before, during and after Iron Man 2.

Chapter Notes

Wow, this chapter really did get away from me and ended up being 20 pages long on Goggle Docs. :P

I hope you enjoy this super long chapter and

PLEASE READ THE ENDNOTE!!!
“Hey Brucie!” Tony said as he fit his tux on. Tonight he’d be opening the Stark Expo in Flushing, New York and Pepper was waiting with Happy to take him to the airfield where the newest Galaxy Aircraft would fly him over to the expo where he would drop down in the Iron Man armor for a dramatic entrance. “What can I do for you?”

“Tony… I’m not sure you’ve heard, but tomorrow morning is Janet Drake’s funeral. I’m hoping you’ll be there. For Tim.”

Tony blew out a large breath.

“I know you’re busy with the Expo, but Tim’s your Godson. He could really use your support right now.”

Tony sighed. “I know, but I’m not sure I can make it. …The kid deserves better.”

“Then BE better, Tony,” Bruce said.

“Not sure that I can,” Tony said, staring at the Iron Man armor waiting for him in the assembly rig. “I don’t have much time left. I… I’ll disappoint him. I can’t be there for him, Bruce.”

“…Tony? Is everything alright?”

“Yeah.” No. “Right as rain.” He’s dying. “Just super busy is all.” Busy trying to cheat death.

“You know, for all the crap you give me about my relationships with Dick and… with Jason… you’ve always told me that if you make the time…that if you don’t even try…you’re already failing. And I know that Tony Stark doesn’t accept failure.”

“First time for everything,” Tony muttered.

“Tony-”

“Gotta go, Brucie. I have an expo to open.”

Tony hung up before Bruce could utter a reply. “JARVIS, block all calls and send them straight to voicemail until I return.”

“Yes, sir.”

It was with a heavy heart that he put on the Iron Man armor - sans helmet - and left to meet with Happy and Pepper.

The Next Morning...

Tim felt numb watching his mother’s casket as it was lowered into the ground. Dick Grayson was standing right behind him, hand on Tim’s shoulder in a gesture that was supposed to be comforting, but only felt like a heavy weight. Bruce Wayne and Alfred Pennyworth were with him as well, standing by as people came up to Tim and gave him their empty condolences.

Tony wasn’t there and Tim hadn’t expected him to be because of the recently opened Stark Expo, but Dick seemed to hold it against the man anyway. Dick didn’t like Tony much, which surprised Tim, because Dick liked most people. Then again, Tony could be a little much at times and Dick seemed like the sort of person that Tony would tease. Tim couldn’t blame Dick for not liking his
dad if that was the case.

After the funeral they had a quiet lunch at Wayne Manor. Bruce had managed to get temporary custody of Tim until more permanent arrangements could be made. Tim knew that social services was trying to get in touch with his father’s sister, but he wasn’t expecting anything to come of it. His aunt and his father hadn’t seen each other in years and had rarely spoken. Tim doubted that she would take him in. He also knew that his mother had an older brother out there somewhere, but no one could find record of him anywhere after his stint in the army. Bruce (and Tim) were still hoping that Tony would step up, but Tim didn’t want to burden his dad, especially since he was such a public figure and his being Iron Man had made things even more turbulent as of late.

Later that afternoon, Dick turned on the TV and they saw Tony Stark on the news. Apparently he’d had a hearing before the Senate Armed Forces Committee that morning. Tim, Dick and Bruce watched the news broadcast the highlights of the hearing and Tim couldn’t help but smile at his dad’s cheeky comments. He didn’t feel sorry for Senator Stern at all, who was cast in a poor light when the media picked up on Rhodes’ comment about taking a piece out of his report and using it out of context, which was ironic to Tim since the media specialized in taking a single statement and using it out of context. This time it just happened to work in Tony’s favor.

“That was a right mess, wasn’t it?”

Tim jumped in his seat, not expecting to hear his dad’s voice.

“Tony?!” Tim gasped, twisting in his spot next to Dick on the couch to see Tony leaning in the doorway to the living room looking exhausted.

“Hey kiddo,” Tony said, smiling wryly. “Sorry I missed your mom’s funeral. I was in court.”

Tim scrambled out of his seat and hurried over to hug Tony, who grunted when Tim collided with him.

“Jesus, Timmy, have you been working out or something?” Tony laughed. “That was some hug.”

Tim flushed. He was stronger, and he was working out… he just wasn’t sure how to tell his dad that it was because he’d been training to become the next Robin. He’d been training hard all year, and even though Bruce hadn’t let him out on the streets yet, claiming that Tim wasn’t ready, he’d promised that it would happen soon.

“Dodged a bullet there, Tony,” Bruce said, nodding at the TV.

“Eh,” Tony shrugged. “They can’t have the suit. I’m not giving them a weapon that can be stolen by another country and used against us.”

Bruce hummed, nodding, but his eyes were narrowed, making Tim take another look at his dad.

“Tony, are you alright?” Tim asked.

“Just tired, Timmy,” Tony sighed. “I was up late opening the expo and then had to get up early in order to make it to the hearing. Then I drove straight here, so I’m running on very little sleep.”

“You should stay the night,” Bruce said. “Alfred has your room all made up.”

“He does?” Tony asked, blinking owlishly. “You didn’t even know if I’d be here.”

“I had faith,” Bruce said, nodding at Tim, “and reason to believe you would be.”
Some sort of unspoken conversation seemed to happen between the two men for a minute before Tony sighed and nodded.

“Fine. I’ll stay the night, but I have to leave first thing in the morning. Pepper’s on me about some board meeting coming up, and the expo still needs my attention—”

“It’s fine, Tony. I understand. Or have you forgotten that I’m the CEO of a Fortune 500 company as well?”

Tony grinned, nodding. Then Dick snorted, catching Tony’s attention. “Hey! You finally cut your hair. Thank God. I’ve been tempted over the years to take a razor to that mullet. But now that it’s gone I kind of miss it.”

Dick scowled, making Tim laugh and Bruce chuckle. Tim saw how Tony totally got on Dick’s nerves. He wondered what his dad thought of the new Nightwing suit.

Tony smirked before he looked down at Tim. “Do you mind if Bruce and I talk alone for a bit, Tim?”

Tim nodded, watching as Bruce and Tony left the living room for Bruce’s study.

“C’mon, Timmy,” Dick huffed. “I got that new videogame I was telling you about.”

Tim grinned as he rejoined Dick on the couch and they played Halo Reach until Bruce and Tony reappeared half an hour later.

“Dick, do you mind if we talk to Tim alone?” Bruce asked.

“Why? What’s going on?” Dick demanded, wrapping an arm around Tim’s shoulders.

Tim stared at Bruce to his dad and back again, noting the serious looks on the men’s faces.

“We just need to talk to him about something, that’s all,” Bruce said calmly. Too calmly. Tim felt his gut clench nervously.

Dick was quiet for a moment before he glared at Tony. “You’re not taking him, are you?”

“Don’t defend him, Bruce!” Dick yelled. “Tim just lost his parents and now Stark isn’t going to step up to the plate? Why? Too busy with boosting your ego to take care of your own Godson?!”

“Dick, that’s enough,” Bruce snapped. “You’re not making this easier on anybody.”

“Easier on who? Him?!”

“I said that’s enough!”

“It’s alright, Bruce,” Tony sighed. “He’s right. I can’t take care of Tim.”

Tim’s heart sank. He knew that he wouldn’t be able to continue his Robin training if Tony were to take him in, so part of him was glad that he hadn’t just wasted a year training for nothing, but Tony was his dad, even if Bruce and Dick didn’t know that. A large part of Tim had hoped that he’d finally get to live with him instead of just visiting for a few weeks every summer.

“But not for the reasons he thinks,” Tony said, moving in front of them, sitting on the edge of the
coffee table so that he was at eye level with Tim. Dick’s arm slid down from Tim’s shoulders and curled protectively around his middle in a sideways hug.

Being eye to eye with Tony, Tim was able to see a few details that he’d missed earlier. The bags under his dad’s eyes weren’t unusual, but the tinge of yellow that hovered around the edges was. His skin didn’t look so healthy, and his veins looked a bit darker, more apparent than they should be.

“Tony, what’s wrong?” Tim asked softly.

Tony’s face twisted into such a sad and pained expression that Tim felt his heart stutter in his chest. Tony swallowed, and opened and closed his mouth a few times before hanging his head. Bruce came up beside Tony and laid a supportive hand on his friend’s shoulder.

Tim was alarmed. He’d never seen his dad look like this, at a loss for words, or allow Bruce to maintain physical contact. Tony didn’t like being touched much, especially after Afghanistan. And even though Bruce was one of the few people (other than Pepper, Rhodes, Happy, Tim, and maybe Alfred) that he allowed to pass him things and accepted forms of physical contact from, Tony rarely allowed prolonged contact.

“I’m dying,” Tony finally croaked, looking up at Tim with a haunted expression.


Tony sighed, taking off his tie before unbuttoning his shirt enough that Tim could see the edge of the arc reactor in his chest. Tim swallowed, eyeing the thin black veining spreading out from around the arc reactor.

“The palladium core in the arc reactor is slowly poisoning me,” Tony said softly. “Ironic, isn’t it? The thing keeping me alive is also killing me. I’ve tried finding a replacement for the palladium, but I haven’t been able to as of yet. I’ve been drinking specialized chlorophyll smoothies to counteract the symptoms, but… it’s only drawing out the inevitable.”

“Continued use of the Iron Man suit is only speeding up the process,” Bruce added.

“So stop being Iron Man,” Dick said.

Bruce gave the young man a stern glare and Dick shut up, but kept holding Tim in a tight hug.

“I want to adopt you, Tim,” Tony said softly, “But… I’m not sure how much longer I have. My blood toxicity is up to 20% as of this morning. I might have a few weeks or a couple months. But… it isn’t fair to adopt you when you’ll be left in the lurch again soon after.”

“So what does that mean for Tim?” Dick asked when Tim couldn’t find the words to respond.

“It means,” Bruce said, speaking up, “that Tony’s asked me to officially apply for guardianship. And I will. You’re going to be alright, Tim.”

Tim choked. How could he be okay? His mother was dead, his father was in a coma that the doctors were unsure if he’d come out of, and his dad was dying, poisoned by the very thing that kept him alive after what happened in Afghanistan.

He launched himself out of Dick’s hold and wrapped his arms around his dad’s neck. Tony hugged him back just as tightly.
“I’m so sorry, Tim,” Tony whispered. “God, Timmy, I’m so sorry. But I couldn’t not tell you. Not after what happened to your parents.”

“So you’re just giving up?” Dick growled, making Tim jump in surprise. He’d never heard Dick sound so angry.

“Of course he’s not,” Bruce said, sternly. “But we have to prepare for every outcome.”

Dick scowled, but didn’t comment further. Bruce and Dick left the room after that, leaving Tim alone with his dad.

“I’ll find a way,” Tony muttered. “Somehow. I swear to God, Tim, that I’m going to do my best to find a solution to this.”

“Do Rhodey and Pepper know?” Tim asked.

“…No,” Tony admitted. “And they won’t. Not yet anyway. Not until I’ve exhausted every option.”

“So never, then,” Tim huffed. “…So what is the real reason you decided to tell me?”

“Bruce bullied it out of me,” Tony said, making Tim smile.

“You weren’t going to tell me either, were you?”

“…Maybe. I didn’t want to,” Tony said softly. “Not when you’d just buried your mom this morning. But I don’t think I could have kept this from you. I would have told you. Eventually.”

“Aafter exhausting every other option?” Tim asked, causing Tony to chuckle.

“Yeah. …I…love you, Tim.”

“Wow, you must be dying. You used the “L” word,” Tim joked.

“Um, wow. Rude, Timmy. I thought I taught you better than that,” Tony snarked.

“You’ve taught me a lot of things, Tony, but manners isn’t one of them,” Tim snipped back. “That was all Mother.”

“I feel so attacked right now. I try to open up and deal with gross feelings and all I get is sass. Is this my legacy? A sassy pre-teen?”

They laughed, but their hug only tightened. “I love you too, Dad.” Tim said, choking back a sob.

2½ weeks later...

Tim was worried as he listened to the speculation surrounding Tony’s latest scandal on the radio down in the cave. It had been Tony’s birthday the night before last and the party had been an utter disaster. The media hadn’t been kind to his dad since the disaster in Monaco at the Grand Prix and was having a ball ripping into Tony. Tim had tried calling Tony that morning, but the line was disconnected, which was weird because JARVIS always answered, even if Tony was blocking all calls.

Tim wanted to go to California to check on him, but Bruce had only just started letting Tim out as Robin over the past week after the paperwork for guardianship had gone through. Dick was hanging around more and accompanying them as Nightwing during patrol. Tim hadn’t been
involved in anything big yet, so there wasn’t much news about a new Robin on the streets aside from the rumors on the street.

Tim was all ready to go on patrol when Alfred came racing into the cave at a brisk pace. Alfred always moved about calmly, so to see such quick hurried movement from the elderly butler was worrying.


“What’s happening?” Bruce demanded, as he marched over to the big supercomputer in the Bat Cave, Dick at his heels.

“There is quite a…stir at the Stark Expo,” Alfred said, glancing over at Tim.

Tim felt his heart jump into his throat as he hurried to join Bruce and Dick at the computer where Channel 11 news was broadcasting a live report from the Stark Expo. Great big hulking armored drones were causing chaos, but what really got Tim’s attention was a flash of his dad’s red and gold armor as it darted across the sky with at least half a dozen bogeys on his tail, occasionally firing repulsor blasts behind him when he had a free shot. What looked like another six drones took off from the ground around the cameraman and joined the pursuit as Iron Man (and was that another Iron Man suit?) flew down a lane of fountains.

“How long has this been going on?” Bruce asked.

“According to the news, fifteen minutes,” Alfred said.

They all watched as the news camera caught the rather impressive sight of Iron Man maneuvering inside and twisting back out of a large metal world globe at high speeds where all but one bogey blew up from impacting inside, the drones being unable to maneuver as quick as the Iron Man with it’s human pilot.

Tim smiled. That was his dad. Always the clever one.

Then the one bogey that had survived and looked like another Iron Man suit collided with Tony’s and they crashed together inside a glass domed building. The news reporter on the scene was commenting on the chaos of the Expo’s evacuation when she and her cameraman were ushered out of the park by Stark Security and SWAT.

“Bruce, please move,” Tim said, settling himself in the great chair that no one had bothered to sit in, in their haste, and rolled up to the keyboard, typing away furiously.

“Timmy, what are you doing?” Dick asked.

“Finding out what is going on in that dome,” Tim growled.

“How?” Bruce asked.

“By accessing the Iron Man armor’s cameras,” Tim said. “JARVIS, access code TJD-97, voice rec., ID: Timothy Jackson Drake.”

“Access code, accepted,” JARVIS’s voice responded. “It is good to hear from you, Master Timothy.”

Tim studied the readings he got from the armor, realizing that his dad was wearing a new suit that
he’d only seen schematics for. “JARVIS, give me audio and video from the Mark VI. Just the audio and video. No mic. I don’t want to distract him.”

“Yes, sir.”

Tim watched the large screen, as the view from the Iron Man armor came online, showing both what Tony was seeing through the armor’s lenses, and what the camera in the suit could show him of Tony’s face, which wasn’t much. The lighting was not enough to give Tim a good enough idea of his condition.

“Reboot complete,” reported a woman’s voice that Tim didn’t recognise. “You have your best friend back.”

The view from the Iron Man armor showed what was indeed another Iron Man suit lying a few feet away in what looked like a stream in a Japanese garden.

“Thank you very much, Agent Romanoff,” Tony said, his eyes glancing up at the camera in the suit.

“Well done with the new chest piece,” Agent Romanoff said. “I’m reading a higher output and your vitals all look promising.”

Tim felt his heartbeat quicken as he pulled up the suit’s pilot vitals readings, realizing what she meant. They looked normal, showing that nothing was outstandingly wrong with Tony’s health.

“Yes, for the moment, I’m not dying. Thank you,” Tony said, and Tim choked on his next breath. Tony had done it. He’d kept his promise.

“What do you mean?” Tim heard Pepper’s voice snap. “Did you say you’re dying?”

Tim shook his head. Of course Tony hadn’t told Pepper. He probably hadn’t told Rhodes either.


“What’s going on?” the new CEO of Stark Industries demanded.

“I was going to tell you,” Tony protested, making everyone in the Batcave snort. Yeah right.

“You really were dying?” Pepper asked, sounding a touch hysterical.

“You didn’t let me,” Tony protested.

“Why didn’t you tell me that?!” Pepper shrieked.

“I was going to make you an omelette and tell you!” Tony shouted.

“Hey, hey, save it for the honeymoon,” Agent Romanoff said, butting into the soap-opera-esque argument. “You’ve got incoming. Looks like the fight’s coming to you.”

And just like that Tim’s tension returned. He felt Bruce and Dick each place a comforting hand on his shoulders.

“Great,” Tony muttered. “Pepper?”

“Are you OK now?” Pepper demanded.
“I’m fine. Don’t be mad. I will formally apologize-”

“I am mad!”

“-when I’m not fending off a Hammer-oid attack,” Tony finished calmly.

“Fine.”

“We could have been in Venice.”

“Oh, please.”

Tim chuckled, shaking his head. There was a story there and he was going to have to get it out of his dad. Right now, Tim had to settle for watching Tony as he moved towards the other Iron Man armor, which looked like someone (not Tony) had gone crazy outfitting it with extra firepower. Looking at what he could see of the hardware, Tim guessed it was the military. There was even a shoulder mounted machine gun. Then Tony’s faceplate must have flipped up because all video feed cut out, leaving only audio for those watching in the cave.

“Snap out of it, buddy,” Tony said. “I need you. They’re coming. Let’s go. Get up.”

“Ugh,” Tim heard Rhodes’ voice groan. “Oh, man, you can have your suit back.”

There was the sound of the two Iron Man armors moving and clanking around before they reassured each other that they were alright and made apologies that didn’t really sound like apologies, but Tim knew it was basic Tony-Rhodey speak for “I’m glad you’re alright” and “we’re cool, we’re friends again.” Tim would admit that he’d probably gotten most of his sass from just watching and listening to these two bicker at each other. It helped soothe Tim’s nerves, knowing that Rhodes had his dad’s back.

“They’re coming in hot,” Tony reported, getting serious. “Any second. What’s the play?”

“He’s letting this other dude call the shots?” Dick asked, looking surprised.

“He knows that Colonel Rhodes is more experienced in this type of situation,” Tim said. “They’ve been friends since their college days.”

“Didn’t know Stark had friends,” Dick grumbled, before quickly amending. “Other than Bruce, anyway.”

“Tony’s a better person than you give him credit for, Dick,” Bruce commented.

“But he does bicker like a child,” Tim sighed, as both Tony and Rhodes started posturing and arguing about tactics and who was “the bigger gun.” “I am so disappointed with them both right now. Colonel Rhodes should know better.”

Finally Tony conceded and told Rhodes to go up to the hill - wherever that was - while he stayed down where they were.

“No, don’t stay down here. This is the worst place to be,” Rhodes said, all sarcasm gone. “This is the kill box, Tony. This is where you go to die.”

That was when a muted hiss came over the comm. before getting louder and several thunderous thumping sounds echoed through the speakers. Then there was a moment of silence before Iron Man’s faceplate snapped back down and Tim swallowed, seeing a lot of drones surrounding the
two men. The next few minutes were a blur as readouts, data, and target sightings raced ran across the armor’s view, showing everyone in the cave what Tony was seeing as the armor sighted and fired repulsor blasts and missiles at the drones. Occasionally Tony and Rhodes would make quips and comments on each other’s moves.

“Rhodey! Get down!” Tony suddenly shouted before the view of the armor began to spin and showed the occasional flash of a red laser that appeared to slice through everything in it’s path. The devastation was incredible when Tony stopped and surveyed the scene. All the remaining drones had been cut down.

“Wow,” Rhodes said, sounding a touch impressed. “I think you should lead with that next time.”

“Yeah, sorry, boss,” Tony said lightly. “I can only use it once. It’s a one-off.”

Tony and Rhodes started trading sarcastic comments back and forth and Tim was prepared to log off JARVIS’s servers on the suit when the Romanoff woman's voice spoke up again.

“Heads up, you’ve got one more drone incoming,” she said. “This one looks different. Repulsor signature’s significantly higher.”

The sound of a heavy repulsor powered engine roared, causing Tony too look up in time to see what looked like a large clunky suit fly over and land with a heavy thud. The faceplate folded back to reveal the man that had attacked Tony in Monaco, Ivan Vanko. He apparently wasn’t as dead as the Monaco police had reported. Tim swallowed painfully around a lump in his throat when he saw the man activated a high powered looking pair of electric whips that crackled menacingly over the line. It was clearly an upgraded version of what they’d seen in Monaco.

“I got something special for this guy,” Rhodes said, stepping in front of the Iron Man armor, showing in the left peripheral vision of the suit. “I’m gonna bust his bunker with the Ex-wife.”

“With the what?” Tony, Tim, Bruce and Dick all asked at the same time.

Rhodes’ armor opened up on the left shoulder and launched a tiny missile that fired impressively, but only bonked against the enemy’s armor before fizzling out pathetically at his feet.

“Hammer Tech?” Tony sighed.

“Yeah,” Rhodes muttered.

“I got this,” Tony growled before firing a dozen small missiles deployed from his armor’s shoulder plates.

Tim watched the Mark VI armor’s readings as the battle between the three men began. He bit his lip in concern as bits of code turned red, flashing warnings, signalling that functions and weapons in the armor had gone offline due to taking heavy damage. He felt his stomach drop when the enemy got both Tony and Rhodes tangled up in his repulsor-tech powered whips. He didn’t like the fluctuations in Tony’s vital signs as the strain on the armor began to take it’s toll on the body inside.

“Rhodes!” Tony shouted. “I’ve got an idea. Wanna be a hero?”

“What?” Rhodes gasped, his voice sounding strained.

“I could really use a sidekick,” Tony grunted, an armored gauntlet rising into view, aimed at Rhodes. “Put your hand up!”
“This is your idea?” Rhodes cried, mirroring the action.

“Yep!”

“I’m ready! Go! Go! Go!”

The wine of the two armors’ repulsors powering up screamed over the comm. line before both armors launched their blasts, which collided in the middle and, incidentally, in front of Vanko. There was a concussive blast that screeched through the cave’s speakers and for an unnerving moment, transmission of the video from the helmet cut, and all that could be heard over the line was static. When the armor’s video and audio came back online in the cave, Tony was looking down at Vanko who was smiling.

“That’s never good,” Dick muttered.

“You lose,” Vanko smirked, just before the reactor in his chest started blinking red, and so were the cores in the drones, their rapid beeping sound increasing. Tim felt his hair stand on end when he realized what was happening.

“All these drones are rigged to blow!” Rhodes said, unnecessarily. “We gotta get out of here, man!”

“Pepper?” Tony gasped, taking off, but going a different direction than Rhodes. Iron Man raced at high speeds over the park, slowing only to scoop Pepper up before flying away just as the drones started to blow. Tony managed to land on a roof somewhere on the outskirts of the park with a freaked out and screaming Pepper Potts before the helmet feed cut.

“Apologies, Master Timothy,” JARVIS’s voice said. “Sir has removed the helmet which has suffered severe damage and needs rebooting before being used again. Other than an elevated heart rate due to adrenaline, Sir’s vitals are running at acceptable levels, and the new arc reactor is functioning perfectly and working at optimal levels.”

“Understood. Thanks, JARVIS,” Tim sighed.

“Any time, Master Timothy,” the AI said, sounding almost fond. “And do come visit soon. DUM-E, U, and Butterfingers have missed you, and Sir could benefit from your presence as well. He’s less likely to destroy the lab when you’re home.”

Tim laughed. “We’ll see. Give the bots my love.”

“I shall. Goodnight, Master Timothy.”

“Night, JARVIS.”

Tim logged out of JARVIS’s server, knowing that his access code was going to be reset the moment he was out of the system. JARVIS would either send him the new code on his phone, or inform him of the change the next time he visited Tony.

“So you can hack into Stark’s armor, huh?” Dick mused, leaning on Tim’s shoulder. “Didn’t realize you were that good with computers.”

