

Face of Fear

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/31983466) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/31983466>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Fandoms:	Red Robin (Comics) , Batman - All Media Types , Batman (Comics) , Red Hood and the Outlaws (Comics) , Batman and Robin (Comics)
Characters:	Tim Drake , Jason Todd , Dick Grayson , Bruce Wayne , Damian Wayne , Scarecrow , Mentioned: - Character , Janet Drake , Jack Drake , Tim Drake's Parents
Additional Tags:	Tim Drake Needs a Hug , Tim Drake-centric , Tim Drake Has a Bad Time , Tim Drake Needs Love , Tim Drake is Red Robin , Tim Drake Angst , Tim Drake Gets a Hug , Hurt Tim Drake , Dick Grayson is Nightwing , Protective Dick Grayson , Dick Grayson Tries to Be a Good Older Sibling , Jason Todd is Red Hood , Protective Jason Todd , Jason Todd is a Batfamily Member , Damian Wayne is Bad at Feelings , But he's trying , Good Sibling Damian Wayne , Damian Wayne Has a Heart , Bruce Wayne is a Good Parent , Bad Parents Jack and Janet Drake , Hurt/Comfort , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Angst with a Happy Ending , Scarecrow's Fear Toxin (DCU)
Language:	English
Collections:	Tim Drake and Red Robin Stories
Stats:	Published: 2021-06-16 Words: 3,363 Chapters: 1/1

Face of Fear

by [WildCard4505](#)

Summary

Tim gets a first hand look at what fear gas does to your mind. The rest of his family get a look at what it does to Tim.

Notes

So I *kinda* don't like this work but the idea has been in my head for months so I had to get it out. Hopefully you guys like it though!

Tim felt the fear gas take hold. He watched reality slip away mixed with twisted flashes from whatever horrors his mind felt like throwing at him. It was terrifying when Tim stopped being able to grasp what was the gas and what was real. It was all mixed together into a gray blur. Eventually it got too tiring to try and separate the white from the black.

He tried to think back to old case files to occupy his mind. Even though his heart was beating against his chest he was able to recall some of the details. Mentions of fear gas victims from reports. Each instance was different, maybe because the gas truly affects everyone differently. Maybe it was because it was always different strains, although a quick lab analysis showed Scarecrow didn't have as much time on his hands as everyone assumed he did.

No, most likely it's because most of the evidence came from people seeing it on the outside. Most of the actual victims pushed the memories out of their minds. Those who didn't still gave minimal descriptions, wanting to keep their fears to themselves. Batman, having suffered the effects too many times, never talked much about it either. Instead he buried himself into preparation and prevention. Making sure nobody had to come into contact with it again, or at least as few people as possible. The only thing he said is that the gas seemed like it took hours to fully go into effect. Like it was searching for the most painful thing possible.

At the time Tim thought none of the descriptions gave it justice. He saw flickers of people leaving. People falling. People... dying. But along with the horror of all of that came the flickers of real life. Or what he assumed was reality. He heard Dick scream his name but saw his lifeless body seconds later. Crumpled with puddles of red growing around him, limbs twisted at odd angles. Tim was terrified he wasn't going to make it back to reality. Even more than that. He was scared he was making the wrong distinctions.

What if he made it back only to find out that Dick really was dead? He'd come back and find Jason gone, like he never existed, hiding in the grief he'd swear he didn't feel. Damian would relapse. Maybe act even worse than when he came from the league. Dick taught him how to deal with emotions besides anger. He taught him how to cope with sadness and fear when Bruce was only able to help if a problem could be punched. Without him, all of it would seem tainted. And Bruce. God Tim couldn't even imagine. He saw the aftermath of Jason. Villains drowning in their own blood. A thread of life left as they were shipped to hospitals and Arkham. Tim remembered wondering if they would even make it there. The thoughts only forced one question to his mind.

'So where does that leave me?'

It causes images of him sitting alone in his apartment. Curled up pushing against the feeling of loneliness growing in his chest. He could feel it blossom like it did years ago. When he spent months at a time in a ghost of a house. Waiting for the telltale yellow lights of his parents' car to stream through the window. Waiting until his phone would ding with another email about their extended trip.

