

We silently made our way from Bioship, which landed in a far-off parking lot, around to the warehouse, our grouping shifting slightly as we moved to take down the above-ground patrols. Once we gained entrance through a padlocked back door, handily picked open by Snapshot, we spread out even further. Those of us who knew how to take down someone quietly made their way to their targets.

Superboy and I took down a pair of guards patrolling the ground floor at the back of the huge building, both of us staying low and using the massive pieces of mechanical equipment and machinery to cover our movements. When we were in range, we both swiftly put our targets into a chokehold, taking them down quickly and silently. With a nod, the flying hybrid hero carried the two unconscious goons out of the building before they could wake up.

I turned to watch the rest of the team, peeking around a giant metal stamping press to watch them work, ready to support if necessary. I immediately spotted Kid Flash and Aqualad, both smoothly taking down their own targets before the speedster whisked them away, one after the other. The yellow blur was surprisingly quiet as he ran, showing off his progress under Ghost's tutelage.

Down at the far end of the relatively large, machine filled factory, I could see two more guards turning a corner. Suddenly they both started to turn in surprise, only to both go limp simultaneously. I could feel M'gann celebrating mentally as she lifted both of the goons up, carrying them away, all while completely invisible. She had knocked them out with a blast of mental energy, which she, unfortunately, needed to make physical contact to send through.

With the three pairs of guards on the ground taken out, the only remaining pair was walking around the metal catwalks, the sound of boots on clanging metal marking their position easily. I watched, my enhanced night vision allowing me to just make out Artemis and Robin as they went to work. They both moved through the rafters, jumping between metal beams until they were over their targets. A few quick hand signals and I could just make out Artemis as she nodded, both pulling something from their belts and connecting it to their hips.

A few seconds later, they both dropped, jumping down from the rafters and falling for several feet before the cables they had attached to themselves slowed and stopped them just above their target's heads. Both of them swung around, grabbed their targets, and quickly choked them out. It was easy to see in the way they jumped and in the way they moved that they were using very different techniques, but the end result was equally impressive. They slowly lowered their targets to the ground before waving someone over.

Superboy flew up from behind a large cutting machine, swooped up and over the catwalk railing, and grabbed both goons, once again silently flying them out of the building before they could wake up.

For a moment we all stood silently, wondering if we had done it, waiting for the proverbial shoe to drop. After thirty seconds, we relaxed slightly, standing up straight and moving out of cover.

“Well done, everyone,” Kaldur said through M’gann’s hookup. “Now, everyone get into position for the basement assault.”

We quickly moved into our assigned locations, with Kaldur’s team standing around a normal-looking stairway, Superboy and Kid Flash standing near a hatch closer to where we had taken down our goons. Meanwhile, my team walked back outside, stopping about halfway down the building when I held out my hand. Having counted out about thirty paces, I leaned down and put my hand to the ground, pushing my energy out into the dirt, allowing me to feel the structure below me. It was deeper than I expected, but eventually, I could feel the concrete foundations below us. More specifically, I could feel the massive foundation and the small supply closet that was our entry point.

I spent about a minute slowly and quietly bending the dirt and gravel that covered the outcropped concrete structure, stopping when it became too dense to move without excessive, and probably noisy, extra force.

“Okay, I’m all set,” I mentally said the team. “Ready when you are.”

“Remember, take no chances. We have no idea what these people will be armed with nor what kind of precautions they have put in place,” Kaldur said, repeating his earlier warnings. “It’s also worth pointing out that this tech has proven to be unreliable and prone to melting down. Try your best to avoid hitting any exotic tech that we find.”

A series of confirmations echoed through the connection, the team’s eagerness leaking through with it. After a few seconds, Kaldur’s voice came back through.

“Breach!”

I slammed my foot down, hardening the remaining layer of soil into a solid chunk, before spinning around and dragging my other foot in a complete circle. I sliced downward with my chi, easily cutting through the concrete and new stone. Then I stopped, took a deep breath and focused, sinking even more of my energy into the iron rebar that ran through the concrete. My energy sank into the dozen or so finger-thick chunks of metal that remained between the circular chunk of concrete I was standing on and the foundation I had just cut it from. Fine manipulation of purified iron and steel was still something I was struggling to master, but I had plenty enough control for this.

