

He'd definitely have to bend Alfred's ear about that suit. Nipples, for God's sake, and exaggerating every limber muscle on that young strong frame, and as for the codpiece—

The man's hands curled into the bedclothes and clenched tight. He stared at the ceiling.

He wouldn't think about it any more. He just wouldn't, that was all. He didn't feel what he was feeling, it was just his exhaustion.

Bruce closed his teeth and eyes and willed the images away from his sleepy erection. It worked; his solitary life and training habits took over, sending him into the well of sleep and overriding everything but that most basic need.

It wasn't so easy when he'd drowsed awake in the early evening. His cock had gotten a second wind and was now seriously thinking about what had lulled him to sleep. This, on top of his old memories dredging up again, Chase's attentions stirring in him a deep longing for truth and intimacy—and such minor asides as the megalomaniacal plottings of Two-Face and the Riddler—had been keeping Bruce Wayne in a state of distracted confusion for weeks.

Badly distracted, enough to let himself walk right into Harvey's trap in the abandoned subway station. He'd thought he was dead, buried alive, his last reserves wrenched from him by the fall and the fire. He remembered the weight of the hot sand squeezing the breath from his lungs, sealing his eyes shut, grinding him to dry powder, waiting to spill down his throat when he opened his mouth to breathe...

But a hand had punched through the sand like a striking snake, seized his wrist, and pulled him out and free of the suffocating tomb with the easy strength of one who has spent a lifetime holding people a wire's edge from death. And there he had been, flashing that cocky, daredevil grin, the nimbus of Bruce's anoxia-clouded vision glowing all around him. In that moment...

Bruce Wayne groaned.

Harvey Dent was dead. Edward Nygma was babbling to himself in an Arkham cell. Chase Meridien was far from Wayne Manor. He himself had finally made his peace with the dark creature that had ruled his spirit since his tragic childhood. Now, Bruce Wayne had no choice but face and admit the instant attraction he'd felt for Dick Grayson.

Pedophile! shrieked the winged and halo'ed stone demon squatting in his gut, wrapped in her white shroud. (He knew that demon; for nearly thirty years she had cackled at him from her marble death-grip on his mother and father, mocking him with the pious quotes

about rest and peace engraved beneath her white wings.) The creature tormented him with images of the criminals he despised above all others—the sexual exploiters of children—

No, whispered the bat-cowled angel in his heart and mind, the muscular angel that had taken the grief-hollowed seven-year-old Bruce under his black wings. *No. You know the truth of it. That young man is no boy. It's not a boy's body that makes you hurt. From the moment you saw him on the trapeze, it wasn't his boyishness that attracted you.*

It's exploitation. He's your ward, your charge, snarled the demon with the face of the judges, the child protection services, the legal system ready to pounce on any image of impropriety.

He's your partner, your friend, the bat-angel corrected. *This would be anything but exploitation—that young rogue wouldn't allow himself to be exploited. Be careful that he doesn't exploit you.*

Bruce coiled in a fetal position, hard, refusing to respond to the images in his mind. *He's brave. He's smart. He's—beautiful. And I mustn't touch him—* He was touched.

He bolted upright, every instinct geared for fighting, only now realizing that his preoccupied mind had not responded to rustling or a sense of presence. He'd let his guard down again... When he realized who he was gripping by the upper arms, he let go as if burnt and fell back in the bed, gasping.

"Hey, hey, it's just me, it's okay," Dick said softly. He was wearing only the bottoms of his slate-blue pajamas.

"Don't—" Bruce clenched his teeth. "—ever—do that again. Let me see and hear you coming. My reflexes—"

"Kept you alive all these years," Dick concluded. "Yeah, sorry, that was a dumb move. Never sneak up on an elephant—one of the first things Dad and Mom told Robbie and me." He looked down, then away, then back at Bruce. There was some kind of hungry look on his face, a pleading for something.

"Dick?"

Dick remained silent for a bit longer. Then he said quietly, "When I saw him hanging over the edge of the island... It's like he stopped being someone I had anything to do with. He was just a criminal I had to put in jail. Not the guy who killed my whole family."

Brave. Smart. And carrying the same wounds in his heart.

Bruce Wayne reached out in the darkening room and rested a hand on Dick Grayson's shoulder, hoping that the younger man could feel in that grasp the strength and protection of black bat-wings. Everything physical



he felt was subsumed in the stronger need to save the fragile spirit from becoming a mirror image of his own twisted soul. "When I caught the Joker, I tethered him to a gargoyle just as he grabbed for the escape ladder on his helicopter, and he got caught between them, stretched out as if on a torture rack. It was *wrong*. I wanted him in Arkham; I didn't want to see him tortured. I could not bear to hear his screams of pain. If he'd only let go of the ladder, I'd have pulled him back up to wait for the police. He was just a psychotic, someone who loved killing too much, someone who should have been locked up." His voice was cold. "I'm not sorry he's dead. But I would have saved his life if I could. Is that how you feel now?"

The crown of the close-cropped head sank against clenched fists. "That's exactly how I feel." A deep breath, and Dick's next words were muffled by anger and his fists. "It's *wrong*! We were the Flying Graysons, we worked without nets. I flew to save Robbie's life. We were charmed—nothing could kill us, *nothing*. And he shot them down in two seconds like they were nothing." His body shook. "It's wrong! I should have wanted him dead!"

"It's not wrong, Dick," Bruce said intensely, both hands gripping the anguished youth. "It's right. It's the final test, if you want. You confronted the most personal of villains, and you treated him the same way you'd treat any other law-breaker. Because..." Bruce paused, blinking, and continued, his heart opening to the truth he had not been able to name at the time, "...because you knew that not all the rage you took out on him would stop your pain. If you could kill him, and bring him back to life, and kill him again, a thousand times, it still wouldn't help. It wouldn't make him feel the anguish you feel. It would only hurt you inside, and turn you into someone your family would have despised."

The strong round shoulders quivered. Dick made a strangled noise in his throat.

"And instead," Bruce said strongly despite the dry burning in his eyes, "you became someone they would have been very proud of. Someone as heroic as they all were in their last two minutes of life."

The body went very still. "Robbie and I were twins." Grayson's voice was flat and dead. Quavering. "His name was Robin." And the cool tough facade that had held the young man together since the tragedy shattered. Dick gasped, hard, and sank forward.

Bruce caught and held his ward.

"Sorry," Dick sobbed, "sorry, I'm sorry—"

"Don't be," Bruce snapped, holding him tighter. "Be grateful you can cry. I can't any more."

"It's over. It's over, it's all over..." There was no relief in that voice. Richard Grayson was finally mourning the loss of his life—his life with his family, with the circus—the only life he'd ever known.

