

Forgotten Bonds
A Teen Titans Fanfiction
by Anthezar

Summary: Robin; the Boy Wonder; ex-protégé of Batman the Dark Knight; leader of the Teen Titans; protector of Jump City, California; and civilian named Richard ‘Dick’ Grayson never imagined that certain decisions he’d make would have such a transcending impact in his life. What was a simple decision to go undercover and try to win the trust of his arch enemy, Slade, only ended up destroying the trust of his four best friends.

Not only that, the enigma Slade has his single eye on Robin and desires the Boy Wonder’s abilities for himself. Kidnapped by the all powerful criminal, Robin cannot hope to escape and must endure the terrible hardship being under the man’s capture. In the midst of his struggles to escape, Robin does something dangerously foolish and ends being harshly punished; beaten until unconscious. Angry at Robin’s treatment, Slade’s best friend, Wintergreen, intervenes on his behalf and demands that Slade change his tactic so that the two of them may start anew.

‘Who is Slade?’

Will Robin be able to see past the stiff molds of Hero and Villain? Will he ever be able to see past the mask and see the true man behind it? And will the bond they begin to slowly form tear down Robin’s morals; or will it throw the old saying “Can’t teach an old dog new tricks” out on its tail?

A story of sorrow, of pain, of hope, and of change – the impossible tale between a Hero and a Villain, and that even the blackest of hearts have a glimmer of light within them.

Genre: Angst, Drama, Humor, Hurt/Comfort, Action, Friendship, Family

Warnings: Violence, physical abuse, and later on; mild corporal punishment.

Chapter One

Into the Darkness

September 12th, 2008. Friday, 1:24 am.

'Who is Slade?'

Robin laid in bed, staring up at the ceiling of his room from behind the safety of his mask. The darkness of the night surrounded him, yet offered no escape from his feelings or previous actions. The sentence constantly flittered through his mind, never ending; each word taunting and teasing him: *'Who is Slade?'* Robin scowled at the ceiling and turned onto his side.

He had blown it.

How could he have been so stupid? Slade had easily seen through his plan – probably from the beginning even. Robin was right back where he had started with the man. But now, because of his stupidity, he had damaged the trust of his friends.

Trust.

Easy to destroy, but took time to build.

Slade had said that.

Robin definitely had destroyed his friends' trust. It had been so simple, so easy to do. Because of his obsession to find out who Slade was and his plans, Robin had blurred the line of right and wrong. He had stolen to gain Slade's trust.

“Two wrongs don't make a right, Robin.”

Robin growled as the smooth, lecturing tone of Slade's voice flooded through the foremost of his thoughts. The growl came deep from within his throat – an almost feral noise. Irritation and anger rose up, burning his insides like lava.

How dare that psychopath lecture him! How dare he have the audacity to *lecture* him – *him*, Robin; Boy Wonder, hero of justice. Who the heck did he think he was to scold Robin; when the man himself was a criminal?! He had absolutely no right to point out Robin's mistakes. He'd only been trying to stop the madman.

That was all.

Honestly.

Robin let out a long sigh, the anger in his heart slipping away as easily as it came. He turned over onto his other side, sighing once again. He pulled the covers closer to his neck; burrowing deep beneath their warmth.

Psychopath or not, Robin couldn't help but admit that the man was right. Two wrongs did not make a right. He shouldn't have stolen those computer chips. He had been too impatient – just like Slade had chided over and over in that low annoying, smooth voice. If Robin had done it right, then he should've included the other Titans. But he hadn't. Thus, his friends were angry with him; hurt that he hadn't trusted them with his plan.

Maybe it would've worked had he included them in it.

But that was in the past now. He couldn't dwell on the what ifs anymore. He had to deal with his actions, now – the present. He had to regain the trust of his friends. Robin couldn't help but shiver beneath his covers, despite the warmth that blanketed him.

What if he couldn't rebuild what he had destroyed?

Cyborg and Beast Boy had totally reamed him out first. Their voices had been loud, furious, and indignant. Not that Robin could blame them. He definitely deserved their ire. He had broken their trust, after all.

Beast Boy had loudly and constantly complained with: “Dude! Why didn't you ask for help! I can't believe *you're* the reason for my month of bad hair days!”