I thrust my hands out and down, and the sound of rending and tearing metal echoed up through the hole. Suddenly the circle of concrete was falling, the last bits of connecting metal torn and broken. My impromptu platform of metal and artificial stone slammed into the ground, crushing a few boxes of junk in the process, spraying dust and dirt through the closet we had just breached.

Immediately I stepped forward, making room for my teammates and simultaneously kicking down the closet door, the thin interior frame all but disintegrating from the blow's force. I stepped forward, scanning the hallway the closet led into, spotting a room to the almost immediate right, as well as another room further down the hall, this one to the left.

I had only taken a few steps into the hallway when a singular person exited the room further away. They were clearly armed, but their weapons were not drawn. The goon's eyes went wide as they spotted me, starting to fumble with their exotic, polymer, and metal weapon, trying to get it aimed at me. An arrow flew over my shoulder, skipped off the ceiling, and slammed into the guard's shoulder, knocking him into the door he had just opened.

"Clear that room," I said, pointing to the closer but still closed door.

I was already running forward by the time Snapshot and Ice agreed, my attention focused on the still off-kilter guard. He was just getting his bearings when I jumped at him, knocking him out with a slightly brutal but effective knee to the chin that smashed him through the door he had just opened. Without slowing down, I pushed into the room he had come from. It was some sort of break room filled with old chairs, tables, and a few newer-looking amenities on the counters on the far side.

There were also three more guards, all in different stages of reacting to their compatriot getting put down hard.

I flicked out my arms twice, firing the metal bands attached to my costume out at high speed. The first band slapped the furthest and most prepared guard in the arm. The impact spun him around completely, smashing him into a stack of old chairs. The second closest to shooting me took the second band of metal to the leg, flinging it out from under him with enough force to slam his face into the table he had been standing up from.

I used the momentum from the last fling to whip out a strand of my meteorite cable, the metal rope slashing out and wrapping, and the third guard, who hadn't even made it out of his chair. With a twist, I cut the cable loose, spinning and manipulating the metal strands around him, securing him to the chair, and wrapping around his legs for good measure.

I whipped out another cable, securing the first two guards and wrapping them together. I put my hand on the second guard's neck, checking his pulse. He had smacked his head off the table hard enough to crack the wood, but his pulse was strong, so I didn't think he cracked his skull. I left him in the emergency position, just to be safe before hurrying out of the room.

Ice and Snapshot were already waiting outside the door, Artemis with an arrow already drawn while Tora blasted the first guard's boot-covered feet with ice, effectively locking him to the floor.

"Only two in our room," Artemis said as we moved deeper into the facility. "They were asleep and-"

As we were getting closer to a corner, all three of us started slowing down. Artemis stepped ahead to peek around as she talked, but Tora reached forward and grabbed both of our arms, pulling us back hard enough that the blonde archer stumbled. A cold blast of exotic energy smashed into the corner, ice forming around the edge as well as the far wall of the hallway. Despite Tora pulling us away, we were close enough that I could feel frost forming on my costume.

Several more blasts of cold energy, as well as a few balls of superheated plasma and a singular line of laser energy, slammed into the wall, melting and cracking chunks of the concrete and freezing the rest.

“Fuck that was close,” Artemis cursed, giving Tora a grateful look. “Thanks”

The cryokinetic nodded, though she looked a little confused and introspective. Focusing on the situation, I reached down into my utility belt, pulling out three small flashbangs. I then pulled my shield off of my back and looked to Artemis, who nodded and readied her arrow. I turned and threw all three flashbangs down the hall, all of them going off at once. A flash of light lit up the hallway and shouts and screams echoed down after. I held up my shield around the corner, lower than I usually would to give Artemis a bit of protection. The archer leaned around the corner and rapidly fired three arrows down the hallway.

As she fired, I fed more meteorite metal from my costume into my shield, letting it grow into a thick tower shield. When the young archer leaned back into cover, I threw three more flashbangs down the hall before stepping out around the corner. I held my extended shield in front of me as I led my other two teammates down the hall. An arrow whizzed by me as Artemis leaned over and took out a fourth guard, the goon joining his peers on the ground.