Victory has a thousand fathers—defeat is an orphan. But someone should have told the sage that victory could be an orphan, too.

No words would comfort the young man. Bruce simply held him and let the warm summer rains thunder down; the downpour healed something inside the older man as well.

▼ The smudged young tough in work coveralls looking up from the engine looked more like a paroled grease-monkey than the other half of the "Dynamic Duo," as Vicki Vale had floridly christened the Batman-Robin team that had vanquished Two-Face. The only thing the young man lacked to complete the image would have been a cigarette half-drooping from the corner of his mouth. Despite the grime and the evidence of hard manual labor, he looked as if he were in heaven, and his face lit up even more as he saw what was approaching. "Perfect timing, Al. How's the hardware retrieval going?"

"Extremely slowly, Master Dick," Alfred replied as the young man tore into the thick sandwich that had been lying on the salver he bore. "I fear that I neglected to back up the spare hard disks during this entire Two-Face affair. As it is, Master Bruce is forced to re-input a great deal of updated information by hand."

Dick set down the decimated torpedo, leaned against the battered hood of the most distinctive automobile in Gotham City and took up the uncapped bottle of beer accompanying his lunch, upending the glass container with a flourish and setting it down nearly empty with an exhalation of pleasure. "You're a lifesaver, Al."

"And how is your own work progressing, Master Dick?" asked the old valet.

Dick waved his recaptured sandwich with a slight shrug. "I've done a lot of the basic repair work. Most of the fancy fix-ups will have to wait until after the parts come in. We'll work on the body once that's done. And after that we start work on the new Bat-plane." A look of lust gleamed behind his half-lidded eyes. "And *then*, I start on the Vincent Black-knight."

"And before all that, you're going to finish planning your curriculum for Gotham University," Bruce's voice rapped down into the work-pit.

"Up yours, Wayne," Dick called back, taking another swig. "I've been home-taught all my life, we had a tutor in the circus. Why should I start doing time in ivy walls now?"



“Because you need to establish your social persona as my ward, the way Bruce Wayne must be seen as the bored billionaire at all the right parties and fund-raisers.”

“Yeah, but those are—”

“Fun, Dick? In that case, you’re going with me to the Daughters of Gotham Dowager Ball in December. And you’ll dance with every debutante as all the mothers and grandmothers size you up as a prize breeding bull.”

Dick shuddered. “Bruce. You *wouldn’t*.”

“All part of the glamour of fighting crime,” Bruce said wryly. “When you’re done down there I want you to finish your course schedule for this upcoming semester. Dick...you really have to think beyond the idea of being Robin all your life.”

“Crap on that,” Dick retorted.

“Language, Master Dick,” Alfred reproved. “Master Bruce is right. You really must attend college.”

“Not you too, Al,” Dick groaned. “I thought you were on my side.”

“I’m afraid I am, sir.”

“What were you planning, Dick? A return to the circus?”

“Oh, great,” Dick said in disgust, slamming a wrench down on the tray of tools to produce a satisfyingly loud clatter. “So while you’re saving the city from a mad bomber or a costumed nutcase all by yourself, I get to do something vital like stay awake through a lecture on Chinese pottery, is that it?”

“Master Dick,” Alfred said nearly as sternly as Bruce, “if a criminal were to strike a museum, your knowledge of Chinese pottery could prove more useful than your ability to jump through a skylight.”

“Dick?” For the first time Bruce looked over the edge of the pit that held the half-repaired Batmobile. One corner of the man’s mouth quirked up. “Just remember. You can take college a few classes at a time; no one says you have to get your degree in four years. And it’s a lot easier to cut classes in college than in high school—if, say, you saw the Bat-signal in the middle of an exam.”

“Master Bruce...” Alfred groaned. He’d seen the way Dick’s face had lit up at the suggestion.

“But that works both ways,” Bruce said sternly. “If you see the Bat-signal when you’re on a date, you’ll have to take her home and come here. And if your grades suffer,” and the Batman glower was on Bruce’s face, skewering his charge, “it’s full-time for you, and you only get to fight crime on weekends.”

Dick was up and out of the cave in seconds.

“Did you have to say that, Master Bruce?” Alfred said. “The sooner we get the boy on a normal schedule—”

“Alfred,” Bruce laughed. “That circus boy hasn’t had a

‘normal schedule’ from the day he was born.” He quieted at the mutinous look from the man who’d been his closest friend for thirty years. “Alfred. I’ve been aware recently that I’m not getting any younger. I’ve got you here at headquarters—but I need a field partner; I can’t do it all by myself. He’s got everything I need; he’s young, he learns quickly, he’s brave—and he’s already saved my life once because he knows when to disobey. He’s a good defense fighter...” Bruce rattled off the list, unaware of how enthusiastic and cheerful he sounded. “The odd hours won’t be a problem for him, he’s got ideas of his own. I’m already figuring him into my plans, as if we’ve always worked together. I can’t explain it, Alfred—I think he was destined to come here and join our work.”

And he makes you laugh and smile—more than you’ve done in your entire life. Since his arrival you’ve stopped sounding older than I. I would never have wished Master Grayson’s orphaned state upon him—but I am grateful for what he is doing for you.

Alfred was a good butler, and said nothing. He left both his young men to their work in the Batcave, and returned to the kitchen.

Bruce pulled the Bentley into its slot and cut the motor. It was nearly noon. The Rolls was gone; no doubt Alfred was out shopping again, a young man’s appetite having caused the household grocery bill to skyrocket.

He should have been feeling hollow, lonely, or at least self-pitying. But all it took was the sound of whistling from where the motorcycles were parked, and all melancholy thoughts were sponged away. He thought of what he was planning for the owner of that cheerful whistle and was cheered himself.

“Hey, Bruce,” Dick’s voice called from behind the supports.

“Dick,” Bruce returned, disembarking from the Bentley. “Getting a start on the bike?” He rounded the corner and stared.

“You might say that,” Dick said without looking up.

The Vincent Black-Knight, one of 101 in the world, looked as if it had been scavenged and left for dead on the streets of Gotham. Most of the body was intact, but the majority of its features lay in parts all over a white sheet on the garage floor. Dick was seated cross-legged on the floor in his coveralls, industriously cleaning a cog with a cloth that had once been white; other cogs lay soaking in a can of clear fluid. Nearby lay several thick library books and one musty book that looked borrowed from a museum, all of them on motorcycle repair.

Judging from the picture on the page the ancient black

groggy with winter, to look into the clear bright eyes of Spring.

"I keep forgetting," Dick said simply. "You're me."

Bruce nodded; any pride or defensiveness he should have been feeling seemed unnecessary. The strong hands made him feel safe, protected—an unusual feeling in one more comfortable in the role of protector.

