

We had a single day free before Batman returned to the cave early in the morning, gathering everyone together to discuss something important.

“I have a mission for the New Titans,” He started simply, everyone perking up at the declaration.

The dark hero worked the cave's main holo computer, pulling up a map of an island, with data popping up all around it. After a moment he turned and addressed us again.

“This is the island of Santa Prisca, a sovereign island nation whose main export is the dangerous neo-steroid known as Venom,” He explained, tapping the screen, a molecular lattice representation of the drug coming on screen. “Several days ago, reports began coming in that all normal shipments of the drug had halted, with no word on why.”

Batman tapped on the projected keyboard, pulling up what looked like thermal imaging scans of a specific warehouse factory.

“Despite these reports, all evidence shows that the largest Venom factories on the island are still running at full capacity” He continued. “Normally, given the circumstances, we would have alerted authorities and focused on the more pressing matter of the Light. However, Sportsmaster’s next check in was scheduled to be tomorrow night, made after securing a large shipment of something from the island. He would have then brought that shipment to the headquarters of the League of Shadows.”

Batman paused for a moment, tapping on the screen to bring up the original map before turning to the team.

“This will be a recon mission to discover who Sportsmaster was supposed to meet and what he was supposed to be transporting. Your secondary objective is capture and asset denial.” He explained, looking at all of us in turn. “Superman and Wonder Woman will be on site, monitoring the feeds from your body cameras. When your primary task of recon has been completed, they will make a judgment call on whether you will continue on to the asset denial portion alone, with their help or if you will be pulled out to allow League members to step in on their own.”

Batman stopped, clearly expecting us to say something about the inclusion of League babysitters. I half expected Wally to say something, but he remained silent. A thought occurred to me and I frowned. Wonder Woman had said again and again she disliked the idea of putting us in danger. It was unlikely she would agree for us to continue on our own unless the island was empty. On top of that, from what little interactions I had had with Superman, he always came off as a bit of a pushover, surprisingly enough. I couldn't imagine it would be very difficult for Wonder Woman to convince him to intervene at the first sign of trouble.

“Sir, could I ask that we also have Green Lantern Stewart on hand?” I suggested, Batman turning to give me a questioning look. “While Wonder Woman and Superman are most likely more than enough support, I’m worried that we have no intelligence as to what or who has happened. I would feel better if we had someone on hand with more flexibility.”

Now I had everyone's attention, including M’gann, who brushed against my mind, I gave her the impression of connection and she quickly hooked us all up.

*“Green Lantern Stewart supported our idea from the get go, and seemed to think letting us prove ourselves was a good idea,”* I explained mentally to the group. *“He will counter Wonder Woman’s dislike of us being in harm’s way, which will keep her from steam rolling Superman.”*

“I agree,” Aqualad said with a nod. “It may be that we need assistance in a technical aspect as well, something Green Lantern’s ring can easily aid in.”

“...Very well, Green Lantern Stewart will be added to the roster of League members on hand,” Batman agreed after a long pause. “Now, your first target should be the heat and motion sensors that dot the entire area around the factory. Approaching the facility will be impossible without knocking them out first. We have a device capable of fooling them into looping their scans, but there is a time limit. Wait too long and the change in time will become obvious due to the movement of the moon, change in weather or the rising sun. You must complete your mission before any of those trigger suspicion and the island goes into lockdown. The device...”

Batman continued to explain how the gadget worked, as well as a dozen other aspects of the mission. He described who usually ran the plant, a villain by the name of Bane, who was a frequent issue in Gotham, where he sold a shocking majority of his drug. When he was finally done we began to plan, brainstorming ideas until eventually Robin brought up a good point.

“Who is going to be the Field Leader?” He asked, everyone going quiet. “We have been putting it off for a while but we should really just get it over with.”

“My vote is for Kaldur,” Kyle said easily. “He did well against Mister Twister.”

“I’m withdrawing, if I was even in the running,” Wally said, as he shook his head. “I think we all know I have a lot of growing up to do before I can handle something like that.”

Everyone, including Batman, was stunned for a moment after Wally spoke. Kaldur put his hand on his friend's shoulder and gave him a supportive pat.

“That, my friend, is proof that you're well on your way to getting there,” He said, giving his friend a smile.

Wally shrugged, but his previous downcast look was a little brighter.

“What about you Warren? Who do you vote for?” Robin asked, his domino mask shifting as he raised his eyebrow.