“I didn’t hack the armor,” Tim scoffed. “I accessed JARVIS’s server in the armor.”

“And JARVIS is…?”
“Tony’s AI,” Bruce said, looking down at Tim, “named after the deceased Edwin Jarvis, his family butler. I hadn’t realized Tony had trusted you with JARVIS.”

“More like he trusted JARVIS with me,” Tim sighed. “Because of my parent’s…lack of presence in my life, Tony gave me a special Stark phone with JARVIS’s basic code programmed into it. Having a mobile version of JARVIS gave me someone to talk to when there was no one else. I’m fairly sure JARVIS reports to Tony how I’m doing, because one time last year I was…I had an altercation at school, and that weekend, Tony showed up and we had a Lord of the Rings marathon. And we watched the extended editions. We may not see each other often…but we do talk.”

Dick and Bruce traded surprised looks.

“…He really means alot to you, doesn’t he?” Dick asked, softly.

“He’s like a second dad to me,” Tim said truthfully, looking down at the gloves of his Robin suit. As proud as he was to be wearing the Robin uniform, it felt like a small betrayal to Tony. Tony thought that Tim had stopped following Batman after Jason had died, and while that was true, he didn’t know that Tim had chosen to pick up the mantel himself.

“Then maybe Bruce should hand guardianship over you to him after all,” Dick said hesitantly. “He’s not dying anymore, so he should be able to take care of you now, right?”

“I don’t think it’s that simple anymore, Dick,” Tim said, smiling sadly at the young man. “Bruce has been granted full legal guardianship. It’d look bad if he backed out after only a week.”

“That,” Bruce said, gently, “and as Iron Man, Tony is a huge potential target for terrorists. Vanko is only one of many, I’m sure. If I know Tony as well as I think I do-”

“He won’t take me in, because being in his care would make me a target as well,” Tim finished, his smile turning wry. “Even as a ward of Bruce Wayne, I am in no more danger than I was as the son of Jack and Janet Drake. Civilian-wise, that is. Being Robin comes with it’s own unique, but still separate, dangers. Living with Tony would be like combining those two dangers.”

Dick sighed, but nodded.

“And speaking of Robin,” Bruce mused, “now that the crisis at the Stark Expo is over, we have a patrol to start.”

“True, B, but maybe Robin should have the night off,” Dick said hesitantly.

“No,” Tim said, shaking his head. “Tony’s fine. That’s all I need to know. I’m good to go. Honest.”

“You heard him,” Bruce said, staring down Dick, who looked like he wanted to protest, but dropped the matter with another sigh.

“Do take care, Sirs,” Alfred said. “And I shall inform you if anything more exciting occurs with Mr. Stark, Master Timothy.”

“Thanks, Alfred,” Tim said, slipping his domino on before following Batman to the Batmobile.

½ a Week Later...

Tony sighed as he surveyed the workmanship of the new storm-glass windows and walls to his
home that had replaced the ones that had been broken during his fight with Rhodey nearly a week ago on his birthday. So far the main part of the house had been rebuilt and reinforced. After he finished making his inspection of the main floor, he was going to return his efforts to the garage/lab on the lower level, which was still mostly in the same state it had been when he’d left it in to fight off Vanko at the Stark Expo which, despite the Hammer incident, was now back up and running as it would for the rest of the year, as planned. Tony was even considering setting up his own HQ in New York City to be closer to the Expo so he could oversee proceedings. It’d also be nice to have a place to stay on the East Coast since he spent so much time over there. Stark Tower had a nice ring to it.

“**You have visitors, sir,**” JARVIS reported. “**Mr. Wayne and Master Timothy are driving up to the door.**”

Tony started in surprise. That was unexpected.

He made his way to the door and opened it just as a sleek new black Jaguar XJ came to a stop. Tim was out of the passenger door not a second later.

“Tony!” Tim cried, launching himself at Tony, nearly knocking him over.

“Shit, kid, you’re getting heavy!” Tony grunted. “What is Bruce feeding you? Seriously?”

Tim huffed, but kept hugging Tony tightly.

“You’re looking better,” Bruce called out as he came around from the driver’s side of the car.

“I feel better,” Tony said with a smirk. “Got a new ticker.”

“What are you using to replace the palladium core?” Tim asked as they headed inside.

“A new element that I created,” Tony said smugly.

“You created a new element?” Bruce asked, looking skeptical.

“Well, Howard discovered it,” Tony admitted grudgingly, “but he didn’t have the technology to go through with actually creating it, and I did. So, after reviewing Howard’s old notes and making some changes of my own, wha-la! I created a new element. I’m thinking of calling it Badassium.”

Bruce and Tim snorted, shaking their heads in unison before giving each other matching wry smiles and raised eyebrows. Tony smirked at them, but felt a stab of sudden jealousy. In that moment, seeing the two of them standing side by side – in matching slacks and polo shirts no less – they looked like father and son. Bruce had only had Tim for a couple of weeks and already they looked like they were family.

“Have you been doing some remodeling?” Bruce asked, shaking him out of his thoughts.

“Sort of,” Tony sighed, looking around at his new living room. No more glass walls in there. He’d gotten rid of half of his glass walls when he’d remodeled and made repairs to his house. It was more open concept now, with more structurally sound and reinforced walls. “I’m sure you heard about my disastrous birthday party. Rhodey and I literally brought down the house.”

“Are the bots alright?” Tim asked, worriedly.

“Of course they are,” Tony said, smiling at the concern shown so plainly on his son’s face. “Why don’t we go down to the lab so you can see for yourself?”
Tim nodded, quickly turning on his heel and leading the way down to the lab. Tony regretted the suggestion almost instantly when they walked down the stairs into the ruined space. The debris had been cleaned up by the bots and the glass wall and door had been replaced, but there were still deep gashes in the wall from where the energy concentrated through the particle accelerator had cut through before it had hit the new core for the arc reactor. Howard’s stuff was still all over the floor up against the walls, and most of his work tables had large components from the disassembled particle accelerator on them, waiting to go into storage.

Tim and Bruce looked around in stunned amazement, as they took in the disaster zone that was currently Tony’s lab before DUM-E, U, and Butterfingers rolled up to meet them, beeping excitedly as they encircled Tim.

“Hey guys!” Tim smiled. “Long time no see.”

The bots whirred and chirped, poking and nudging up against Tim. DUM-E even showed Tim his new fire extinguisher.

“What a reception.” Bruce laughed, grinning as the bots began trying to herd Tim further into the lab for one of the games that they usually played when Tim was visiting.

“No kidding,” Tony huffed, pretending that he was irritated. “They’ve never reacted like this when I come home. Not even after I returned from Afghanistan.”

At that, the bots abruptly reversed direction and came hurrying over the Tony, whining in distress.

“Aww!” Tony cooed, patting his bots on their raised claws. “Daddy’s only teasing, boys. Go play with Timmy.”

They whirred and beeped worriedly for another moment, before chirping an affirmative and hurried back to Tim. DUM-E actually left his fire extinguisher next to Tony, a gesture that said the bot cared and would return later.

Bruce was smirking at him.

“What, Wayne?” Tony snapped.

“Just thinking about you being a dad,” Bruce chuckled. “It’s surprisingly easy to picture.”

“Robots are not children, Brucie,” Tony scoffed.

“No,” Bruce agreed. “But those bots are to you.”

Tony pursed his lips, but didn’t deny it. He couldn’t deny that he felt as attached to his bots and JARVIS as he was to Tim. The thought had kept him up some nights. Did that mean that he valued his creations on the same level as flesh and blood humans? Or did that mean that he undervalued human life because they rated on the same plane as his bots? And if that was true, did that mean he undervalued Tim, his true flesh and blood offspring?

“What’s your point?” Tony asked, wearily.

Bruce shrugged. “It’s just interesting to see that you have a soft side and are good with children.”

“I told you, robots aren’t children,” Tony muttered.

“But Tim is a child,” Bruce said, before adding softly, “Jason was.”
Tony felt his chest seize, though he knew that the arc reactor was functioning perfectly. He’d only experienced true grief twice: when Edwin Jarvis and his mother had died, and when he’d received news that the second Robin, Jason Todd, had been killed by the Joker.

“What is your point, Bruce?” Tony bit out.

“…I know Tim is your son, Tony,” Bruce said softly.

Tony froze in surprise, before he glared at the man he’d known since they were teenagers.

“What?”

“Tim is biologically your son,” Bruce said softly. “I ran a DNA test.”

“Why?” Tony snapped.

“A few days ago, Tim accessed JARVIS’s program in the Iron Man suit during the fight at the Stark Expo,” Bruce said. “Tony, you’ve never entrusted anyone with JARVIS’s code. Not me, not Miss Potts, not even Colonel Rhodes. I couldn’t help but wonder why you’d give a 12 year old boy an access code to what you consider to be one of your greatest achievements. To what is essentially a learning, living, program that you consider to be your child as much as you do the bots. Not only that, but you gave Tim a mobile version of your AI. And that’s because he’s your son.”

Tony ground his teeth together before looking away, watching Tim as he helped the bots move Howard's things back into the SHIELD storage container they’d come in.

“I’m not criticising you, Tony,” Bruce said gently, “I’m just trying to understand how it happened.”

“You asking if I had an affair with Janet Drake?” Tony bit out.

“No,” Bruce said. “I know you don’t knowingly sleep with married women. It had to have happened before her marriage.”

“We met at her bachelorette party,” Tony admitted. “I didn’t realize she was the bride-to-be. We were both drunk and had a quicky in a private room and that was it. Didn’t even remember her until after I met with her for a business meeting, and that was only because she confronted me about being the father of her baby.”

“So how’d you become Tim’s Godfather?” Bruce asked.

“Janet was a master manipulator,” Tony said, smiling fondly, in spite of himself. “She thought I deserved to be a part of Tim’s life, so she kept arranging things so that we’d keep meeting and eventually Janet, Jack and I became good friends. Jack never knew, though. Janet and I agreed on that. Jack is Tim’s dad, not me. I didn’t raise him. Jack did.”

“Does Tim know?”

Tony scoffed, turning to face Bruce again, both of his eyebrows raised. “What do you think?”

Bruce chuckled. “Right. Of course he knows.”

“Figured it out all by himself when he was 5,” Tony said, before grinning smugly. “Didn’t tell me until he was 9. Speaking of figuring things out, how long ago did you realize that you had a mini-ninja paparazzi stalker?”

There was a long pause as Bruce stared at him in shock.
“You mean to tell me that all this time you’ve known that Tim had been following Batman and Robin around at night?!” Bruce cried, looking both flabbergasted and outraged.

Tony laughed. “Please, Brucie! Of course I knew. Who do you think encouraged Janet to keep signing Tim up for all those extra self-defense and martial arts lessons and gave him stealth gear? It’s not like I could stop him, so of course I made sure he had the means to hide and defend himself.”

“I have no idea what I should say to you right now,” Bruce fumed.

“Like you have any moral high ground here, buster!” Tony scoffed. “As I recall, you were training Dickie boy to be Robin when he was around the same age.”

“Dick was 10 when he started training and I didn’t let him out on the streets until he was 12!” Bruce retorted.

“Perhaps, but I never encouraged Tim to go out and fight crime,” Tony snapped. “I’d rather have him practicing stealth and defense than going out looking for a fight to actively participate in. He stopped sneaking around at night after what happened to Jason, and clearly he doesn’t need to do that anymore now that he’s living with you. So unless you know something that I don’t, Bruce, I don’t see what the problem is.”

It was quiet in the lab for a long moment, and at that point Tony realized that he and Bruce had been shouting during the last half of their conversation. Bruce’s expression was unreadable - in Bat-mode - and Tim looked worried.

“…Am I in trouble?” Tim asked.

“What?” Bruce asked, going from angry to confused in two seconds flat.

“No, Timmy,” Tony sighed. “Bruce is just realizing what a bad parental figure I am and what a disaster it’d be if I adopted you. I let you get away with more than I probably should.”

“Obviously, because how could you think it was okay to let him sneak out in the middle of the night to some of Gotham’s worst districts just to take pictures of Batman and Robin?!” Bruce cried.

“Says the man who dresses up like a bat to fight crime with little boys you let wear bright colored shirts and panties!” Tony scoffed. “That uniform offered them very little protection. It’s no wonder Jason-!”

Tony bit his tongue, but the name had already slipped. Shit. Fuck. Shit! Shity fuck-ity shit!

“No wonder Jason what, Tony?” Bruce said coldly, crossing his arms over his broad chest, fists clenched.

“No wonder Jason what, Tony?” Bruce said coldly, crossing his arms over his broad chest, fists clenched.

“Shit, Bruce, I - I didn’t… Fuck. I didn’t mean to say that. I know what happened to Jason… What Joker did to him… I’m sorry,” Tony rambled feeling awful. He knew just how much Jason had meant to Bruce. How much the boy still meant to him even in death.

Bruce sighed, lowering his arms. “I know, Tony.”

“Doesn’t make what I almost said right,” Tony muttered. “We both miss him.”

“You did warn me,” Bruce said softly, pinching the bridge of his nose. “You’ve been against the
idea of Robin ever since Dick put on the uniform.”

“Not completely,” Tony admitted. “Dick turned out alright, questionable fashion choices aside. Robin’s purpose is to be Batman’s partner. Robin is as much a symbol of hope in Gotham as Batman is. You need that light that Robin provides, because sometimes we need those reminders. Reminders of what we’re fighting for. *Who* we’re fighting for.”

Tony looked at Tim, who was watching them from where he sat amid the protective circle of the three bots, before turning back to face Bruce.

“Batman needs a Robin at his side. I’m sure Tim told you the same thing when he convinced you to let him be Robin.”

Bruce choked on his next breath, also glancing at Tim, before nodding.

“Wait, you know?!” Tim gasped.

“I’m your dad,” Tony huffed. “Of course I knew you were the new Robin the moment I saw the pictures. I may have been a little slow on the whole uptake because I was dying and everything, but that was last week and a different hair style isn’t much better than Clark Kent’s glasses. And thank *God*, your uniform has pants. Bruce, you’re not leaving here until I’ve seen the blueprints for Tim’s suit. If Timmy is going to be Robin, he’s sure as hell going to be well protected.”

Tim flushed bright red.

“Should I be surprised how well you’re taking this?” Bruce asked.

“Well it’s only natural that Timmy follows in my footsteps,” Tony said, shrugging. “I became Iron Man, and am going to continue being Iron Man, so it’s only logical that my son would want to become a superhero too. I’d be a hypocrite if I said no. Besides, who else would I trust to train my kid? I’d rather have him learn from the Batman and be able to defend himself, then let him try and go at it on his own.”

“Funny,” Bruce chuckled. “Didn’t I say the same thing about Dick when he first became Robin?”

“Yes, but if you get my boy killed, I will *end* you, Bruce,” Tony growled. “I’m not even joking. Iron Man will go Terminator on your sorry ass and JARVIS will become Skynet. Not even your League of Super Friends will be able to save you.”

“Sounds fair,” Bruce said, smiling.

“And I still get my few weeks during the summers with him,” Tony said. “Just because you’re his legal guardian now, doesn’t mean I don’t get to see him. And I reserve the right to drop in and help out in Gotham if one of your Arkham Freaks break loose. I expect to be called in on that shit if you’re going to involve Tim.”

“Dad!” Tim protested.

“You make it sound like we’re a recently divorced couple hashing out custody arrangements for our child,” Bruce said, looking amused.

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Tony scowled. “We’re more like two eccentric uncles fighting over spending time with their nephew. We are *not* husbands, Brucie.”

“No, but you’re both my dads now,” Tim sighed, throwing his hands up in the air.
Tony blinked in surprise, before narrowing his eyes at Bruce. “I thought you just got legal guardianship custody, like you did with Dick and Jason. You never said anything about legit adoption.”

“I did,” Bruce said, staring at Tim curiously, who was now flushing bright red again.

“That’s not-!” Tim stammered. “I misspoke! I meant that it’s like you’re both my dads.”

“Timmy, I’m not mad,” Tony laughed, walking over to hug his son. “There are worse people than Bruce Wayne to think of as another father figure.”

“...Really?” Tim asked.

“Really, Tim,” Tony said.

Bruce was also smiling as he joined them and placed a hand on Tim’s shoulder. “And I’m honored, actually.”

Tim’s face was still red, but he was smiling.

“Alright, enough with the mushy feelings crap,” Tony huffed, pulling away from Tim. “How about we order a couple pizzas and you two can help me fix up the lab? Then we can discuss plans for keeping Timmy safe as Robin. I’ve been testing this new polymer that can be used in your suits, Bruce, that’ll make them a little more bullet and blast resistant. I’ve also made some improvements to your exploding batarangs…”

Tim and Bruce let Tony ramble as they helped him fix up his lab. When Tony was alone once again that evening after they caught a flight back to Gotham, he couldn’t help but feel content. Bruce would look after Tim, and one day Tim would become one of the world’s greatest heroes. He could feel it.

He also wondered if Bruce was going to tell Dick that Tony is Tim’s biological dad, and, if he or Tim did break the news to Dickie-bird, how he was going to react. The thought kept him in a good mood for the rest of the night.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

(My Endnote was too long for the text box, so I had to post the first half as part of the actual chapter. :P The part you really need to read is in there.)

This didn't really go in the direction I'd expected when I wrote the first two parts. I wasn't originally going to have Tony find out about Tim being Robin so soon after Tim started patrolling. I had intended for that little discovery to happen in a different chapter, but Tony decided that if Tim could figure out that Tony was his dad at age 5 and who Batman and Robin were at age 8, than Tony could damn well recognize his own son in the Robin suit by just looking at a picture of the new Robin. I might have to write a little non-canon (to this verse) one-shot about how I had originally intended Tony to find out about Tim being Robin, however, because I had planned out this full-blown dramatic scene in my head that did involve everything that Tony threatened Bruce with in this chapter.

Also, as a side-note, Bruce did NOT elect to inform Dick that Tony is Tim's bio-dad after the events at the end of this chapter, and since Bruce doesn't tell Dick and Tony never brings it up, Tim doesn't either, so Dick is still in the dark on this particular matter for now. It's all for the best, anyway, because Dick would have disliked Tony even more at this point in time, because he
wouldn't have been able to fully understand how a father couldn't want to take in his own flesh and blood.

And it's not that Tony doesn't want to take Tim in (I hope I made that clear in this chapter). He does. He's just actually thinking of Tim's safety and he knows that his current lifestyle doesn't allow him to have a child without endangering them. Tony turned to Bruce because Bruce already has a track record for taking in kids and knows that Alfred and Dick will be there for Tim as well, which is more than what Tim would have had if he'd gone to live with Tony. That's why he's content at the end of this chapter. He loves his son, but he's self-aware enough that he knows that he has no business being a full-time dad. He doesn't want to be another Howard Stark. He can't do to Tim what Howard did to him, so he's entrusted Tim to Bruce.

**PLEASE READ BELOW!!!**

Chapter End Notes

Ok, so I have maybe a couple more chapters for this story before we get to the events of the Avengers, which I plan on making a separate fic. I have three different plots in my head on when and how Tim meets the team: one where Tim meets the Avengers right after the first film, one where he butts his way in halfway through Age of Ultron, and one where Tim doesn't get involved with the Avengers until the end/after the events of Civil War (which broke my heart and made me want to punch Captain America in his self-righteous face). The first one is going to be the happier and more light hearted option with plenty of shenanigans involving Tim and the Bats (and maybe some Titans and JL member cameos) while we go through the movie plots up to Age of Ultron (because why would there be a Civil War if everyone is getting along for the most part?), while option two is more of a fix-it for the events in Phase 2's Marvel movies, featuring Tim angst, the Batfam, and Kon and Bart because reasons and I'm a fan of SuperRedKid bromance/best-bros stuffs (not ship). The third story plot is big time hurt-Tony feels and me basically playing with the idea that Tim would totally elect to take on the Iron Man legacy and bring along some of his besties (Kon and Bart mainly) in his effort to reform and remake the Avengers.

Also, I've been playing around with different ship ideas, even though I don't plan on having them become a major factor in the stories (and if I do, they'll get their own side fic collection of one-shots). In all of these options it'll be Bruce(Wayne)/Selina (if and when I can finally get around to writing her in), Tony/Pepper and Thor/Jane because I love them together and the last 2 are canon up until Civil War (the feels!).

I don't really have any issues with Sharon Cater/Steve Rogers or Wanda/Vision pairings, so I'm thinking of keeping those ships in all versions as well (if I can make it Wanda/Vision work in op.3 that is), though neither of those ships will have anything major happen in any of the story line options. They'll be hints and teases more than anything. The other ships I have thought up kind of depend on which storyline I'm writing, though.

I'm a big Natasha/Clint shipper, so obviously I'm going to ship them in option 1 (AoU would happen differently in that one, so there wouldn't be a Laura Barton & kids), but in option 2 & 3, I'd keep Clint/Laura and play a bit with Bruce(Banner)/Natasha (even though it doesn't make much sense to me), if only to keep with canon so I can lead into
CW where I'm ultimately going to end shipping Natasha with Bucky.

As for Tim, I'm thinking either Tim/Steph or Tim/Cass(Cain) for option 1, which I plan to make very neutral as far as pairings go so as not to turn off any of you wonderful readers who don't like yaoi/gay/slash pairings, like JayTim, which I'm considering for Option 2. I know there are a lot of Tim/Kon shippers out there, but that pairing just never appealed to me like JayTim does. I don't MIND it, it's just not my OTP, so I'm not writing it. That, and the idea of Tony and Bruce having to decide on how and who to give the THE TALK to for that relationship just makes me laugh. For Option 3, I'm actually considering a Tim/Peter Parker ship. They're both nerds, photographers, and little guys who kick some serious ass! I think they'd make a great pairing to be honest. I'm actually wondering why I haven't seen this cross-ship before, because their compatibility just seems obvious to me. In fact, if anybody HAS seen this ship somewhere PLEASE send me a link!

That's basically all that I wanted to say. If you'd be so kind, fantastic reader, please let me know in a comment which plot line of the three appeals to you the most, and any ideas you have for pairings that I both mentioned and may have overlooked. I do plan on writing a fic for all three options eventually, I would just like to know which one I should start on first. :)
Fear and Loathing in Recovery

Chapter Summary

Jason Todd is back from the dead and he's out for vengeance against those who have replaced him. Tony has something to say about that.

Chapter Notes

First off, Merry Christmas readers! I hope you're all well.

This chapter is a Jason centric chapter and it ended up being so long because of all the feels. I've never read the Death in the Family comic where Jason Todd's Robin was killed, but I own a copy of and have watch several times, Batman: Under the Red Hood, so the events of that movie is what I have in mind concerning Jason's death, resurrection, and fight with Bruce and Dick, though I do hint at his birth mother being a factor at some point to keep with comic canon.

That said, I hope you enjoy the chapter and have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2011

Jason Todd had grown up learning that there were very few people in the world that you could trust. The only reason he believed that there were ANY people you could trust was because of people like Bruce Wayne, Alfred Pennyworth, and Tony Stark. Before his death at the hands of the Joker, Jason had thought he could trust them. Trust them to have his back. Now he knew better.

Bruce, his so-called father figure, had replaced him, and Alfred clearly liked the newer model better, dotting on the boy like he was the man’s own grandchild. Stark was no better. Jason had looked into the man’s travel records, and saw that he made twice as many trips to Gotham since the new Robin had appeared then he had when Jason was Robin.

It had made Jason so incredibly angry to see the three men he’d looked up to before his death so happy and having dinner with his replacement. Even Dick Fucking Grayson was there, tussling the brat’s hair and making nice like he never had with Jason. It had made the resurrected teen want to shoot out the dining room windows and have them look at him. Make them face him. Make them stare him in the face and see that even after his death they wouldn’t be rid of him. The only reason he hadn’t was because he had been watching that sickly domestic scene through a hacked camera feed in the manor from his safe house and not in person.

It just galled him. His replacement was a joke. He might have been smart (Jason could admit that the runt was a much better detective than he and Dickie-bird had ever been as Robin), but he was woefully underwhelming in the power department. It had been so easy wiping the floor with the brat back at Titan’s Tower. So easy in fact, Jason found him pathetic and not even worth finishing
the job (or so he told himself). And yet Bruce and Alfred and Dick-face continued to keep the boy around. They weren’t going to take him off the street. They couldn’t see that this life was going to get him killed.

