

"Say again, Ranger?" I asked, tapping my earpiece with my finger. "I missed last."

"Squad one and two successfully took down their targets," Ranger, also known as Jim Harper, repeated clearly. "Warden says Aqualad reported no casualties and confirms they had time to call out."

"Copy, our eyes are peeled," I responded. "We will-"

*"Skarn, I'm seeing a lot of movement from my angle. A big delivery van just pulled up."* Artemis reported through our mental connection. *"Fire, you can see that corner from where you are. Can you see it?"*

*"... yes, I see it now. It's one of those walk-in-style vans. It just pulled in and stopped by the garage door. Alright, the door opened, and they are moving stuff into the van,"* The young Brazilian woman reported. *"They seem to be in a rush."*

*"Alright, that's it then, Alpha team kicked up the hornet's nest, and these guys are reacting. Superboy, confirm the contents of their boxes."*

*"Tightly wrapped bricks of some sort of powder, as well as bags of small crystal chunks,"* He responded clearly. *"Can't tell colors."*

*"It's good enough for me. Squad three, move in. Fire, hold off from lighting up until you get closer."* I called out mentally. *"Artemis, move in to assist as overwatch. M'gann and I will move in from the south to flank."*

Without saying anything, I held out my hand for M'gann to grab, the Martian lifting us from our spot and into the air. Our position wasn't that far from where Artemis was watching, but in a city like Boston, even being a block or two away meant two totally different views. As we flew, M'gann shifted the shape of her hand to grip mine better, making it harder for her to drop me. She could have carried me easily with her TK, but that could be knocked for a loop with the right surprises, so a physical grip was better.

When we landed on the opposite side of the warehouse that Squad Three was attacking from, I immediately headed for the door. I used a subtle bit of metal bending to flex the door frame, giving the locked door just enough space to open despite the deadbolt still being engaged. The door into the building opened with a whine, revealing a back entrance of an old storage warehouse. Just as we stepped into the dimly lit interior, three men, all wearing dark clothing and armed with various firearms, rounded the corner of one of the metal storage racks, clearly having been rushing to the door.

They skidded to a halt, surprise written on their face, having not expected anyone coming from this side. Still, they were quick to attack us, raising their guns and aiming them at both of us. I whipped out my hand in a slapping motion, the closest of the goons, who was

maybe eight feet away, losing his pistol as I bent it out of his grip and into the next aisle. I followed through with the slap, hitting the metal rack and using the force of the move to bend the frame itself, letting several bags of what looked like road salt fall and smash into all three criminals. I quickly stepped forward and solidified the salt, fusing it into a solid mass and to the concrete floor below.

*"Group of four heading your way,"* Superboy said, probably scanning the whole warehouse to keep an eye on everything.

He had taken his role as squad three lead very seriously.

*"Copy,"* M'gann responded simply, flying up and over me, easily spotting the oncoming group, sending a mental image of where they were to me.

I pulled my shield from my back, fusing a lot of my extra metal plates into it, holding it out in front of me as the group burst from a separate aisle, this time farther down than the first three. They were well out of my reach to manipulate their guns, but with Superboy's warning, I had plenty of time.

They opened fire, bullets pinging off of my shield, not even leaving any dents on the thick metal surface. As they wasted their ammo, M'gann flew up and over the large stock shelves, snagging several boxes with her TK as she went. When she was behind them, she hurled the crates at them, undercutting them and taking out their legs. They fell back hard, groaning and cursing, three out of the four knocked for a loop, with the fourth struggling to get up. M'gann swooped down and kicked away their guns before quickly trapping the still struggling goon in an arm bar.

*"We have seven suspects down,"* I said, walking over to fix a cord of metal around all of their feet, connecting it together before repeating the same technique with their arms, fusing the wire with the concrete in several places. *"Any issues?"*

*"...ten suspects down on our side, no issues,"* Superboy responded. *"I can see a lab inside the warehouse, not sure if you can see it from where you are."*

*"I spotted it,"* M'gann said, still floating above me. *"There's no one around it, but I think it's still running..."*

*"Keep an eye on these guys, M'gann,"* I asked, sending her a mental hug.