There were a few of: “I can't believe you couldn't trust us with this. Man, I honestly thought we were closer friends than that.” from Cyborg.

Raven's one simple, monotone declaration had been a little quieter, but a much harder pill to swallow than the rest: “You are an idiot.”

But it was Starfire's talk with him that had been the real stab in the heart: “We did learn one thing from all this. You and Slade are... similar. He did not trust you and you did not trust us.”

Just how stupid could he get?!

Robin rolled onto his back and resumed his scowling at the ceiling. Depression settled in his heart and began to weigh down heavily against his chest. His eyes burned, but Robin knew there would be no tears. He shut his eyes, squeezing them tightly; hoping that, perhaps, tears would come to wash away the terrible sin he had committed against his friends.

How long would it be before he could regain their trust?

It was because of his obsession with Slade that he had made this poor choice. Robin had been impatient and determined to discover and stop Slade's plan. He had pushed away his friends; alienated them in his complete obsession. He admitted it. He had been—was, still even now, completely obsessed.

But he had to be.

Slade was a dangerous man – a dangerous criminal. Robin just couldn't let a man like that loose in the city. People might get hurt because of him. What if he was planning a mass murder? Or what if he was going to try to bring the whole city under his command. What if—

Robin sighed again, forcing his thoughts to stop. It was bedtime – he should be sleeping, not brooding over a madman.

Robin supposed he obtained his work ethic from Bruce. During the five years that he had been the man's ward, Robin had rarely – if ever – seen the man take a leisurely rest. Usually Alfred, the aged British butler, had to drag the man to bed during those intense times when he had a big case.

But someone had to do it.

Someone had to protect the citizens. Someone had to protect the innocents from those nut jobs that decided they could go crazy in the streets. Someone had to protect the people from aliens, metahumans, or whoever got it into their head that they were above the law.

It was Robin's duty to protect those innocent people.

Well, he liked to think that, anyways. Truthfully, he felt terribly burdened by it. He was just a fourteen year old kid. Honestly, he should just be hanging out with friends; his only worries: acne problems, grades, and girls.

Instead, there was a heavy weight and burden on his shoulders – the weight of peoples' lives.

While he enjoyed his crime fighting, sometimes he did wish for the normal moments. Here in Jump City, he never let up on the persona of Robin. He was Robin, Boy Wonder, twenty-four seven. Ever since he had left Bruce, left Gotham City behind, he had also left behind his first identity.

Richard "Dick" Grayson, son of John and Mary Grayson.

None of his friends knew his real name. They didn't know he had been a well known circus acrobat with his parents. They didn't know that his parents had been murdered right before his eyes when he was only seven years old. They didn't know he was taken in by Bruce Wayne, the playboy billionaire of Gotham City.

They didn't know that even with Bruce's kindness, Dick had felt the loneliness nearly suffocate him; almost drowning him in its terrible weight. While he was extremely thankful to Bruce for taking him in when he'd had no one else, the man wasn't exactly father material. Maybe a wiser, stern older brother; but definitely not a father.

And when he learned that Bruce Wayne was really the Dark Knight, Batman, of Gotham City, Dick had relished in his role as Robin. He had been eager to push away the bitter loneliness that his parents' deaths had left him with.

His friends also didn't know why he left Batman and Gotham City behind.

What they didn't know could fill a library.

They only knew "Robin". Robin: strong leader, outgoing personality, brave, driven, enjoyed video games, told terrible puns, hung out with his friends, loved to do pranks, and kicked bad guy butt like no tomorrow.

Dick, on the other hand, was a bit introverted. In fact, at times, the quite opposite to Robin. Dick was somewhat timid, shy, loved hugs and affection, avoided the limelight – despite his past work with his parents, wanted to please, hated contention, and wished for normalcy.

Robin wasn't sure if he remembered that boy anymore, though. That boy laid behind a mask that never came off – ever. If he took off the mask, would Dick surface once again? Would he blend with Robin's personality or would Robin disappear altogether when the mask came off? If he did, would the other Titans accept Dick?

But their trust had been shattered.

Could they honestly accept anything from him anymore?