At least Stark seemed to be getting with the program. It had been very satisfying to hear him and Bruce go at it in the Batcave after Stark had found out what Jason did to the kid at the tower. Jason wasn’t sure how long Tony had known that Bruce was the Batman, but it was clear that he was in the know now. What was also new these days was the fact that Stark himself was part of the superhero scene, though not apart of any official team like the Justice League. Jason had to admit that Stark’s Iron Man armor was totally badass. He would almost give anything to see him take on the Batman, but he knew that would never happen. Stark and Bruce argued a lot, but it had never come to physical blows.

Jason was keeping low these days. Batman and Nightwing had been hunting for him relentlessly after he’d attacked the new Robin in Titan’s Tower less than a week ago. It irritated Jason that that was what it had taken for them to take him seriously. Two weeks ago they’d had their own little reunion. There had been injured pride all around after that little debacle. Nightwing had twisted his ankle badly during their first chase/standoff, and Batman had nearly crippled Jason’s hand during the final showdown when he’d caused Jason’s gun to backfire with a batarang just when he was about to blow the Joker’s brains out.

His hand was still a bit stiff, but it was nearly healed. The cursed Lazarus Pit was good for something at least. Dick was clearly feeling better since he was back out on the streets trying to help Batman hunt the Red Hood down. At least the Joker was still in traction with all the busted bones that came with having a building blown up and fall down all around him. It was a pity he hadn’t been crushed. That was only mildly satisfying, though. Jason still wanted that fucker dead, but the Bat had the clown locked up tight. So Jason had gone after his replacement.

The kid had returned from some summer trip in California apparently, which would explain why he hadn’t been around when Jason was trying to draw the Bats out in the beginning. Then Bruce had sent him back to Cali to the Titans after Jason had tried to slit the kid’s throat. If Bruce had thought that sending the brat away was going to stop Jason, than he was only kidding himself. Jason had seen the action as a challenge and proved that it didn’t matter where the Bat sent the boy. If the runt was going to wear the Robin uniform (and seriously? Why did he get to have pants?!) he was going to have to earn his place and prove that he could handle it. But clearly he couldn’t.

So now Jason was keeping low in Crime Alley in one of his few but secure safe houses. He didn’t dare patrol as Red Hood right now with Batman and Nightwing scouring every inch of his territory. All of Crime Alley’s usual criminals were keeping low as well. The Bats were clearly out for blood and it was best for everyone to stay low until they moved on.

Jason was very proud of the fact that he was able to hide right under their nose. He wouldn’t admit it, but he’d been nervous and anxious the first few nights he’d heard that the Bat was making sweeps of Crime Alley. When it became apparent that Batman hadn’t found any of his current safe houses, he began to relax a bit. Big mistake. Just because Bruce and Dick-face hadn’t found him yet, didn’t mean that someone else couldn’t.

“Nice place you have.”

Jason stared, surprised, as he took in the fact that Tony Stark was standing in one of his most secure safe houses examining his Red Hood helmet. Then he pulled out one of his guns and aimed it at the man’s head.

“Are you going to shoot me, Jason?” Stark asked, actually pouting a bit. “Rude. I’m unarmed.”
“Your mistake. What the fuck are you doing here?” Jason snapped.

“What, I can’t visit?” Stark asked. “I’m hurt. You came back to see Dick and Bruce and even the fucking Joker, but not me? If you weren’t going to drop by for a visit, then I was. Simple as that. Alfie says hi, by the way. He’s disappointed you haven’t visited him yet either.”

“Why are you here?” Jason growled.

Stark sighed and set the Red Hood helmet down, his fingers gliding over it’s red finish almost… fondly?

“I had to see for myself,” the man said, looking straight into Jason’s unmasked eyes and never had the teen felt so vulnerable. Those warm brown eyes cut straight through like the Batman’s never had to Jason’s core. His corrupt Lazarus Pit saturated core.

“See what?” Jason muttered, his voice rising in volume until he was screaming at the man. “That the kid you knew is no more? That I’m as twisted and evil as the Bat says?! That I’m nothing more than some common criminal now?! Huh?!”

Stark shook his head and dared to take a step forward. Jason flicked the safety off the gun and aimed between those disappointed, condemning… sad eyes?

“No,” Stark said softly, taking another step. “I came to see if Jason Todd was really back from the dead.”

“Well here I am,” Jason scoffed, throwing his arms out wide. “What are you going to do about it, Mr. Genius?”

Then Stark moved, faster than the teen thought the man capable of. Jason was too late to bring the gun back up in time for a clean shot, so he dropped it (and was glad it didn’t discharge, because that was sloppy of him), ready to get into it with his fists…when the man hugged him.

Jason froze, unsure of how to react, before his face suddenly found itself tucked into the man’s neck. Stark’s hold was strong and hard, full of muscle Jason didn’t remember him possessing.

“You’re alive,” Stark gasped, choking a bit. “You’re really alive.”

Jason…was astounded. He hadn’t expected this at all. Hadn’t thought he’d mattered enough to Stark to warrant this kind of a reaction. The man had never been much of a touchy feely person. Yes, there’d been moments Stark had offered tokens of physical affection in the form of a shoulder squeeze, hair ruffles, and pats on the head, shoulder or back, but the closest thing to a hug he’d gotten from the man before this was the occasional loose arm around his shoulders as they surveyed their work on whatever car the man had brought over for them to tinker on.

“Sorry,” Stark said taking a step back, eyes blinking rapidly - shit, were those tears?! “Awkward, I know, but… Jesus, kid, you’re alive.”

Jason had no idea what to say. He was honestly still a little shocked that he’d been hugged … and that’s when Stark punched him right in the face. Hard. POW! Flat on his back and, son of a bitch, that had actually hurt. Then again, the man had supposedly been a boxer for years now.

“Sorry, not sorry, but I felt entitled to a punch,” Stark said. “You did nearly kill my kid twice now. Chalk it up to a dad’s overprotective tendencies, parental rights and all that jazz.”

What now?
“The fuck?” Jason growled, feeling the pit driven anger rile up again, but he was still so confused by the hug and even more so upon hearing that, that it only simmered instead of explode.

“Tim Drake,” Tony said, crouching down next to Jason where he was still flat on his back, and poked him hard in the chest. “Batman’s new Robin? The kid you slit the throat of and then not even a week later beat to a pulp in the Teen Mini-League’s Clubhouse? He’s biologically my son. Bruce may have legal guardianship until Jack Drake clears PT and gets out of the hospital, but due to our agreement I still have what amounts to parental rights. Shit, that does make us sound like a divorced couple.” Jason tried to make some sort of comment, but Stark wasn’t having any of it. “No! I’m talking. I’ll tell you that whole story later. Right now you listen because I’m having a hard time deciding whether I want to hug you or slug you again because, fuck, I missed you, you little bastard, but I also want to kick your ass into next Tuesday for what you did to Tim. Just be glad I decided to have this conversation without the Iron Man suit nearby.”


“I feel like I should be asking you that,” Tony sighed, plopping back to sit beside Jason’s sprawled form. “I get wanting to stick it to Bruce and Dickie-bird, because who doesn’t on occasion, right? But going after Tim? That, I can’t fathom. He’s never done anything to you. Well, technically he did stalk you when you were Robin but that was because he fucking idolized you. Dick may have been the first Boy Wonder, but you were the one he followed around the most. Your death and the shit storm that became life afterwards was the whole reason he became Robin. He did it in memory of you, asshole.”

“And you never thought to stop him?! Jason growled, sitting up. “Didn’t my death teach you guys anything?! Kids his age shouldn’t be running around in tights playing hero. It gets them killed. It got me killed!”

“Clearly I’m a shit parent,” Stark deadpanned. “Why else would I let Bruce have custody over by boy instead of me? But that doesn’t mean that I like the fact that someone as young as Tim is Robin. I didn’t like it when Dick was Robin, I didn’t like it when you were Robin, and I most certainly hate it now that Tim is Robin and his predecessor is trying to kill him. But I can’t stop him because it’s what he wants to do - it’s what all of you ever wanted to do, even now - and I’d be a hypocrite if I told him that he can’t do it when I am running around doing the same thing as Iron Man. The best I can do is make sure he has the best training, equipment, backup, and protection as possible.”

“Is that why you’re here?” Jason demanded. “To neutralize a threat to your precious son?”

Stark punched him again. The anger that had been with Jason ever since he’d awoken in the Pit came boiling to the forefront and for a moment all he could see was that sickly rage-driven green. He snarled as he sat up and was about to hit back and wrestle the man to the ground when he felt those arms wrap around him in another hug, dowsing the worst of the Pit Rage almost instantly. What the fuck was up with these hugs?! And why were they throwing him so off kilter?

“I idiot boy,” Stark growled back, a hand fisting into the hair at the back of Jason’s head. “Is anything getting through that thick skull of yours? I’m not here for Tim. I’m here for you.”

“No,” Jason snapped, trying to push the man away, but it was harder than it should be. He couldn’t tell if Stark was just that much stronger now, if his conflicting emotions were weakening him, or a mixture of the two was the reason for it. “You’re here for the boy that died. The kid that used to help you fix up your damn cars. The kid that thought you were fucking brilliant because you taught him a few simple things about engineering. The kid that got his ignorant ass beat and blown to hell.”
“I came here for that kid, yes,” Stark admitted. “But I’m also here for the boy who’s stuck in his own personal hell. The boy that’s hurting inside because he thinks that his father figure has betrayed him. The boy who is so justifiably angry at the world that he’s lashing out in the only violent way he knows how. I knew when I came here that I wouldn’t find the boy that had died. Not all of him at any rate. I came here to see the man that that boy was forced to become because of what the Joker did and see if I could help.”

“Help me, huh? What do you know of hell, you rich bastard?!” Jason screamed.

“Plenty,” Stark said so bitterly that Jason ceased his struggling. The man let him go again and began unbuttoning his dress shirt.

“The fuck?” Jason breathed when he saw the white-blue glow coming from Stark’s chest.

“You wouldn’t know this because you were in Ethiopia being murdered,” Stark said softly, “but at the same time that was happening to you, I was in Afghanistan giving a weapons demonstration for the US military. On my way back to the nearest airbase, my convoy was attacked by a group of terrorists called the Ten Rings. A missile detonated in my face and shrapnel pierced through my kevlar vest into my chest cavity.”

Jason eyed the small but numerous scars that littered the flesh surrounding the circle of light in the man’s chest.

“I woke up in a cave a few days later,” Stark continued, “with a car battery plugged into my chest powering a magnet that was immobilizing all of the tiny shrapnel shards in my chest that couldn’t be surgically removed with the materials at hand.”

“Oh my God,” Jason gasped, feeling sick. He could picture it. A dark cave with low torch light and an eerie glow, only Stark’s light was blue, not green.

“I was stuck in that hell hole for three months. Do you know why they didn’t just kill me as they had originally intended?” Tony asked.

“They wanted you to make weapons,” Jason muttered.

“Yes, but that’s the reason they kept me alive after they tried to blow me up. See, when they had attacked my convoy they hadn’t known who I was. I was just a target to them before they realized who they were trying to blow up,” Tony said, chuckling bitterly.

Jason frowned.

“Do you remember Obadiah Stane?” Tony asked.

“Obie? Yeah, I remember him,” Jason said slowly. “Met him at a few of your galas that Bruce flew us out for. Nice guy.”

Tony’s laugh was harsh and ugly and it reminded Jason too much of how he’d laughed at Bruce only two weeks ago. Clearly he was missing something.

“Yes, nice guy indeed,” Tony spat. “Like a father to me. Took me under his wing, like Bruce did with you. Only, apparently he thought I’d outgrown my usefulness. It was Stane that had ordered the hit on me in Afghanistan. He didn’t want me to know that he’d been double dealing Stark weapons under the table and off the books. It was one of my own missiles that detonated in my face. Irony, right? Nearly killed by a weapon I designed. Gave a whole new meaning to the phrase, ‘bullet with your name on it.’”
Jason felt his insides freeze.

“And that’s not even the worst of it,” Tony chuckled bitterly. “After I managed to escape the caves in Afghanistan, I came back to the states and basically ordered an immediate shutdown of SI’s weapons manufacturing facilities. Stane didn’t like that. See, he was trying to rebuild the armor I’d used to escape in Afghanistan, but he didn’t have a compatible powersource. He knew about this little gizmo in my chest, realized that it must have been what was powering my armor, and when my guard was down, he ambushed me at home and paralyzed me with a sonic taser that emits a high pitched sonic frequency that attacks the subject’s nervous system and causes their entire body to lock up. I could only sit there and watch as he reached into my chest and took out what has become a physical and almost literal metaphor for my heart.”

Jason watched with growing horror as Stark actually touched the device in his chest, twisted, and popped it out so that Jason could see just how deeply it was imbedded in his chest even with the wires still connected to the inside.

“The Arc Reactor has a diameter 2.7 inches, and a circumference of 8.48 inches, though that’s hardly important,” Stark continued. “It’s roughly 7 inches deep inside my chest cavity, including the magnet, meaning that I have roughly 42 inches of total area carved out of my chest, which translates to a little more than 23 fluid ounces. A 16 ounce bottle of pop holds just under 29 fluid ounces, just f.y.i.”

“How are you still alive?” Jason coughed, feeling sick.

“The doctor that put the casing in was brilliant,” Stark said, smiling wryly. “He had to make quite a few adjustments to my anatomy, and the fact that I even survived the surgery - in a cave in Afghanistan no less - boggles the minds of every doctor I’ve seen since my return to the states. I’ve had further surgeries of course, to replace the old casing and make sure it isn’t causing more damage than what’s already been done to my body, but not much can be done since a good number of my ribs were sawed and cauterized to make room for this cursed thing.”

“Why not have them remove it?” Jason asked.

“... It’s not something I’m currently willing to be put under for. In order for them to perform such an invasive surgery, that would involve not only the removal of the reactor and magnet, but the shards of shrapnel still in my chest as well, I’d need to be put under for roughly 18 hours. And then there’s the lengthy recovery period of at least six months,” Stark said, looking away.

“Wait… are you saying you were awake during all of those surgeries?!” Jason gasped.

“Not the first one that hooked a car battery up to my chest cavity,” Stark huffed, “but, the replacement surgery I had when I put in the first arc reactor and all of it’s replacement units, including the new casing that went in two years ago, yes. I needed to be able to give instructions on how to install it. Pepper wasn’t willing to do that, so she made me have my long standing personal physician do it. I’m not exactly comfortable with other people sticking their hands in my chest without supervision.”

“I can imagine,” Jason said softly, watching as the man put the glowing gizmo back in his chest. And just like that all of his anger was just... gone. For now. It was hard to be angry in the face of someone who had suffered like he had. Worse than he had. Jason at least had had the relief that came with death, until he was unceremoniously and painfully revived. The Lazarus Pit had healed all of his wounds and removed every scar. The only pain he lived with now was his anger and any injury he got on the streets, but even those healed pretty quickly. He couldn’t imagine having to live with that contraption in his chest. “Jesus, Tony, you sure don’t pull your punches.”
“It’s not that I’m belittling your own pain by any means, Jaycie. I’ve come close to dying so many times, but never managed to meet that end like you did. I can’t imagine what it’s been like for you coming back to life after all these years, but I think it’s safe to say that I know a thing or two about what hell is like. I’ve been there. I’m still there some nights. Nightmares are a bitch, aren’t they?”

Jason swallowed around a thick lump in his throat. He didn’t know why hearing that stupid nickname made him feel like he was 12 years old all over again.

“Hey! Shit, sorry, Jaycie, I didn’t mean to make you feel worse,” Tony moaned, pulling Jason into another hug, one hand fumbling to wipe at his face and - shit! Jason twisted away to try hiding the tears he only just now realized were falling. When his hand hit Tony’s chest and he felt the warm metal beneath his palm, he ceased all movement, afraid of damaging such an invasive, but crucial device. “Fuck, I’m not good at this,” Tony sighed, settling for just holding Jason, his hand moving away from Jason’s face to cradling the back of his head.

“Funny, you’re doing a pretty good job,” Jason chuckled, the little part of him that had been Robin wanting to just bury his face in Tony’s shoulder, so he did.

“Right, I feel so accomplished,” Tony deadpanned. “I made an 18 year old tough guy cry.”

“You’re right. You’re an asshole,” Jason laughed. He couldn’t help it. For the first time since he’d been revived by the Lazarus Pit he felt a touch of peace.

“Hey, I made you laugh at least,” Tony said. Jason could easily visualize that damn smirk. “And it takes an asshole to know an asshole, and a broken man to recognize another broken man.”

“Is that what we are?” Jason sighed. “Broken men?”

“Poor choice of words. I prefer to think of us as survivors,” Tony said. “Stane and Joker may have tried to break us, but we’re still here, aren’t we? And if we can keep getting back up, and keep fighting, then they can’t win. We’re more than their victims. We’re Tony Fucking Stark and Jason Fucking Todd.”

Jason laughed again, pulling back before smiling at the man.

“I missed you, Tony.”

“Missed you too, kid. Now let’s get out of here,” Tony huffed, getting to his feet.

“And go where?” Jason sighed, feeling his bitterness bubble up again. “B is looking for me and will have me arrested the moment I come out of hiding. I’ve kill a lot of people over the last couple of months, Tony.”

“My hands aren’t exactly clean either,” Tony said softly. “And please. If I can find you when he can’t, I can easily get us out of Gotham without any of the Bats knowing.”

“How?” Jason asked, still feeling skeptical.

“A private plane and an AI feeding the Bats false information,” Tony smirked. “Who the hell do you think helped Bruce install that supercomputer in the Batcave? I also helped him design and upgrade his Batmobiles. Let’s just say that if I wanted to, I could mess him up good. He may think he’s locked me out in recent years, but JARVIS has been a part of his system since it was installed. He’d have to completely dismantle and rebuild the computer and cars to remove JARVIS from their systems and even then, he’d have one heck of a time keeping me out. Oracle is good, don’t get me wrong, but she hasn’t been a hacker for as long as I have.”
“Just like that? You’re going to whisk me out of Gotham, Bruce being none the wiser, and what? Set me up in some cozy loft and send me off to therapy?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Tony scoffed. “You’ll stay with me in Malibu. I can get you a therapist if you want, but I was thinking more along the lines of helping you get back on your feet and used to living again. I’ve got a decent gym, fun toys, and a sweet firing range. I was looking at your Red Hood helmet and while it’s rudimentary functions are good, I think we can really make it something special. The self destruct sequence if pretty nice. Gives you a last ditch weapon in a tight spot. I assume you wear a domino mask under it?”

“Not going to lecture me on carrying firearms?” Jason asked, genuinely curious.

Tony just leveled a disbelieving stare at him. “Do I look like Bruce anti-gun Wayne to you? Former Weapons manufacturer, remember? I’m hardly gun shy. If you feel the need to carry firearms, then carry a permitted gun. Just ease up on the trigger finger. Where we’re going the most threatening thing is going to be a pissed off Pepper Potts. I kind of ditched our one year anniversary plans to come out here and hunt your ass down.”

“Pepper Potts?” Jason repeated. “Isn’t she your Personal Assistant?”

“She’s acting CEO of Stark Industries now,” Tony said, smiling gently in the same way that Jason had seen Bruce smile at Selina Kyle, meaning that Miss Potts was a lot more that a PA or CEO or whatever her job was to Tony.

“And is she going to be alright with me just crashing at your place?” Jason asked, feeling doubtful.

“Eh,” Stark huffed, shrugging. “We’re not living together, so I don’t see why not. She’ll probably yell at me for not telling her about you beforehand, but I’m sure she’ll warm up to you.”

“Right,” Jason sighed, shaking his head. He doubted it. Nobody - aside from Tony that is - had been particularly thrilled to see him. Granted, that was mostly his fault, but if they’d just gotten rid of the Goddamned Joker-! Hadn’t he meant anything to them? Why was his killer still alive? Why hadn’t they avenged him?

“Hey,” Tony said softly, kneeling on the floor again next to Jason, tapping his knuckles gently against his head. “Talk to me, kiddo. What’s going on in that head of yours?”

“Why is the Joker still alive?” Jason growled.

“You know Batman doesn’t kill,” Tony sighed, but he at least sounded a touch angry as well. “And Iron Man’s interference isn’t welcome in Gotham, by Batman or GCPD. Trust me, if I could, without ruining my friendship with Bruce, or getting my ass arrested, and my armor seized, I would have blown that piece of shit up as soon as I learned what Joker did to you. That’s what I get for being Batman’s friend and a public superhero, though. I have to play by the rules, which includes not killing someone without probable cause. Though, I’m telling you right now, if that fucker ever comes across my path and tries to murder people in front of me, he’s getting blown sky high. My moral standing is a lot lower than Bruce’s.”

Jason growled, but let it go. That was more than what he’d gotten from Bruce. Besides, Tony wasn’t who he was mad at anyway. Never really had been.

“I don’t think I should go with you,” Jason sighed, finally getting his ass off the ground. “I don’t belong in Malibu in your fancy house.”

“So you’re just going to stay here?” Tony asked, getting up as well and gesturing to the rundown
apartment that was Jason’s current safehouse. “And do what? Take over the drug cartels? Become a mobster?”

“Here it comes,” Jason smirked fiercely. He knew it. Tony was no different from Bruce after all. “Going to tell me how wrong I am? That Bruce was right? That I’m a criminal now?!?”

“Whoa, Jaycie,” Tony said, frowning sternly in a manner that oddly reminded Jason of Alfred. “Cool your jets, kid, and stop putting words in my mouth. I’m not saying you’re wrong. You’re not really right either, according to the law and stuff, but your plan to take over the underworld to make it more manageable does make a lot of sense. And in a city as corrupt as Gotham? It might just work. You can’t get rid of all crime, but you can at least make it somewhat manageable. Do not ever quote me on that by the way. Pepper would castrate me for the shitstorm that’d come up if it got out that I support a would-be mobster.”

Jason relaxed a touch at that, but was still on edge. “So why do you want to get me out of Gotham?”

“I told you,” Tony sighed. “I want to help you, Jay. It’s not like you can do much while Batman is hunting for the Red Hood anyway, so why not leave and regroup elsewhere? Take a vacation. Get away from everything. California sunshine just might do you some good. I’ll even help you with your tech.” Tony patted the Red Hood helmet, grinning. “I can’t stop you, but I’m willing to help give you the means to be safer. I…I don’t want to lose you again, Jayce.”

Jason grit his teeth, watching the man for a minute before sighing, feeling the fight drain out of him. Now that the seemingly never ending rage that had fueled and driven him for so long was gone, he felt tired. So tired he felt it in his bones. It felt strangely of defeat. Like that moment he’d watched the last seconds on the bomb’s timer in Ethiopia tick down and he knew that he was going to die. Stark had worn him down. He should have seen it coming the moment he found himself stunned by that first hug. Tony always got his way, after all. Why would now be any different? The man was a force all on his own and, apparently, not even the Pit’s influences could persevere against the man.

“Ok, Tony,” he said. “Ok.”

3 Weeks Later…

Not everything had been smooth sailing after Tony had gotten Jason to come to Malibu. He’d been right about Pepper being furious, but after their fight she’d taken one look at Jason and personally saw to setting up a guest bedroom for him. For the first couple of days, things had been fine. Jason was grouchy in the mornings (the kid had never been much of a morning person), but had taken to the bots well enough. He helped Tony tinker in the lab (though never with the Iron Man armor. That was Tony and Tim’s thing), and spent a good bit of time at the range Tony had set up on his property. So at first, everything was fine. Good even. It was like having the old Jason back, only the kid was older and full of more biting sarcasm and snark.

But the third night led to the first of what Tony and Jason had begun to call Pit-mares. A Pit-mare usually involved Jason reliving his death, his resurrection, and, in one way or another, a disappointed Bruce/Batman. After a Pit-mare, Jason was always seething and angry and just destructive in general, upturning furniture and throwing things because they’d agreed not to have guns in the house. JARVIS was smart to lock down the lab after the first one, after Jason had nearly wrecked half the work space during his Pit-fueled tantrum.