Dick drew Bruce forward and hugged him hard.

Slowly, awkwardly, Bruce's arms came up around Dick and returned the embrace; it was the expected response. He'd been hugged before, mostly by people whose family members he'd just rescued or by the rescued party themselves. Any memories of being himself hugged or held for comfort lay behind the wall of blood and roses, the implacable black wings; it had been part of his life before. He did not know the etiquette of such embraces; he was embarrassed, and moved beyond words by the young man's gesture.

"Thank you," he said simply when Dick let go of him.

Dick's eyes were very bright. He sat back down abruptly and took up the cog and cloth again, his head bent fiercely over the minor chore of cleaning the sticky gear. Bruce watched the crown of the man's head, and for the thousandth time restrained himself from reaching out to brush his fingers over the cropped fuzz.

"So it never—never gets any better." Dick's voice was very low.

Bruce was silent a moment. Only the truth between them. "Not in the way you mean," he finally said. "You get stronger. You learn to live with the pain—and you deal with it as best you can. But, no—that pain never goes away."

"Damn." The voice was very soft. Dick kept his head bowed. Perhaps it was sweat droplets that hit the white cloth; it was a warm afternoon for November.

It was so strange that a man who'd kept to himself, licking his own wounds his entire life, knew how to give aid and comfort to someone similarly wounded. Or not so strange, to render the service that had just been given.

Bruce squatted beside the still figure of Dick Grayson and wrapped one arm tight around the young man's shoulders. Those were indeed tears running down his nose, and Dick blindly accepted the proffered handkerchief without embarrassment. "Dick," he said quietly. "I cannot tell you how proud, and relieved, I am that you did not kill Harvey. Not for his sake, but for yours. Revenge eats you, until nothing is left when the act is accomplished."

"He died," Dick whispered, catching his breath.

"Yes. And it wasn't enough, was it." It was not a question. "If you had been the one to kill him, it still

wouldn't be enough. Your parents did not raise you to kill, Dick. They raised you to fly."

"I dream..." Dick took a big breath. "I'm flying again, doing the Death-Drop, Dad's waiting to catch me. Then I see that purple face, the bomb goes off, I grab for Dad's hands, I miss, I fall. Now I'm the one falling to the ground."

Bruce simply held him.

"I know what that dream means." Dick's voice was flat. "I'm finishing what Two-Face began. The Flying Graysons are dead."

"Not this flying Grayson." Bruce squeezed his shoulders again, then let his arm drop naturally. He could not have asked for a better time in which to spring his secret. "You need to fly again. And I need you to supervise some alterations in my gym equipment."

Dick's head lifted. The cog still in his hands drifted down to touch the dropcloth. His legs unknotted.

"You'll know better than I what needs to be done to set up the rig you worked on in the circus." And for the first time in what felt like a long day, Bruce smiled. "If you're going to be my partner on the streets, I need you to teach me some of your trapeze tricks."

The look Dick Grayson gave him was one kings have died in battle to receive. It went straight to Bruce Wayne's heart and pierced it through and through, conversely making it beat harder. *How can it be that you can't hear my heart from here?* Bruce reminded himself to smile and say, "It's a plan, then?"

"Yes," Dick whispered, eyes bright. "Yes!" He hauled himself to his knees, seized Bruce's upper arms and drew him down again in another hug, his grin brighter than the chrome on the Harley. Then Dick grimaced in embarrassment and let go; only then did either realize just how grimy Dick's hands were from his messy work and just how much damage they had done to the expensive camel jacket Bruce was wearing.

To cover his embarrassment Dick's voice became businesslike. "You'll, you'll have to be trained as a catcher, of course, not a flyer. Get Shaky Pete, he did our rig, he'll know what I need, I'll tell him it's to keep my hand in..." His voice steadied and grew stronger with his authority on this subject.

Bruce nodded in an idiotic head-bob, listening to the voice lift and soar, even as his heart tumbled in his chest.

He would never lay another hand on the young man again if it meant that Dick would look at him again in that same way. The steady lifeline of Dick's hands on his shoulders, Dick's arms around him, Dick's exuberant grip on his arms were well worth the cost of a soiled Armani jacket.



Not just the instant physical attraction to a beautiful young man that had caught him right away, then; not only the horrifying *deja vu* that had bound him to the tormented spirit inside.

What he had felt for Chase Meridien was the moon in daylight, pallid and bloodless before the blazing glory of the sun that burned inside him now.

I am in love.

Not even the most holy and epiphanous of internal transformations are exempt from intrusion. "...so I'll never be a drag on you again."

Bruce blinked. "I beg your pardon?"

"You heard me, Bruce, I was worse than useless to you at the end."

Bruce looked at the angry young man, this time trying to focus beyond the event that had poleaxed his brain to see Dick's self-castigation. Ah. "I think...ah, I think what's more important is what happened inside you, rather than, than the case. You met the man who murdered your family face to face, and you took him alive."

"Yeah, and then I got caught by him," Dick muttered, still not looking at Bruce. "My first job, and I blew it. I was a liability to you. Maybe I should change my name to Hostage Boy."

Bruce didn't—quite—release the burst of laughter that wanted out; that angry self-pity was such a trademark of men in their early twenties. If he laughed or made light of this Dick would be hurt—and for Dick to be hurt was unthinkable now. "It was your first field assignment," he said soberly. "You let your guard down. It won't happen again."

It didn't help much—Dick was still angry at himself. "Stupid. Clumsy—"

"Some day," Bruce said, smoothly breaking the tirade, "perhaps, I may tell you about my first time on the street as Batman."

That got Dick's attention. An unholy smile lit up the young man's face. "That bad?"

"Nearly," Bruce said deadpan, his heart pierced by the smile.

"Oh, I've *gotta* hear this," Dick said with an evil grin.

"Some day," Wayne repeated himself smoothly, rising. He looked down at his friend. "Perhaps."

And Bruce left Dick to his dismembered motorcycle, going into the house proper. He was very proud of himself, and grateful that the stylish long cut of the jacket had hidden his full reaction to his inner revelation.

"Good afternoon, sir," Alfred said with his usual warm formality. "Shall I prepare luncheon for you now?"

"Half an hour, Alfred," Bruce replied calmly, walking

past the old retainer and starting up the long spiral staircase. "I'm going to shower first."

But not all the cold water in the Gotham Reservoir would numb that ache in his heart.

hold on, hold on to yourself, for this is gonna hurt like hell

▼
Bruce lay prone on his bed, naked, skin ice-cold from the water, shaking and holding the pillows close to his chest, trying to stop the pain that made him bite his lips to bloodiness, that rumbled in his throat, that wanted to cry out against this intruder. As he had suspected, the shower had not helped.

