



A Tim Plan

Batman - All Media Types · Not Rated · 2741 words

by Arukir

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A Tim Plan

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Tags: Implied Relationships, Blood and Injury, Coffee Lover Tim Drake (DCU), Tim Drake-centric (DCU), Tim Drake is Robin (DCU), but he doesn't want to be, he just feels like he has to be, Tim Drake is a Menace (DCU), Hurt Tim Drake (DCU), Smart Tim Drake (DCU), Disguise, Hacking, Laughter, which in Gotham is Not Okay, Tim has this weird thing where strong emotions cause him to laugh, Bad Parents Jack Drake and Janet Drake, Neglected Tim Drake, Author's Favorite, Manbat was separated from Kirk Langstrom, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Not Canon Compliant, Alternate Universe, Tim is around 12-13 in this, Jason is around 15-ish but it's not entirely clear because he's not sure how long he was dead/not ag, Tim does not ACT 12-13 (but since when has he ever?), Kirk Langstrom and Manbat are Different People (Batman), Author Doesn't Know DC Comics Canon, Morally Ambiguous Character, Ambiguous/Open Ending, Flying

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When Jason comes back from the dead, Tim sees a way to quit being Robin without too many consequences. Now if only he could find him...

As of 13 May, 2025, this is my 6th fic to reach 1,000 hits!

As of 14 May, 2025, this is my 9th fic to reach 100 kudos! Less than a month after I published it! ☐☐☐

19 November, 2025: This is now my third fic to ever reach 2,000 hits! Though I'm not entirely sure when it happened.

AS OF 7 DECEMBER, 2025, THIS IS MY 3RD FIC EVER TO GET 200 KUDOS. I wanted this so badly because Tim is the third Robin, and it's finally happened ☺ Thank you so very much to everyone who has read, enjoyed, and kudosed this work. This is amazing. It's only been around 7 months since I published it. I can't believe it. ☐☐☐ Here's to the eventual 300, I suppose, XD

I first posted this fic in April. To celebrate the one year anniversary of this fic, I will be posting a two-shot sequel in the first two days of this April.

It's not a DIRECT sequel, but takes place a bit later in the same universe. So, look forward to that, I guess!

Update: Sequel is now posted! ☐

Chapter 1: Faultlines

Tim uses Jason's trauma against him, and only half regrets it

Tim runs, thinking as fast as he can. Unfortunately, the fact that Red Hood is Robin keeps shocking through his head, disrupting his normally neatly-ordered thought processes.

Robin had been light, and laughter, and *magic*. Red Hood is pain, and rage, and fear. Tim knows how the Pits work, knows this isn't exactly Jason's fault, knows he has to—

Wait, rewind. It's not Jason's fault. Tim skids to a stop in the hallway, spinning around and smacking himself on the forehead with his free hand, uncaring how it jostles his broken ribs and bleeding shoulder. How could he be so stupid, not seeing it before? He's supposed to be the smart one, isn't he?

'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players'.

He waits until Jason — not Robin, Robin isn't a *person*, he's a title — turns the corner, staring him right in his poison-green eyes. A reminder of the Pit's influence that makes Tim feel bad about this plan, but then he remembers the *knife to the shoulder* and gets over any reluctance.

"Replac—" Jason barely manages to sneer before Tim lowers his broken staff and slowly scrapes the metal across the floor.

It's enough to give the other pause, make his eyes go wide in the holes of his domino, but not enough to stop him. So Tim gives in to his adrenaline and lets his loudest, most deranged, most Joker-esque laughter bubble forth.

Seeing his attacker run screaming makes the spiteful part of Tim cheer. Seeing Jason Todd run away in terror makes the kind part of him break, just a little. The practical part of him is trying to think of a way to get Jason to stay long enough for Batman to get here, but it's vetoed by his self-preservation, who's very grumpy at having been woken up and wants to go back to bed now. Unfortunately, Tim's insomnia has apparently run into it, because his heart rate won't calm down.