Had he completely blown it with them? Could he really piece together the shattered shards of their trust? He couldn't blame them, if he couldn't. He certainly lost their trust through his actions – it was completely his fault. He didn't deserve their trust anymore.

Robin's throat constricted as he swallowed the dry lump that had built up inside. Gosh, he wanted to cry. His emotions were burning his eyes. But, Robin didn't cry. Dick could and would – but Robin couldn't. He was the leader of the Teen Titans and he had to be strong for the group.

If he took off the mask, would the tears flow then?

Robin let out a shuddering sigh as he sat up. The darkness was illuminated by a faint stream of light from the window; the glow of the moon the only light that came from night sky. The light shadowed the empty walls; the illusion of the darkness prevalent.

He couldn't sleep.

I have to stop thinking like this, thought Robin bitterly. I'll never get to sleep if I can't calm my thoughts down.

Sighing, Robin pushed the warm covers away and threw his legs over the edge of his bed; his pajama pants twisting slightly. Might as well grab a midnight snack. Maybe some food in his stomach would bring sleep.

Robin set his sock covered feet on the carpet and stood up. He moved quietly, a habit that had been ingrained in him during his time with Bruce. The shadows swallowed him easily. He walked into the other section of his room that had been walled off with a doorless opening.

Robin looked at the darkened walls. There were numerous newspaper clippings of criminals that he had plastered on their surfaces. Countless criminal faces seemed to sneer at him through the darkness, taunting him in his sleepless night. He shivered slightly as he thought, *Maybe I should do some cleaning tomorrow. All these faces staring at me... Totally giving me the creeps.*

He slowly walked past his desk, ignoring the items of interest that he had collected from his fights with Slade. As he reached the door, he pressed the control button and the door slide open.

“Hello, Robin. Couldn't sleep?”

Robin sucked in his breath and whirled around furiously, his eyes searching the darkness for the source of the voice – that terrible, smooth voice.

Gosh, he hated the way it sounded so smug.

“Slade,” hissed Robin. “Show yourself!”

“You've been tossing and turning a lot tonight. You need better sleeping habits.”

“Shut up!” snapped Robin, taking a step forward back into his darkened bedroom. The door slid closed behind him from inactivity. Robin couldn't see anything in the room; the darkness shielding Slade from his view.

“My, aren't we the disrespectful little boy. No matter. That's easily rectified.”

“What are you playing at, Slade? Why are you here? Why are you spying on me?” demanded Robin. He felt naked without his utility belt; bare and unarmed before a dangerous enemy. He couldn’t attack blindly in the dark without his weapons; so he began to inch towards his end table in the other section of the room where his belt lay.

“Still so impatient, Robin. I had hoped that maybe you had learned something from our recent experience. Looks like I was wrong.”

“There’s nothing to learn from *you*,” hissed Robin viciously.

“Now that’s where you’re wrong, Robin. I have a lot to offer. A lot to teach you.”

Robin stopped and frowned in the darkness. What was this madman talking about? ‘A lot to teach you’? Wasn’t Slade a criminal? Didn’t he hate the Teen Titans for getting in his way? Didn’t he want them dead, like all the other criminals? Why would he offer to ‘teach’ Robin?

“What are you talking about?” asked Robin, resuming his slow inching towards his belt. He slowly passed the dividing wall. There was a low chuckle.

“Have I said something that interests you, Robin? Good, because I’m offering you something that many would die for.”

Slade’s smooth voice was beginning to grate on Robin’s nerves.

“Oh, like what?” drawled Robin.

“All my power, all my knowledge.”

Huh?

“All for you. You just have to become my apprentice and swear to serve me.”

What...?

Robin couldn’t help but stop his advancement towards his end table, frozen by Slade’s pronouncement.

He was offering... a partnership?

No...

No, that wasn’t it. No, he was just like Batman. The man was offering the position of ‘sidekick’. There was no way he’d be *partners* with Robin. There was just no way.

Robin gritted his teeth furiously.

He was sick of it. Totally sick of these men underestimating his abilities. He wasn’t a sidekick – he was a leader. Robin was nobody’s sidekick. No, he was the leader of the Teen Titans. He was powerful and strong in his own right.