The worst thing about Pit-mare nights, however, weren’t Jason’s bouts of impossible rage, self
loathing and destruction. It was the breakdowns afterwards. There was a lot of ugly crying (the kind with a lot of tears and snot and wailing) and depressing shit, that usually ended with Jason saying that he wished that he’d stayed dead. That he could just die again so that it wouldn’t matter anymore. JARVIS had taken to locking away the kitchen cutlery after one particularly bad night that had left half the kitchen in shambles and Tony with a black eye and some scratches from fork tines.

Those nights were becoming fewer, though, the longer Jason stayed, but the previous night had been particularly rough. Tony had known that he wouldn’t be able to keep Jason’s actions a secret from Pepper and Rhodey for long (frankly he was impressed he’d managed 3 weeks), so he wasn’t too surprised that once they saw the damage in the living room when they came over that morning they ganged up on him after Jason left, feeling mildly embarrassed, to shower off another ugly morning-after.


“He needs a psych ward and a straight jacket,” Rhodey had grumbled, eyeing the turned over couch, it’s shredded cushions and the shattered lamp in the living room where there was a steak knife embedded in the wall. JARVIS had missed one, it seemed. Either that, or Jason was in the habit of sleeping with knives under his pillows, which Tony wouldn’t put past the teen.

“He’s not crazy, Rhodey,” Tony sighed. “He’s been through alot and is hurting.”

“You keep saying that, but you won’t say what he’s been through,” Pepper sighed.

“Who is this kid anyway?” Rhodey asked. “Where’d you pick his crazy ass up?”

“I told you, his name is Jason,” Tony said, gritting his teeth. “And he’s from Gotham. He grew up a street kid and has recently seen some really tough times.”

“Was he in a gang?” Pepper asked.

Could the Batman and his posse be considered a gang? Nah. They were more like a mafia. He’d taken to referring to the group of Gotham vigilantes as the Bat Family because of the obsessive way they tended to keep tabs on each other and their Rogues Gallery.

“No,” Tony sighed.

“Well he’s got one hell of a case of PTSD,” Rhodey said. “He looks too young to be a soldier, but was he in service?”

“Something like that,” Tony muttered. “More along the lines of Special Ops.”

“Jesus,” Rhodey sighed. “And how old is he?”

“17-19-ish,” Tony mused, not really sure. Did you count the time he was dead or not?

Rhodey frowned, because obviously Jason wasn’t old enough to have gone through the training required to be a Special Ops. agent.

“Regardless,” Pepper cut in, “that young man needs help. I’m proud and happy that you want to help him out, Tony, I really am, but he needs professional assistance. He needs someone to talk to about his experiences.”

“He is talking. We both are,” Tony snapped, feeling defensive.
“Both?” Rhodey repeated, eyes sharp. “What’s going on, Tony?”

Tony grit his teeth and turned away, heading for the mostly tidy kitchen. A few appliances still needed to be replaced from the fit that Jason had had the week before, but the furniture had either been restored or replaced. He blatantly ignored Pepper’s glare and Rhodey’s pointed looks at the fist sized dents in the fridge door.

“I’ve known Jason for years,” Tony admitted. “We’ve both been through hellish situations in recent times, but we’ve been talking to each other. Last night was just a really bad night for him. He really is getting better. You guys just don’t know him like I do.”

“Tony,” Pepper and Rhodey sighed in unison, but before they could continue, Jason appeared in that quiet and sudden manner that all bat brats were in the habit of doing. They both jumped, startled to see him suddenly there. That had been a quick shower.

Jason glared at them, but flashed Tony a guilty look before opening the fridge. “Sorry,” he muttered.

“Hey, I have my bad nights too,” Tony said shrugging, handing Jason a glass from the cupboard for his orange juice.

Jason sighed, shaking his head.

“Wanna talk about it?” Tony asked, casually. He normally offered after Jason had calmed down after a Pit-mare.

Jason frowned at his drink, eyes darting warily at Pepper and Rhodey.

“They won’t say anything,” Tony assured. “I trust them.”

Jason scowled, but shrugged, slumping against the counter.

“What’s there to say?” he growled. “It’s the same thing every time. Bastard comes at me with a crowbar and beats the shit out of me. Then that damn bomb blows and I’m burning and screaming until fire becomes the water and instead of burning, I’m drowning and I can’t breathe and all I can hear is that bastard’s laugh.” Jason chokes, his voice going hoarse. “And I’m still screaming. I’m always screaming, always burning, and he’s always laughing.”

Tony stepped up next to Jason and wrapped an arm around the teen’s shoulders.

“I have dreams like that too sometimes,” Tony admitted. “In Afghanistan… the terrorists would shove my head under water and hold me there. Over and over and over again when I didn’t immediately follow their commands. When I wasn’t working fast enough to build them their damn missile. It was worse when I was still hooked up to that damn car battery because not only was I drowning, I was being electrocuted too whenever water hit the battery. When I have nightmares about that particular brand of torture… I wake up unable to breathe. Unable to scream because there’s no air in my lungs to make a sound. And they’re still shouting and yelling in Arabic and other dialects of languages I can’t understand.”

Jason clenched his eyes shut, nodding, before leaning into Tony’s side. They both jumped slightly when Pepper made a noise that sounded like someone had punched her in the gut. Rhodey also looked pained at the admission. Tony flushed, looking away from his two closest companions. He’d honestly forgotten that they were there in his attempt to reach out to Jason, to let him know that he wasn’t alone in his pain.
“You never told us how they’d tortured you before,” Pepper whispered, staring at Tony sadly.

“Because it’s not something I want to talk about,” he sighed. “I didn’t want you to know what that felt like, because isn’t it enough that I’m back?”

“Is it?” Jason asked hollowly. “Can it ever be enough?”

“If we want it to be,” Tony said softly. “If we choose to move on instead of dwelling-!”

“Easy for you to say,” Jason snapped, stepping away. “You’ve never died. I did die, Tony. I was dead! I should have stayed dead! But Ra’al Fucking Gul decided to dunk me in his Lazarus Pit and revive me for whatever sick reason he had and I can’t find peace. I’m so angry! All the fucking time! All the time, Tony…” And yet Jason’s anger faded just as quickly as it’d erupted. “And when that anger is gone, I’m tired. So tired I can’t find the strength to move some days. I didn’t know I could feel this tired until you showed up and dragged me here.”

“Gotham wasn’t good for you,” Tony said softly. “And being here hasn’t all been bad, has it? We’ve had some good days too, remember? The bots like you when you’re not knocking shit over and screaming at them. Why, just yesterday, DUM-E let you use his fire extinguisher. I don’t think you realize how attached he is to that stupid thing.”

“I blew up the prototype for the new Hood we were working on,” Jason grumbled, but his lips were twitching up into a small smile.

“Sure did,” Tony said, grinning. “And then Butterfingers accidentally squirted you with the oil can when we were working on the old T-bird, and U wouldn’t stop chasing after you with the rags.”

Jason chuckled, slumping back against Tony.

“And don’t forget when you allowed him to test the new repulsor, sir,” JARVIS piped up.

Tony laughed, nodding. “Weren’t expecting that much kickback were you, kid?”

Jason snorted, his small smile now a large grin.

“See? Not all bad times. Nights just really suck sometimes. That’s why I don’t sleep very often.”

“That’s not a good thing, Tony,” Rhodey huffed, but he and Pepper were smiling at them, a warm, fond look in their eyes.

“Sleep is overrated,” Tony said, surprised to hear Jason’s voice echo him. He grinned at the teen and ruffled his hair. Jason squawked, batting his hand away, but the smile hadn’t faded in the slightest.

“But in all seriousness, Tony,” Pepper said gently. “He needs help.”

“I’m not subjecting him to anything he doesn’t want to do,” Tony growled.

Jason winced, looking away from everyone as he slumped against the counter again.

“I’m not just talking about him seeing a psychiatrist, Tony,” Pepper sighed, “even though I think that would really help. I was thinking more along the lines of something more recreational. Something to help him work out all of that aggression, instead of letting him take it out on your house and the furniture.”

Jason winced again, looking gloomily at the refrigeradorator and the fist sized dents in the door.
“Why didn’t I think of that? I can arrange something,” Tony conceded. “Maybe move you to a room that’s closer to the gym? We can get some really sturdy punching bags. I can program some training droids for you to fight, too. Then you can fix them up. We’ve already agreed that fixing stuff is therapeutic, right?”

“I’ve heard pet therapy works wonders,” Rhodes offered.

“I am not letting any animals in here, thank you,” Tony scowled, but noted that Jason was smiling a bit again. “Pet dander gets everywhere and then there’s cleaning up their excrement and just—! No! Ick! N. O. NO!”

“So don’t get anything big like a cat or a dog. What about something small like a hamster? Or a fish?” Rhodey asked.

“They’ll die within the first couple of days,” Tony huffed. “I’m not taking care of anything like that. I’ll forget to feed them.”

“Fish are boring anyway,” Jason scoffed. “All they do is swim in circles.”

“And a hamster?” Pepper asked.

Jason shrugged. “It’s a rodent. What’s so fun about those? Don’t they carry diseases and shit?”

“Rats are notorious for being plague carriers,” Tony added.

“Oh please,” Pepper huffed.

“Hamsters can be fun,” Rhodey protested. “You two could probably build the craziest hamster habitat ever for the little guy to run around in. And don’t BS me about the whole not feeding and watering, thing. You can program a food and water distributor that JARVIS and the bots can run. I’m sure the bots would love to help with the clean up as well. DUM-E and U are kind of neat freaks when they’re not knocking shit over and creating their own messes.”

Jason raised an eyebrow and Tony mirrored the action.

“It’s up to you, Jayce,” Tony admitted. “I don’t mind getting you a hamster if you take care of it.”

“Do I look five to you?” Jason scowled, but there was a look of consideration on his face.

“Whatever, we’ll table this conversation for later,” Tony said, but knew that both he and Jason were probably going to be looking up hamsters later that day.

Rhodey and Pepper stuck around for brunch before taking Tony away for work at the office. They needed to get everything in order before they could get started on the build for Stark Tower in New York. Pepper and Tony had managed to buy out some prime real estate that was within a couple of blocks of the Chrysler Building.

By the end of Jason’s fourth week in Malibu, not only had Jason decided to buy a hamster (a little black thing with a white spot on his back that looked like a bat if you squinted and looked at it sideways) named Batster the bastard hamster, and not only had they built the BEST hamster habitat for Batster that wrapped around Jason’s new room, it also went through the wall into the gym with extensions planned to go into the workshop. Jason’s new room had been a storage space previously, but Tony had quickly outfitted it with everything and anything Jason could need in the basement level. It became common place for Tony to wake up from where he’d fallen asleep in his workshop to the sound of Jason pounding on the punching bags. Tony was still putting the
finishing touches on the androids for Jason to fight, but he wanted to reinforce and protect the circuitry and processing panels to make sure that Jason wasn’t able to completely destroy the things when he fought them.

The most surprising development of the fourth week, however, was that Pepper had worn Jason and Tony down enough to get them to agree to meet with a psychiatrist. The doc was more of a behavioral specialist, really. They had scheduled sessions with Dr. Patrick Jane on Tuesday and Thursday. They were allowed to have their sessions together, for emotional support as Pepper liked to say. Tony and Jason knew that that was a load of bullshit, but they couldn’t deny that having the other there helped. It also helped that Dr. Please-call-me-Patrick Jane turned out to be sassy and sarcastic as fuck.

The guy was good. Tony could admit that. Dr. Jane had a way of getting them comfortably talking and then somehow turn the conversation on it’s head and get them talking about some seriously personal and emotional stuff. Jason had really lost it in the middle of their first session, screaming at Dr. Jane about how he couldn’t know shit about what it was like to be killed by the Joker and then revived by a meddling immortal. The doc hadn’t batted an eye and just asked more probing questions that had Jason ranting it all out, going into every gory detail of his death at the Joker’s hand, and his resurrection, not even hiding the fact that he had been Robin. By the time he was done, Jason was drained and panting and all Tony could do was gently take hold of the boy’s wrist and draw him back down onto the couch they’d been sitting on for their session, and wrap an arm around his shoulders.

Tony had expressed with great severity after the session that if Dr. Jane ever dared to break Doctor-Patient confidentiality and speak a word about Jason to anyone, Tony would do everything in his power to ruin him. Dr. Jane had sworn he wouldn’t, saying that he saw it as an honor to help heroes like Iron Man and Robin.

Despite reassurances, Tony had JARVIS run a thorough background check on Patrick Jane and had his movements followed for the rest of the week to ensure that the man was genuine. It sure seemed like it, but Tony had JARVIS keep the surveillance up as a precaution.

Their Thursday session had been less explosive, mostly because it was focused on Tony due to the last one being primarily about Jason. Jason had no trouble helping Dr. Jane heckle information out of Tony. He even got Tony to talk about Yinsen, someone that Tony had refused to talk about, even to Tim. Especially to Tim. The guilt he felt about surviving captivity in Afghanistan at the cost of Yinsen’s life was still so overwhelming at times. He couldn’t go to sleep some nights because he wondered if he was doing enough good to make up for the bad his weapons had wrought. If he’d saved even a fraction of the number of lives his weapons had destroyed. If he’d even begun to tip the scale in a positive direction.

Unlike Jason, who tended to shout and express his feelings through the anger that the Lazarus Pit had left him with, Tony became quiet and contemplative. Where Jason was raging fire, Tony was still ice. He knew that he’d fallen into a melancholic quiet episode when Jason scooted closer and Tony was able to feel his warm living body budge up beside him, chasing away the cold night desert cave air and the cool touch of sleek machinery that he tended to dwell on.

By the end of Jason’s second month living in Malibu with Tony, the Pit-mares had become fewer, to the point that he was able to sleep most of the week without having a violent episode. The therapy and various physical outlets had really helped. Jason didn’t outright destroy the droids he was fighting either, and had even started to spar with Tony. Those were highly educational encounters for the man that left him battered and bruised in a good way whenever he did it without the Iron Man armor on. It had really freaked Pepper out the first time she’d caught him applying
concealer over a particularly dark bruise on his left cheek he’d earned due to a moment of inattention during their morning spar.

Sessions with Dr. Jane still began with a “group” session for the first hour, but they now had individual sessions as well for an additional half hour; Tuesdays were Jason, and Thursdays were Tony. Jason had also started to work a part-time PA position for Tony at Stark Industries under the name Jason Peters. He was mostly getting coffee and running little errands during the day, but he was allowed to work as Tony’s assistant the days that were spent working in the R&D labs. It allowed him to socialize with other people who weren’t Tony, Pepper, Rhodey and Happy (who wasn’t so happy to hear that Jason had sort of taken over as Tony’s sparring partner). The point was, Jason was meeting new people and making sort-of friendly acquaintances. There was a particularly pretty brunette named Abby who doubled as both Pepper and Tony’s office secretary that he was particularly fond of. The woman was a firecracker and fun to banter with. She reminded Jason of Barbara Gordon.

Back at the house, Batster the bastard hamster had also gained a few new friends to join him in the monstrous accumulation of habitats and tubes that threaded throughout most of the basement level. There was Wingnut, a grey, black and white hamster, that enjoyed monopolizing the various wheels in the habitats; Penny, a dusty orange-grey hamster that was always hard to find because he liked roaming around through the tubes; Babster, a bright orange-red hamster who liked to kick Wingnut off his wheels and steal them for herself, and a small brown hamster called Tiny Nim who preferred to roam the tubes and habitat boxes that wound through the workshop because that’s where Jason and Tony spent a lot of their time together.

Yes, it seemed like everything was fine with Jason, but the real test came halfway through his third month in Malibu, when Tim Drake was coming over for a weekend visit after a rough mission with the Teen Titans. If Tony was worried about any possible confrontation, Jason couldn’t see it. He did notice, however, how excited and happy Tony seemed to be the closer it got to Tim’s arrival.

Tim arrived just after sundown looking exhausted as he pulled into the garage on a Ducati in dark civilian clothes with a large duffel slung over his shoulder. Jason kept himself out of sight behind a work table and it’s holograms, watching as Tony set down his tools and raced over to greet the boy. The bots were squealing quite happily as well, as they joined their creator in greeting the blood son of Stark. A bubble of jealousy flared briefly in Jason’s gut, but he squashed the feeling and began a meditative breathing exercise that Dr. Jane had taught him.

Watching them, it was amazing that Jason hadn’t realized before how much Tim and Tony looked alike when he’d been researching his replacement. Seeing them stand side by side, it was obvious. They had the same fly-away black hair (when the kid wasn’t gelling it down or purposefully spiking it up), eerily similar body language, and mannerisms. Yes, their eyes were different colors, and Tim had obviously inherited his mother’s cheek bone structure, but their short, compact frames were nearly identical from the way they held themselves to their bodies’ whip-cord frame beneath their unassuming clothes. Neither looked physically impressive, but Jason knew from experience that both man and young teen were capable of flipping someone on their ass.

“Hey Dad,” Tim sighed, his smile tired as he hugged Tony.

“Timmy,” Tony returned, cradling the back of Tim’s head, much like he often did for Jason after a Pit-mare.

Jason found himself more intrigued than angry as he watched the father and son update each other on their health and recent activities. Then he froze when Tony turned around and motioned him forward. Shit. Tim’s eyes practically bugged out of his head in surprise and his body went tense.
“Well...here goes nothing,” Jason muttered under his breath.

“What’s he doing here?” Tim asked softly. Jason was rather surprised that it was more weary than angry.

“Rehabilitating,” Tony quipped, “and as you know, he’s Jason Todd. Jason, this is Tim Drake, my Godson-slash-bio-son.”

“Huh?” Jason said, frowning in confusion. He knew about the bio-son bit, but Godson?

“Ah, yes, sorry,” Tony laughed. “Even though Timmy’s mother and I agreed that Jack Drake would be his dad, she somehow also managed to get Jack to agree to make me Tim’s Godfather so that I could have some tangible and legal part in his life, no doubt. She was sneaky and manipulative. You would have liked her.”

“I really doubt that,” Tim sighed. “Mother was a high society type. Though she thought it was sweet of Bruce to take in orphans, she didn’t approve of Dick or Jason because of their backgrounds. There was a reason she stopped bringing me to Bruce’s galas as I got older.”

“She thought they’d corrupt you,” Tony said, grinning. “Oh the irony. Jayce and Dickie boy have been corrupting you since Robin first took to the sky.”

Jason frowned, not sure what to make of that statement. He’d only met the kid four months ago.

“You’ll have to tell Jay the story of how you figured out the big bat’s secret and how you became Robin,” Tony said to Tim while smirking at Jason.

Tim glanced between Jason and Tony, his face was carefully arranged in a blank expression - like Bruce’s when he was still taking in a situation and wasn’t sure how to react yet - but the tension was still there in his shoulders.

Jason shrugged. “Whatever.”

“Granted, it’s not anything ballsy like stealing the tires off the Batmobile, but Tim was only eight-nine-ish when he figured Bruce out,” Tony mused in that way that was overly nonchalant and meant to get you interested. …And succeeded.

“Kid found out about the Bat’s ID when he was nine?” Jason asked. From his research, he knew that the kid was smart, and now that he knew that he was Tony’s it made sense he’d be smarter than most kids his age, but nine years old?!

“Eight and a half,” Tim mumbled, flushing slightly.

“Tell Jay what gave the Bat away,” Tony said, his smirk growing.

“...Dick has a very distinctive skill set, including a quadruple somersault. I saw him perform it the night his parents died,” Tim said. “Then I saw Robin perform the same somersault six years later. Very few people can execute that move and there was only one person in the world Robin’s age capable of pulling it off. So after figuring out that Dick Grayson was Robin, it was only logical to deduce that Bruce Wayne was Batman.”

It was quiet for a minute before Jason couldn’t help himself. He burst out laughing, startling Tim and making Tony beam proudly.

“So Golden Boy was the one who gave it away,” Jason gasped, having to lean on U’s chassis, he
was laughing so hard. “And I suppose, baby bird, that after that, it was only logical that I, Bruce Wayne’s next ward, was the second Robin?”

“Yes?” Tim said, looking unsure and confused now instead of tense.

“Oh, that’s priceless,” Jason snickered.

“That’s nothing,” Tony crowed. “Wait till you find out how Timmy became Robin.”

And Jason found himself genuinely interested. He hadn’t cared before, because it hadn’t mattered how he was replaced. All he’d known about his replacement - about Tim - was that he’d begun his Robin training 2 years after he’d died. 2 years… That had seemed like less time than he’d thought it was fresh out of the pit. Of course, then, being Robin had felt like it was just yesterday. It was amazing the perspective he was beginning to get after all the time he’d spent these last few months with Tony (and talking to Dr. Jane).

Jason gestured to the grungy couch where Tony usually passed out for the night if he was on an engineering binge in the lab, and they settled down to listen to Tim (with some antecedents from Tony) explain how he became Robin. He wasn’t sure he believed Tim when he described how bad Bruce - Batman - had been after Jason had died, even after Tony pulled up injury and incident reports from the GCPD’s database during the two years before Tim began his training. He didn’t want to believe because he still had a grudge against the Batman - he’d admitted as much to Dr. Jane during his last private session. He did wish, however, that he could have seen the look on both Bruce and Dickie’s faces after learning that a scrawny 12 year old knew who they were. He even admired the guts the kid had for putting on Jason’s old suit and taking on Two Face. The guy was known for being one of most dangerous criminals in Batman’s Rogues Gallery for a reason.

“I… I never wanted to replace you, Jason,” Tim said softly as he finished his story. “But Batman needed a Robin. I know that I’m nowhere near as good or as strong as you or Dick, but… I could only hope… it’s all that I can ever hope… that I am good enough. That I can do the role justice. That I can give Batman the kind of support he needs now, that he got from my predecessors.”

Aw hell. Now Jason really felt like shit. Especially when his eyes caught sight of the shiny new scar on the kid’s neck. He’d done that. He’d done that to a fourteen year old boy who hadn’t deserved the brunt of his anger. His rage. Bruce and Joker, he could still blame - did blame - but this kid was innocent. And so naive, with those bright blue eyes that shone with that spark of hope he’d so often caught glimpses of in the mirror when he was that age because being Robin was amazing. When Jason was still baffled and amazed that anyone could want him, the neglected orphan child of an abusive asshole criminal father, a drug addicted mom, and a traitorous bitch of a birth mother.

And according to Tony, the Drakes had been neglectful too. They’d been gone for long periods of time and often enough that their tiny kid was regularly able to sneak out at night with little to no problem to some of the worst parts of Gotham just to take pictures of Batman and Robin.

Jason could just imagine him. A tiny little boy who looked like he was 6-7 years old instead of the 8-9 year old he really was in a large baggy sweatshirt that hid his camera, crouching behind chimney stacks, water towers, on fire escapes, and in tiny crevices just to get that perfect snapshot… so tiny no one noticed him if he held still enough, especially when shit was going down and eyes were only tracking movement. How many times had Jason missed seeing Tim, even when the kid was right under his nose?

“Don’t worry, Jason,” Tony said, “just think of it this way. Even though you never suspected anything for the two years you were Robin, just remember that Bruce had been completely clueless
for nearly four years.”

That was actually a good point and it made Jason snicker. So much for the World’s Greatest Detective.

“Please tell me you still have some of those pictures,” Jason said, looking at Tim. “I bet you’ve got some really good ones.”

“Uh, yeah,” Tim stammered. “I moved all of the hard copies here last summer.”

Tony hadn’t stopped beaming the entire time they’d been sitting on the couches. He jumped at the mention of Tim’s pictures and went to a spot in the wall that Jason had never realized was a safe. They spent the entire night looking through the photos, even the ones Tim had been reluctant to show Jason from his own Robin days.

Listening to the kid and watching him talk as he described what was going on in every picture was very informative. The kid had an Eidetic Memory like Tony so he could recall everything going on in each shot, and remembered how he’d managed to take it. It helped Jason remember a lot about his time as Robin when they went over his pictures. It was easier for him to remember the good times he’d had with Bruce and as Robin. He could remember the utter joy and elation he’d felt the first time he’d flown and patrolled the streets. Tim had captured him on his first night perfectly, his grin wide as he crested the apex of a swing, Batman’s shadow a dark protective blur behind him.