“I was going to suggest we vote anonymously,” I said with a shrug, giving Kyle a fake glare, the Kryptonian only offering a shrug in return. “But it’s a tough call. I would say Kaldur, but only because I’ve seen him lead and he did a damn good job.”

“Yeah, I’m kinda not surprised .” Robin shrugged, looking as if he had expected that. “I think Kaldur will make a great field leader as well, and... honestly after a lot of thinking I’m not sure I’m ready for it either. I would like to be looked at first when we restructure for multiple groups.”

“There is nothing saying that we cannot have another vote in a sufficient amount of time,” Kaldur pointed out. “I believe that Robin will eventually make the superior Field Leader.”

“Sure. We can discuss quarterly or maybe even yearly revotes for certain positions,” I suggested, before thinking for a moment. “Maybe bi-yearly. Either way, it’s something to keep in mind. Alright then. All in favor of Kaldur taking the position of Field Leader?”

Everyone save Kaldur raised their hand, with the Atlantean nodding his head slowly in respect.

“Thank you my friends for your confidence in my abilities,” He said solemnly. “I will do my best to shoulder this burden for now.”

“Good, now that that’s settled, we need to have a very important conversation,” I said, turning to Batman. “We still haven’t put together the team’s utility belts. If we have time, I’ve got a few ideas.”

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The next night, a day before Sportsmaster was scheduled to arrive and pick up the mysterious cargo, we were on our way to Santa Prisca aboard the Bioship. The interior of the living ship looked almost the same as usual, with M’gann’s control seat shifted forward just a few feet to make room for two Bioship versions of the stasis pods from Cadmus. Both of them were attached to the same wall as the control seat was, only on the other side, facing the exit ramp. Bioship had absorbed the tech within hours, creating their own version with near identical effects. Their version could even provide assistance in helping unconscious people in and out of the pod.

Superboy made it very clear to everyone that he had better be near death before anyone even considered putting him in one, and to make sure he didn’t wake up inside it. He had no idea how he would react to it, but he was pretty sure it wouldn’t be well thought out.

The whole group was quiet, the atmosphere was tense, though no one had really dipped into open anxiety quite yet. I could feel M'gann's nervousness in shallow waves, quickly followed by self assurance as she mentally psyched herself up. She stayed mentally close to me, something I appreciated as well, my own nervousness rising slightly as we descended from out of atmosphere, down to the island.

"Engaging stealth." M'gann said, as she guided the ship lower, the beach slowly getting closer.

As we got lower and lower the beach's features came into view. It was dotted with rocks, several fallen trees and logs of driftwood. Most importantly, however, were the dozens of large weapon emplacements, spread out along the entire beach. About half of the emplacements were massive rocket pods, clearly designed to knock out any snooping busy bodies who came to investigate the island.

Eventually, about ten meters up, Bioship came to a stop and Robin's seat buckles came undone. He stood from his seat as a clip, attached to a long cable of biomechanical material, descended from Bioships ceiling. He clipped it onto his belt, gave it a tug to make sure it was secure before Kaldur stood as well, handing him a cylindrical device with a lightly glowing red rectangle along the curved side. Robin examined the device for a moment before nodding.

"Good luck." Kaldur said as a hole opened in Bioship's floor.

With a nod the caped hero quickly jumped down through the hole, Bioships cable lowering him down. As soon as he disappeared the floor sealed back up, a screen descended from the ceiling with a close up view of Robin as he slowly descended. Eventually he came to a stop, about a dozen feet from the ground, before flicking himself upside down and hooking his foot along the cable to keep himself that way. The cable lowered the final dozen feet before stopping again, allowing Robin to deftly attach the gadget to the the side of some sensor equipment. He fiddled with the device for a few seconds, checked something on his wrist before giving us a thumbs up.

Immediately Bioship began reeling him in, the agile hero waiting until he was far above the missile pods before letting himself swing rightside up. Another few seconds and he was inside Bioship, his entrance closing behind him.

"Step one is complete," He said with a cocky smirk as he retook his seat, his harness wrapping back around him. "Data feed is on a loop, and no alarms were triggered. They should have no idea we are here."

"Good job," Kaldur said, nodding in recognition. "On to step two. M'gann?"

"On the move." she said, guiding Bioship up and away from the beach, heading inland.

Less than a minute later we were hovering over the forest, a large mountain in between us and the factory. We all stood up and prepared to descend from Bioship to the ground. I made some final checks, making sure everything was strapped in nice and tight before pulling my helmet on, fixing on the chin strap.