Pain was nothing new to Bruce Wayne, nor was grief. His heart had been one solid ball of pain since the simultaneous loss of his father, his mother, his sense of security, his belief that the world made sense, and his childhood in the space of seven seconds; that black iron ball had battered and pounded him from the inside, beating him into tempered steel even as his mind picked up everything it could in an effort to fill that void. That hard ball was now a steady hammering at the outer shell he wore even when he was out of the Batman armor.

Grief he could handle; rage, hatred, lust, and loneliness had all consumed him at one time or another. He had even succumbed to them at times; he had slept with Vicki Vale, and Selina's rough tigerlike games still featured in his most erotic fantasies. With Vicki it was simple ordinariness he'd craved. Selina/Catwoman's recognition of his own Bruce/Batman dichotomy had filled his maw with the realization that he wanted to be known, seen, understood by someone—someone who could also be a companion, a mate, a partner. Fond as he was of Alfred...

But Selina was dead saving his life. That had started the dreams that had troubled him into seeking Chase Meridien.

He'd thought Chase was the one. She was beautiful, knowledgeable in her specialty, a cool sense of humor, tougher in a crisis than she looked. He'd sensed a glimmering of that partnership with her, had reached for it and her—

And he'd been blindsided by the real thing under his own roof, by Alfred's surprise. The instant he'd seen Dick in the Robin suit everything had quietly clicked into place, and solitary crimefighting had become unthinkable between one breath and the next.

Dick, angry and irreverent and stricken—Dick, a younger version of Bruce, who could be rescued from the emotional quagmire in which Bruce had waded his entire life. Dick had stolen the Batmobile for a joy ride—



and while he'd been out he had taken on an entire gang, single-handed and unarmed, to rescue a citizen. Dick had attacked Batman in a rage of grief—and not two months later he had saved Batman's life. Dick had seethed with his plans for revenge and murder—and when his enemy was finally helpless he had extended his hand to pull him to safety, sensing his duty lay beyond even his own pain.

It was instinct and synchronicity, parallel lives and the persistence of evil. It was youth and beauty, strength and wildness.

He thought of two scenarios: someone else as Robin fighting beside him, or Dick Grayson at Wayne Manor doing nothing but fixing up motorcycles for the rest of his stay. He'd rather have Dick on any terms than someone else as his Robin.

A friend; a partner.

And now, this pain that ate him from the inside. Grief and loss and aloneness had been his from seven years old, but a new pain beat at him now. His heart was not an iron ball now but a glowing ingot, flooding him with heat and light from within. This pain was the pain of blood returning to a frozen limb, one frozen for twenty-eight years.

He took deep breaths, trying to overcome the pain, to move with it and find its core, and when he did that he uncovered more truth:

During that double plummet on Claw Island, he had saved Chase's life because the Batman was sworn to defend the law-abiding citizens of Gotham from its villainous underbelly, and he was honor-bound to make every effort to rescue the hostage. He had saved Robin's life because he would have been unable to survive the loss of Dick.

Not that he wouldn't have grieved for Chase—but at that moment he saw everything clearly, saw her pallid moon eclipsed by that plummeting sun, and he knew he would never again go to her as a lover. But with Dick—

He rolled with that pain.

What if he *were* to go to Dick and say "I want you, I'm attracted to you, I wish to sleep with you"? Would Dick even respond with anything besides ridicule or silence?

Perhaps. There was a wildness and a lawlessness to the young man that hinted at such a sexuality, or at least the verve to try anything interesting at least once. Dick could very well be gay or bi. Even if Dick's reaction was to decline, they could find a way around the one-sided attraction to keep working together.

But that wasn't the truth; not what Bruce truly felt. And his trepidation at Dick's reaction to a sexual propo-

sition was nothing beside the water-gutted terror of imagining Dick's reaction if he went to the young man and said what he truly wished to say— "I love you, I need you in my life, never leave me."

The young man had lost his entire family and way of life less than six months ago; he had been thrown into a darker, more dangerous world than the circus that had been his home since birth, and had nearly been killed by his family's murderer not two weeks ago. And to die falling, bound and helpless, surely the nightmare of all trapeze artists—

Stresses piled on stresses. Bruce's admission could be the one that broke the camel's back. He had not received any signal from Dick that his feeling was reciprocated—not even that Dick was attracted in any way to Bruce.

Dick Grayson had lived with a traveling circus all his life; he'd never stayed in one place for long. If Dick felt threatened, overwhelmed, unable to handle a one-sided passion in this fixed place, wouldn't he simply take his motorcycle and leave?

Bruce would go to his grave with his love unspoken rather than see that day dawn. But just now his pain threatened to send him there anyway.

"Master Bruce?" Alfred behind the door, discreet as always. He was there to remind Bruce to come down for lunch, down at the dining room table, where Dick would already be sitting. "Are you well, sir?"

He could not, he would not, send Dick away even as he himself teetered on the edge of a disastrous crisis.

He would go away, away from everything, and stay away until he could tame this new pain that had taken up residence inside him. He had saved the city one more time; surely the city would allow Batman time away from his nighttime duties.

Just one more time. Nonchalance and distant affection.

"I'm fine, Alfred," Bruce said, rising from the bed to dress. "I'll be down in ten minutes."

He had fought with broken bones; he found he was able to eat lunch with Dick. He did a good job of it, even finishing most of whatever it was Alfred had prepared.

"Dick, you organize the rig set-up from start to finish," he said casually to his plate. "I'm going to be out of town for some time. At most a month."

"What the *hell*—" Dick started, whipping his head around.

"Start your studies, prepare the rig, but do not go out on the streets until I return," Bruce said coldly. "You'll need to be trained, and your reactions honed."



"Wait a sec, where the hell do you think *you're* going?" Dick snapped.

"Master Bruce?" Alfred echoed, his tone of puzzled disapproval voicing the exact same sentiment.

"I need some time alone. I'll be back." Bruce rose from the table, making an art of not meeting either set of eyes. "Don't worry about my luggage, Alfred, I'll handle it myself." He headed for his rooms. "Remember, Dick—not until I'm back and the rig's in place."

Thank God it was over. He didn't think he could take another minute of Dick's stunned silence beside him at the table.

Two bags would be enough. Bruce could carry the entire expected retinue of a playboy billionaire bachelor anywhere in the world, but knew how to carry everything he needed in a belt around his waist. Two bags were a good compromise, and Bruce Wayne's private jet waited in its private hangar at Gotham Airport.

Where to? Alaska? The Gobi Desert? Borneo?

Bruce realized he was thinking in terms of exile, barrenness; he wanted some place quiet and away from people, somewhere to sit and think, far from the sight and sound and nearness of that beautiful young man who had taken his place beside Bruce as naturally as he had once flown forty feet above the crowds without a net.