“Thank you for showing me these,” Jason said, smiling softly as he picked up a picture of him smoking a cigarette while in uniform alone on a rooftop across from the police station where the backlit outlines of Commissioner Gordon and Batman could be seen in front of the lit Batsignal.

“But you’re getting better,” Tony suggested softly, smile still hesitant, and Jason hated that his eyes kept returning to Tim’s throat. To that scar. He’d done that.

“I can’t promise that I won’t hurt you again,” Jason admitted. “I’m… several different sorts of fucked up.”

“Therapy?” Tim repeated, his eyebrows shooting into his hairline.

“Yeah, Pep’s got us seeing a shrink every Tuesday and Thursday,” Tony admitted before quickly adding, “I’m only putting up with it to help Jason.”

“You’ve got him attending regular therapy sessions… Jason, I’m honestly wondering whether or
not I should hug you right now. I’ve been asking him to seek some sort of psychiatric help since he returned from Afghanistan,” Tim said.

“Hug him anyway,” Tony said. “Jayce needs as many hugs as you do and Dick’s not here to supply his personal brand of comfort.”

Jason and Tim both made a face at that.

“Still a hugger?” Jason asked. Granted, he hadn’t been on the receiving end of many Grayson hugs, but he’d seen how much of a cuddle monster Nightwing was from observing Dick and his team.

“Like an octopus,” Tim groaned. “It would be nice if he weren’t so…”

“Clingy?” Jason snickered.

“I was going to say opportunistic, but yeah, that too,” Tim laughed.

“Oh?”

“He hugged me every chance he got after my mother passed away, and he’s started up again, now that my father is awake from his coma and is preparing to move out of the hospital,” Tim sighed.

“Speaking of Jack, how is he?” Tony asked.

“Frustrated,” Tim sighed. “But is promising to be a better and more attentive father this time around. He’s moving us out of Drake manor and into a Brownstone that’s more handicap accessible. He’s currently in a wheelchair and will be unable to use the upstairs, meaning that it’s all my space for now.”

“Must make it easy for sneaking out at night to patrol,” Tony mused.

Tim hummed in agreement and as the two continued to talk more about Jack Drake, his condition, and the pretty physical therapist he was seeing, Jason tuned the conversation out and watched Tiny Nim pater through the tubing that ran along the back shop wall. Wingnut was on one of the wheels again in the habitat above the minibar and it looked like Babster was thinking of kicking him off. Again. DUM-E and U whirred fretfully when she did, but it make Jason chuckle. And apparently regain Tim and Tony’s attention.

“What’s so funny?” Tony asked.

“Babster kicked Wingnut off a wheel again. He’s totally sulking,” Jason smirked as he watched the two hamsters he may have named after Dick and Babs.

“Oh my God, are those hamsters?! When did you get hamsters?!” Tim cried.

“They’re part of Jason’s pet therapy,” Tony explained.

“Are not,” Jason scoffed. “Batster, maybe, but the others are totally your doing, Tony. You’re the one who said he must have been lonely.”

“Batster?” Tim repeated, looking like he was torn between laughing and being appalled.

“The Bastard Hamster,” Jason said, shrugging.

“Who may or may not be named after a certain bastard bat,” Tony added.
“Oh my God,” Tim laughed, sounding a touch hysterical - clearly on the verge of losing it. “Do I even want to know what you named the others? Just how many do you have?!”

“Five.”

Tim ended up near tears he was laughing so hard when Jason told him their names. He felt quite proud of himself. His replacement wasn’t so bad after all.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter was really emotionally draining for me to write at times (hence why it's taken me so long to post it). I have a lot of love and sympathy for Jason Todd's character, so I really wanted to give him that chance at recovery. If he came off as too OC, I apologize. I didn't want to make his recovery seem too easy, so that's why the chapter didn't stop after Tony gets Jason to agree to come out to Malibu, even though that was what I'd originally intended. That and I wanted Jason and Tony to grow close again and to give Jason and Tim a chance to meet outside of Gotham and being Red Hood and Robin. I hope that this chapter was believable and kind of fun (the hamster thing came out of nowhere). Because I want this to be a happier Batman and Avengers verse, Jason and Tony are getting the help they need. I really love the bond that has developed between these two characters and with Tim's.

Next chapter will be a little more happier (I hope) and go back to the sort of playful mood the earlier chapters of this fic. Cassandra Cane and Stephanie Brown are going to make their appearances soon and the hijinks promise to be a lot of fun. Granted, I don't know much about either character (having only seen them in the Red Robin comics and read other reader's interpretations of them in fan fics) so I hope to do at least an adequate job, but they will probably end up OC. :P Any advice and info you guys can tell me about the characters would be great, guys.

ALSO! In regards to the branching off of this verse's potential storylines surrounding the events of the Avenger's movie, the results are thus:

Option 1 (where Tim gets to meet the team either during/after the events of the film) got the most votes and requests that it have a Tim/Steph pairing.

Option 2 (where Tim doesn't get directly involved or meet the team until Age of Ultron) came in second and got mostly JayTim requests

Option 3 (where Tim doesn't get involved until Civil War) came in third, which I can't blame you guys because I'm still reeling from the Tony feels that movie gave me, but there was a definite interest in a TimPeter pairing even though most requests came attached to this option.

What do these results mean? Well, I DO plan on writing ALL three options at some point (maybe even in rotation), but obviously, Option 1 as the winning option is going to be written first. However, I've kind of worked myself up to wanting to write TimPeter now (that doesn't concern the angst of the Civil War storyline), so another (possibly 4th?) story separate from these but at the same time maybe in this verse will be written about Tim and Peter Parker meeting and getting together (in the Andrew Garfield Amazing Spider-Man verse maybe?). We'll see. If you guys would like to see
that, let me know. I'll see what I can cook up. ;)

Anyway, thanks for reading and have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Parent Troubles

Chapter Summary

Jack has found out about Tim's nightly activities as Robin and blames Tony for being a bad influence. Tonight, Tim gets to see his bio-dad and the Bats out of uniform while attending a fundraiser gala, but they're not the only people he finds himself reunited with.

Takes place a few months some time after No Man's Land but before the events of the Avengers movie.

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry it's taken me so long to get this chapter out. Like the last two, it ended up longer than originally intended. It's also not as fluffy as I wanted, but we do get to see Barbara, Steph and Cass for the first time. Let me know how I do.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2012

Cassandra and Stephanie had Tim in tow as they made their way through the ballroom looking for Tony Stark so that Tim could introduce them. Tim was a bit nervous. He wasn’t sure how they’d react to his dad or how he would react to them. A lot had happened over the last six months in Gotham during No Man’s Land and all that had happened afterward. Namely, what had happened nearly a month ago, after Jack found out that Tim was Robin. No, That Tim had been Robin. He wasn’t anymore. Steph was Robin now because Jack hadn’t taken it well and Batman needed a Robin. Tim and his father had argued a lot and Jack had yelled at Tony over the phone about it too. He blamed Tony for putting ideas in Tim’s head about becoming a superhero.

When he’d managed to secretly meet up with Dick after school one day and told him what had happened, the older vigilante had found it amusing that Jack seemed to blame Tony more for Tim becoming Robin than he did Batman. Tim didn’t find it funny at all. It wasn’t Tony’s fault. Tony had had nothing to do with his decision to become Robin, though Jack didn’t seem to think so and had forbid Tim from seeing Tony. He’d even confiscated Tim’s Stark Phone. Not that it had stopped JARVIS from hacking into his new phone, or Jason from dropping by when no one but Tim was at home, but Jack didn’t need to know that. Essentially, Tim hadn’t seen Tony since that trip he’d made last fall and found out that Jason Todd was living and recuperating at the Stark Manor in Malibu. That seemed like forever ago. No Man’s Land had happened right after that and everything just seemed to come to a head and led to Jack finding out his secret.

Now Tim was attending a city fundraiser gala with Jack and Dana (his new stepmom) where (surprise!) Cass and Steph had found him and dragged him off to find Tony. Tim was surprised that Jack and Dana let him go, but - then again - neither of them knew that the girls were Batgirl and the new Robin or, apparently, that Tony was in Gotham that night. They’d probably just
assumed that they were friends of Tim’s from school wanting to hang out.

When Tim finally spotted Tony, he wasn’t surprised to see Jason “Peters” lurking in the background while Tony made small talk with some other big-wig out-of-town donators for the night’s fundraiser. Jason also happened to be scowling at a cheerful looking Dick Grayson who was saying something that only seemed to irritate Jason more. Tim smiled fondly at the sight and realized that if Barbara and Bruce were around then the whole “Bat Family” (as Tony liked to refer to them as) would be present.

“Hey, Tim.”

Ah. Speak of the devil and he shall appear, as they say.

“Hi, Barbara,” Tim said, turning to smile at the lovely young redheaded woman as she pulled up in her wheelchair next to them followed by none other than Bruce Wayne himself and Alfred Pennyworth. Cassandra moved to Barbara’s side in an instant and gave her mentor a hug.

“Bruce. Alfred,” Tim said, greeting the two men.

“Tim,” Bruce said back with a bright Brucie Wayne smile. “It’s good to see you. How have you and your father been faring?”

“We’re alright,” Tim sighed with a smile. “Still working through some things, but we’re good.”

“That’s good to hear, Master Timothy,” Alfred said genially with his usual small smile.

“Get away from me, Dickface,” Jason suddenly said loud enough to get their attention as he stomped over towards them. Tim was a little surprised when Jason stopped next to him and gave him a playful nudge with his elbow. “Sup, Replacement?”

“Jason,” Tim sighed, smiling wryly at the older teen.

“Aww! Little Wing!” Dick whined with a pout as he joined them, but Jason moved to make sure Tim stayed between them. This both irritated and amused Tim, though he could see Stephanie eyeing Jason wearily. Her first encounter with Jason had happened shortly after she’d become the new Robin and Jason had started returning to Gotham regularly as the Red Hood. It really hadn’t gone well. Red Hood hadn’t exactly beat her up or tried to kill her like he had when he and Tim had first met, but he hadn’t been particularly civil either. There had been an epic rooftop brawl though, from what he’d heard from both parties. Jason hadn’t taken Tim’s quitting the vigilante life very well.

“No! I’m done dealing with you,” Jason growled. “Go pester someone else. Don’t make me shoot you.”

“Tony didn’t give you that side arm to shoot people for being irritating, Jay,” Tim sighed.

Jason tisked, but since he hadn’t made a move for the permitted side arm they all knew he was carrying no one was worried about his idle threat.

“Dick,” Barbara said sternly, “don’t be an ass.”

Dick chuckled, flashing Jason a devilish grin, but stopped playing ring-around-the-Timmy with him and settled behind Barbara’s wheelchair so that he could give her a playful peck on the cheek.

Jason huffed, and crossed his arms before bumping his shoulder with Tim’s. “How’s civilian life
treating ya?”

Tim snorted. “How do you think? I know you and Tony have been keeping tabs on me. You’re as bad as Babs and Bruce.”

“Hey!” Barbara cried, though Bruce looked more amused than irritated by the comment.

“It’s because we care, Timmy.” Tony’s voice suddenly said before the man’s arm wrapped around Tim’s shoulders when he came up behind him.

“Yeah, nothing says that more than a daily cellphone hack and a dozen or so hidden cameras in my room,” Tim deadpanned, though everyone only grinned obnoxiously at him.

Tony laughed before letting Tim go, allowing him to turn and get a proper look at the man. He looked good.

“Hey, Timmy.”

“Hi, Tony.”

“Can I have a proper hug from my Godson now?” Tony asked, arms slightly extended. The man still wasn’t much of a touchy feely person, but he was learning. Having Jason living with him for most of the last year had been good for both of them it seemed. The man was more open to hugs these days though he was still awkward when initiating them.

Tim huffed good naturedly but accepted the hug. He’d really missed Tony. Talking to JARVIS on the phone and getting updates and messages from Jason just wasn’t the same.

“You’ve gotten taller,” Tony commented.

“Nah, you just got shorter,” Tim quipped back.

“Smart ass,” Tony snorted.

“I learned from the best,” Tim chuckled.

“Damn right you did,” Tony laughed, with a smirk. “Now are you gonna introduce me to your lady friends?”

“Sorry,” Tim said, turning to the blonde on his left. “Tony, this is Stephanie Brown.”

“The infamous Steph I’ve heard so much about?” Tony asked, grinning as he offered her his hand. “A pleasure to meet you at last.”

Steph blushed, but appeared pleased. She knew how much Tony meant to Tim, though she - like everyone else except for Jason and Bruce - didn’t know their real relationship.

“And these lovely ladies?” Tony prompted, looking over towards Cassandra and Barbara.

“Cassandra Cain and Barbara Gordon,” Tim said, gesturing to each in turn.

“Ah,” Tony said, grinning as he shot a sly look at Dick, before turning on the charm. “Now this really is a pleasure. Timmy’s told me a lot about both of you, and Bruce and Dick speak very highly of you, Miss Gordon. I’m told you’ve got quite the set up back at your place. Timmy’s even showed me some of your little gadgets. It was some very impressive tech.”
“Oh?” Barbara said, clearly flattered and then became amused when she caught sight of Dick’s scowl.

Tim sighed. Tony couldn’t help baiting Dick, could he? He was starting to doubt that those two would ever get along.

Then Barbara and Tony began to get into some complicated techno talk about computers and various projects they’d worked on while being playfully teasing and even a touch flirty. Jason and Dick seemed to have a role reversal mere minutes into the conversation. Dick looked very grumpy and kept glaring at Tony while Jason practically looked giddy upon seeing how much it was bugging Dick that Barbara was enjoying conversing with Tony. Cassandra also looked amused, though she clearly had no idea what Barbara and Tony were talking about and had moved back over to Steph and Tim to talk about school and how Tim was handling life without a cape. Bruce and Alfred were now talking to Jason, and Tim was glad to see that Jason appeared to be more relaxed when talking to Bruce. He’d heard that Jason had been visiting the manor and had begun reconciling with Bruce about the older teen’s death. Whatever therapy Jason was going through when he stayed with Tony was doing wonders.

That is when Gotham apparently decided that they weren’t allowed to have nice nights like this so soon after No Man’s Land and something exploded near the front entrance of the gallery that was hosting the gala. There were screams and cries of alarm as people began to run and push and shove their way as far from the explosion as possible.

Jason and Tony were in action almost immediately. Tim wasn’t sure where they’d been keeping Tony’s portable suitcase armor, but Tony was suited up in seconds and Jason had his sidearm drawn and was making his way after him, shoving people towards the back exits as he went. Cass, Steph, Bruce and Dick had practically vanished, leaving Tim alone with Barbara and Alfred.

“Never a quiet night,” Tim huffed.

Alfred merely quirked an eyebrow, but Barbara was grinning wryly at him.

“TIM!”

“And cue my worried parents,” Tim sighed when he caught sight of Jack and Dana pushing their way through the panicking crowd to get to where Tim, Barbara and Alfred had managed to stay out of everybody’s way by remaining where they were against a far wall. There was no way Tim was going to leave Barbara in her wheelchair to maneuver through the crowd. It wasn’t that Tim didn’t think Barbara could handle herself. Quite the opposite in fact. It’s just that in their panic, people might knock her chair over and trample her. It was safer to wait for the crowd to thin a bit.

Jack’s hand felt like a vice as it grabbed his arm and began to yank him towards the exiting crowd.

“Dad, calm down,” Tim hissed. “I’m fine.”

“Why weren’t you trying to leave?” Jack demanded. “Thought you’d stay behind and help?”

“I thought I’d keep my friend company and help her out once the crowds thinned a bit,” Tim snapped, gesturing to Barbara and her chair.

“Jack,” Dana said softly, placing a gentle hand on the man’s shoulder. “Let him go. He’s fine.”

Jack flushed slightly, though whether it was in anger, or embarrassment, Tim wasn’t sure.

“Babs, this is my father, Jack Drake, and my step-mom, Dana” Tim said once Jack had let him go.
“Dad, Dana, meet Barbara Gordon.”

“Pleasure,” Barbara said, shaking Dana’s hand.

Jack seemed to have collected himself and shook her hand as well. “Yes, a pleasure, I’m sure. But I think it’s high time we got out of here.”

Tim nodded as he looked over towards where the explosion had occurred and could hear the whine of Iron Man’s repulsors and the occasional gunshot, and saw the occasion blur of black as Batman and the others arrived to help.

“Yeah,” Tim sighed as he and the others moved away to the back of the hall where everyone was scrambling to get through the back exits. Once they got mixed up in the crowd, though, Tim found himself separated from the others. He could hear Jack yelling for him and tried moving towards the sound of his voice, but someone grabbed his arm from behind.

“My apologies, boy, but I’m going to be borrowing you for a short while,” a man’s deep voice said in his ear to be heard clearly over the din of the chaos still going on around them.

“Who are you? Let me go,” Tim hissed, shoving at the hand that had a solid grip on him.

“Now, boy, is that any way to speak to your uncle after all these years?” the man behind him asked. “Janet would be so disappointed to hear that her son has lost his manners. Although, because it’s me you’re being rude to, she might have been proud instead. She loved giving me hell.”

With a growl, Tim whirled around and faced a tall impeccably dressed, but formidable looking man wearing an eye patch over his right eye and had snow white hair. It was Slade Wilson, otherwise known as Deathstroke the Terminator to the caped crowd.

The man’s words suddenly hit him with all the metaphorical force of a speeding train. His mother was supposed to have a brother that no one had been able to track down after her death. There had been no record of him after his stint in the army nearly two decades ago. Jack had once described him as eccentric, wild and uncivil. Neither of his parents had seen him since Tim’s first birthday when Janet had apparently had a bad disagreement with him. Her maiden name was Wilson. His uncle was Slade Wilson, the Terminator: Deathstroke.

“Oh fuck,” Tim gasped, feeling slightly numb.

“Now he figures it out,” Slade grumbled before yanking him through the crowd.

Tim was reeling in so much shock he didn’t even try to resist as Slade manhandled him through the crowd and into a car.

“Come on, boy, it isn’t that shocking,” Slade snapped as he put the car in gear. “And put your seatbelt on.”

Tim numbly did as he was told as Slade smoothly pulled away from the curb and began to quickly leave the scene, though not fast enough to warrant attention from police who were just now arriving at the scene of the gala.

“Where did you think you got your athleticism from? Certainly not Jack. What exactly did you get from that moron? You look nothing like him to be honest,” Slade mused. “You look more like you’re Stark or Wayne’s brat. What the hell did Janet see in that man?”

“I am so confused right now,” Tim sighed. This man wasn’t quite what he’d expect Slade Wilson
to be like after all he’d heard about the mercenary from Dick, the older Titans, and Ravager, Rose Wilson. Who was Slade’s daughter… which made her Tim’s cousin.

“What’s there to be confused about?” Slade huffed. “Your mother married a pansy.”

“Why am I only finding out about you now?!” Tim cried.

“Because your mother told me to stay out of your lives when I showed up on your first birthday after a job and nearly blew her cover with Jack. Don’t know what the problem was. The man’s so thick he never once suspected her of being a spy,” Slade grumbled. “He’s never liked me, though, and the feeling is mutual.”

“Mother was a what?!” Tim screeched.

“A spy. Are you deaf?” Slade scowled. “She worked for the CIA. Why else would she marry Jack? He was the perfect cover and allowed her to travel all over the world on all sorts of trips for so-called business meetings and archeological discoveries.”

Tim stared out the windshield unseeing, connecting dots and putting together facts about his mother that he’d never been able to make sense of before. The constant traveling, the way she’d always seemed to keep Tim at arm’s length, like she didn’t want to get too attached to her own son, and the depths she went to, to ensure that Tim had Tony in his life. Little things like that in her mannerisms and habits suddenly made too much sense.

“Fuck,” Tim breathed again.

“Yeah, Janet’s good at messing up people’s lives. Even in death,” Slade growled.

“If my mother wanted you to stay out of my life, why make contact now?” Tim demanded.

“To keep your ass safe, of course. Janet would find some way to haunt me if anything happened to you. After she died, I got a letter asking me to keep my eye on you. Not that it mattered. You’d already become Robin by the time I tracked you down. So now we’re going to have this little family reunion fast before the Bats and Iron Moron realize you’re missing and try to track us down,” Slade said, though he looked a little too gleeful at the prospect.

“Wait, so the robots attacking the gala weren’t your doing?” Tim asked.

“No, but they provided one hell of a distraction, and I’m not one to let a good opportunity pass by.” Slade smirked, pulling the car into the back of a parking lot and got out. He had put a hat on to cover his distinctive white hair and had the brim pulled down low to leave his eye and eyepatch in shadow. “Come on, runt. We’ve got some things to talk about before your guard dogs start sniffing out the trail.”

Tim cautiously followed Slade onto a busy street. Slade grabbed him by the arm so that they didn’t lose each other on their way down into the subway. Tim had some trouble keeping up with the man’s long strides, but he managed not to trip over himself too many times before Slade shoved him into a maintenance room that had a well hidden secret passage into a long hall that went on for blocks and led to a safehouse of sorts. Tim was surprised to find himself in a nice townhouse. In fact, if he wasn’t mistaken, it was only a few blocks from his school. That was unnerving. How long had Slade been watching him?

“So what’s this about?” Tim asked.

“This,” Slade said, pulling an envelope out of a wooden chest on the mantle in the living room.
“This letter was sent to me by someone after her death was confirmed. An old CIA buddy, no doubt.”

Tim took the envelope with trembling hands. The addresses on the envelope and the letter inside were all written in Janet Drake’s neat cursive.

Slade,

If you are reading this, then I am dead. Looks like I wasn’t the death of you after all, big brother. I know we haven’t spoken in years and I told you to stay out of my life and Tim’s, but now that I’m dead I wish to take it back. If I’m dead, it’s likely that Jack is dead too, and that means that Timothy only has Tony Stark. As much as I like that man, I don’t fully trust him to take care of Tim. Especially now that he’s Iron Man. Consider it my dying wish that you watch over my son. I know you’re shit with kids, but just keep your eye out for him, Slade. He is a Wilson in all but name and that’s going to get him into serious trouble one of these days. He’s going to be great someday. You love to say that I am the reason your hair went prematurely white, so if that’s true, then Timothy is going to make you bald. There are a million things I want to say to you, my dear older brother, but half of them are curses and the other half is just too sappy to write down without me wanting to vomit, and will have you wanting to gouge out your eye, so I’ll spare the both of us.

I’ve left a box of things for Tim at your Gotham address for when he’s older. Please make sure he gets it.

Take care of him for me, Slade.

Your baby sister,

Janet

Tim read the letter twice before he folded it back up and handed it back to his uncle.

“There’s one for you too,” Slade said, pulling out a second envelope from the chest, this one still sealed and unread as far as Tim could tell as he turned it over in his hands. There was no address. All it said was “Tim” in his mother’s neat cursive on the front. With slightly shaking hands, Tim opened the envelope and took out a page of crisp stationary.

My dearest son,

If you are reading this letter, then I am dead and Slade has found you. He is your uncle, Timothy. My older brother, whom I trust enough with your life, despite whatever I’ve said about him to you. Though his morals may be questionable, family means a lot to him.

I know you think that I don’t know about your new nightly habit of sneaking out to train with the Batman, but I know that you’re following Tony’s example and are training to become the next Robin. Depending on how long it takes my letter to find Slade, you may already be Robin and have heard about him from in a less than spectacular light.

But I know you will give him a chance if only on the merit of him being your uncle. There is more to him than the mercenary, Timothy. There is more to him than Deathstroke the Terminator. He
just may be a complete ass about it at first unfortunately. He’s sadly a touch insane, but his black heart is still in the right place and is capable of some emotion.

I want you to know that I love you very much, Timothy. I know I never said it often. I know I was hardly there for you, but I did love you. I loved you enough to make sure that you had Tony and that he remained a part of your life. I loved you enough to make sure I wrote one of these letters before every trip I took in case I met my inevitable end. Slade should have them all. I know that it can’t ever make of for all the time lost between us, or make up for how horrible of a mother I was, and how much of your life I’ve missed, but it’s all I have left to give you.

I love you with all my heart, my darling son, and am so proud of you.

