

Chapter 22 - Presentation

The next two days went by pretty quickly. M'gann, Kyle and I kept up our morning routines and worked out every morning, with Superboy leaving to visit his guardians while M'gann and I trained more in the grotto. The morning after we had finished our presentation Batman confirmed that several members of the League would be available on the following night. The next day saw the delivery of my costume. The moment she knew it had arrived M'gann was adamant that I try it on immediately.

"Well... What do you think?" I asked, stepping into the living room, wearing my uniform.

The outfit was based on the uniform of the Earth Empire soldiers from Legend of Korra, a homage to the origin of my earthbending. While they might have been the bad guys in the show, their uniform was a great place to start for my own. The fact that it looked cool was just a bonus.

The color scheme was very similar to the original, with the colors, especially the center strip of olive green, shifted to a slightly more vibrant shade. I had thought about putting the earth bending symbol on the chest, but decided to hold off on it for now. The pants were still the same olive green as the original. The belt, which in the original basic design had been a simple metallic looking accent, was now a full utility belt, which I was already certain could hold everything that I wanted. Metallic plates covered my shoulders, legs and biceps, attached to the uniform by a strong magnet system that allowed quick removal so I could use them in metal bending.

The overall design was simple but armored, with thin plating hidden under the uniform. Two coils of metal wire, each tipped with a metal point, were also hidden under the uniform, strapped to my forearm with a deployment system on the backs of my black gloves, which I had borrowed from the earth bending police uniforms from Republic City. More wires, these thicker and longer, were stored in two circular reels attached to my belt, one on either side. Thin bottomed boots with metal bands around the top finished off the uniform.

"It looks good!" M'gann said, floating around me to see it from every angle. *"What about the rest?"*

I smiled and grabbed the helmet from the counter, putting it on. This is where I had strayed the furthest from the original inspiration, as I completely ignored the Empire Soldier helmet and instead paid homage to the other origin of my powers, Captain America. The helmet was sleek and molded to my face, an almost direct copy of the MCU Captain's helmet, only in the same greens as my uniform. I pulled on the helmet, clipping on the chin strap before grabbing the second half of my homage to Steve Rogers.

A heater shield, painted dark green with eight accenting silver lines drawn from the bottom point to the other side. It was some sort of strong metal alloy, which I had plans to enhance or replace with meteorite metal so I could more easily bend it. It clipped onto my back, locked in place by several powerful magnets. I jumped in place a few times to make sure everything was secure. When nothing fell off or jingled loudly I smiled.

"It looks great Warren. You cut an impressive figure," She added, landing in front of me with a smile.

"Thanks. Now I just need to get used to it." I said, going through some stretches. The outfit fit perfectly, and had plenty of freedom of movement, though it wasn't perfect.

"We could spar?" The Martian suggested.

"No, our presentation is in a few hours and this is the only one I have," I explained as I unbuckled my helmet and clipped it onto my belt, letting it hang there. *"The spares will be coming in the next few days, then I'll start to spar in them."*

M'gann agreed, the conversation shifting to the eventual meeting and who was coming.

"Do you think Superman will show up?" M'gann asked. *"I don't know if I could be friendly with him."*

"I don't think so," I answered. *"He wasn't on the list of confirmed members that would be coming. And honestly I think the best policy is to follow Kyle's lead on this one."*

"What do you mean?"

"Well he was the one being affected. As long as it's healthy he should be the one to set the tone of our treatment. Unless of course it's way over the top, in which case we would probably have to help him calm down."

"That's a good point," M'gann responded, chewing her lip. *"I'll be polite unless Kyle acts otherwise."*

"Yeah. It's a bullshit situation all around," I added with a shrug. *"The League in general really screwed up when it came to Kyle's care."*

"I'm so glad he is getting along with his new guardians."

"Yeah, he deserves a win."

M'gann and I spent the next hour or so talking for a bit before sitting down on the couch. I Pulled the metal plating off of my armor, and leaned my shield against the couch so she could

sit next to me more comfortably, leaning against my side. Eventually Kyle returned, quickly followed by the arrival of Kaldur and Robin. The latter two paused visibly when they noticed how close M'gann and I were, though only Robin reacted beyond that, the younger hero smirking knowingly.

"You guys ready?" Robin asked, still smirking. "I see your uniform came in, it looks good. What's with the shield?"

"The hero I got my enhancements from used a shield as his main piece of equipment," I explained with a shrug. "I wanted to pay homage to him. Plus a lot of my... borrowed combat instincts involve using a shield."

"Should you not have been using one when we sparred then?" Kaldur asked.

"Well one, this just got here today," I pointed out. "And two, I'm also trying my best to work advanced earthbending into my fighting, rather than defaulting to a style without any earthbending, as effective as it may or may not be."

I didn't mention that I was just starting to get comfortable with the idea of using the shield, despite the fact that holding it was like second nature. It reminded me that I wasn't completely myself anymore, which was something I had only recently started to slowly accept. We talked about my uniform for a bit more before Wally finally arrived, his mentor right behind him. Over the next twenty minutes more and more members of the Justice League arrived before eventually Batman showed up, confirming that everyone who said they were going to be here, was. By then Wonder Woman, The Flash, one of the Green Lanterns, Green Arrow, Black Canary, Aquaman, Martian Manhunter, Red Tornado, who I actually forgot lived with us, and Captain Marvel had all showed up. I made a mental note to ask someone what I should call the individual Green Lanterns.

The team made their way to me, all of us standing side by side. This drew most of the League's attention, but I took a deep breath anyway before talking.

"Hello everyone! Thank you all for coming, we appreciate you taking time out of your schedule."

Everyone was now completely focused on me, and for a moment I stuttered mentally, before M'gann gave me a mental nudge. I smiled and continued with a barely noticeable pause.