In the half-hour it takes the Bats to get on scene, Tim just barely manages to lower his adrenaline enough to cut off the laughter. He downloads then deletes all footage of his encounter with Red Hood, leaving just enough to show Jason taking off his helmet to reveal his face. The poor man probably doesn't want his family seeing his panic attack, and this way Tim won't be caught acting like a literal lunatic.

Jason's rebirth, if it is truly him, presents a unique opportunity for Tim to retire without consequence. He'd rather wrap up his turn as Robin on as good a note as he can manage.

But if he has to burn his hard-built bridges with the Bats to bring Jason home? Well, then that's what he'll do. All the way home and in the medbay, Tim mentally rearranges his to-do lists and plans, making theories and reviewing evidence until he has something resembling a way forward.

First step in his new Plan A? Find— actually, no, step one is getting some coffee ASAP, because there is no way he is managing this on caffeine withdrawal.

Step two? Find Joker.

Chapter 2: Waiting

Tim has an illegal surveillance feed, too much coffee, and a half-baked plan — what else would he need?

Edit: October 5, 2025 — Now includes an AI-generated image of disguised Tim!

Tim can't be Robin for this mission. If he's caught as Robin, he either makes the Bats look bad (which he has tried so *hard* not to do), or he has to bring the Bats in. Which, yeah...

'Hey, you know your possibly alive son/brother you're trying to find? I think he's trying to kill Joker, so let's break into Arkham and stop him! Oh, and he's emotionally volatile right now, so if you could maybe be perfectly calm and mature, that'd be *great*.'

No. Just no. Tim's on his own for this one, but that's fine. He doesn't have to be Robin. Not this time.

He has a few sets of plain, dull-colored clothes that he bought years ago and promptly shoved into the back of his closet, being oh-so-careful to *never* be seen in them. Right now he's wearing jeans and a grey hoodie that are big and formless enough that his gender and even age (if he doesn't get too close to someone, anyways) are perfectly vague, with generic sneakers that are a size or two bigger than what he normally wears and gloves to hide his fingerprints.

With the hood pulled over a bright pink wig, the disguise is good enough for the common folk, but not quite good enough for a bat. He adds a scarf pulled tight around his mouth and a white mask of his own design that covers the top half of his face (so *much better* than a simple domino, he actually feels hidden for once), making sure to move in ways that are natural but don't quite match with Tim Drake or Robin.

He's crouched on the roof of one of Arkham Asylum's many spires, watching the hacked security feed from a phone he might've shoplifted a few years back, making it unknown by the Bats and therefore safe to use. Manny blinks sleepily at him from his nearby perch, but thankfully ignores him and goes back to sleep after being bribed with a candy bar Tim had in his pocket. He's got a few others, plus enough to-go Starbucks to hold him over a while.

It had taken Tim a few days and a lot of coffee to figure out why his brain had jumped to 'Find Joker' when his goal was catching Jason, but he thinks he's figured it out. Jason chose to take on Joker's old identity, the Red Hood, the identity the Clown died in — it's no secret how much he detests his old gang, not after he personally burned it to the ground.

Taking it on is one of the biggest ways somebody could say 'fuck you' to the Joker. Add in the ranting about Bruce not caring, the obvious anger issues, and the desire to send a message? It's the clown or one of the Waynes, and Tim doesn't think Jason quite has it in him to attack his family just yet.

Tim has to believe that Jason isn't *that* far gone, so he settles in for a long wait, positioning himself in a way that causes the least amount of pain to his ribs and shoulder. Whatever Jason's plans are, they were disrupted at the Nest. The anger, the frustration, the Pit-fueled need to do *something* — there's no way he'll wait long for his next strike. It's just a matter of waiting.

And waiting.

And waiting.

Chapter 3: Cut Out Of The Loop

Tim discovers an error in his plan and makes a new friend, arguably in that order

Tim returns three days in a row, pretending to go home to parents who aren't there (he's pretty sure they're in Albania right now, but he's waiting until the black eye Jason gave him goes down before he actually contacts them to find out) and hacking his school to make sure their records say he's been cooped up in classes instead of spying on dangerous lunatics.