Your mother,

Janet Wilson-Drake

Tim swallowed as he read the letter, holding back tears. His mother had known, and seemed to have approved of Tim’s actions to some degree. However, She was entrusting his safety to Slade fuckign Wilson, even though she had to have known that Deathstroke and Batman had clashed on more than one occasion. Just because his mother and uncle had been staying out of each other’s lives didn’t mean that they hadn’t been keeping tabs on the other’s activities. You can’t completely avoid someone if you don’t have any idea of where they are afterall.

“Why is my family life so messed up?” Tim bemoaned.

“Because you’re a Wilson by blood, sister’s spawn,” Slade chuckled softly.

“But why are you only showing up now?” Tim asked. “Mother died nearly two years ago.”

“I didn’t get my letter until last year,” Slade sighed, taking a seat in a wingback chair. “As you already know, we hadn’t spoken in years. She kept to her life and I kept to mine, making sure our paths never crossed. I have safe houses that she didn’t know about. She sent her letter to the last place she knew I was living. It got forwarded a bunch of times until it ended up at our idiot brother’s address in New York.”

“Wait, I have another uncle?” Tim gasped.

“We don’t like to talk about Wade,” Slade growled. “He is certifiably insane. Can’t take that moron anywhere. He got some unsanctioned experimental bullshit done to him and now he’s practically immortal. Can’t tell you how many times I’ve tried to kill him, but the idiot won’t die and now I’m stuck with him. Why couldn’t it have been Janet? Her kind of crazy was easier to deal with.”

Tim stared at Slade in alarm.

“Just stay away from a guy in a black and red suit that’s similar in design to mine and goes by the name of Deadpool and you’ll be fine,” Slade sighed. “Point being, short stuff, I didn’t get Janet’s letter because it was forwarded to our crazy brother who forgot he had it until his girlfriend found it while she was cleaning house. Then the annoying bastard decided to personally track me down and deliver it. By then you’d already been Robin for a year, Jack was awake from his coma, and you didn’t really need me. I have kept tabs on you, though. You maintained impressive grades considering how you were spending your nights.”
“Uh, thanks?” Tim said.

“In all seriousness, kid,” Slade said, “I wanted to talk to you tonight to let you know that I’m around if you need me. I might not always be here, but if I am in Gotham, I can be found at this address. You can come here whenever you need to. It’s not changing.”

“You’re not afraid that Batman might already know this address?” Tim asked.

“Kid, so long as I’m not up to anything in his city, the Bat and I leave each other alone. And even if I am up to no good in this city, I sure as hell am not staying here when I do it,” Slade laughed. “And speaking of the Bat, I better get you back home before he and Iron Man start looking for you.”

“That’s it?” Tim asked, “You just drag me off, show me a couple letters Mother wrote years ago, and just send me on my way? Wouldn’t it have been a lot easier to just approaching me at the gala and show me the letters there?”

“And let the Bats and your Dad listen in?” Slade scoffed. “Look, kid, I don’t care if they know we’re related, but I figured you’d appreciate a private conversation considering the fact no one outside of the CIA knew that your mother was a spy or that her two brothers were still alive after leaving the army, one of whom after being dishonorably discharged.”

“You?” Tim asked

“No, Wade,” Slade grunted. “I went into the CIA for a short time before I got into the mercenary business. I swear Janet only joined up too just to piss me off. Speaking of which, if for whatever reason you do need me and I’m not here, call this number,” he said as he flipped open Tim’s phone (when the hell had he taken that?) and started hitting buttons. “I put it under Winters. It’ll call a friend of mine, who’ll get in touch with me. If you can’t get a hold of him and he doesn’t get back to you no matter how many times you call within a twenty-four hour period, then - and only only if it’s an emergency - call Wade, whose number I’m also putting in here.”

“Wait, didn’t you say that I should stay away from him?” Tim asked, confused.

“Unless it is an emergency,” Slade repeated with a sigh. “He’ll probably talk your ear off when you call, but he’ll get here faster than anyone else since he’s only a couple hours away in New York. Oh! Almost forgot.’”

Slade got up from his chair, took the chest off the mantle and handed it to Tim.

“It’s full of letters and things from Janet for you kid. There are hundreds of them,” Slade said.

Tim took the chest, examining the ornate carvings all over it’s wooden surface. Curious, Tim flipped open the lid and saw bound bundles of hundreds of letters and a few large envelopes that looked like they held objects in addition to the letters. Slade gently set Tim’s letter on top of everything and shut the chest.

“Don’t open anything until you’re home alone,” the man said gently. “Once you start, it’ll be hard to stop.”

Tim nodded, wordlessly following Slade - his uncle - out of the townhouse and into a garage where a sleek but unremarkable black car waited. The drive to Tim’s house was a quiet one. Neither spoke until Slade pulled the car up to the Drake house, where Jack burst through the door almost the moment Tim stepped out.
“TIM!”

Tim wasn’t surprised to see Dana right behind him or a couple figures moving slightly in the shadows. The Red Hood’s helmet gleamed briefly in the tree next to Tim’s bedroom window.

“Where the hell have you been?!” Jack cried, racing forward, gripping Tim’s arms tight and shaking him slightly.

“Relax, Jackie boy,” Slade drawled as he got out of the car and came around to stand by the passenger door. “He was with me.”

“You!” Jack growled, pushing Tim behind him as if to protect him. “What are you doing here, Slade?”

“I’m just bringing my nephew back home,” Slade said, smirking. “He got separated from you in the crowd at the gala and I offered him a ride home. We did take a detour over to my place, however. I had a few things of Janet’s that she wanted me to pass on to the boy in the event of her death.”

“It’s true dad,” Tim said gently. “Mother left a chest of things for me at his house that she didn’t want me to have until I was older.”

“What things?” Jack demanded.

“Letters, mostly,” Slade said, shrugging. “Janet was a practical woman. She wrote Tim a letter before every trip you two took when globe trotting in the event that something might happened to her. Now if you don’t mind, Jack, it’s late and I’ve got an early flight to catch tomorrow morning. I’m sure Tim is also anxious to go through the things Janet left him. Do call if you need anything, Tim.”

“Uncle Slade!” Tim called out, shoving past his father to stand before the man. “Thank you.”

Slade’s smile actually looked soft and genuine when he looked down at Tim. He hefted the chest out of his car and gave it back to Tim.

“You’re welcome, Tim,” he said. “I know that Janet would be very proud of who you’ve become.”

Tim nodded, stepping back to stand by Jack and Dana as he watched Slade get back in his car and drive away. Tim sighed, staring down at the chest in his arms.

“Please excuse me, Father,” Tim said softly as he headed inside the house.

“Tim, wait!” he heard Jack say, but Dana stopped him.

“Jack, let him be,” he barely heard her say in a soft tone. “He’s home. He’s safe. He wasn’t out fighting.”

Tim couldn’t hear anymore of their conversation as he slipped upstairs and into his room. He set the chest on the foot of his bed and stared at it for a moment, trying to reconcile all that had happened in the last couple of hours.

He was pulled from his thoughts when the window opened and Red Hood slipped in with Robin and Batgirl.

“Tim!” Robin cried softly as she practically tackled him into a hug. “Are you alright? The boss
man was really worried when O reported that you’d disappeared.”

“Tony was too,” Jason sighed as he pulled off his helmet. “What the hell happened, Baby Bird?”

“Baby Bird?” Robin repeated, voice squeaking a bit as she stared at the young man in surprise. Obviously she’d never heard that particular nick name out of the many Jason had given Tim over the last year.

“He’s tiny and he was Robin,” Jason snapped defensively. “Kid was practically a baby compared to Dickface and I when we wore the uniform.”

Batgirl said nothing, but the slight shaking in her shoulders told Tim that she was laughing at the exchange. She sidled up to him, her full face mask giving nothing away.

“You okay?” she asked. “What’s in the box?”

Though she spoke quietly, Jason and Robin heard her and stopped talking.

“Letters,” Tim answered, flipping the lid open. “They’re all from my mother.”

“Why the hell did Slade have them?” Jason asked.

“Mother left them with him, I guess,” Tim said, picking up the first bundle of letters. There was fifty in the stack held together by a couple rubber bands. All had his name on the front. “Slade is her older brother.”

It got dead quiet in the room.

“You have gotta be shitting me,” Jason gasped. “Fucking Deathstroke is really your uncle?! That wasn’t just some bullshit cover story?”

“That’s not all,” Tim sighed, handing him the letter he’d read at Slade’s.

Jason’s eyes got bigger and bigger as he read it. Robin and Batgirl were up on their tiptoes to read over his shoulders.

“She knew?” Jason whispered.

“Yes,” Tim sighed.

“Do you think she knew who Batman is?” Robin asked.

“Highly likely,” Tim sighed. “My guess is that she did and was too smart to say so outright in her letter in case it fell into someone else’s hands.”

“I’m still wrapping my head around the part where Slade fucking Wilson is your uncle,” Jason growled. “Tony’s not going to like it.”

“Neither is the boss man,” Robin sighed.

“Well too bad,” Tim snapped, taking his letter back from Jason and shutting the chest full of letters. “I can’t help who my family is. It’s not my fault my mother was a spy and has two crazy mercenaries for brothers.”

“Your mom was a spy?!” the trio gasped.
“CIA,” Tim answered shortly. “So was Slade until he got into mercenary work, apparently.”

“No wonder you’re so good at being sneaky,” Jason mused. “You get that from your mom’s side apparently.”

“Yeah,” Tim chuckled darkly. “Got just the right amount of crazy in my blood too with my mother being a Wilson and all.”

“Tim,” Robin said softly, reaching out a comforting hand.

Tim stepped out of reach.

“If it’s all the same to you guys, I’d like to be alone right now. I’ve… got a lot to think about.”

He didn’t hear or see them leave, but he knew he was alone after a few minutes of silence. Letting out a long tired sigh, he got out of his suit, showered, and put on a pair of comfortable sweats and a large old worn t-shirt that he was pretty sure had been Dick’s at one point in time. Then he crawled onto his bed and stared at the chest full of letters.

When he finally mustered the courage to open the chest again, he pulled out the first bundle and undid the rubber bands. It wasn’t until he moved to open the first letter in the bundle that he realized that the back of each envelope was dated. The bundle he held dated back a year before his mother died. Putting the bundle back together, Tim searched through the chest until he found him mother’s first letters, dating back to just a few months after he’d been born.

Then he began to read them. The letters that covered the first two years of his life weren’t that long, but they were full of lovely sentiments and Janet’s hopes for his future. At least a third of the letters, however, had been written during her trips and occasionally had pictures of the places she’d been. As he went through the years through the letters, they got longer, and he occasionally found pictures of her with Jack or Tim as a child. He had found one particular letter that had been written a few months after his third birthday with a picture of Tim sitting in Dick Grayson’s lap with Janet, Jack and Dick’s parents standing behind them.

Her letter was full of reassurances that even though Dick’s parents were dead, that the boy would be fine. That she believed that there was a life after death and that Dick was sure to see them again after he died, and that Tim would get to see her again when his time came. It was one of her longest letters, one that she’d written in the event that she might die during the trip that she and Jack had taken soon after two of the three Flying Grayson’s had fallen to their deaths. Tim kept that letter and the picture out and set it on the bedside table in a small pile of letters that he wanted to reread later.

Tim kept reading through the night going through letter after letter until he came back to the last one she wrote - the first he’d read - and read it again. He let the tears flow, feeling true grief for the loss of the woman who had been his mother, who had been made real again through these letters. He felt like he knew her more now than he had when she had been alive. He missed her, mourned for her, and felt emotions that he felt hadn’t been there the day of her funeral when he’d watched them put her in the ground. He hadn’t known that woman then, but he knew her now and it pained him that he only got to know her after she was gone.

He wished that he could have spent more time with her. He wished that he could have gone on some of the trips that she’d written about and taken pictures of. That he could see the places she’d found and bought the trinkets that were kept in the larger envelopes. One trinket in particular was a necklace made of thick hemp cord with seaglass beads woven in the fibers and had a shark’s tooth dangling from it. If her letter that came with the necklace was to be believed, she’d gotten the
shark’s tooth from a diving expedition that nearly went wrong somewhere in the Pacific Isles where a great white shark nearly took a bite out of her and her scuba instructor. Janet had found and collected the tooth from her wrecked diving bag that had been recovered and had a local Samoan weaver make the necklace and carve symbols of strength and love into the shark tooth.

Tim put the necklace on his side table on top of the letters he’d kept out. There were quite a few of them.

He jumped when he heard a knock at his the door before Dana slipped in.

“Did you stay up all night?” she asked.

Tim glanced out the window and realized that the sun was starting to appear in the sky. It was a good thing it was Sunday and he had no school.

“I guess I did,” Tim said, his voice a little hoarse from his crying.

“May I?” Dana asked, gesturing to the bed.

Tim nodded, putting away the rest of the letters that he wasn’t keeping out, as she sat beside him on the bed.

“Your father and I had a talk last night,” Dana said.

“I swear, I didn’t do anything,” Tim groaned. “I didn’t try to go back and fight whatever the hell attacked last night’s gala. I was lost in the crowd trying to find you but Slade showed up, dropped the bomb that he is my uncle and told me he had some things from my mother, gave me the chest, and drove me home. That’s it. Nothing happened.”

“I believe you,” Dana said, smiling softly. “Do you want to talk about her? I know Jack doesn’t like to, but I am here if you want to, Tim.”

“Thanks, Dana. I know why my father doesn’t talk about her. I don’t either. But now there’s… this,” he said, gesturing to the chest. “Before, there wasn’t anything to really talk about. I barely knew her. To be honest, I barely knew either of them. I didn’t start getting to know my father until after he woke up from his coma. It’s kind of hard to talk about someone you didn’t know.”

Dana nodded slowly. “And now?”

“Now… now I know what she must have been like,” Tim whispered, his throat tightening like it was trying to choke him as the words started spilling out. “I know how much she loved me. I know that I was always in the back of her mind. She wrote to me before every trip in case it was ever her last. She wrote all those letters like they might be the last thing she would ever get to say to me. And then there are the ones she wrote while she was on her trips about all the places she’d been and the things she’d seen. She wrote about where she’d want revisit to take me on trips with her one day. She wrote about how she wanted to show me the Pacific Islands for my sixteenth birthday, about her plans to get Tony to come out with us and trick him into paying for the whole thing.”

Tim’s strangled laugh turned into a wrenching sob.

“For my eighteenth she wanted to take me to New Zealand to visit and hike places the Lord of the Rings movies were filmed because she knew how much I love those movies. She wanted to track down and introduce me to Slade and reconcile with him. She regretted that she hadn’t tried to find her brother after his wife and son had died. She regretted that she’d spent so little time with me.
She regretted being an absent mother. She regretted putting her job first and me second even though she thought about me all the time. She’s written so much and now that I’ve read everything that’s in that damn chest, all I want is to find more!

“I want to find her journals and the diaries she refers to in her letters. I want to find them so that I can know what her childhood was like with her brothers. To know how she met and fell in love with my father. I want to know more about her trips, and her life that I never knew about aside from the destinations. I want to know so much more about this woman I never knew when she was alive, and feel awful that I felt nothing when she was buried.

“I couldn’t look past her absence and didn’t love her as much as she loved me. She says it in every letter and I can feel it bleeding off the pages. It kills me that I can’t even recall a single time that I told her I loved her. But I must have, right?? She had to know that I loved her. That I only wanted to be with her. Oh, God! I wish I could see her one last time if only to tell her that I’ve read every letter. That I love her as much as she loves me. That I want to make her proud, that I want to take those trips and see the things she wanted me to see. I wish I’d said goodbye.” Tim choked. “I never got to say goodbye.”

It was like a dam had broke. His tear ducts were working overtime, producing wave after wave of tears. He found himself sobbing into Dana’s shoulder as she pulled him into her arms, her hand in his hair, shushing him and saying incomprehensible but soothing words. He wasn’t sure how long it went on, but when the tears finally stopped, and his breathing - though still hitching - was returning to normal, he found Jack sitting on his other side, gently pulling him out of Dana’s arms and into his own. They didn’t exchange any words. Jack just held Tim and began rocking him slightly, as if he were a little boy again. The action was more soothing than anything he could have possibly said, and Tim felt himself slipping into unconsciousness.

Before he succumbed to sleep, however, he vowed to be a better son. He promised himself that he wouldn’t let Jack remain a stranger in his life. That he wouldn’t have to bury the man without knowing who he was, like he had with his mother. He might miss being Robin, maybe even regret giving up the cape, but he would give it all up again to have this chance to know his father. To know Jack, and get to know Dana better. He swore that he would stop dwelling on what he missed about being a vigilante, and focus more on his family.

Chapter End Notes

I KNOW! I KNOW! I totally failed to drag myself out of the darkness and keep this a fluffy piece like I’d intended. I found myself crying as I wrote the ending of this chapter because of all the feels. I actually had to get up an walk away from it for an hour before wrapping it up. I’m actually kind of mad with how depressing this chapter ended, but I just couldn't deal with writing more for this chapter. I'll try to post a new chapter soon that'll be nothing but pure fluff. Maybe I'll write about Jason and Tim racing hamsters or something.

I'm really kind of bummed that Steph and Cass weren't in this as much as I'd originally wanted. Maybe it's because I'm not as familiar with their characters as I am with everyone else's, that I kept hitting road blocks when writing them in scenes. And speaking of characters that I'm not familiar with, I totally hadn't intended for Slade to show up this chapter, but he muscled his way in anyway and then decided to go "oh hey! Here's some angst for you" and dumped a chest full of letters from Janet into
Tim's lap. I must apologize if Slade comes off incredibly OC in this fic. Some of you may have caught my hints that Janet had a brother that could possibly be Slade or Wade Wilson and I have had some readers guess that her brother would turn out to be one or the other but you're all right! It's both! Though technically it was Slade that was being referred to in chapter six's funeral scene because (as Slade said this chapter) "we don't like to talk about Wade." So yeah. Tim's family situation continues to get crazier and crazier. The kid was never meant to be normal, the poor boy. XD

I hope I did alright writing Slade, Cass and Steph (even though the girls weren't in the chapter much). I realize that they are perhaps the most OC of any of the characters that I've written so far, and I'm afraid that it shows that I'm just not as familiar with them as I am with the others like Bruce, Tim, Tony, Dick and Jason (the last of which I find kinda funny because I haven't read his character in any comic apart from the new 52 Red Hood and the Outlaws comics). If you guys have any advice about writing Slade, Steph and Cass's characters, please tell me because the only thing I've read Steph and Cass in is the Red Robin comics. Slade, however, I've seen in Teen Titans, Young Justice, the DC animated movies, and CW's Arrow (all of which are different characters in their own ways, especially in age). The Slade I'm kind of leaning towards and referring to character-wise, is the Slade Wilson in the Arrow tv series on CW.

The Slade Wilson in my fic is probably in his early to mid 40s, but looks like he's in his 30s because of the procedure that gave Slade his regenerative abilities and heightened senses. For the sake of simplifying things (and because I'm not familiar with his comic origins except for what's written on wikipedia), let's just say that Slade has the same regenerative abilities as Wolverine and Deadpool, and went through a sanctioned secret government experiment that was very similar to the one Wade (who I'm gonna base off the Deadpool movie for most if not all of Wade's backstory and characterization) went through but didn't have any adverse results because he didn't have cancer, though it didn't regenerate his eye because that happened before he went through the procedure.

Alright gang, technically this is where this fic ends things before we get to the events surrounding the Avenger's film. I won't change this fic's status to complete just yet, however, because there are moments I want to go back to and write little chapters for, like hamster racing, and happy times with a younger Timmy interacting with Tony, Pepper, Happy and Rhodes. If there's anything you guys would like to see, please feel free to drop a suggestion in a comment or something.

This of course means that I'm finally getting ready to actually write the Avengers plot lines. As you know (If you ever bother to read these author's notes) I have 3 main plot lines that I'm toying with and am going to write as their own separate stories that'll all exist bus as their own AU in this same verse. So for all three plots, this is where the plot lines diverge into their own realities, so keep your eye out for new fics under the new Tim Drake-Wayne-Stark series tag that I've added. :)
Reader Request Drabbels: Death, Butlers, and Hamster Racing

Chapter Summary

By reader requests we have:

Tony reacting to Jason's death (for Guest)

A sort of "Alfred and JARVIS snippet" (for @Nobodystormcrow)

And Tim and Jason hamster racing (for everyone who loved the hamster pet therapy thing and wanted to see more)

Chapter Notes

Holy crap it's been 4 (nearly 5) months since I posted anything for this, hasn't it? O_O SORRY!

I had the hamster bit written a few months ago, but got so caught up in ending my contract with my old job, moving to South Dakota with my sister, and trying to update all of my Digimon fics for August 1st while also trying to find a new job. I am happy to say that I successfully fulfilled my old job contract, moved to a new state with little to no incident, was able to update all of my promised Digimon stories, and found a new job that I start on 9/11. What a great day to start a new job, huh? ;P

Also, I know you're all waiting for the next installment that will introduce the Avengers character to the mix, so be reassured that I have started working on it! ;) I'll leave a note here (more than likely with another set of drabbles) when I have posted the first chapter for the sequel spin-offs. Thanks for reading and enjoy!

ANYWAY! So read the short notes before each drabble, and I hope you enjoy! Thanks for reading, and comments are appreciated. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

For Guest - “Tony's reaction to Jason's death.”

- Takes place the day after Tony returns from Afghanistan and has done the interview.
- Remember that Tony's abduction by terrorists coincided with Jason's death in Ethiopia.

2008

Tony was down in his workshop tinkering with the design for a new suit, calling it Mark II. He was scrapping a lot of what went into the original suit that he (and Yinsen) had made (together) to escape the Ten Rings, but here at home he had better materials and more resources to work with. He had JARVIS and his bots for one (though they didn’t - couldn’t - replace Yinsen). He would
make this suit better. Stronger. Quicker to assemble (so he couldn’t lose - couldn’t fail - another Yinsen).

“Sir, Mr. Wayne is here to see you.”

Tony stopped, startled at the sudden announcement, and immediately saved and cleared away the Mark II suit’s designs. Bruce didn’t need to see that. Yet. His friend would get the wrong idea. The holos were gone not a moment too soon before Bruce stormed into the shop, staring at Tony like he was seeing a ghost.

“Tony?”

Jesus, Bruce sounded like he was, seeing a ghost.

“Hey, Brucie,” Tony said, struggling to put on his usual smug smirk. The bruises on his face weren’t too happy with him. They only reminded him that his whole body ached terribly. His crash had been anything but gentle in the desert, even if it had been in a sand dune and the suit had been padded as well as it could have been.

Bruce actually made a strangled choking sound, his eyes notably taking in every blemish on Tony’s skin and the discarded sling Tony probably shouldn’t have taken off. Then the man in all of his 6’2 height and 210 pounds with a freakish 40% of it being pure muscle (Tony’s helped Bruce with some of his suit’s, ok, it isn’t weird that he knows the man’s dimensions) came marching up and pulling Tony into an intense, but gentle hug.

Tony froze at first, not used to being engaged in physical body contact of this magnitude from other people apart from Tim and Jason, but this was Bruce, his oldest friend, and if he could be comfortable with anyone initiating a hug, it should be with Bruce. Still, part of him couldn’t help freaking out.

He took measured breaths to help hold back the ensuing panic he was starting to feel building up. This was just Bruce, dammit all! He wasn’t in Afghanistan. He wasn’t stuck in the caves with terrorists. He was at home. He was in his workshop - his safe place - and he was with one of his oldest (and dearest? Best?) friends. He still couldn’t muster up the composure to return the hug, but he did manage to pat Bruce on the back.

Bruce, no doubt sensing Tony’s discomfort, let him go but held him at shoulder’s length, as if he couldn’t bare to lose physical contact with Tony. He knew that his smothering wasn’t wanted; that it couldn’t be accepted. Though the prolonged contact still made Tony feel a bit twitchy, it helped him calm down a little and regain his composure.

“Sorry,” Bruce muttered. “I know how you are about touch.”

Tony gave his friend another strained smile. “It’s alright. You looked like you needed it. To confirm I’m not dead and all I’m sure.”

Bruce gave him a pained smile back, but his eyes still looked haunted. There was little relief in his friend’s expression.

“Bruce? What’s wrong?” Tony asked, tentatively reaching up to grasp one of Bruce’s shoulders with his good hand.