He'd fill his mind with the sounds of Wayne manor. Imagining laughter and family dinners. Except none of that really happened, did it? How much of his "memories" were fake. There was another yell that broke through. The voice was gruffer than Dicks but didn't have the age to it of Bruce's.

'Jason then' Tim's mind supplied. Except Jason died? Tim tried to remember. His brain was getting fuzzy. Some part of him yelled that fuzzy was bad. That people have died from fear gas, their heart rates spiking too high. He was too preoccupied trying to remember. Jason died as Robin. His hero, the boy he had looked up to when no one was there.

Then it was like he was 10 all over again. Watching Batman beat a guy bloody after not seeing him for weeks. Bruce Wayne mourned his son and Tim was terrified. He felt his hands loosen from his camera in horror. There was none of the wonder left. No smiles or proud smirks. No graceful leaps across the building. Just brutality and dark.

Blood splattered on the wall next to the criminal after a broken nose. What did he even do? He didn't seem like a supervillain. Maybe steal a purse? Nothing that warranted this. Tim backed away slowly. This wasn't Batman. He didn't want to remember Batman like this. He turned and ran on the rooftop. Even an empty house was better than this. Instead he ran right into the alleyway. His brain was reeling. He was on the rooftop running the opposite direction, how did he get here? His thoughts were cut off as Batman noticed him. His eyes were steely and filled with the bloodlust of a criminal.

"you thought you could get away with it." Tim froze confused.

"G-Get away with-" He tried to ask what he did, stuttering and teeth chattering, but Batman cut him off.

"Don't Play Games With Me!" he yelled and Tim resisted curling into a ball like when his dad yelled.

"I-I'm not I-I swear I'm not-" Tim felt something slam into his head from above. He thought it was a brick only to see Batman pull his hand back into a familiar fighting stance. He'd seen from afar, even photographed it. It was the same stance he practiced in his room as he threw marbles on the carpet like smoke pellets at home. He never imagined it would be used against him. As his fist reeled back again Tim felt like he was growing bigger than he already was. He tripped over his feet as he tried to back away, falling as the fist came down on him again.

“Stop it!” Tim yelled, scrambling back to his feet. He tried to run but each stride of Batman’s was ten of his own. There was no way to outrun him.

“You’ll never escape from your guilt!” Something hit his back knocking the breath out of him. He felt the ground scrape his cheek as he went down face first.

“Bruce please!” The name was a last ditch effort. Maybe it could snap him back. Instead it only seemed to make him angrier. He heard his heavy footsteps approach him, bringing him back to the days of screaming behind a locked bedroom door. He turned on the ground, the gravel of the alleyway digging into his elbows. He only had a split second to raise his arms in some semblance of a block before his fist hit him again.

“No! Stop it!” Tim felt tears drip down his face, not just from the pain of blow after blow. It was something much worse. He felt his heart being torn to shreds. Batman was supposed to be a hero. He didn’t leave criminals dead on the streets. He didn’t hurt little boys. He wasn’t supposed to hurt him. He felt like each punch was shattering the world he created. The world he had lived and breathed and hid in for years. The wall of punches finally stopped and Tim spoke through his tears and the pain in his jaw.

“I-I...I didn’t..do anything. Please...” Tim always did something though. That's what his dad said. What his mom said too. He always did something.

“You KILLED them!” Batman yelled, picking him like he weighed nothing and pushing him against the wall. The action made his back scream in protest, he forgot he got hit there. It took a second for the sentence to find its way into his head. He wanted to protest. He never killed anyone! He’d never kill anyone! But at the same time his brain was screaming out that it was his fault.

The fist wrapped in his shirt vanished and he felt himself drop to the ground. He didn't fall that far though. It was like he’d grown taller, older maybe. When he looked out there was a sea of gravestones. Some names he recognized and others he didn’t. Some were nameless victims he was too slow to save. He walked slowly through the stones, shaking slightly. He didn’t kill these people he thought but another side of him screamed differently. He froze seeing a set of three gravestones covered in vines. He reached out, brushing them aside. The material of his gauntlets kept too much of the cold from the hard rocks from seeping into his hands. Despite that when the names were revealed he felt chilled to his core. In front of him were the names of his brothers. Jason Todd. Dick Grayson. Damian Wayne.

Their stones were poorly kept. Like no one had touched them besides putting them there. At first he thought it was a sign of disrespect but maybe it was a sign of pain. The idea of their deaths too painful to come near them.