Robin was a leader.

Although, Robin knew deep down the offer was tempting, just a little – if he was honest with himself. This man was powerful – that much he knew and admitted. The man certainly had a lot to offer. He probably *could* teach Robin a thing or two.

Too bad he was on the wrong side.

“Thanks for the offer, Slade. But no thanks,” said Robin offhandedly with a broad smirk. He bolted towards his end table, his hand reaching for his belt.

He never made it.

A bladed hand sped through the darkness, connecting with Robin’s neck. Stars erupted in his eyes as pain flared from the blow. He dropped to his hands and knees, gasping. Another attack connected with his stomach, causing him to smash into the side of his bed. With the wind completely knocked out of his stomach, Robin struggled to breathe.

“You’re so cute, Robin. You honestly think you have a choice in this matter.”

A groan of pain slipped from Robin’s mouth. He could see Slade’s metal boots in front of his eyes. He glanced upward; the dark man towering over him. Even in the darkness, Robin could feel the overpowering presence from this man.

Gosh, he hated being so short.

Robin coughed and gasped as he struggled to sit up; clutching his stomach with one arm as he pushed himself up with the other. He had to fight. He had to win. He couldn’t let this man loose inside Titans Tower. His friends were in danger.

He had to protect them.

Another swift kick connected with his stomach. A muffled cry of pain escaped from Robin’s lips before he could clamp his mouth shut. A hand grabbed Robin by the hair and jerked his head to look upward. He was forced to look into the face of the masked man – half orange on the right, half black on the left. The only human feature visible was a grey blue left eye, surrounded by the orange of his mask.

The eye narrowed beneath the metal.

“Pathetic, Robin. I expected more of a struggle from you. Too bad your last night wasn’t filled with pleasant memories with your friends.”

Another blow smashed into Robin’s head. Stars glimmered once again in his sight, slowly fading away into dark spots – he was blacking out. He collapsed to the ground, sliding downward into the darkness. He closed his eyes, thinking how he failed his friends. He hadn’t even had the chance to apologize – tell them how sorry he was and how stupid he’d been.

He would never get the chance to say he was sorry.

I’m sorry, guys... Please forgive me...

That thought stood at the forefront of his mind as the blackness took over.

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September 12th, 2008. Friday, 9:30 am.

The Teen Titans were an interesting group of five young teens; heroes that sacrificed their time to protect others and stop crime – stop those that would harm others in their greed or quest for power. Each Titan had their own pasts, their own skills, their secrets that they wished to keep to themselves – Robin had been no different. Robin's friends each had their interesting abilities and quirks that kept them together in their uniqueness.

Cyborg was the oldest out of the group, being around seventeen years old. He was also the tallest of the group, being an ex-football player; but an accident changed everything for the older teen. Thus, it accounted for his appearance, being mostly robot – only part of his face, arms, and heart were human flesh. With most of his body being made out of high powered robotics, his skills lied with immense strength and electronics. The chocolate skinned young man was very bright, being able to completely repair any damage that could be inflicted to his electronic body.

He was the second in command to Robin in leadership of the Teen Titans and much of the time acted like the older brother to each of the friends. But that didn't mean he didn't enjoy himself and spent much of his time with video games and sports; and building numerous electronics.

Starfire was the next oldest, being fifteen. She was from another planet called Tamaran. Thus, Starfire wasn't quite used to earth customs. She was the kindest of the group, being the ray of naive sunshine, yet also bore a soft maturity that held them together. Her powers were driven by her emotions; the greater she felt, the greater her power. She could fly and shoot powered star bolts from her hands. That being said, negative emotions many times had a poor affect on the young alien girl.

Starfire was also quite beautiful; her deep emerald eyes like gemstones, while the sclera of her eyes a lighter green. Her long burnt auburn hair reached to her hips and her skin was a orange shaded tan. She generally wore a purple sleeveless top which showed her midriff, a mini skirt of the same shade of purple, and purple boots that reached all the way to her thighs.