As we walked by the tazed, wrapped up, and foamed guards, Tora blasted their feet and legs with ice while Artemis further disarmed them. I kept my eye’s forward, ready to respond to incoming threats as they worked. Just before we were ready to move on, Kaldurs voice echoed in our heads.

“We are making our final push into the main room now,” Kaldur said. “Status?”

“Same here Aqualad,” Wally responded, “We just reached a big old metal door, just waiting for you guys.”

“I can see the last door as well,” I said as we walked, mentally reviewing the basement's layout.

“Good. Superboy, Kid Flash, breach fifteen seconds after my mark,” Kaldur said, quickly continuing. “Skarn, breach thirty seconds after my mark to flank them. Mark!”

Mentally I started counting down, even as we reached the doorway that led into the main area. It was sturdier than any of the other doors so far, but I was still sure I could get through it. I turned to the other two.

“Ready?” I asked softly, both of them nodding. “Alright.”

I positioned myself in front of the door, my shield held high against me, still mentally counting down. After fifteen seconds, we could clearly hear our teammates breaching into the room. Shouts of confusion echoed out to us before the sound of fighting took over. All three of us grew more and more tense as we listened, unable to do anything yet. When I got to five seconds remaining, I took a deep breath, letting it out before lifting my foot up and kicking the door clean off its hinges, the metal reinforced door crumpling around my foot before skittering into the large basement room.

The doorway opened up onto an open set of stairs leading down to the floor of the much larger room. On one side of the workspace was a series of shelves stocked with boxes, crates, and other materials and parts. In the middle of the room were two large workbenches, each with several unfinished projects on them, surrounded by parts and tools. Closest to us were another few rows of shelving, these ones filled with what looked like finished products. Dozens of guns, tools, and other devices were stored away, seemingly ready to head out and be sold.

There were also about a dozen goons taking cover all around the space, including by the finished products. They were almost all focused on our teammates, who were taking cover and fighting back against them, mostly staying clear of the dangerous exotic weaponry. One goon, who was taking cover by the closest workbench in the center of the room, heard the door tumbling down the stairs and turned to us.

His eyes widened, but before he could say anything, I punched out with my shield at him, manipulating it as I did, releasing a half-fist-sized chunk of metal from the top edge. It arced across the room and slammed into his stomach, rocking him back against the bench and knocking his breath out, keeping him from shouting.

Artemis and Tora were right behind me, the former firing a quick arrow at another goon while Tora blasted a wave of ice out along the floor, ice rising up and giving us some much-needed cover. Together, the three of us started picking off goons, managing to get three more before they realized we were behind them. They turned to fire at us, burning and melting vast chunks off the ice barrier, but Ice repaired the wall too quickly for them to take it down.

With their attention finally split, our teammate pushed forward. Superboy lifted a large metal door, presumably the one Wally had mentioned, and used it as a shield, covering himself and Wally. When they were further into the room, Kid Flash blurred away from the door, taking out two more criminals before he was forced to zip back into cover.

Kalder used a water whip to attack his targets, pumping electricity through it when he managed to wrap a tendril of magically controlled water around a guard's leg. M'gann threw chunks of rock before telekinetically shoving another guard to the ground.

With the whole team working from all angles, we quickly whittled the goons down until Robin took down the last one with a leaping kick. When he hit the ground, the room was silent, save for the sounds of groaning criminals, settling chunks of rock... and a fearful whimpering that was coming from between the large workbenches.

Slowly we moved in, eyes peeled and ready for anything. When Kaldur, Wally and myself finally reached the workbenches, we found a gentleman, one only a few years older than myself, huddled on the ground in the fetal position, hands on his head to protect himself. He was dressed in a dirty lab coat with thick rectangular glasses. The second he spotted Wally and me, he shouted, crawling out from behind the workbenches. He kept moving away from us until he bumped into Kaldur's legs.

He looked up at the Atlantean, his eyes going wide with fear. After a moment, his eyes rolled back, and he went limp, falling to the floor in a heap.