He was only going away until he could control this need inside him. Now that he knew what that need was, he had to keep it tamed, locked tightly away. Perhaps, in a few more months, maybe even within a year, he could gradually release the truth and let Dick decide if he could act on it or not. If not...

He leaned over his open suitcase, hollow inside.

Damn it, he *had* to control this. He would control this. Men have died and the worms have eaten them, but not for love. He would live. He would survive. This was *not* the worst thing that had happened in his adult life, it wasn't. It wasn't.

The door thumped loudly. "Bruce, let me in! Now!"

That was the worst thing that had happened.

"Let me in, dammit!" The doorknob rattled loudly.

It was over.

Bruce stared at his bag, at his hands. What he felt, what he needed to say to the young man, was trembling inside him like a snow overhang about to turn into an avalanche. He could control physical pain, he could contain himself in the presence of enemies, but this territory was new and untraveled for him. He would not be able to control what he said.

So. As quickly as this, his time with Dick was over. He had at least gotten a kiss from Selena.

As he was turning toward the door, it opened. Dick smoked in and the door banged shut behind him. He was in the leather jacket and jeans he'd worn in the garage. "You had your chance," he said coldly, and slammed something small and metallic on the inlaid and polished ebony table, probably leaving a permanent mark from the sound of the contact. "Al gave me the key. I didn't want to have to use it. So there is one other locked door in this museum of yours."

Should have taught him how to pick a lock, Bruce thought irrelevantly, mind locked in panic. Alfred had given Dick the key, and at the moment that didn't bear thinking about.

Those angry hazel eyes bored into his own, so intense and beautiful. "Mind telling me where the hell you think *you're* going?" Grayson snapped. "And why you didn't tell Alfred? Not telling me—well, that's bad enough, I'd *hoped* you could start to trust me," and the look of plain blunt hurt on the young man's face was painful beyond words to Bruce, "—but not telling *Al*? He's as baffled as I am."

Bruce threw up an ice wall, trying to stave off the coming avalanche. "I need to be by myself for a while," he said coldly, turning back to his open case and folding a sweater into the interior. He had to keep his back turned now—he was no longer wearing his long jacket, and his reaction to Dick's presence was unavoidably present.

"But why? And why not tell anybody?"

"I need—to recover after my breakup with Chase."

"Bullshit." The word landed like a whipcrack on Bruce's back. "You need to tell Al or me why you're *really* running scared."

"Not...running," he ground out, the ice blocks grating against each other, ready to crack beneath the weight... "Dick, I haven't had a vacation in years. I'm simply exhausted."

He could hear the faint *shushhing* sound of leather; without looking behind him, he knew that Dick had just folded his arms and was now in a loose straddle, head cocked to one side. "Uh huh. You're so exhausted that you didn't tell Al you're leaving, you won't turn around to look at me, and you're not keeping track of your lies.

"And you *are* lying, because you can't do it right. I can't lie either—not convincingly. That gang knew I wasn't Batman when I took them on.

"Bruce," and now Dick's voice was so gentle it pierced Bruce's heart and his guts and his eyes all at once. He sank his teeth into his lower lip in a desperate attempt to make the pain stave off the trembling snow. But the warm gentle voice bored into him, melting the



ice wall. "You *can't* lie to me. You *are* me, and I'm you. You knew what I felt from the very first, about every-thing. Why won't you trust me now? Why won't you tell me?"

The wall fell, block by block, a thundering sound of ice. Bruce's eyes were tightly shut, his hands buried in the folded clothes in his open suitcase, clenched tight around shirts and sweaters. "I don't want to lose you," he grated. "Dick, the truth does not make you free. It only explains why you are in pain. You've learned that much."

"You're running away from me."

Another bolt to his heart. "No," he gasped. His tight-shut eyes felt on fire.

"I'm not just a friend or partner to you, am I?"

"No." A whimper, a moan—futile denial as the arrows hit closer and closer to the mark...

"You want to sleep with me."

This time, the only sound that escaped was a whine of pain from behind a closed mouth. Bruce's eyes were so tight-shut he saw lightning flashes.

"Geez, Bruce! You mean this is all about you getting turned on around me?" That exasperated, angry tone held more intimacy than a sultry confession of reciprocated passion ever could have held, and it was a red-hot skewer. "You've been ripping your guts out over wanting my ass? Is that *all*?"

"No, it's *not* all!" Bruce Wayne roared, even as something flooded his blazing eyes to stop the terrible burning pain. "It's not all there is, I wish it were!"

Angry, enraged, stricken with a grief that waited in the wings to tattoo his heart, Bruce opened his eyes and coldly swiveled to face Dick Grayson, glaring at the young man in black as best he could with his blurry vision, as if through wavy glass.

"I wish it were just that," he snarled again, his anger the only thing that could get past the paralyzing pain wrapped hard around his throat and that kept him from collapsing. He didn't give a damn any more that Dick could see his erection clearly through his trousers; there were no more humiliations to fear before the greatest one to come.

But Dick's look of stricken disbelief was not aimed at the ridiculousness of the swollen bulge tenting Bruce's expensive camel trousers. He was staring into Bruce's eyes. "You said you couldn't do that any more," he said softly, like a child who catches a parent out in a lie.

And before Bruce Wayne could react (Before he could react? Was this the same man who rescued two plummeting people in mid-fall?), Dick Grayson's hand was up, fingers half-curved, the back of one hand

brushing at one cheek. Dick pulled his hand back and stared at his knuckles. He looked back up at Bruce. "Now I know," he whispered.

"No you don't," Bruce snapped, heedless of his hot wet eyes, heedless of his erection, heedless of the astonished look on Dick's face. The snow was thundering down, and when it ended he would be buried deep, buried for millennia. "And that is *not* all. If I only wanted to fuck you that would be easy to control," he said harshly. "I know how to deal with lust.

"It's worse than that, Dick. I love you. I am in love with you. I need you in my life. I want you at my side and in my arms and against me and inside me, and I want to be beside you and inside you. I want your fists beside mine in a fight; I want your mind to join mine over a puzzle; I want your fearlessness with mine when people are in danger. I want your hands to pull me to safety, and to reach for mine when you need to be saved. I want your eyes looking at mine over a single pillow, and your body joined with mine in one bed. I want your mouth and your ass and your cock and your heart to be a part of me, and I want mine to be a part of you."

The snow that fell so hard was hot and wet, and it fell down his cheeks. He was watching Selena electrocute herself all over again, but this time his own words were providing the electricity. But he hadn't cried when she'd died.

"Stay here. You are welcome here. I will take myself away until I can control myself. I will never bring this up again. I will never approach you in a non-professional capacity, if that is your wish."