"I don't know how much you know about why we asked you to come, but I'll start with the basics. This team was put together when a few of our members decided that they were not satisfied in their current positions. That isn't to say that they were unhappy, just that they knew that they could do more."

I paused for a moment, taking my time to look a few of the League members in the eye before continuing.

“I was invited onto the team not long after that. I was told that the team was created to allow the less experienced heroes a place to function more independently, still gain experience while remaining under the guidance of their mentors and the League. I was eager to meet the team, and so far I have enjoyed what interactions we have had. I did however find a question lingering in the back of my head. What was this team?”

I resisted the urge to pace in front of the smattering of older heroes, staying where I was and letting the words flow naturally.

“Are we just the junior Justice League? Was the team just a place the League was keeping its future members? I asked my teammates what they thought and we settled on two explanations beyond the need for a covert team. One was to provide us with a place to gain experience out of the spotlight, and the second was to give us the opportunity to function more independently without actually being separate. This brought up a new point. Was this all we were capable of?”

“We decided together that this team was capable of being more than the training wheels for the Justice League.” Kaldur continued, stepping forward to stand beside me, perfectly on cue. “We put together a plan, an idea, pulling greatly from Skarns original thoughts, of what this team could be. Not just for tomorrow, not just for this year. But for many years to come.”

“The League is a group of solo or double acts coming together out of necessity. But what if we built a team from the ground up, one trained to work together, to fight as a single unit, taking down threats that far exceed what the individual members would be able to take down.” I said, picking up after Kaldur finished.

Robin turned slightly and summoned the projected screens, pulling up the data and sending it via smaller projected screens to all of the League members. This was all of the information that Robin had gathered and that the team had curated together.

“This concept has been proven effective amongst baseline humans, both in elite fighting units like U.S. Special Forces, Seal Teams and various other military groups, including the Atlantean military, as well as much more commonly in various different sports and competitions.” Kaldur continued. “Training together, in ways that forge bonds and create real connections can dramatically increase the effectiveness of a fighting force.”

“That is what we want to create. A uniquely equipped and powered team, who’s members are trained to not only fight effectively, but to fight effectively together. A combination of advanced tactics, stealth, infiltration and small unit tactics, all rolled up into a single group.” I said, making sure to meet everyone's eyes as I talked. “We believe that training in this way, and

doing so together will create a hero team that could one day stand beside *and separate from* the Justice League.”

That final statement got a bit of movement, more than a few heroes starting to say something. Instead of allowing them to cut into the presentation I cut them off and continued.

“However, that is not all. We also believe that such a group would allow individuals with powers and abilities that don't meet what could be considered a minimum amount of effectiveness to reach new heights.” I said with a smirk. “There is no doubt that many of the members of the Justice League won the lottery when it came to levels of power. A group that focuses on how individuals work in a team could cover shortcomings and improve overall effectiveness despite a hero's power being weaker or unfortunately specific.”

As I talked Robin started playing muted video feeds of training exercises for various elite military groups, interspersed with shots of League fights, defeating overwhelming foes through joint effort.

“Our essential goal is to take the lesson of the Justice League, that alone we are weak but together we are strong, and extend it out to its logical conclusion. If we are stronger when we come together, then what happens if we start together and only get closer?”

“Our final bit of footage was recorded a few days ago during one of our sparring meetups.”

As Kaldur explained, a few of the members looked surprised. Clearly Black Canary and Red Tornado had no idea that we were meeting to spar. Kaldur continued on, explaining the basis of our idea, that the close bond M'gann and I shared was an example of what we could accomplish once we had sufficient training. Robin started the edited footage, showing a selection of clips from our fights. As it was playing Kaldur pointed out several moments, pointing out that our mental communication was enabling us to out fight three seasoned heroes despite our limited experience. When it was over I turned back to the “Crowd” and began talking again.

Together Kaldur and I went over a general outline of our plan, including finding people to train us in certain aspects, as well as trainers for more specific things as well as potential patrols. I brought out the concept of a standardized load out, a recruitment process, as well as the basics for a command structure that the team had discussed.

“We plan on voting on two leaders, a Field Leader and a Base Leader. The Field Leader would be in charge of the team in the field while the Base Leader is in charge of logistics, training, everything that goes into keeping the team going,” I explained. “For now that would be it, but as we add more members we will also be voting in Squad Leaders, who would be in charge of smaller teams. The hierarchy would be maintained to keep order and a chain of command, but is not the end all be all for decision making. Most choices being made that affect

the team long term or on a large scale will be made by vote, potentially having to pass by a three fourth majority.”

Kaldur had pointed out that fifty percent was likely to leave some choices being controversial and could alienate members if motions barely passed. He suggested a three fourths majority rule, which I liked the idea of, but wasn't sure would work. Still, there was plenty of time to discuss the problem.

“We want to make three things clear before we transition into questions. The first is that we recognize that this is not a simple goal. This will take years to figure out and get right. We plan on starting with a single team, settling down with either eight or ten members,” I explained. “After that, once we have gotten the best methods for training and team building down, as well as decided our own internal leadership and worked through the kinks we are hoping to expand to multiple teams, the size of which would be determined at a later date. This is years and years down the line.”

“The second point is that this is not us asking permission. We understand that the League is responsible for us as a team, and that as our mentors you have a lot of control of what we are allowed to do,” Kaldur continued. “But this is happening. Your control is now on the quality and speed of the training you allow and help us secure. Whether it is tomorrow or in a few years, we will be giving this idea our all.”

“And finally, as this is our first official discussion of the team beyond just being told what is happening, we agreed that this is where we would be announcing the team's official name.” I said, a large smile on my face, pausing for plenty of dramatic effect

“We are the New Titans. Now does anyone have any questions?”