*"Okay!"* She responded, returning the mental hug eagerly before focusing on her task, leaving me to focus.

As I turned away from the restrained suspects, I shifted my shield slightly, forcing it into a smaller shape.

"Ranger, if the situation for Alpha is stable, ask Nightwing if he knows how to stabilize a meth lab and if Kid Flash can run him to us," I said, tapping my earpiece to activate it as I walked through the warehouse to see the aforementioned lab. "Also, we need transport for seventeen, a hazardous materials team, and maybe a few ambulances for minor concussions."

"Copy that, Warden heard and confirmed, expect help shortly. BPD are on their way with wagons and support, they were ready and waiting," Ranger responded. "No friendly injuries?"

"Guys, any injuries?" I asked through the connection, receiving various negative responses in return.

"No, no friendly injuries."

"Good. Kid Flash should-"

Before Jim could finish, I could hear Kid Flash, as well as Nightwing, saying hello through the relatively thin walls of the warehouse.

"They just got here, Ranger. I'm gonna focus on this," I said. "Let me know when the police are a minute out."

"Copy that," He responded, the line going silent, though I know technically he was still listening.

I pulled out a flashlight from my belt and started examining the Meth Lab, checking for any hidden traps. It wasn't long until Nightwing joined me, entering through the already-opened garage door.

"Anything?" He asked, pulling his own light from his recently redesigned costume.

Gone was his red, yellow, and black Robin suit, replaced by a slightly more armored suit of black and blue. His helmet, the same style as mine, had two blue horizontal bird wings that started at his temples and ran backward a few inches, reminiscent of Thor's classic helmet but on a much smaller scale.

"No, but this isn't my wheelhouse, really," I admitted, getting a distracted nod as he did his work.

The young hero had really come into his own over the past few months, branching into his own style that I'm sure would shift as he got older but was already impressive. He had taken to leading Squad Two like a fish to water, and whenever we expanded again, he was in the front running to lead his own team.

"Okay... I'm not seeing any traps... But get ready with a blast shield just in case."

I nodded and bent my shield back into a tower shield, this time a bit wider and more angular, to fit Nightwing and divert energy should something explode. The young hero reached out and rotated a few knobs on the complicated and crude-looking setup, walking around to a few of the different machines and contraptions, shutting down whatever process they were working through.

"It's more stable for now, but it's still a hazard until someone breaks everything down," He said, stepping back. "Have you seen what's in the van?"

"No, the first priority was securing the bomb," I said, gesturing to the meth setup. "Why, what's in it?"

"We were right, hitting some of their houses made them panic, they were moving their product, probably taking it somewhere to hide it," He answered, nodding out the door. "Go take a look."

I gave him a look before jogging out of the warehouse, heading to the area that Superboy, Ice, and Fire had secured. Two goons were up to their necks in Ice, while eight others were all handcuffed and sitting against one wall, watching Superboy as he stood by. A pile of bent and ice-encased guns sat in a pile off to one side. As Superboy turned to look at me, one of the criminals on the end tried to stand and run, but Superboy just blurred, ran to catch him before none to gently put him back in his place.

"Can you...?" He asked, trailing off when I nodded.

Using the extra meteor metal in my shield, I made a cable, worked it around their feet, and fused it to the ground, locking them in place. I got quite a few curses and dangerous looks, but I ignored them, turning to watch Ice and Fire as they melted the last two suspects free of their ice prisons.

"So, Nightwing told me to look in the van?" I said, walking over to what I'm pretty sure was a stolen and repainted delivery van.

"Yeah... the plan worked pretty well."

I stepped up into it, looking at the shelves and crates, picking one and opening it. Inside was a tightly wrapped bag of cocaine. I turned and picked another one, this time finding Meth.

"Well... Damn..." I said, putting everything back and stepping out of the van. "Superboy, is there still more in the warehouse?"

"Yeah, a good amount."

I nodded, looking around for a moment before turning back to Superboy.

"Go up with Fire and keep an eye on the area, keep civilians away, make a note of anyone suspicious."

"Sure. Fire?" He called out, getting the green-haired young woman's attention. "We're on the perimeter."