Raven was also fifteen, slightly younger than Starfire. Raven was half human and half demon. The story of her birth is a long one and a terrible one – a story in itself and a story for another time. Suffice to say, her father was a cruel demon. Raven could be considered Starfire's opposite. Raven's powers were also driven by her emotions; however, the more she felt, the more out of control her powers would become. Thus, Raven spent much of the time meditating to avoid being overly emotional; most of the time being monotone and sometimes sarcastic when she spoke.

Raven's appearance could be considered almost Goth like, yet at the same she too was attractive. Her skin was pale, almost grey in appearance. Her eyes were a deep violet; her short, shoulder length hair the same. On her forehead, she bore a red, black edged gemstone – the ajna chakra – which she had since birth. She wore a long sleeved black leotard; an indigo cloak, which she kept her face hidden much of the time with its hood; and matching ruffled boots that came to her ankles.

Beast Boy was the youngest of the group, being twelve years old – nearly thirteen in a few months. He was the light hearted member; always telling jokes – although, much of the time he was the butt of such jokes, especially when his own pranks backfired on him. His appearance was probably the most noticeable out of the group, having dark green skin and pointed ears. As such, his skin color attested itself within his powers. Beast Boy was a changeling, meaning he could transform into any type of animal he chose.

Because of this, Beast Boy was a firm vegetarian, usually arguing with the others on this subject. He wore a black and purple uniform – a old uniform from his days on a different team, The Doom Patrol – which had

gloves and sneakers with Velcro straps. Being the youngest of the group, Beast Boy tended to try harder with things, but usually he just ended up getting into mischief.

Each were special friends that depended on each other. However, none of them truly knew or understood the great and long trial that laid before their lives – a trial of sorrow, of pain, of growth, of change, and of hope; one that would change their lives.

Hopefully for the better.

Starfire glided happily through the air as she made her way to the main room of Titans Tower; humming lightly to herself. It was a glorious morning indeed. The sun was shining brightly, the birds chirping happily – indeed the perfect start to a glorious new day. She just couldn't wait to be with her friends. What new fun would they have today?

The door of the main room slid open automatically as she approached.

“Good morning, dear friends!” cried Starfire joyfully, lifting into the air as she smiled brightly. She was met by low, indistinct grumbles. Starfire frowned. That just wasn't right. Why weren't her friends happy? Was it not a beautiful day? Starfire floated towards Raven, her feet landing gently once she reached the other girl. She hoped that her friend would explain the boys' unnatural actions.

“Raven, why does everyone have the gloom?” asked Starfire. Raven looked up from the book she was reading.

“Those two are still mad at Robin.”

“Oh, we're not still mad – we're *furious!*” yelled Cyborg, slamming the fridge closed. In his arms were a number of foods; all perfect ingredients in the making of a sandwich. “Little dude totally didn't trust us. I thought we were supposed to be a team.”

Cyborg dropped the food onto the countertop angrily. He stomped through the kitchen, grabbing a few spoons, knives, and a plate. Raven rolled her eyes and lifted her book to continue her reading.

“Yeah!” piped up Beast Boy indignantly, popping up from a spot on the couch. The video game he had been playing paused. “Look at my hair! *Look at it!*” Beast Boy pointed hysterically to his hair. There were still remnants of little red splotches through the green hair.

“How the heck am I supposed to get rid of this gunk? Not cool at all!”

Raven shut her book closed irritably.

“Enough,” said Raven. “No amount of yelling and griping will change what Robin did. He made a bad choice. Accept it and move on. Choose to forgive him or choose to snub him. But whatever you choose – choose it quietly. The two of you are ruining my concentration.”

Raven opened her book again and settled down in her seat, vanishing beneath its pages. Starfire noticed that the writing on the cover was upside down.

Cyborg grumbled something under his breath, but didn't argue Raven's point; continuing his work on his sandwich. Beast Boy huffed and whipped back around, resuming his fast paced video game.

Starfire bit her lip, looking sadly at her friends. She could feel the unhappy mood flowing through the air. It was terribly suffocating. She turned away and slipped quietly out of the room. She wandered the halls of the tower, slowly making her way towards Robin's room.

She understood the others' anger. She herself was not pleased with Robin's choice. But a part of her heart understood that Robin had only been doing what he thought was best. But, sadly, it showed everyone that he was not trusting of his friends.