Lightning flashed and Batman appeared behind the stones, making time jump. His cape shifted, nearly causing him to trip in his haste to get away.

“I’m sorry...I- god- I never wanted this.... Please Bruce- Bruce they can’t be dead.” Batman said nothing and Tim felt himself spiral. He didn’t care much about presenting it. He felt his heavy breathing fog up the lenses in his cowl and pulled it off completely.

“I tried- I’m so sorry- I tried to get it right this time- I-I swear I did.” But everyone always leaves anyway. Tim was destined to be alone no matter what path he took. Whether he stayed in an empty house, waiting for a light that’ll never come. Or whether he sought out a home of mitch matched boys and an odd father figure. He always ended up alone.

“Why-” He choked on sobs, cutting off his own sentence. He hated being alone. Why was that the only thing he was allowed to be?

Bruce took a step forward, somewhere during his breakdown he’d disregarded his costume. He was dressed in lounge wear that reminded him of movie nights and coffee runs during a difficult case.

“Why am I the one who’s always left behind....” His knees gave out beneath him and Tim was distantly surprised he managed to remain standing for so long. He felt like he was drowning in his tears. Unable to get a full breath in. Somewhere he realized he didn’t care, his body already felt like it was shutting down.

Suddenly he felt like he was taking a breath of fresh air and the world went white. It came too quickly, causing him to sputter and cough. He propped himself up on his hands and tried taking deep, slow, breaths. He noticed metal under his fingers, not cold but warm. Maybe from body heat. There were hands on his shoulders too, and someone rubbing his back and patting it trying to alleviate his coughs. When his breathing was under control he finally opened his eyes.

Dick was standing in front of him, his face frozen in a mix of panic and pure relief. He saw Damian sitting in the extravagant chair in front of the bat computer. He was far away. If Tim hadn’t been looking he wouldn’t have seen his shoulders lose a bit of their tension. He heard Jason’s voice whispering reassurances of “*breathe, just breathe. It’s okay.*”. It was quiet but it started to grow stronger. Tim had yet to deduce whether it was from his hearing or if Jason was actually speaking louder. He turned to see him removing his hand from his back reluctantly. Replacing it with a familiar leather coat that hung too long and too wide on his small frame. He opened and closed his mouth a few times, the words not coming out. He wanted to ask what happened but before he did his brain filled in the gaps. Fear gas, he knew that.

At some point he forgot though, too lost in the world he was shoved into. All he could think was “*You’re alive*” but even that didn’t come out.

“I know babybird. We’re here.” Dick tightened his grip on his shoulders almost to prove it. Tim still reached a shaking hand, placing it on top of his to be sure. He turned to Jason too, holding a hand out and stopped. He didn’t think this through, Jason’s the only one that initiates contact, it’s a given rule that everyone follows. He must have noticed his hesitation because soon Jason grabbed his outstretched hand. He placed it on his chest, holding it over

his heart, and Tim slumped in relief at the feeling of his heartbeat. He turned to Damian where he sat on the other side of the room. Said boy rolled his eyes in faux irritation. Even so he practically threw himself onto Tim's lap.

Tim laughed. At some point tears must have come back because it was watery, but it was a laugh nonetheless.

“We’re not going anywhere either.” Jason stated plainly and Tim froze. He felt like a computer trying to take an invalid command. Jason must have noticed his hesitation. He squished his way in front of him next to Dick and looked him square in the eye.

“Tim. We’re never going to leave you. Okay?” Tim nodded slowly, eyes wide.

“You’re stuck with us now.” Jason laughed and Tim joined in, nodding again. And Again. Until his head was buried into his brother chests and Damian sandwiched between. He didn’t object besides a few half-hearted squawks of protest.

Suddenly footsteps echoed from the cave and Tim got a glimpse of an exhausted Bruce. He looked like he had aged 10 years and Tim suddenly realized he didn’t know how long he’d been out. Or how much the others knew, but by the speech Jason just gave him he figured they knew a lot of it already. Bruce’s shoulders were slumped as he walked into the main room, an empty vial in his hands. Tim speculated that it held the antidote at some point. Then, like he’d just noticed the difference in the room, his gaze snapped to Tim and the cuddle pile he’d gotten dragged into. Well, cuddle pile he’d initiated. In a second he was wrapped up in his arms instead. The others had evacuated with all the speed of Robins to avoid the crushing hug. Dick giggled, Damian had a smug smirk, even Jason seemed amused if the mischievous tilt of his mouth was any indication. Even so, Tim buried his face into his father figure's shoulder.