Maybe Bruce's theories about Joker being a victim in the Warehouse Incident are correct. Maybe his ideas about the Clown being a fraud are true. Maybe the man really isn't all that bad. Or maybe, and much more likely, Bruce is delusional and trying to rationalize the most inappropriate crush Tim has ever seen. Tim doesn't know, and he doesn't care, because he knows two facts for certain: Joker is dangerous, and Tim will do what it takes to keep him alive. For Batman's sake, just like everything else Tim does.

Over seventy hours no sleep, on minor pain pills and higher stress than usual, Tim thinks he can be excused for taking a while to realize that something about the security feed is different on the fourth day.

Joker has spent the *entire day* sleeping. No singing, no tracing bats in the air with his fingers, no psychological warfare against the guards or fellow inmates — not even a *bathroom break*. He's just curled up on his cot, deep breaths interspersed with breathy giggles and the occasional whine.

(Things Tim Drake's Learned Through Ethically Dubious Spying, #1754: Joker has nightmares.)

Breathy giggles and the occasional whine that have been happening in the *exact same pattern* for about four hours. *Dammit*. Tim switches from the useless camera feed to his contacts list, briefly sending an anonymous tip to Arkham Security about the loop before texting a contact he probably-definitely isn't supposed to have.

(Me)

[It's Trip. Is Joker in his cell?]

He waits a few moments for the reply, growing antsy and more worried with each second that ticks by. Finally, his phone dings.

(?)

[Named after an empire he couldn't hope to emulate, willingly letting an accessory control his choice and fate.]

[Why the second Prince would make a truce, I don't know, but with the blackest heart the Jester did go]

It only takes Tim a minute to solve the cryptic answer, but he runs through it at least five more times just to make sure. Fuck.

(Me)

[Okay, thanks E.]

[Give me five minutes, and don't you dare take too many with you, I'm swamped with work as it is]

Tim wastes precious minutes accessing Arkham's systems, sending guards on wild goose chases and short-circuiting security systems, carefully clearing a path from Riddler's cell to the front door. Honestly, it should not be this easy.

One thing he immediately regrets is not getting off the island before everything goes crazy. Dammit, there's no way he's sneaking off without being spotted, not with his injuries and minimal gear. Tim tugs at his wig in frustration, holding on tightly to one of the spires as he looks around for an idea. He spots the setting sun and grins under his scarf. Maybe Batman wouldn't approve of his 'social networking', but it's definitely coming in handy today.

He carefully tiptoes across the roof to where the giant form of Manbat is resting, hanging upside down in what appears to have once been a bell tower (he really needs to study the history of Arkham one of these days, because what the fuck?). Ever since being separated from Kirk Langstrom, the giant Homo Sapien Chiroptera has taken to staying close to the Asylum, despite not being imprisoned. Tim likes to think of him as the island's mascot, a thought he keeps well hidden despite knowing most Gothamites think similarly.

"Manny," he whispers, shaking the... mutant? Creature? Cryptid? Science experiment? Whatever-Manbat-technically-is awake. Golden eyes crack open to shine down on him, sending a shiver through Tim's body. Too late to back out now. "I know it's a little early for you to be up, but I was wondering if I could get a favor?"

"Favor," Manny repeats, tilting his head. Wow, that looks weird upsidedown. "Third birdie favor want from Manny?"

Tim has given up trying to figure out how Manny always knows who he is, no matter how well disguised he is, and is just grateful he's never met him as Tim Drake. "Yeah." Tim nods. "I, uh, I sorta need a ride?"

Manbat tilts his head the other way, and Tim begins to regret this plan. "Ride. Fly. Hunt." Manny smiles, fangs flashing, and Tim definitely regrets this plan.

Chapter 4: Where's The Warehouse?

Tim is maybe just a little bit broken, finds the Joker, and comes up with a new plan

Tim holds on very tightly to Manny's neck with one hand as the bat soars through Gotham, using his free hand to tap away on his phone. Luckily, Manny seems content to let him stay on his back until he figures out exactly where they're going.

