Through the Looking Glass

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Summary

When his father disappears, Damian Wayne is left as head of the family and Batman to the newest Robin, ten year old Dick Grayson . . . if he can survive the antics of his many siblings.

Notes

Title taken from the book by Lewis Carroll.

Written for quipquipquip's Reverse!Robin AU on tumblr: http://quipquipquip.tumblr.com/post/21667864403/batkids-reverse-order-damian-the-oldest-dick-the
"I refuse to have this conversation upside down," Damian announced to an uncaring audience. The blonde at his side just teases him about becoming one with the bat. "Do not encourage him, Stephanie."

The little monster required no encouragement.

"Richard, descend immediately."

Blind obedience needs to be trained out of the boy as quickly as possible, Damian considers as the newest Robin promptly drops from the chandelier. Damian is not infallible.

He succeeded in catching the boy this time. Now with a ten year old latched around his neck, and his companion's fingers digging painfully into his arm, the young Wayne heir reached for the calm dignity of his alter ego, clearing his throat.

"Sorry," she apologized, releasing him and peeling Richard off of him. "You're going to give me a heart attack one of these days, circus brat," she scolded, hugging the boy to her. "And then who will look after the two of you?"

Timothy. Jason. Cassandra. It would be a joint effort, and Damian isn't sure if the newest incarnation of the dynamic duo would survive the attempt. It's not so much that they lack other competent siblings as it is that Stephanie is one-of-a-kind.

"We would manage," Damian lied even as Richard chirped a "Sorry, Steph," causing both of his older siblings to snort.

The boy was truly meant for the role of Robin, all his predecessors had agreed. Their increasingly odd family just wasn't complete without him. As it had not been when Jason was lost to them. Or Stephanie.

Judging by her smug smile, Starling knew exactly what Damian meant anyway.
The Great Sock War

Tim is the kind of person who has OCD when it comes to the exact arrangement of the furniture and putting dirty dishes in the dishwasher as opposed to on the counter. The mold growing in the refrigerator is appropriately labeled and for the sake of science and justice. His room looks virtually unused (because it is), and there is a place in modern society for the Dewey Decimal system—it happens to be Tim’s wall of bookshelves.

That’s fine by Cass who prefers her unobtrusive furnishings, but Jason thrives on the chaos he creates, dropping weapons and towels wherever he happens to be at the time. It doesn’t hamper Cass’ ability to navigate the apartment blindfolded, but it places certain obstacles between Tim and his morning coffee. Utterly unfazed by Tim’s irritation, Jason takes pride in being a teenage boy right up until Alfred pays a surprise visit to the apartment. After the butler’s timely intervention, Jason cleans up his act to a certain extent.

The socks are an unstoppable force.

At first, Tim was convinced that there was a new villain … because seriously, the sheer volume of socks is impressive when one considers their tendency to coat every surface in the apartment. Dirty socks. Clean socks. Socks mended by Cass, and socks with gaping holes, and pristine socks which are obviously new. Socks in every color, style, and material, but no two the same. No normal seventeen year old boy could possibly wear all those socks in a week, but Jason—like all bats—defies normal conventions.

And the dirty socks are totally on Jason, because Tim’s little brother is a troll. The clean socks, however … well, not even Jason is sure where they all come from. The war on socks is a long, grueling, uphill climb, but with—as Cass so quaintly puts it into perspective—“minimal bloodshed.” They are mostly responsible individuals, and take all the necessary steps to prevent being run out of their home by semi-sentient footwear.

Jason’s dresser overflows with socks, and the boys actively try to burn the damaged socks before Cass can mend them. Tim regularly stuffs the younger boy into the hamper with the dirty socks on a weekly basis as a reminder to do laundry. And their coffee table centerpiece is a beautifully woven basket where any inhabitant can deposit the accumulated offerings of clean socks to be found throughout the apartment.

Damian wrote them all off as heathens long ago. Fortunately, there is an alternative use to the dirty socks that is meant to keep visiting older brothers in line … because nothing smarts quite as much as a sweaty sock thrown at the back of one’s head.

Damian will return fire, and then the great sock war takes on new meaning, because Tim and Jason will join forces and Steph gives as good as she gets. Dick jumps on the furniture with unabashed glee at the opportunity to play with his new siblings, and Cass will commandeer the entire sock basket as her personal arsenal.
“You went to the 7-11 in disguise,” Steph squeaked, ducking behind her teacup at the pointed stare.

“There are three Disney movies on the list you gave me,” Damian returned, discarding the ginger wig and depositing the plastic bag on the coffee table. “Three. Among other atrocities.”

“They’re classics, D,” Steph whispered, clutching the offending titles close.

“One has anthropomorphic furniture on the cover,” Damian refuted with one eyebrow delicately raised in a gesture of superiority. Or possibly disgust: “Blow your nose and drink Alfred’s tea.”

“I am drinking the tea,” Stephanie complained through her tissues. “I’ve been drinking the tea since before you left; he keeps refilling it. At this rate, I’m going to need a bathroom break before the second song.”

“Tragedy,” Damian deadpanned, shedding the trench coat and kicking off his shoes. Since his father was out patrolling with Cass, Damian was left with baby-sitting duty. He held up one hand expectantly. Steph tossed him the VHS and hid her tea behind the Kleenex. Damian obviously noticed, but restrained himself from commenting beyond: “Come here, you childish commoner.” Commandeering the end of the sofa, Damian pulled the younger superhero into his lap to better maintain control of the remote.

Steph shifted until she was completely comfortable, and tugged her blankets up to her chin. “You sure you won’t catch the flu from me?” she asked, scratchily.

“Tt … I have perfect genetics. I do not get sick, not even with the plague you have contracted.”

“It’s the flu, not the plague … and famous last words.”

Damian hummed in acknowledgement, and sped through the previews. Steph knew that he really only protested out of habit; she was almost halfway through the Disney animated movies and Damian had become somewhat more compliant as time wore on. Stephanie was training her predecessor well. Now if only she could get him to lay off of potential boyfriends … Tim Drake was cute and approximately half of Damian’s size.

Her sigh caused Damian to glance down at her with the barest hint of expression. He brushed her hair back away from her face, attempting to be subtle about checking her fever. “You have your tea, Kleenex, medication and bucket?”

“I’m all set,” Steph nodded, resting her blond head against his chest as animated figures raced by. “Thanks, D. I’m sorry that I puked on your boots.”

“I have seventeen other pairs,” Damian commented idly and pressed Play as the blue castle came up.

Steph scowled, curling up even more. She can and will convince him to cuddle. “Next time, I’m gonna aim for your mask, Rich-boy.”
“Damian, you cannot vet every person at Dick’s school.”

Stephanie can be quite persistent, but Damian is not going to be persuaded this time. If Richard is out of Damian’s sight, then the Batman will know exactly who has access to his young ward … students, teachers, staff … the odd overly-helpful parent.

“Dami,” Richard whines, literally hanging off the back of Damian’s chair. “It’s Gotham. If you aren’t related to a criminal, you’re dating one.”

Damian narrows his eyes, and the boy flips off the chair to hide behind Stephanie.

“Related!” the little bird squawks. “I’m related to Steph who fills all criminal requirements. Yes, sir, no dating here.”

“You have a suspicious mind, Damian,” Stephanie scolds sweetly, patting the boy’s head with a comforting hand.

“I have family worthy of suspicion,” Damian acknowledges pointedly. Dick ducks behind his only ally once more, but Steph just hums appreciatively.

“It’s an honor, Batman.”

“Likewise, Black Mask.”

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