Bruce pulled back just enough to look at him, he seemed like he was fighting for words and Tim understood. They both shared the same method of communication. And by that Tim meant no communication at all. Still Bruce held his gaze.

“I’m so proud of you. I’m proud of you everyday.” And Tim searched his eyes for any hint of a lie. Anything that would give him away and throw him back into that world of “*I’m not good enough*”, but he found nothing.

He could feel his walls crack and he was dragged into another hug. He tried to stop a sob from breaking through. Unfortunately that meant not breathing and Jason noticed the change immediately. Tim pulled away from the hug and Jason replaced his hand on his shoulder. Letting some of his weight fall on it to ground him.

“Timbo, you have to breathe, okay?” He shook his head weakly. How many years had he tried to hear those words? He cleaned the house and vacuumed despite having a maid. Watered the garden and cooked dinner. He kept his grades up to perfect A’s. All to hear that his parents were proud of him, Just once. It never came though. Instead they only noticed when a coat was left in the foyer or a light got left on the room. His straight A’s were

disregarded in favor of the one B he got on a hard test. Anytime he protested he was acting unbecoming as an heir to Drake Industries.

“Come on. Tim I promise we won’t be mad but you have to breathe, you can do it.” Jason’s voice was hazier. Was he still holding his breath? Tim could feel his lungs protesting and breathed in a much needed gulp of air and promptly broke down into tears. This time it wasn’t the quiet tears from before. It was heart wrenching sobs as he held on to Bruce and Jason. He could feel Dicks arms wrap around them all as he cried.

“I-I never got to-” He could get the words out. Tim took a deep breath to slow his tears.

“I never got to hear them say it” Tim finally said, his tears slowing down. Maybe he was running out of them.

“I tried so hard... but they always left and maybe it was my fault-” Tim knew he was rambling now but he didn’t have the energy to care as the words fell out.

“Baby bird no-” Dick tried to interrupt him but Tim suddenly felt like he had to get it out now or he’d explode.

“-maybe I was too clingy or just too difficult but I- I just wanted to hear them say it once” Tim wiped away his tears and heard Dick talk hesitantly.

“Say what?” He was quiet and it was unnerving. It was so unlike the bouncy Dick Grayson to stand so stagnant with a small frown on his face. Tim had the sudden thought that he did that. He caused them worry about him. Jason squeezed his shoulder like he could read his thoughts, giving him a small shake of the head. The message was clear. “Don’t go down that road” so Tim didn’t.

“That they were proud of me...” Tim said finally. Bruce and Dick let out the same wounded noise from their words. It was moments like these where you can see Bruce’s influence in Dick. See that he was raised by him and the similarities between them.

Tim watched as they both tried to reach out, almost stopped by some invisible wall. A sad smile appeared on his face that spurred Dick into action. He was pulled back into another bone crushing hug. From there he could see an understanding in Jason’s eyes that wasn’t there before. They both grew up alone. Granted it wasn’t the same kind of lonely but it was no less isolating. No less painful. Even Damian looked at him differently. His eyes still shined with poorly hidden concern but he looked like someone had just given him a lost piece of a puzzle.

“I believe the usual custom after an event such as this is a movie night.” Damian stated, looking over at Dick questioningly. He’d honestly come so far Tim thought idly. He couldn’t ever imagine the kid that came from the League of Assassins suggesting a movie night. Bruce let a rare smile grace his features.

“That sounds like a wonderful idea Damian.” He said. In a split second he was being dragged up stairs by several pairs of arms and practically thrown on the couch in between everyone. Despite the large manor the couch wasn’t made for everyone sitting on it. It groaned slightly

at the weight causing Damian to shoot Dick a worried glance. Tim just smiled and settled into his too small space. He knew the couch would hold them. Tim knew he was still shaking, the adrenaline rush not quite faded along with the rush of emotions. God knows he was getting a lecture later about putting himself in unnecessary danger.

But for now he could focus on his brothers bickering about the movie. Even though Bruce was already sticking Star wars into the DVD player with a knowing look sent his way.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!