When I was sure I was set, I scanned the rest of my teammates and nodded in approval. Kid Flash was already hooked onto a cable, his armor already shifted from an obvious yellow to an inconspicuous black, thanks to something Batman had called stealth tech, which may just be the most useless description on the planet. M'gann had also shifted into a darker version of her usual costume, most of her body now a dark black. Even her cape had shifted color, on top of growing a hood.

The most shocking was Superboy, who had adamantly refused to wear any sort of costume. With the mission incoming I pulled him aside and asked him why he didn't like uniforms. After some light pushing he finally admitted that the tights reminded him of the solar suit Cadmus had forced him to wear, and made him feel naked and anxious. They also just didn't appeal to him, especially since he was already bullet proof.

Which I immediately countered with the fact that he was vulnerable to kryptonite and magic, and while it was unlikely that he would run into those randomly, it would only take one bit of bad luck for him to get in a whole lot of trouble.

Luckily, I had a solution.

With stuff we scavenged from the storage room at the cave, we put together a temporary uniform for him, one that was mostly made up of armor from some sort of high tech riot gear. It was mostly black, with stab and bullet proof plates that ran along his arms, chest and legs, covering his vitals and some of his extremities. His helmet was some sort of stealth helmet from a separate set of armor, whose face plate could snap and fold upwards with a press of a button. The finishing touch was a red S-shield spray painted on the chest piece.

The final look was bulkier than the tights most heroes seemed to like, but in a powerful and intimidating way. According to him it was also comfortable and relatively light weight, mostly because he was bullet proof, which meant we could skimp on a few layers and a lot of the extra padding. Not that a few extra pounds would actually bother him. It was good work for an impromptu set up, and the way he nodded and smiled when he wore it in front of a mirror made me relatively confident that he would get an official set built soon.

Kaldur double checked that everyone was ready before the team jumped through the provided holes in Bioships floor, all of us save M'gann rappelling down to the ground, the Martian floating down beside us. I was pulling hard on the slightly faded knowledge of Steve as I had absolutely no experience with this sort of thing. Luckily everything went fine, and the five of us touched down smoothly.

All of us shared a look, and at the same moment realized that number was wrong, before looking up to watch Kyle plummet down towards us. M'gann, Robin, Wally and Kaldur all rolled, jumped, zipped and flew out of the way, while I did a short hop back, using the movement to imbue my energy into the earth and rock below the falling teen. I softened the ground, moving the earth up to meet him and down to catch him, a soft rumbling the loudest part as I forced the earth to move. The result was a small crater, with a confused Superboy in it, looking at me.

"I was fine, I didn't need you to catch me," He explained, slightly confused. "I can jump higher than that."

"I know, but it would have made a shit ton of noise," I said quietly. "Half of the island would have heard and felt it."

It was a credit to how much he had changed and grown in the last few weeks that instead of getting angry, he looked surprised, and then embarrassed.

"Dammit. I didn't think of that," He said, shaking his head. "I was just annoyed that... well that I couldn't float down like M'gann"

"It is alright Superboy, no harm was done," Kaldur assured him, patting his shoulder. "Learning better habits is part of gaining experience."

The rest of the team gathered back around, Robin dusting himself off as he stood from where his last minute roll had taken him. He looked like he wanted to say more, but he kept it to himself.

"Alright, Robin, message our back up that we have successfully touched down. Kid Flash, do a fifty foot perimeter check. Keep an eye out for any paths hidden by the brush," Kaldur said, getting a nod in return as both of the younger heroes agreed. "Miss Martian... hook us up"

Robin activated his wrist computer and sent a quick message to our support, while Wally blurred as he ran into the forest. M'gann closed her eyes for a moment and I could feel our connection expand slightly, recognizing the sensation of others being hooked up to our link in a much lesser capacity. Not long after that Wally returned from his quick perimeter check.

*"All clear,"* The speedster said, stopping next to Robin and pointing out into the forest. *"I spotted a path about a hundred feet that way. It looked like it was heading towards the factory"*

*"Good, our first task is getting eyes on the factory undetected."* Kaldur said, more or less just restating what we already knew. *"For now we will follow along the path. Everyone ready?"*

Everyone nodded in agreement, and together we moved, making our way in the direction Kid Flash had pointed towards. It didn't take us long to find the path and turn, following along it on our way to our target.