Bruce’s expression crumbled for a moment, his head bowing.

“Bruce?”
“It’s… been a bad few months, Tone,” Bruce said, his voice so soft it was nearly a whisper. “First, you disappeared in Afghanistan. Then… Jason… He’s dead, Tony.”

Bruce choked off for a second, returning with a wet quiver in his voice, and Tony felt his heart seize as Bruce rambled on about the whole thing. Ethiopia. The Joker. The bomb. Bruce getting there just minutes too late. It felt like he was back in the caves in Afghanistan with that damn battery still attached. The miniaturized arc reactor hummed uncomfortably in his chest. He really needed to redesign and make a new more functional one. He’d have to make a refined one soon, like Yinsen suggested, one that was much more stable and… fuck, Yinsen was dead. Tony, for all his genius, hadn’t been able to create the suit with optimal software. It had taken too long to download. Yinsen had bought him time for it to finish and he’d died. He’d been shot and there’d been so much blood.

“Tony!”

And Jason had died that way too, hadn’t he? Bruce had been too late, just like Tony had. Mere minutes had been the difference between Yinsen and Jason living. If only Tony had build a better suit. Had made Bruce better trackers for the Robin suit. Had insisted that Bruce make Jason a better suit that would have protected him better. That damned suit! Tony could just envision Jason lying there on the cave floor (no, not a cave, a warehouse, Tony) bleeding from various bullet holes (no, cuts and bruises, the Joker had beaten him), waiting for him (Batman) to get there, so that they could escape together…

“TONY!”

Tony’s head snapped up to look at Bruce and realized that he’d sunken to the floor and was struggling to breath. Bruce was clinging to him and trying to get Tony to calm down. JARVIS could be heard in the background reciting the date and weather over and over in a soothing tone.

It took a while (an embarrassing long while) before Tony regained any semblance of a normal breathing pattern, having to rely on Bruce helping him through a breathing exercise. On the bright side, he wasn’t twitchy anymore about maintaining prolonged physical contact with Bruce now. Both of them were huddled on the floor together, ignoring each other’s tears as they pulled themselves together through their grief.

“Sorry,” Tony croaked. “It’s just…” Yet Tony couldn’t find it in himself to give voice to his pain like Bruce had. He couldn’t talk about Yinsen. Not yet. Not when he could still see the man every time he closed his eyes. And now his image blurred together and change into Jason.

Logically Tony knew that there was nothing he could have done about Jason. He hadn’t known. He’d been dealing with his own brand of hell, but he couldn’t stop the nagging what-ifs at the back of his mind. What if he’d gone with Rhodey’s convoy instead? What if he had updated Batman’s equipment before leaving, instead of putting it off until after he’d returned? What if he’d insisted more on updating Robin’s uniform when he’d learned that Bruce had taken on another kid? Why hadn’t he insisted on it? Why hadn’t he been in touch with the kid more? He knew things had been getting tense with Bruce, so why hadn’t he checked in every once in awhile?

But none of those thoughts mattered right now. They couldn’t change the fact that Jason Peter Todd was dead. All he could do was move forward.

He’d make the Mark II. He’d update all of Batman’s equipment. He’d work to make sure his friend was protected. He’d work on better kevlar for police and the military (God, all those young army men and women who’d been killed because of him). He wouldn’t make weapons anymore (the Mark II armor didn’t count, he wasn’t going to sell that), but he could damn well make sure
that the men and women who had to deal with the weapons that were still out there (in the hands of the enemy) were protected so that they didn’t have to pay for his mistakes more than they already had. He made a mental note to make sure that SI provided for the men and women who’d been killed in Afghanistan because of him. He’d make sure that the Maria Stark Foundation got on helping and donating to the Wounded Warrior Project and other injured military relief aids. He might not build weapons anymore, but there were more (better) ways to save lives and protect the people of the US. He was going to remake Stark Industries. Make it into something that would help save lives rather than take them. Something that Yinsen and Jason could be proud of.

For @Nobodystormcrow - “JARVIS and Alfred snippet, please?”

- Takes place a month after Tim starts Robin training.
- I wasn't too sure what the requester meant by "JARVIS and Alfred snippet," but this turned out into trying to show a bit of Tim's interactions and thoughts on his relationship with both JARVIS and Alfred
- basically ended up being a drabble about the Batfam learning about Tim and Tony's Godparent/Godchild relationship ^_^''

2009

Tim let out a sigh as he turned off the nice warm water from the shower in the Batcave that had help sooth his sore and aching body. Mr. Wayne wasn’t going easy on him at all with his training, always pushing Tim to his limits. They’d only been training for less than a month, but Tim could already tell he was improving. He’d lasted longer today than he had during their previous sparring sessions.

After Tim pulled on a fresh pair of sweatpants and a loose T-shirt out of the stash of clothes that were kept in the Batcave for these occasions, he reentered the main part of the cave and noticed that Alfred Pennyworth was waiting with a plate of cookies and hot chocolate. Bruce was nowhere to be seen, undoubtedly getting ready to head out for patrol.

“Thanks, Alfred,” Tim smiled as he took a cookie off the plate.

“My pleasure, Master Timothy,” the butler said kindly. “A room has been made up for your stay with us this weekend…”

Tim nibbled on a cookie as Alfred’s words flowed over him. He hadn’t really noticed it at first, due to his nerves and wish to make a good impression on Mr. Wayne and Dick Grayson, but now that he’d been relatively accepted into the group and was being trained to be the next Robin, Tim had started to notice how similar Alfred was to JARVIS in tone and cadence in their voices as they talked. There was also a similar level of snark and sarcasm that dripped with every exasperated comment they aimed at those they served.

It was funny, but despite the fact that Alfred, being an older man, had a more, well, older, sounding tenor, compared to JARVIS’s younger sounding voice, they conveyed such similar emotions and styles of speech. So similar in fact, Tim often thought that if JARVIS had an actual physical form, he’d look a lot like a younger Alfred, perhaps. Yes, he knew about Edwin Jarvis, whom JARVIS had been named for and he’d seen pictures, but it was hard to put JARVIS’s voice to Edwin Jarvis’s face.
“Master Timothy?”

“Sorry, Alfred.” Tim said, smiling sheepishly. “I must have spaced out.”

“Must be some rather heavy thoughts to distract you from Alfred’s cookies and hot chocolate,” a familiar voice piped up.

Tim spun around in his seat and spotted Nightwing as the older teen leaned over the handlebars on his cycle, grinning up at Tim and Alfred.

“Not really,” Tim said, hunching his shoulders. “I was really just thinking that Alfred reminded me of someone I knew, that’s all.”

“Oh really?” Nightwing chuckled as he slid off his bike and flipped up to where they were so that he could snatch up one of Alfred’s cookies. “Know a lot of old fashioned English butlers that keep their superhero charges in line?”

Before Tim could answer, his cellphone rang. Tim frowned as he pulled it out of his pocket, only to find that it was not ringing. Then he realized that it had to be his other phone - the one that Tony had given him. He could have sworn that he’d turned it off before he started training that evening.

“You have two cellphone, Master Timothy?,” Alfred mused, eyeing the sleeker second phone. It was obviously Stark Tech. Even Nightwing was raising an eyebrow at the device.

“This is my emergency backup phone,” Tim explained. “Only one person ever really calls me on this.” Well. One person and one AI. Tim looked at the caller ID and saw that it was JARVIS calling. “Hello?”

“Master Timothy,” the AI greeted. “It is good to hear from you.”

“It’s nice to hear from you too JARV, but why the call?” Tim asked. JARVIS had never initiated phone calls before. It was usually Tim who called to update the AI on what was going on in his life or to vent at whenever he couldn’t personally reach Tony. If Tim was being painfully honest with himself, JARVIS was his best friend. He could tell the AI anything. Well… almost anything. He hadn’t breathed a word about training to become the next Robin on the off chance the AI got protective of him and either informed Tony or strongly hinted at it enough for his dad to figure it out himself. It’d happened before.

“I am so sorry to be calling so late, but I thought that it was in Sir’s best interest if you were notified and could possibly convince Sir that staying up for 56 hours working in blackout conditions in the lab is detrimental to one’s health.”

“Say no more. Put me through, JARVIS,” Tim sighed, but fidgeted when he realized that Bruce was back in full Batman regalia and had joined Nightwing and Alfred in staring at him.

Nightwing looked confused, but both Bruce and Alfred seemed surprised and curious.

“Hey-low!” Tony’s voice said over the line, slurred slightly either from alcohol, lack of sleep or a combination of the two.

“Tony,” Tim said neutrally.

“Timmy!”

“Why is JARVIS calling to inform me that you’ve been up 56 hours straight?” Tim asked.
“Tony?” Tim prodded.

“This situation feels very backwards,” Tony huffed. “Shouldn’t I be telling you to go to bed?”

“I’m not the one who’s been awake for 56 hours playing around in the lab,” Tim huffed.

Tony grumbled unintelligibly for a moment.

“Tony, go to bed. Whatever you’re working on can wait another 8 hours for you to recharge,” Tim chuckled, shaking his head.

“And if I don’t?”

“I’ll have JARVIS call Colonel Rhodes and Miss Potts on you,” Tim said, grinning. Even Batman and Alfred looked amused, while Nightwing only looked more confused than ever.

“You wouldn’t.”

“I would,” Tim said. “And if JARVIS doesn’t inform me that you’ve gone to sleep within the next hour, I’m telling my mother on you.”

“You cruel child! You and JARVIS are traitors!”

“I’m sure Mother would be very appalled to hear what a bad example you are setting for you Godson,” Tim sighed.

“You play dirty, Drake brat,” Tony huffed, but Tim could hear the undertones of amusement in his voice.

“I learned from the best, Mr. Stark,” Tim quipped, grinning when he saw Nightwing’s jaw drop in shock. Even Batman looked a little surprised. Alfred only looked put together as always, but his eyes flashed with amusement.

“Brat,” Tony grumbled.

“Old man,” Tim snickered. “Now go to bed Tony, before I make good on my threats. JARVIS, you know what to do.”

“Indeed, Master Timothy. Thank you and goodnight,” JARVIS said.

The line clicked and Tim slipped his phone back into his pocket with the other one.

“You know Tony Stark?” Nightwing asked, bewildered.

“Since the day I was born,” Tim said, shrugging. “Mother and Father made him my Godfather. He visits whenever he’s in Gotham. Especially if he’s got a new car or something for his collection. He’s the one that taught me about engineering and mechanics, and everything I know about hacking.”

“You are full of surprises, aren’t you, Master Timothy?” Alfred asked.

Tim shrugged bashfully, watching as Batman remained quiet. There was a tightness in the man’s shoulders and a pained pinch to his mouth. Then he turned away and headed towards the batmobile, but not before glancing at Jason Todd’s memorial case. Tim felt his heart sink. Just
what had he done now to remind Bruce of his former partner? He looked back at Nightwing and Alfred, but Nightwing only shook his head.

“Stark taught Jason a lot about mechanics and hacking too,” Nightwing muttered before heading off to join Bruce.

Tim watched sadly as the Batmobile raced out of the cave with Nightwing on his bike in hot pursuit.

“Why don’t we retire for the evening, Master Timothy?” Alfred suggested after a long quiet moment. “I’ll reheat the hot chocolate and we can go over your homework together.”

“I’d like that, Alfred,” Tim sighed. “Thanks.”

“It is no trouble, young man,” the butler said, leading the way back up to the mansion proper.

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- Takes place shortly (practically right) after Fear and Loathing in Recovery during the weekend Tim spends with Tony and Jason before returning to Gotham and going through No Man's Land and the shit that follows (reread Parent Troubles chapter for more details).
- This was my silly happy chapter after writing two serious and depressing chapters in a row.
- Enjoy your fluff. ^_^

2011

Tim sat down at what had become Jason’s work table in Tony’s lab and began coaxing a little hamster out of the carrier he’d brought with him and into his hand.

“What’s that you got there, Baby Bird?” Jason asked as he came in wearing only a pair of sweatpants and an old worn t-shirt, running a towel through his wet hair. He’d clearly just gotten out of the shower after sparring with the androids that Tony had built for the older teen to fight.

“What’s it look like?” Tim asked, setting the hamster next to Tiny Nim in the hamster habitat on the desk.

“Don’t tell me Tony got another one,” Jason huffed.

“He didn’t,” Tim said, smirking. “I did. You needed another hamster.”

“We’ve got five. Isn’t that enough?” Jason asked.

“You’ve got hamsters that are named after Bruce, Dick, Barbara, Alfred and me,” Tim said. “There isn’t one named after you.”

Jason froze, towel slipping from his hand.

“You didn’t.”

“His name is Hoodlum,” Tim said, watching as the white and grey hamster with a bright patch of orange fur on the top of his head climbed over Tiny Nim to get to the wheel Wingnut was currently using. He and Jason watched with mild amusement as Hoodlum joined the grey, black and white hamster on the wheel but got it running so fast Wingnut was flung off.
“Poor Wingnut,” Tim chuckled. “Now he’s got two hamsters picking on him.”

“It’s karma brought upon him by his namesake,” Jason snorted, shaking his head, but Tim could see in the reflection of the hamster habitat’s plastic that the older teen was smiling.

Tim hummed, smiling as he watched Babster enter the habitat from a tube that connected to the gym. Hoodlum didn’t stand a chance. Tim snickered as the lone female hamster headbutted Hoodlum off the wheel and claimed it for herself.

“Girl’s a menace,” Jason chuckled, sitting down on the edge of the table to watch the hamsters scurry around the habitat. Wingnut was sulking by the food station, nibbling by the food station, nibbling on a sunflower seed. Tiny Nim was making his way into one of the tubes that curved up and went along the wall of Tony’s workshop to other habitats in the room. Hoodlum was making his way back to the wheel for a rematch against Babster. The two hamsters raced around the wheel for a while until it was spinning so fast both were flung off. Babster landed on an unfortunate Wingnut and Hoodlum landed on his back by the water bottle, wriggling a for few seconds before he was able to right himself.

Jason and Tim laughed.

“I wonder which of them was the fastest,” Tim mused.

“Why don’t we race them and find out?” Jason asked.

And that’s how the two of them got to planning various race tracks and future obstacle courses (to make things more interesting) for the hamsters. They were in the process of building their first track when Tony and Rhodey came down to the lab.

“What’s all this?” Tony asked.

“We’re building a race track for the hamsters,” Jason said as he used the staple gun to pin two boards together to put the last two walls for the course in place.

Tim was setting up a wheel at the end of each lane since that appeared to be what Babster and Hoodlum wanted. It was a straightforward course, all things considered, comprised of two lanes that ran straight down the middle of Tony’s garage. The middle of the track was designed to pull apart so that they could insert obstacles in the future.

“Who are you racing?” Tony asked.

“Babster and Hoodlum,” Tim said.

“Hoodlum?” the men repeated.

“I bought him,” Tim explained. “You were missing a hamster.”

“Sure, kid. Well if I had to get one named after me,” Jason huffed, “don’t you think it’s only fair that we get one for Tony?”

“True,” Tim agreed. “We’ll go shopping later.”

“Don’t we have enough hamsters?” Tony groaned.

“You started it,” both boys replied.

Rhodey snickered. “They got you there, Tones.”
“No, technically you started it,” Tony growled. “You’re the one who suggested it for pet therapy.”

“He’s right,” Jason mused. “Maybe we should get one for Rhodey too.”

“Alright,” Tim said, “but if he gets one, Happy and Pepper should have one too. It’s only fair.”

“It is only fair,” Jason agreed, flashing a shit eating grin at Tony.

“Don’t you boys think you’re getting a little carried away?” Tony sighed.

“No,” they said in unison, as they put the finishing touches on their track.

“Come on, Tony,” Rhodey chuckled. “They’re teenage boys and are actually acting their ages for once. Let them have their fun.”

“You would say that,” Tony groused. “This is your fault.”

“How is it my fault?” Rhodey asked.

Tim and Jason tuned the bickering men out as they retrieved Babster and Hoodlum.

“So who do you think’ll win?” Jason asked, carrying Babster over to one of the racing lanes.

“Dunno. I thought we were racing them to find out,” Tim said.

“It’s called betting, Baby Bird,” Jason huffed. “My money’s on Babster.”

Tim laughed. “Fine. If Babster wins, I’ll buy Tony, Rhodey, Happy, and Pepper’s hamsters. If Hoodlum wins, you buy their hamsters.”

“Deal!”

Jason and Tim set Babster and Hoodlum in the starting container. It was a simple section of the track blocked off from the rest of the track by a thin strip of wood that was inserted into a slot that cut through both lanes. When they were ready, they pulled the strip out and watched the hamsters move about down the track. Both hamsters didn’t seem to know what to do at first, meandering along the first half of the track until they must have spotted the wheels at the end of the lane. Hoodlum was the first to take off and Babster wasn’t far behind, but Hoodlum won, having been the first to spot the wheel at the end of his lane.

“Again,” Jason growled. “That was a trial run.”

“Alright,” Tim said agreeably, lifting a squirming Hoodlum from his wheel.

Both hamsters made much better time the second round, making a beeline for the wheels they now knew were at the end of their lanes. Hoodlum was still slightly faster though.

Jason grumbled a lot, but conceded the loss after another round where Hoodlum won for a third time. The two later departed Stark Manor (much to Tony’s exasperation and Rhodey’s amusement) for the local pet store. That night, Tim and Jason returned with four hamsters.

Iron Menace (IM for short) was Tony’s bright orange and white hamster. He was an energetic little guy that loved to race through the tunnels, often disturbing Tiny Nim and Penny as he scurried about. Rhodey’s hamster was a dark grey color with white feet. Tim and Jason decided to name him Col. Twitch because he seemed to twitch a lot whenever IM was anywhere near him. Pepper’s designated hamster was a copper orange hamster they named Peppie. Peppie had bonded well with
Babster and the two resident female hamsters could often be found together hogging the wheels and kicking Wingnut, IM and Hoodlum off of them. And last, but not least, was Harold, Happy’s large white hamster. Harold was a very mellow hamster. He often just nestled himself in a corner of whatever habitat he’d sequestered himself in away from the others until one of them inevitably found him (most often IM) and roused him from his sleep. Tim found it very amusing that for a hamster named after Harold “Happy” Hogan - a usually cheerful man - Harold the Hamster was a rather grumpy rodent. Jason just thought that it was funny that the human went by a pet name and that the pet had a human name.

During Tim’s stay that weekend, Jason, Tim and Tony built more lanes for the hamster race track and had created a number of obstacles. They determined that in a straight race, IM and Hoodlum were the fastest, but when obstacles were introduced, Batster, Babster, and Tiny Nim were the most often the winners. Wingnut could be quite the contender as well if given the right motivation (sunflower seeds).

Tim had thoroughly enjoyed his weekend working on the tracks and racing hamsters with his dad and Jason. He couldn’t wait for his next trip to Malibu next summer.

Chapter End Notes

So what did you think? Did you enjoy these drabbles? Would you like to see more? Then leave a comment with your suggestion/request and I'll see if it fits into this verse, or one of the Avengers spinoffs I'm working on. It's funny how much writers block sucks until you have a fun/interesting premise to work around. :)

Now that I've got that out of the way, I'm going to explain some of my thoughts going into these fun little drabbles explaining details that didn't quite make it into the story, but are part of my head cannon for this verse.

Tony's reaction to Jason's death...
I literally wrote this one in a few hours last night. I had kind of thought about it but glanced over it when I was originally writing the post Iron Man and pre-Iron Man 2 parts, but I hadn't really given it real thought about WHEN Tony found out about Jason and kind of left it vague. I'm happy I got this request, because 1) it allowed me to write another Bruce-Tony moment, and 2) it really allowed me to get in Tony's head and work on little details for his character motivation. Tony tends to make everything about himself, so even though he had NOTHING to do with Jason's death, he can't help but blame himself for not being there for Bruce and Jason when they needed him most. It doesn't matter that there was literally nothing he could have done or foreseen it happening, given his situation as a prisoner and enduring tortures of his own, but it's part of his ego that we all love. He is so quick to blame himself for the pains endured by those close to him. It's one of his fatal flaws. Sure, it's extremely pretentious and presumptuous of him to assume that kind of responsibility, but it shows in a backwards way that he cares. I really enjoyed this little dive into his character and I hope you did too.

Also, BRUCE! Gawd, could you imagine loosing your son/partner and your best friend around THE SAME TIME?! That is why Bruce is kind of a wreck here. He had to bury his son and give up his best friend for dead as three months passed without any results. Also, realistically speaking, I doubt that the military would be able to continue
searching for Tony Stark without additional funding for three solid months. He'd be
given up for dead after the first, in my opinion, so it is my head-canon that Bruce
continued to fund Rhodes's search for Tony even after Stark Industries pulled funding
after the first month because Stane was willing to write Tony off. But Bruce couldn't
let go of that hope, not after what he'd been through with Jason and the Joker, so no
body meant no proof of death and therefore Tony still had to be out there somewhere.
And he was right! ;)

Alfred and Jarvis...
This part I actually wrote this afternoon. I hadn't been sure what to write for this
request for a while, but while going back over the "Jason death reveal" drabble I'd
written last night and rereading some of the previous chapters, I came up with the idea
that Jarvis and Alfred must really sound alike to Tim after a while. They're both
British more-than-butler types with a penchant to use subtle sass and sarcasm. So a
younger Alfred is what Tim imagines when he thinks about Jarvis having a human
form. They both address Tim as Master Timothy, and tend to sass Bruce and Tony in
similar manners. Basically, in my head-canon, a younger Alfred supplied his voice
when Tony was refining Jarvis's program after losing Howard, Maria, and Edwin
Jarvis in the "car crash."

So, yeah. Tim finding similarities between Jarvis and Alfred is mostly because they
share the same voice. Alfred was the closest in tone and tenor of voice that Tony
could get after losing the human Jarvis. Alfred did this because he is in fact very fond
of Tony, and when he feels comfortable enough to drop formalities, he'll address Tony
only as "Anthony". No Master. No Mr. Just Anthony, something he only does with
Bruce on rare private occasions. If Bruce is Alfred's pseudo son, than Tony is his
pseudo nephew. I hinted in the Two Robins and a Nightwing chapter that Alfred knew
Edwin Jarvis. I'm not saying they were brothers, but I can see them as cousins of some
sort. They were close before Edwin's untimely death at any rate despite living of
opposite ends of the country, and Alfred saw the same pain in Tony that he saw in a
younger Bruce after Edwin's passing. So I imagine Alfred and Jarvis conspiring a
lot to keep their charges safe, healthy, and in line. ...I may have to write that at some
point. :P

And finally... Hamster Racing...
There isn't too much to say about this, because I really wrote this drabble with the
intension to get away from the angst and depression brought on by the Jason Rehab
and Janet's Letters chapters. Did I succeed? I can totally see Tony, Tim and Jason,
buying a new hamster for every new friend and member of their family. Can't you? I
may start an entire side-fic based on this. ;)
Tony Meets the Mini-Bat

Chapter Summary

Tony Stark and Damian Wayne meet for the first time. Neither is what the other expects.

Chapter Notes

I wasn't going to write a one-shot with Damian until we'd passed the Avengers film, but I decided that Tony and Damian's first meeting didn't have to have anything to do with that. This is how I see their first meeting going and it just gave me so many feelings for these two. I hope you enjoy this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2012

Damian stood before the wall of uniform cases in the Batcave, watching in the reflection of the glass as Father and Drake geared up for patrol. Father was wearing all but the cowl of his Batman uniform while Drake was still in warm-up sweats. Damian sneered as Drake left for the locker room to put on the Robin suit and go through his pre-patrol inventory check. It should be Damian in that suit at his father's side. Drake was just a placeholder and should have stepped aside after Damian showed up.

A flicker of movement from the stairs caught his attention. He almost dismissed it for Pennyworth coming to do his own checks before Batman and Robin left, but the man coming into the cave was not his father's manservant. Damian frowned as the stranger practically waltzed into the cave as if he owned the place. The man traded a few words with Father before both men suddenly turned to look up at Damian.

"Damian, come down here," Father ordered. "There is someone I want you to meet."