Their friend Raven was right; they would have to do the forgiving of Robin. If they didn't, Starfire feared they would never be the same as a team again. She would have to do her best. If she could convince Robin to come and say the apologies, then maybe their friends would, in return, forgive him.

"Robin?" called Starfire softly, knocking on Robin's door once she reached it.

No reply.

"Robin? Are you awake? Come and join the others in the partaking of the breakfast," said Starfire in an encouraging tone. She knocked again.

Silence.

"Robin?" asked Starfire, opening the door. The room was silent and dark. She could see the many clippings of paper on the walls. She stepped inside hesitantly, flipping the light switch on.

The room was divided; the main area seemed to be Robin's workspace. There was a wall that parted the room without the use of a door. Starfire slowly made her way to the other section where Robin's bed lay.

It was empty.

Starfire's feet lifted off the ground as she looked around the room. He just wasn't here. Her speed quickened as she left Robin's entire room, the electronic door sliding shut in her wake. Her soft, kind voice filled the hallways as she called his name.

"Robin? Where are you?"

Still no reply.

Starfire couldn't stop the panic that began to fill her chest. She began to zip through the air, frantically looking in all the places she knew he'd normally go. She tried the room of working out, the basement, the roof, the room of cars, the rooms used for guests, the room of recovery – Robin was nowhere to be found.

Starfire couldn't stop fearing for the worst.

"Friends!" cried Starfire frantically as she burst into the main room. Raven hadn't moved from her spot, although her book was righted. Cyborg was sitting next to Beast Boy on the couch, scarfing down his sandwich with one hand and pointing towards the TV screen with the other.

"No, no, no, Beast Boy. You're gonna crash if you drive like that."

"Dude, I'm trying—AH! Maaan, I crashed again."

"I'm telling you should've listened to me."

“You were distracting me!”

“Friends!” cried Starfire louder. The TV screen displayed a red flashing light, signifying Beast Boy’s crash. Cyborg was in the middle of taking a bite of his sandwich. Raven’s head popped up from behind her book. The other three Titans looked at Starfire.

“Starfire, what is it?” asked Raven.

“Robin is gone!”

“What do you mean, gone?” asked Beast Boy. “He can’t be gone, he lives here. `Sides, it’s not like he’d go off without tellin` us.”

“Not like he hasn’t before,” drawled Cyborg sarcastically through a mouthful of sandwich. He swallowed before continuing. “Look, Star. I’m sure he’s off brooding inside his room over Slade again.”

“He is not! I looked!”

“Training room?”

“Yes!”

“Starfire, listen to me. You need to calm down,” said Raven. Starfire bit her lip anxiously before lifting into the air and flying over the couch to land in front of the large screen. She turned to face the other Titans.

“Oh, friends, I have checked everywhere. He is nowhere to be found. I fear that he has left us,” cried Starfire, pulling her arms close to her chest in worry.

“Star, you sure checked everywhere?” asked Beast Boy.

“I have!”

“Just calm down, Starfire,” said Raven firmly, lowering her hood. “I’ll try to sense him. If he’s in the tower, I’ll know.”

Starfire nodded and patiently waited. Raven lifted her legs and crossed them, floating about two feet in the air. She extended her arms outward and closed her eyes. She murmured softly, “Azarath, metrion, zinthos,” There was a long tense moment of waiting before Raven opened her eyes.

“He’s not in the tower.”

The air in the room felt heavy as newfound worry and anxiety began to spill from each of the Titans.

Something was deadly wrong.

“Oh, we are bad friends for not knowing where our friend, Robin, is located,” cried Starfire, the volume of her voice rising as her worry grew.

“All right, all right. Calm down already,” said Cyborg with a raised hand. He set his half eaten sandwich aside before standing up. “We’ll figure this out. I’ll just check the camera feed outside Robin’s room. That way we can see when he left his room.”

“Please hurry,” said Starfire. “I fear there is something wrong; terribly wrong. I have the bad feeling.”

“I’m sure it’s nothing. Maybe Robin went out for some fresh air or something,” said Cyborg, trying to give Starfire a reassuring smile. But it wasn’t really working. With a sigh, Cyborg walked to the main computer, sat down in a chair, and starting working.