Was this the Dark Knight of Gotham, the black-winged terror of the underworld whose mere presence had been enough to scatter a savage gang—this man in tears who was only a heartbeat away from sinking to his knees before a man a decade his junior, whose last words were a near-whispered "Only don't leave. Please, Dick. Don't leave."

Dick stared at Bruce in silence. He took a deep breath.

Don't leave. Oh, please don't leave.

"And here I was hiding everything so I wouldn't scare you off," Dick said. Slowly, the cocky grin appeared and curled broad across the young man's face. And he stepped forward, advancing on Bruce.

Bruce watched this, numb. This was a joke, it was obviously a joke, Dick was teasing him for desiring him. Let him tease, let him taunt, as long as he was not frightened or angry enough to go away.

But when Dick's arms went around Bruce's neck and



his mouth reached for Bruce's, wounded pride took its own stand. Wayne pulled away, angry. "There's no need for that."

"Hell there is!" Dick snapped. "I've wanted to kiss you for a long time and you're not virgining out on me now."

Bruce blinked and stared at Dick's mouth, at the slightly parted lips and the intense eyes that were focused on his own lips. A few seconds passed. "You mean it," he said. "You weren't joking."

"Of course I wasn't joking!" Grayson said angrily, his pride wounded. "I told you I felt what you felt!"

Bruce shook his head, still waiting for the other shoe to drop. "It's not that easy, it can't be," he said. "Nothing in life is easy."

"Nothing in your life has *been easy*," Dick corrected, his voice stubborn. "You don't know how to deal with love; it was taken from you early. I know the real thing, Bruce. I know what I felt for my family. I know what I feel for you, and it's *not* just thoughts of you in that suit bending me over a bike and humping me raw." The brutal language was belied in the next moment as Dick gently brushed one thumb over the knuckles that had touched Bruce's cheek. "I thought I was going to start crying myself when I saw these." Dick's eyes were as tender as his voice. "Bruce, you took me in and gave me a home when I had nothing. You took my rage and helped me turn it into something I can do with my life that will give their deaths meaning." The finger stroked the cheek again. "I would do anything to stop your pain. Even go away forever." And there was in Dick's shrewd hazel eyes the look of the bat, the same look Bruce saw in the mirror when he cowed himself. "That's what you were thinking yourself, weren't you? Go away—forever, if you had to—rather than hurt me."

He'd been idiotic to try to hide anything from Dick. They *were* the same.

They were the same. They felt the same way about each other. How absurdly simple.

The heaviness of the emotion in the room was instantly lightened by the sly grin. "Any more arguments?" Dick asked.

Bruce still couldn't think very well, but now it was trying to think past the giddiness and disbelief of finding himself atop the avalanched snow, free and clear, safe. Valiantly, he tried to remember how this had all begun. "I'm, I'm responsible for—"

"Bullshit."

Bruce never thought he'd think that the most beautiful word in the English language.

Dick was still rebutting, wild and young and beautiful

and brassy. "We're responsible for each other—I've saved your life, and you've saved mine. That's what partners do." He grinned and cocked his head to one side, very like a robin. "On paper you're my guardian and I'm your ward—and that's as real as that 'bored billionaire' schtick of yours. It's more than that with us."

Us. As casual as that. Such a tiny word to pierce him.

Bruce stood, poleaxed, the last of his arguments and fears wafting away. He therefore was not moving at all when Dick rejoined him, drew his head down slightly, and covered his mouth with his own.

Grayson would have to be deaf to ignore the moan he'd created, and numb from the navel down not to feel Wayne's cock hard and hot against his thighs, rubbing against his belly.

Bruce shook his head violently even as his hands curved around hard planes of muscle as a parched man's hand grips a canteen. His cock slammed into his abdomen, and a strangled cry escaped him. Heroically, painfully, he gasped, "Dick, I shouldn't—I don't—" But everything else fled before the gaping maw of his lust as the strong young body molded to his own, inescapable.

The mouth covered his again, open, wide. A tongue, supple and muscular and pointed, went into Bruce's mouth; the mouth widened.

Bruce's hands taloned into the lapels of Dick's jacket. He opened his own mouth wider, boldly sent his own tongue to explore. Their bodies were joined, wetly locked at the mouth, interpenetrating.

Bruce seized at Dick's mouth again and again, chewing him, taking the cocky young man as he was meant to be taken. Their bodies fused together, through clothing and leather and all. Thighs interlocked. Still their mouths pumped gently, rhythmically, feeding off each other; sweet hot wet sounds commingled as they did.

Eyes closed again, this time clear and comfortable as they had not been in a long time, Bruce delved deep into sensation, into an unnamable bliss. *Fuck me, fuck me again*, he thought peacefully every time Dick's tongue filled him and coiled around his own, a damp flexible cock knowing his most sensitive orifice. Joy beyond imagining took hold of him as the beautiful white teeth took hold of him, chewing his lips. Dick indulged himself heavily, sating himself on this sensation; ah, he must have wanted to do this for a long, long time...

Bruce's own hands came up to frame Dick's skull; his fingers moved eagerly over the cropped fuzz at the top of Dick's head, glutting themselves on a sensation they'd wanted for a long, long time. Like coarse velvet, like the plush pile of velveteen. Velveteen...

What is *Real*? the Velveteen Rabbit had asked.
This is real.

Stupid of him, ridiculous. He'd let his ingrained pessimism cloud his perception of reality. He should have known this would be all right between them.

Strong muscles molded against strong muscles through silk and leather and wool. Strong muscles, and thick hard cocks. It only made their kisses wider and deeper. Nothing their cocks did with each other's bodies would be any wilder, deeper or more intimate than the depth and intensity their mouths shared now. No more intense or intimate, perhaps, but surely pleasure beyond belief, only joy and lust appeased, a deep hard hunger sated. Dark wild thoughts coiled up into his brain, slithered into his cock.

"Bruce, you're—"

"You're mine," he said. His doubled fists gathered Dick's leather jacket together and pushed together hard, forward.

Dick stumbled backward, the back of his knees caught the bed and he went sprawling on the bed, making a small noise of pain as one outflung wrist banged against the edge of the open suitcase.

Bruce simply yanked both bags off the bed, clothes flying in disarray from the open case as it hit the floor. His fists recaptured the jacket and his thighs straddled Dick's, and his eyes bore into the stunned, transfixed hazel eyes over the swollen red mouth. He continued his conversation. "Your ass is mine, and I'm going to fuck it until you can't walk. Is that all right with you? Because I'm going to do it whether it is or not." His thighs gripped hard, felt hard muscles shift beneath. The power of his lust swam through him; it was relief as much as arousal to state his mastery over Dick's startled body, to tell the truth of what he wanted and felt.