Tim's brain is running at full-tilt, cross-referencing everything he knows about Jason, Joker, and Roman Sionis AKA Black Mask. Everything else, from his mentally-written WE reports to his plans for Christmas, is shut down.

Well, there's one thing that's still getting through. Even in a situation like this, he can't help taking a second to enjoy the feeling of flying. The ground spinning away below him, the wind rushing past, the surges of adrenaline every time Manny dives to chase cats or scare pigeons — it's the most wonderful feeling of freedom and joy imaginable.

Tim doesn't even realize he's laughing until his cheeks begin to hurt. Even that pain feels nice, like when you go to the gym after too long on bedrest. He slips his phone into his pocket, having hit nothing but dead ends, and rests his head on Manny's neck to let the sounds forth into Manny's fur.

'On the bat's back I do fly, after summer merrily,' Tim remembers, suddenly. How very fitting, he thinks, and laughs all the harder.

"Third birdie sound like Joke Prince," Manny comments over the wind, and Tim tries so hard to clamp down on those awful noises the moment he does, but it's harder than it used to be. "Smell scared-tired now. Not happy sound now. Joke Prince scary when like that. How Manny make third birdie happy-laugh again?"

Tim looks up, the laughter somewhat dying down, and uses one hand to pat Manny's head. He likes this version of Manbat a lot better than the old one. "It's okay, it's just—" Tim's eyes widen, and he has to breathe deeply to keep from chuckling as a plan springs into his head. "You like Joker, right? Joke Prince?"

"Friends," Manny squeaks happily, and Tim grins a little too wide.

"Manny, Joker's in danger," Tim says hurriedly, not sure in that moment whether he's more scared of losing Jason or of seeing Manbat's pain if he loses Joker. "I can't figure out where he is. Can you—?"

Manbat's off like a Flash, screeching what Tim can only assume is a battlecry. Tim holds on tightly with both arms, praying for both their sakes that they aren't too late.

The warehouse is littered with dead Black Mask goons. Sionis only hires the worst of the worst, and Tim does a little mental celebration even as he avoids looking directly at their bodies.

There's a chair in the center of the carnage with heavy metal chains and a... A bloody crowbar. It takes Tim a second to realize what's on it, though, because the blood is *green*.

Three people are tucked into a corner, Batman crouched over Joker and Nightwing pacing near them. Neither Bruce nor Dick look seriously injured, and Tim breathes a quiet sigh of relief, but Joker... If he didn't know about the clown's healing factor, he wouldn't think he was *currently* alive, much less going to stay that way.

A warehouse. A clown. A Robin. A crowbar. A Bat who didn't quite get there in time to stop the damage. Tim was right, Jason's after revenge, and — if the dozen-something dead bodies are anything to go by — he won't stop at anything to get it.

Tim doubts Jason will even *consider* coming home until his murderer is dead.

Batman doesn't believe that Joker's a murderer, and he's *certainly* not going to let anyone kill him.

That leaves Tim with one option. Uncover, one way or the other, Joker's guilt in Jason's death. Tim nods to himself, happy with his plan, and sneaks back out to the roof. All the best channels for finding information on Joker — Batman, Harley, Joker himself — are too emotionally compromised in this scenario, so he's still doing this alone.

"Joke Prince okay?" Well, maybe not quite alone.

"Joke Prince is alive," Tim whispers, patting Manny's head comfortingly. He's glad he hadn't seen his friend like... Like *that*. Tim's going to be having nightmares for a while, even without Joker's blood actually looking like human blood. "He's hurt, though. Batman's taking care of him."

"Batty!" Manny croons happily. "Joke Prince safe. Batty, Joke Prince, safe together."

"Yeah, B will take care of him." Which is either sweet or unfortunate. Tim doesn't know yet, but he's sure as Hell going to find out. "Hey, Manny?"

Manny hums curiously, letting Tim back onto his back. "Yes?"

"What do you know about Joker's kill count?" Tim asks as they fly high above Gotham, the final pieces of his new plan clicking into place.

It's not a Robin plan, but... Maybe it's a Tim plan.

— end of "A Tim Plan" —