Damian's frown turned into a scowl, but he did as he was told. The closer he got to the man standing at his father's side, the more Damian took stock of the stranger's appearance. This man was clearly as well off as his father, dressed in well tailored clothes, though he was dressed down in only slacks, a vest and a dress shirt that had the top three buttons undone and the sleeves rolled up to the elbows. He was a head shorter than Father was and stood in a relaxed slouch, but he held himself in a manner that told Damian that the man wasn't as unguarded as he appeared. The man had dark hair that Damian couldn't distinguish as black or dark brown in the dim lighting of the cave, but his facial hair was trimmed into a very distinctive stylized goatee that finally gave Damian a clue as to who the man was; Anthony Stark, the Iron Man.

"Damian, I'd like you to meet Tony Stark, a good friend of mine," Father said, drawing Damian out of his thoughts. "Tony, this is Damian, my son."

"So this is the mini-bat Jay was talking about," Tony mused, smiling down at Damian. "He looks a
Damian was quick to squash the small spark of pride that rose up at that statement. Stark was merely saying what most people said about other people's offspring. Damian had been told that he looked like his father at a lot at the events he'd been forced to attend earlier in the week after his existence as blood heir to the Wayne family had been publicly announced. None of them knew Damian, so the comment was more cordial than complementary.

Damian hadn't realized he'd let his thoughts wander while he silently stared the man down for a couple of minutes until the man spoke again.

"He's definitely yours," Stark chuckled suddenly. "If the personality wasn't a dead giveaway, then the Wayne family blue eyes are for sure. Though, as paranoid as you are, I'm certain you ran a DNA test to prove his legitimacy before you made the announcement."

Damian blinked, unsure how to take that comment. People usually dismissed him after "complimenting" him on how like his father he was, yet Stark hadn't broken eye contact with him. The man's smile was amused, but his gaze was assessing. Damian suddenly realized he was underestimating the man merely because he was rich like those other airhead socialites his father had introduced him to. Surely his father wouldn't befriend someone like Stark unless there was more to the man than there appeared. The man was in the Batcave after all and Damian knew how much Father guarded his secret mission as the Batman.

"I did," Father said curtly as he went over to the Batcomputer.

"You said Talia al Ghul is his mother?" Tony asked, still holding Damian's gaze. It was unnerving the boy now that Stark hadn't looked away yet. There was something about the man that was familiar though.

"Yes," Father answered. "He's well trained, but in the way of the League of Assassins."

"A true son of the Batman if there ever were one," Stark chuckled before letting out a sigh and finally looked away from Damian to properly address Father. "What do you want, Brucie? I take it you want more than for me to just meet and greet your son?"

Damian looked over at his father and saw that he was running a program he was unfamiliar with. Father didn't answer Stark's question.

"Tony?"

Damian scowled as Drake returned from the locker room in full Robin regalia, clearly ready for patrol now.

"What are you doing here?" Drake asked, jogging over and gave Stark a hug that the man returned. Damian felt a sharp jab of irritation. Yet another person that favored Drake.

"That's what I'm trying to find out," Stark laughed, ruffling Drake's hair.

Drake stared at Stark for a moment before turning his gaze on Father and then onto Damian. That's when Damian realized what it was about Stark that had felt familiar. It was that assessing gaze Damian had been subjected to. It had the same calculated feeling behind it as Drake's stares. And that wasn't where the similarities ended either. Their posture was the same. Seeing the man and teenager standing side by side was a bit surreal. Despite not having any similar facial features, they had the same body build; compact and unassuming. But Damian was sure that, like Drake, Stark could be competent in combat even without the Iron Man armor (not that he'd ever admit to Drake
that he had a reasonable degree of fighting prowess).

Damian would bet money that Drake was somehow related to Stark. Damian's mother had taught him how to read body language and (though he wasn't on the same level as Cain) it didn't take a genius to see that when Stark and Drake were practically mirror images standing side by side. Damian suddenly found himself feeling a small thread of insecurity about his place at his father's side. If Drake was related to Stark, and Stark was as good a friend of his father's as they appeared (considering Stark's presence in the Batcave), then perhaps Drake was somewhat deserving of the position of Robin after all. Damian hated to admit it, but despite Drake's average fighting technique, his stealth skills were on par with some of the best ninja trainers he'd studied under in the League of Assassins.

"While Tim and I are on patrol this evening, I want you to evaluate Damian's abilities," Father said, breaking Damian out of his thoughts.

"Is that why you've pulled up my training program?" Stark asked, joining Father by the computer.

"You have the drones, don't you?" Father asked.

"I know that Jason keeps a few cases stashed around at various safe houses for training purposes for when he's here in Gotham," Stark claimed. "Timmy, do you know if he keeps one here and can you go fetch it if he does?"

"Sure. He leaves one here for me to use. I'll go get it," Drake said before racing off.

"You know, you could run the training assessment yourself," Stark said, smirking at Father. "Why drag me here? Are you hoping Dames and I'll bond or something?"

Damian scowled at the man and his father.

"Partly," Father admitted, "but you have more experience and work better with people in Damian's situation. Furthermore, I believe you'll be more objective than I would be in assessing his abilities."

"I honestly can't tell if you're insulting me by saying that I'm more likely to be neutral and more technical when assessing a child's level of combat skills, or if you're being genuine in saying that I can relate more to troubled youths than you."

Father merely turned to Stark and raised an eyebrow at the other man.

"Clearly I'm being insulted," Stark huffed, turning away and stalked back over towards Damian. "Fine then. Dames and I'll have fun beating up my drones while you and Timmers go out and serve justice or whatever it is you yahoos in spandex do at night."

"You know perfectly well our uniforms aren't made of spandex," Father grunted, but looked amused as he pulled the cowl on over his head.

"True," Stark allowed. "But that's because I help design the fabrics to keep your asses from being beat and blown to high heaven."

"You design Father's uniform?" Damian asked, surprised.

"I don't design it, but I do synthesize the materials like the fabrics and work on upgrades for the Bat crew's armor and gear," Stark said, shrugging. "It's what I do to keep my friend and his associates safe."
"On top of everything else you have to do for Stark Industries," Drake's voice chimed in just as the older boy came in lugging a large metal case.

"Robin," Batman called, cutting off anything else Drake might say.

"Gotta go!" Drake grinned, waving over his shoulder as he raced to join Batman at the Batmobile.

Damian and Stark watched as the vehicle roared to life and practically flew out of the cave towards the city.

"Well!" Stark said suddenly, clapping his hands together before picking up the case Drake had brought over. "Let's get started shall we?"

Damian reluctantly followed the man down a cave tunnel he knew led to the training area. Once they were in the middle of the open sparring arena, Stark set the large case down, kicked it onto it's side and recited a series of numbers and letters. The case then began to hum and the top side flipped back to reveal four helmets not dissimilar to what Damian knew the Iron Man helmet looked like. The helmets began to quiver and then they were suddenly rising out of the case, a thin skeletal body growing out from it and parts of the case until four five-foot tall drones stood before them.

"They aren't my best, I'll admit," Stark said as he checked and inspected the drones, "but they'll do in a pinch. I designed them for Jason incase he needed to let out some pent up aggression. They're more breakable, but I designed them to be that way so that they'd be easier to fix."

That was evident in the small scratches and dents in the drone's plating.

Damian knew that Jason Todd, Father's second Robin, had been killed by the Joker and revived in Grandfather's Lazarus Pit. Madness was a common side effect seen in individuals Ra's al Ghul deigned worthy enough to use the revitalizing properties of the Pit, and Todd had been no exception. Damian had seen Todd once after his revival during his stay with the League and in Mother's care. Talia al Ghul had planned on using Todd for something to do with Father, but those plans had apparently failed because of the very man standing beside Damian. Since then Todd had become Stark's protege as much as he had been Father's. Mother hadn't been pleased, but cut her losses and returned her focus to where it should've been on Damian, her son, and making him worthy of his father's and grandfather's legacies.

"So what are we doing?" Damian asked.

"You're going to fight the drones through a series of levels," Stark explained. "I've synced them with the training program I installed in the Batcomputer for your dad when he learned about what Jason was using the drones for. I'm still working on building a more durable and permanent set for use here, so you guys don't have to keep using Jason's travel cases, but these'll do for what dear old Bats had in mind."

Stark then pulled out his phone and after tapping on it a few times, the drones whirred to life once more and took up fighting stances. Then he walked off the training mats and took a seat on the sideline.

"We'll start on Level 1 and move up from there. Only one will attack at first and as the levels progress, more will join in. Consider these first few levels as warm ups. If you want to stretch do that now and let me know when to start the training session," Stark instructed.

Damian tisked, but knew better than to argue. He stretched as advised, examining the drones as he
did so, looking for weak spots and mentally logging their locations away for future use. When he was ready, he signaled Stark and the first drone sprang into action so fast, Damian could admit, if only to himself, that it'd taken him a little off guard.

Even though Stark had said that the first few levels were supposed to be easy and more like warm ups than an actual challenge, the drones were fast and swift enough to push Damian a bit. His hands itched to hold a katana, but he felt he was holding his own fairly well. It made him wonder how Todd faired. How would Grayson do? And Drake? Hell, even Father. Damian knew he'd have a few good bruises to show for his efforts by the time Stark called an end to the assessment. Damian didn't want to admit it, but the drones had proven to be a real challenge. They were small, light and flexible enough in a way most normal humans weren't and seemed to anticipate a lot of his maneuvers. Hell, Damian could swear that they had executed a few of Grayson's attacks.

"You did really well," Stark commented as he handed Damian a towel before checking and beginning repairs on the few joints on the drones that Damian had managed to cripple. He'd failed to completely disable a drone, but those things were more durable than Stark had led him to believe. "Scary well for someone your age."

"I'll take that as a complement," Damian huffed, watching the man as he tinkered.

"As you should," Stark said, sending a brief smile Damian's way. "I don't know if you noticed, but I customized the drone's attacks to your skill level as it became more apparent to me and the program. You have superb hand to hand skills. Your hit strength is impressive and your stamina is even more so."

Damian felt a surge of pride. Finally. Someone who recognized how qualified he was.

"Almost too good," Stark then added. "I don't mean to be rude or insensitive, Damian, but I do have some questions about your biology."

"What sort of questions?" Damian asked.

"Your results are near superhuman on some levels," Stark explained. "I have known your father since we were Tim's age. You're only ten years old, correct?"

Damian nodded.

"I happen to know for a fact that ten years ago Dick Grayson had only just started his hero career as Robin. There would have been few to no chances of Bruce meeting with your mother. I can't say I know about everything that goes on in your father's life, but I can't find anything in his records on the Batcomputer pertaining to the time you'd have been conceived that he had any interactions with the League of Assassins. I'm aware of his old on and off relationship with your mother, but you weren't naturally conceived were you? Damian, you're Bruce's clone with a few augmentations in your genetic code am I right?"

Damian stiffened.

"I'm not judging," Stark said quickly, as if to cut off any comment Damian might have said. "And I promise I won't tell Bruce about this conversation. Your DNA just matches Bruce's a little more than Talia's and I'm curious. I'm a scientist. It's part of my nature."

Damian was surprised to see Stark flick his phone and a hologram appeared showing three DNA samples. The middle one had to be his, because there were points that matched both samples above and below it. There were more matching points to the sample above than there were the the one
"Now I'm no biologist," Stark continued, "but this imbalance in matching alleles isn't natural, which is why I suspected augmentations had been made to your genetic code."

Damian pursed his lips. He wasn't sure if his father knew, but Damian knew that he wasn't a natural birth. His mother had told him he'd been made to be the perfect heir. Not born. Made. He knew about her laboratory and that she had spare organs and things stocked for him. She'd used them before to help him recover after he'd received serious injuries during his more… intense training sessions.

"So what if I'm not? I'm my father's blood son," he said, internally cringing at the defensive note in his tone that had slipped through.

"I'm not denying that," Stark said gently, actually leaving his drones to kneel and put himself slightly below Damian's level so that he could look up into his eyes. It was slightly unnerving to have someone look up at him. No one had ever done that before. He'd always had to look up at others. "Damian, I'm not asking to be cruel. I'm merely curious."

"It's true," Damian found himself admitting against his better judgement. "Mother… told me that one day I'd take my rightful place at Father's side. I'm destined to succeed him. I was made…"

Damian cut himself off, but not in time.

"Made, huh?" Stark said softly with a sad, but strangely understanding smile. "Made to be the perfect heir. Molded to succeed your father and take over his enterprises."

Damian's eyes widened. "And what would you know about that?"

Stark snorted, falling back onto his rear and sitting cross legged on the mats. "What do you know about me, Damian?"

"You're Anthony Stark-"

"Tony, please."

"...Tony Stark, son of Howard and Maria Stark, and former CEO of Stark Industries, but I hear you still run the Research & Development department. You're a child genius that graduated high school at 14 and college with several engineering business majors by 17. You took over your family's company after you turned 18 and turned it over to Miss Virginia Potts two years ago. When you're not doing work for your company, you moonlight as the hero Iron Man, which you took up after a three month long imprisonment in Afghanistan."

"That's the highlights, I guess," Stark sighed. "But, to answer your previous question about how I knew those things about you… suffice to say that I had a similar childhood. Now I may not have been raised in the same manner as you, but I was groomed from the moment I was born to take over my father's company. I know what it's like trying to live up to a parent's expectations. How it hurts when you don't meet those expectations. How much of an obsession it becomes to strive for that unobtainable goal of perfection to get the approval you so desperately want, but are more often than not left frustrated and depressed when you fail."

Damian was quiet, but he felt something inside him ease a bit. That was one thing he hadn't found since he'd come to stay with his father. Understanding. He knew that it was hard for his father to accept him. His mother had sprung Damian's existence on him quite suddenly, after all, so he'd expected some suspicion and that it'd take a while for Father to adjust to his presence and accept
him. But he'd been in Gotham for a little over a month now, and he was still an outsider in his father's house. Even though he was officially part of the family now, no one really talked to him unless it was to scold him for misbehavior or to inform him on how something was done.

Stark, however, was the one engaging Damian in conversation. He was trying to understand who Damian was. It was… very different from what he was used to. In the League with his mother, he'd always been told what he should be and what he needed to do to become that. There were expectations and Damian had done his best to live up to them and had succeeded for the most part.

In his father's house, however, everything he was and did was wrong. He was too violent according to Drake. Grayson and Todd believed him to be too young and volatile. And Father had expectations so different from Mother's that Damian was struggling to alter his beliefs and views on life to figure out his new position at his father's side. His mother had raised him to become the next Demon Head. A man worthy of taking over the League and would continue his father's legacy. Damian had been raised with the belief that he would become the bridge between his mother's and father's worlds and reconcile their two separate but similar life missions. But how could he when their ideals were so different? Mother's world was one where the weak were eliminated and replaced by the strong, but in his father's world, the weak were protected and it was the duty of the strong to help those who could not help themselves. They were as different as night and day and Damian was struggling to adjust one of their beliefs to conform to the other's. He hated to admit it, but Drake was right. He was violent. He was trained to cut down offenders, not subdue and incarcerate them.

"Damian."

Damian jerked back, surprised to find Stark still in front of him, a concerned expression on his face.

"What's wrong?" the man asked.

"You are right," Damian muttered, turning his face away from those eyes that were so different in color, and yet so similar in intensity to Drake's. "I was born and raised to be my father's successor by Mother, and was intended to become the future head of my grandfather's League, but… though my skills are enough for the League, they are incompatible with Father's mission. ...I cannot be at his side as Robin because I am too violent. My instincts are to maim and kill assailants and though I want nothing more than to be by his side…"

Damian choked off, angry that he could feel tears sliding down his face, but Stark didn't scold him for the display of weakness. The man didn't say a word, actually, and acted instead. His moves were well telegraphed and Damian had ample time to move away if he so wished, but he allowed himself to be engulfed in the man's arms. He felt the heavy, but surprisingly comforting weight of Stark's hand cup the back of his head and neck.

"You will be," the man said softly. "You're young. Give it time. You are an amazing child, Damian. I have no doubt that one day you'll be Robin and take your place at Batman's side. Take this time to figure things out. Figure out what you need to be. What you want to be. Forget what your parents expect from you. Become what you want you to be. And if that's to become Robin, figure out what that entails. Research what made Dick, Jason, Steph and Tim such effective Robins, so that you can become even better than they were. There's no doubt in my mind that you will be because you're Bruce's son and you're already so much like him. I know things are hard and frustrating right now, but give it time. And if you need help, or even just someone to lend an ear… you can come to me. I'll listen. I've been more than one Robin's soundboard before, so I know how frustrating working and living with these people can be."
Damian was mortified by the whimper that slipped past his control, but he allowed himself to take comfort in the embrace and found himself clutching his hands in the man's shirt.

Neither said anything after that, and Damian wasn't sure how long they remained that way, but he did eventually find the strength to pull away from the man. He was surprised to receive a hair ruffle and even a smile that looked fond before Stark returned to fixing his drones and putting them back in their case. He wouldn't realize it until he was in bed that night, but as he drifted off to sleep Damian found that he felt at peace for the first time since coming to live with his father.

Tony had watched Alfred escort Damian up to bed, and was now waiting for Bruce and Tim to return from patrol. It was a weeknight which meant that they'd be back before midnight so that Tim could get home and have a few somewhat reasonable hours of sleep before he had to be up again in time for school.

Right at 11:25, the Batmobile pulled into the cave and Tim jumped out in a hurry to shower and change. Tony almost expected Batman to head out again and complete another few hours of patrol, but Bruce pushed back the cowl and joined Tony instead.

"How did he do?"

"I'm assuming you mean Damian," Tony huffed, ignoring the glare aimed his way. "Skillwise, your son is frighteningly competent in combat. He's already a better hand to hand fighter than all four of your previous Robins when they started. He doesn't have the grace Dickiebird had, nor the calculated precision Timmy has, but his moves are a bit more sophisticated and flow better than Jason's brawler style, so his training with the League of Assassins shows. I suppose you could say that he's brutally efficient. He made it up to Level 7 before I ended the assessment. The readings are on the computer."

"He made it to Level 7?" Bruce repeated, looking surprised.

"Your kid was raised by ninjas, Bruce," Tony chuckled. "Of course he's going to have above average results. He's also got amazing stamina. He'll be a true credit to your mission one day."

"He's too violent," Bruce sighed.

"I repeat, he was raised by ninja assassins, Brucie," Tony huffed. "You've trained with the League. You know their methods. What else were you expecting from a child raised in that kind of environment? He's having to readjust and relearn what is expected from him. You and Talia have very different methodologies and it's got the poor boy confused and frustrated because he was raised to such different standards by his mother and finds that they are now incompatible with the life he wants to live with you. You need to give him time to adjust. Educate him, Bruce. Don't just foist him off on me, Alfie and good ol' Dick when he's in town. For all his skill and educated manner of speech, Damian is just a ten year old boy. A boy who wants nothing more than to please you but doesn't know how."

"He told you this?" Bruce asked softly.

"He didn't need to," Tony said gruffly. "I know what it's like to be groomed from birth to be something by a parent, and yet still found lacking in what they believe matters. Don't be that parent, Bruce. Don't be like Howard. Or Talia for that matter. Show your son that you give a damn
about him and help him adjust to not only a new way of life, but a new culture, because he's obviously struggling to understand social expectations in regards to his violence. Get Dick and Tim and Alfie to help you. I'm sure they'll lend a hand. Don't just push him away because you feel you're the wrong person to teach him something and you feel like you're not doing it right. That's what got you into trouble with Dick and Jason."

Bruce was silent for a moment, just staring at him before a fond look stole over his face.

"What?" Tony snapped.

"You know, for all my experience in raising and mentoring several children, you still come off as the better parent figure," Bruce said.

"Oh? How do you figure that?" Tony scowled.

"Because you understand them. You relate to them. It's something I've always admired about you because I've always struggled with that aspect in helping my children and proteges. Jason, Tim and the others trust you because of that."

Tony shifted uncomfortably in his seat but didn't protest. Bruce had told him things of a similar nature before.

"It's why I want to make you Damian's Godfather," Bruce suddenly added, "and future guardian in the event that something happens to me."

"What?" Tony gaped, staring.

"You've done wonders with Jason," Bruce said, shrugging. "I'm hoping you can do the same for Damian. I know I can trust you to take care of him."

"I'm… honored," Tony said, struggling with his shock and the sudden surge of humility he felt upon hearing that Bruce trusted Tony with Damian as much as Tony trusted him with Tim.

Bruce smiled briefly before tugging the cowl back on. "I'll get in touch and we can discuss arrangements later. I need to resume patrol now."

"Sure. Go kick some ass," Tony said, waving the man off.

Batman nodded before heading back to his Batmobile and raced off into the night once more. That was when Tim came out of the locker room showered and in clean clothes. Tony listened to his son babble about how patrol went for a few minutes, but before he headed up to the main manor, Tony told Tim he had a request.

"What is it, Dad?" Tim asked.

"It's about Damian," Tony said, smiling in amusement as the teen scowled. He'd heard all about Tim's first meeting with Damian and the constant attempts on his life.

"What about the brat?" Tim growled.

"He's just a little boy, Timmy," Tony scolded lightly. "One raised by assassins and that's got to mess with the kid's head. This new life change is a little jarring for him and there's various things he needs to learn to help him adjust to our culture and lifestyle. I know you don't like him, but at least try to remember that and do what you can to help him. Bruce asked me to be his Godfather, you know."
"No, I didn't," Tim huffed, eyebrow ticking in irritation.

"I said yes," Tony said softly. "Talia and Ra's are his Howard, Timmy. She and the League of Assassins were all he knew. They placed great expectations on his young shoulders and molded him into what they wanted him to be from the day he was born and now he's in a new environment with a father he barely knows, a culture he barely understands, and is finding himself falling short at every new standard he meets."

Tim shifted uneasily before to him.

"You don't have to like him or get along with him, but I want you to at least try to empathise with Damian and where he is coming from. That's all I want you to do, Timmy."

"I suppose I can do that," Tim grumbled.

"Thanks," Tony said softly, ruffling his kid's hair. "Now get upstairs. Alfie's probably got your night snack all ready for you."

"Right," Tim sighed. "Good night, Dad."

"Good night, Timmy."

Chapter End Notes

And that's how Damian and Tony met. God, I just want to wrap these two in my arms and give them a big hug. I looked up Damian's wiki page and decided that he was going to be a clone of Bruce, rather than deal with any part of the debate whether Talia raped Bruce that surrounds some comic storylines. I hope you guys don't mind.

Also, I have an update for you guys! I have just posted the first chapters for 2 sequels for this series. One, is the promised chapter for the 1st storyline option that you guys voted on several chapters ago that takes place during the first Avengers film. That fic is called "Bats, Meet the Avengers."

The second fic, is a little plot bunny that's about Tony having to deal with a de-aged toddler Timmy. That one is called "Baby Tim (Eventually) Meets the Avengers."

Enjoy these sequels! :)

End Notes

Story Notes:

*Tony Stark & Bruce Wayne are the same age
*Tony Stark's age (and therefore Bruce's) is 10 years younger than RDJ's age.

Timeline:

1996: November - Tony meets and has 1 night fling with Janet Drake
1997: July 19, Tim Drake(-Stark) is born - Tony 23
2000: Tim 3 - Tony 25
   ---- Tim sees the Flying Graysons
   ---- Jack & Janet start leaving a lot more frequently on trips
2006: Tim 9 - Tony 31
   ---- Tim deduces the identity of Batman & Robin
2008: Iron Man
   ---- Tim 11 - Tony 33
2010: Iron Man 2
   ---- Tim 13 - Tony 35
   ---- Tim trains with Batman & other martial masters
   ---- Janet dead; Jack comatose & paralyzed
   ---- Tim becomes Robin
2011: Tim 14 - Tony 36
   ---- Jason Todd returns to Gotham as Red Hood
   ---- Cassandra Cain joins Batfam as Batgirl
2012: The Avengers (May)
   ---- Tim 15 - Tony 37
   ---- Arrival of Damian Wayne
2013: Iron Man 3 (December)
   ---- Tim 16 - Tony 38
   ---- Bruce Wayne “dies” and Dick Grayson takes over as Batman
   ---- Tim is fired from being Robin and becomes Red Robin
2015: Age of Ultron (May)
   ---- Tim 18 - Tony 40
2016: Civil War (May)
   ---- Tim 19 - Tony 41

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