Dick's hands gripped his upper arms. His eyes never left Bruce's face, and his eyes were hot. Dick's heart pounded hard beneath his bunched fists, painful against his knuckles. Dick's parted mouth was panting hard. His cock jerked, visibly, even through the heavy denim of his jeans. He was going to punch a hole through the fabric unless—

Bruce let go and sat back on his heels, buttocks resting on Dick's knees. "Undo yourself. And me." His own hands rested upon his thighs, unmoving even when the same strong hands that had pulled Bruce from a collapsed subway tunnel trembled at unbuttoning his fly.

His own hands swooped in instantly, capturing both of Dick's hands. He pressed them to his freed groin, at the bulge in his silk underwear; he wrapped the hands around the cock and held them there as he pumped a

little, stroking in ecstasy. "Feel it," he said, squeezing the hands around the cock again. He was hard and exultant with his power over this strong young Turk—and here and now, with this man, he was allowed and encouraged to have such dark unheroic thoughts. "Feel how big and hard you've made me. You're going to make me small and soft again, too. You'll do it with your mouth, and with your ass." He jerked his cock through the young man's gripping hands again, and then released Dick's hands so that he could wrap his own hands hard around Dick's head, stroking the velveteen fuzz at the top fiercely. "Strip me to the thigh and suck me." He knelt up a little bit, to allow the man to open and peel him.

One lovely advantage to being a billionaire was not having to worry about one's clothes in the middle of an emotional scene. Motorcycle grease on his jacket, rips and tears in his trousers, cum spattering fine Armani, they were all to be ignored.

Those strong, hot acrobat's hands gripped at his buttocks, sank deep in the iron muscle. Bruce shuffled forward on his knees, still straddling Dick's body, his balls brushing close to the denim's zip, the coarse cotton of the T-shirt, his bare thighs slithering past the black leather and rough buckles of the jacket. Dick was still dressed. And he was trembling beneath Bruce's body. His mouth parted wide even before Bruce reared up, aiming, and Bruce's hands brought the young man's head forward. Bruce wetted Dick's lips with seed, parted them, stretched them wide and plundered.

Dick sucked.

Oh. Oh, bliss. Sweet as wild honey, wild as a tiger, loud and coarse and utterly wonderful. He was as transfixed as the young man sucking him so sweetly; his hands gripped Dick's head, but Dick was the one who moved over and over Bruce.

Soon a moaning Bruce was fucking that wanton mouth. Wanton it was—Dick worked his throat against the immense cock inside him, wetted and slicked it with saliva, swirled his tongue round the head, nibbled in just the right places.

How many villains had longed to hear the cowed crusader whimper? If only they had known how very easy it was to inspire that sound...

"Oh fuck...oh fuck...oh fuck..." he moaned, trapped between strong hands and that delicious mouth. Orgasm was rising in him, beckoning to him, promising—

"No...no..." and he pushed at Dick's shoulders, hard, pushing strongly until his cock was free, chilling in the air. Dick gasped for air, his lips red and wet and swollen, looking up into Bruce's eyes—the same heart-stopping look of worship and love that had flattened Bruce only



that afternoon. He was so young, so beautiful, and Bruce wanted so much more from him than a fully-clothed blow job.

Bruce dismounted the younger man and stood beside the bed, still hard as a rock. Dick sat up, still looking dazed, staring at him.

Without a word Bruce heeled off his shoes and stripped off his trousers and silk boxer shorts. He reached up to unbutton his shirt only to find both wrists held in a light but unbreakable grip. Dick pulled his hands away and his head came in. This open-mouthed kiss was wider, deeper, stronger, hotter. Bruce pulled half-heartedly against the implacable grip even as his mouth was taken, filling him with a musky taste that was different from the last time Dick had kissed him—the taste of his own cock, he suddenly realized with a thrill of lust that jolted through his body and tightened his balls even more.

His wrists were released as Dick's hands moved to the top button of Bruce's shirt, slipping the fine silk off his shoulders as it was carefully freed of each mooring; as the shirt was pulled down further and further, Bruce's arms were pinned at his side by the silk material.

Dick's mouth released Bruce's from its second fucking and Dick's head moved in, all velveteen bristle over a beautifully-shaped skull against Bruce's neck and shoulder. Bruce gasped, convulsed as that wicked mouth seized his flesh again, as Dick's thighs clasped his cock. Dick's arms went around him, leather warming against his bare back, strong fingers digging into his ribs; Bruce was naked against him, chewed and chafed, his body held fast by leather, his arms pinned by silk and his cock grasped by brutal denim. The noises he made were loud, guttural sounds.

Bruce wanted it. He wanted more. He wanted to be held down, held fast, fucked, sprayed with Dick's semen, bound with silk and leather, to be slicked and mounted again and again by this beautiful young savage. And he would, oh he *would*—if not now, another time. The future for both of them unfurled bright with promises and dark with men's desires.

Dick's belly rubbed against his; his mouth moved up from shoulder to throat, gnawing wetly on Bruce's Adams-apple, sly fingers at his back moving south

oh dear god oh my god you're going to

moving strongly over the round hard buttocks, stroking so deeply they would leave score-marks for days in the skin, moving between and inward

i can't i can't take much more of oh dick dick

and then the strong fingers found his center and depressed the nerves, breaching him, filling him

ah god ah my sweet oh darling oh dearest

The mouth caressed his neck. The fingers moved.

And only the coarse pain chafing Bruce's cock kept him teetering, a hair's-breadth from spraying out his hot need all over Dick's jeans.

Dick released his throat, gasping and damp with sweat; his trapped swollen cock rubbed blindly at Bruce's belly through the heavy jeans. His panting breath puffed hot on damp flesh, stirring their musks together to eddy around them in a narcotic cloud of lust.

Bruce sucked in a breath and skewered the glorious eyes with his own. "I want you naked," he hissed. "Strip for me." He wanted to see that cock hard and wanting him.

Dick grinned his daredevil grin and released Bruce all at once, dazed and gasping and bereft of all touch. He shrugged off the black leather jacket, heeled off the sneakers, tugged off the T-shirt, unzipped and peeled the jeans away from his body like the skin off a banana, tugged off the socks, hooked his thumbs into his cotton jockeys and kicked them off. The whole thing had taken less than ten seconds. "There, I'm naked," he said, and his eyes glowed. "Now what?"

Bruce looked. He saw that the flattering codpiece on the Robin costume had not been an exaggeration of Alfred's. "The Boy Wonder," Vicki Vale called Robin in her gossip news column. If she only knew...

His perusal was cut short by a yell and a flying dive from Dick that sent both of them onto the bed. Bruce flipped Dick over his head and whirled to face Grayson, crouched on all fours and grinning like a tiger. Dick landed, rolled and was up again. Bruce countered his next lunge with a scissors kick and leaped on Dick with a war-cry.