The other Titans gathered around behind him; clustered together as they leaned in. A darkened camera scene appeared on the large screen, showing the outside of Robin’s room.

“Okay, I’m going to fast forward after he went to bed,” said Cyborg, pressing the enter key. The nothingness of the darkness sped up. After a few moments, Robin’s door flickered suddenly.

“Wait, you missed something,” said Raven, pointing to the screen. Cyborg nodded, seeing it as well. The footage went backwards and Starfire saw Robin’s door flicker once again. Cyborg stopped it and allowed the film to play out in real time.

There was a long agonizing moment of waiting.

Then, the door opened and Robin stood in the doorway. He stiffened just at the door opened and he whirled around, stepping back into his room after a moment. Starfire caught a glimpse of fury on his face as he turned. The door closed after a swift moment.

Raven frowned, her eyebrow. “Replay that, Cyborg.”

The Titans rewatched the segment. Contemplative silence permeated the group afterward. They began to glance at each other, as if in the hopes of reading the others’ thoughts.

“So... um... What exactly does this mean?” asked Beast Boy.

“It looks like something called Robin back into his room,” answered Raven.

“But never left afterward,” continued Cyborg, as he fast forward the footage to the point Starfire had visited only moments ago.

“That must mean an intruder used the window in Robin’s room,” concluded Starfire.

“Wait, what? Intruder? You guys think it’s an intruder?” asked Beast Boy incredulously. “Oh, come on. Who’d sneak into Titans Tower, huh?”

“Could be a number of villains,” suggested Cyborg.

“Why isn’t there more footage?” demanded Beast Boy. “Now that we know something’s up, look at the footage from Robin’s room.”

Cyborg sighed and shook his head. “That’s just it. We don’t have any cameras in our rooms. Ever hear of privacy?”

“Yeah, but...” Beast Boy trailed off and looked down at the ground. There was a long moment of silence between the group.

Starfire bit her lip nervously. She had rarely seen Robin look so angry, so hateful. She could only think of one person who ever brought such a look on his face.

And that worried her greatly.

“I think... it is Slade,” said Starfire, breaking the silence. The other three Titans stared at her, looks of disbelief all over their faces.

“Look, I know we just had a fight with the man, but that doesn’t mean he... he *kidnapped* Robin,” said Cyborg skeptically, but there was a hint of uncertainty in his voice. “I mean, why would he kidnap Robin?”

“I have rarely seen such a look of fury on Robin’s face. Only Slade ever brings such feelings to Robin’s heart,” said Starfire in a soft tone. “And Robin was never able to discover Slade’s plans.”

A feeling of somber gloom fell upon the group of teens. The thought of their leader, their buddy, their best friend kidnapped by a hardened criminal was a terrible, terrible thought to think. Starfire began to wring her hands in worry.

“Friends, what are we to do?”

“I... I don’t know,” said Cyborg. “I mean, this is big. This is serious stuff. Robin’s the one who usually does the leading with this kind of stuff.”

“We need a temporary leader right now, then; until we bring him back,” said Raven.

“Yeah, but—”

“We *will* bring him back,” said Raven, overriding Beast Boy. She looked at Cyborg seriously. “I suggest you take over leadership, Cyborg.”

“*Me?* Are you crazy, Rae?”

“I am not. We need to formulate a plan and I have confidence that you will lead us well.”

“I fully agree!” piped Starfire. “We must hurry and rescue our friend, Robin, from the evil hands of Slade.”

“I...” started Cyborg, looking uncertainly at the looks on his teammates’ faces. Even Beast Boy seemed to have accepted his leadership, albeit temporary.

“All right, I’ll do it,” sighed Cyborg.

“Glorious!” cried Starfire, leaping happily into the air once. “Now, we must find Slade and bring our friend Robin back.”

Cyborg frowned.

“What would include Robin in Slade’s plans?” questioned Cyborg in a low murmur. “Why steal him away in the middle of the night? And why just him? Why not all of us? It’s like he isn’t targeting us as a group.”

“Just Robin...” nodded Starfire.

“Those are the right questions we should be asking. And we will find out the answers,” said Raven in a low, yet determined tone.

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