They tussled and grappled, laughing, and Bruce's heart flew like a bat's. This was a brand-new sensation for him—it was playing with a younger brother, wrestling with a playmate, and training a partner all at once—beyond the constant physical contact and stimulation that sensitized and aroused him to a high sharp pitch.

Dick came in over one shoulder. Bruce simply ducked and pinned the panting, grinning Dick when he overshot and missed. He was grinning widely himself. "Change your fight pattern, Dick. You don't want your opponent able to guess your strategy. This is why you need more training," Bruce said smoothly.

Mine.

Smoothly Bruce leaned his weight on the hands pinning Dick's strong round shoulders. His thighs casually parted Dick's.

The strong hands moved down the limber, muscular



torso, swept to the back, gathered up the hard round buttocks like green peaches. He wanted this flesh split open and wrapped hard around his cock. To thrust deep, to the balls, into that eager young muscle, and just *take* him until he was spent—

“Gonna fuck me now, Bruce?” Dick whispered hoarsely. “You wanna go up my ass and fuck me?”

“Since I first saw you,” Bruce snarled. “You’ve been in my dreams since that night.” No apologies for brutal thoughts or brutal words. They were the same. They understood the darkness inside each other.

A lazy, ruttish grin curled on Dick’s face and his thighs parted. “Then do it,” he whispered through his teeth, a challenge. He reached one hand over his head and under the single pillow still on the bed after the rumpus. When it emerged it was holding a tube. “Stuck it there for safekeeping when you threw me on the bed.” He uncurled his fingers from around the offering and grinned like Coyote.

Bruce doubled over and laughed, giddy with love. Oh god, this man was *never* going to stop surprising him, ever—“You do it,” he gasped.

Dick’s eyes glowed, but he tsk-tsk’ed as he unscrewed the lube dispenser. “You rich guys have to have everything done for you, don’t you?” The gel oozed out in a clear sparkling line across his fingers and he reached for his lover; Bruce gasped at the cold as he was anointed, then whimpered as the strong fingers warmed their slippery charge and stroked harder.

The gel was handed off to Bruce. Without a word Dick smiled, then doubled over himself as only a lifelong acrobat could, and Bruce found himself facing Dick’s lean hard upturned ass and his legs split in a perfect V over Dick’s own head.

That beautiful ass that had first mesmerized him in the circus...

Bruce bent forward and planted a kiss on each smooth cheek. The flesh trembled under his lips. He nuzzled the buttocks, savoring their proximity and his ability to do what he’d done only in fierce dreams since that night.

His heart was moved beyond belief at this tenderness between them—but his cock cried out for the rawness of sex. Bruce pulled away. He squeezed more of the cold lube into his hand and closed it in a loose fist as he looked quite frankly at the tiny puckered opening that would take him in. “I’m going to fuck you,” he said calmly to Dick. “I’m going to thrust myself so far up your ass you’ll never be rid of me. I’ll mount you like a dog on a bitch, and I’ll stay there all night. I’m going to make you wet with my come, and I’ll keep fucking you long

after you’ve gone to sleep. Your sex is mine now, and I’ll take what’s mine whenever I want.”

“You’re a lot of words, Wayne,” Dick gasped from beneath his splayed thighs. “But I don’t feel anything—”

The strong lovely legs and beautiful ass tensed like harp strings beneath Bruce’s hand that slid smoothly over the beckoning entrance, gliding with every application of the lube he had been warming in his hand. Over the parted buttocks, along the rimple of flesh from taut, tightly-drawn-in balls to the sweet pucker, over and around the glory hole itself. Bruce stroked his lover’s anus as tenderly as he had caressed the young man’s head and kissed his body. He huffed a single hot breath on the wet flesh, and Dick’s cry and convulsion made him harder and hotter. One stroking finger disappeared and moved gently in this new territory; it was eventually joined by a second and then a third, while Dick whimpered and begged and swore. When Bruce finally pulled his fingers away from the clutching ass, the entrance was rosy from the work and eagerly opening and closing, begging for more.

Bruce’s head bowed toward that exposed flesh.

“Bruce for god’s sake fuck me, stick it up me, put your cock up there and—”

The body arched and froze as Bruce planted one last tender kiss, his lips sliding on the warm puckered skin of the musky opening before pulling away and rising high. He felt immense and invincible and omnipotent as he had never done on his best night on the streets; warm and loving and tender as he had never felt with Vicki, with Selena, with Chase; primal and brutal as he had never dared let himself feel before in any situation.

Bruce moved into perfect position atop his partner, his hands on the backs of the man’s thighs, fitted dick to Dick; then he went limp, and let his own weight sink him deep into that eager flesh. It was like sinking into fire. From on high his eyes seized those of his completion and held them transfixed as his cock transfixed that completion. Flesh moved and convulsed beneath his during the long gliding impalement; but Bruce did not stop until his hipbones bracketed Dick’s ass and every millimeter of his length was buried.

Dick’s body bucked beneath Bruce, and he gripped the thighs, riding with pleasure and lust pounding through his blood.

“oh fuck oh bruce oh god oh fuck...” The arms reached for him, the legs pushed hard against Bruce’s big hands, seeking, seeking...

Closer, come closer together.

Bruce let go of Dick’s legs and they immediately came down to wrap hard around his broad shoulders; he

Dick Grayson's grin lit up the golden-hued room and he gave Bruce the look again.

"Nothing heavy tonight," Bruce warned, trying unsuccessfully to quell the sunburst inside him at the sight. "Not until you've had more training. This will just be a routine patrol. We might stop a few robberies or muggings in process but that's it."

"Got it, Bruce," Dick said, grinning joyfully, and dove into his food.

Bruce turned to his own plate and found himself beaming at his eggs; he shook his head and began eating. It was the best meal he'd ever had. He'd enjoyed the post-coital hum of pleasure through his nerves before, with Vicki, but this sensation was as if the black iron ball inside him had turned into a big ball of light driving away the darkness and the pain. He felt light and beautiful and kind, and the black wings in his soul wrapped him close as a mother bat securing her kitten for the day's sleep.

About halfway through his plate, something pulled and tugged gently at his mind, tugging, pulling...

"So whatcha thinking, Bruce?" Dick's voice was as warm and bright as the eyes regarding him over the younger man's already-empty plate.

"Considering logistics," Bruce replied absently, possibilities still warming his mind.

"Of what?"

Bruce fixed his lover with the same piercing look from last night. "Me. In the suit. You. Over a motorcycle." He returned to his coffee without another glance.

and if i shed a tear i won't cage it i won't fear love

All quotes are from Sarah McLachlan's Fumbling Towards Ecstasy album.

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