Fire nodded, giving me a nod as well before her fire covered her body, shifting to her green active form, which she needed to enter in order to fly. Together they lifted off into the air, Fire's green flames making a few of the restrained suspects flinch. She could control the temperature of her flames, which technically was more than just green fire, well enough that no one was in danger, but they didn't know that.

With Fire gone up with Superboy, I helped Ice melt the gangsters free, one at a time, disarming them as we went. They didn't put up much of a fight, sitting down next to their compatriots and letting me restrain them.

We were just getting done with the last guy when the first of the police cars arrived, BPD making good time. With the help of the BPD we quickly had the entire warehouse cordoned off, though they were clearly stretched thin.

"You guys are really doing wonders for my overtime," One of the older responding cops said. "Three assaults tonight and two more on Monday. These guys make it personal?"

"Not personal, no," I responded, shaking my head. "We stumbled on a few of them during our patrol two weeks ago. We did our research and found out that the new dealers they employ have a fifteen percent increase in tainted products."

"Yeah, we've been noticing that as well," He admitted, shaking his head. "We were working up to a meeting to discuss it, but... well, you guys beat us to it."

"The BPD does a lot of good work," I assured him, in case he was building up to a complaint. "Sometimes it's easier for an outside team to handle things."

"I'm not complaining. Your credentials check out, and you're doing good work," He responded with a shrug. "Alright, I need to get inside and work through the building. Lieutenant Rosin will take your statements, and then you guys are free to go, you've earned a rest."

I nodded and shook the police officer's hand before gathering the rest of my team. We spent about twenty minutes giving our statements before leaving, all six of us piling into Bioship. From there, it was a quick trip up into space, then back down to the cave. We managed to beat the Alpha team by ten minutes, despite the fact that they would have been done with their

business first. Their new ride, affectionately called the Bus, couldn't do the suborbital flights that Bioship could.

The beta team quickly dispersed to their rooms to sleep off the long night, Tora and Beatriz leaving through the Zeta Tube. Their parents ultimately decided that they would stay at home during the school year, at least until they proved they could reasonably handle both responsibilities. Only M'gann and I stayed up, waiting for the Alpha team to return.

When Nightwing called ahead that they were getting closer, M'gann and I headed out to greet them, watching as the young hero skillfully steered the Alpha team's primary vehicle into the hangar, landing it easily in the open space. I could only describe the Bus as looking like the Pelican from Halo, but if someone sanded off the edges and dipped it in black matte paint. It was fast, almost as fast as the Bioship in the atmosphere, and Batman assured me that a space-worthy version was already in the works.

I still preferred Bioship. I was desperately working out a way to convince the Martian Manhunter to let me petition his people for more.

Not long after they landed, Alpha team disembarked. Will was the first one off, giving me a nod as he got closer.

"How did everything go?" He asked as Kaldur, Garth, and Tula stepped out of the back hatch next, quickly followed by Nightwing.

"Just about as well as we could have hoped for," I said before wincing. "No one stood out as the boss, but I'm hoping someone will turn over for a deal."

"Fingers crossed," Will said, walking past the both of us. "I need some sleep. Night."

We spent a few minutes talking about the Alpha team's double-pronged attack on two separate facilities, Kaldur assuring us that it went well. Judging by the lack of injuries, I couldn't disagree. Kaldur confirmed my suspicion that Wally ran home rather than ride the "slow mobile," as he liked to call it. As long as he showed up for debriefing the next day, I could hardly complain.

After a few minutes of talking, we made our way from the hangar to the recently expanded kitchen and living area. It was basically the same general setup, but now with a more cafeteria and common room vibe since it was much larger. Nightwing said good night and headed to his room.

"Are we still on for Wednesday?" Tula asked M'gann, who happily nodded.

"Yes! I'm excited to go on a double date, it always sounded so fun," M'gann admitted, and I mentally crossed my fingers everything would go well. I gave Kaldur a look, the stoic Atlantean simply nodding in return.

"Great! Okay, I need a long shower before I can even think of going to bed," Tula said with a smile, she turned to Garth and kissed his cheek. "Goodnight, Darling."

Garth smiled and returned the affection, continuing to smile when she turned to Kaldur and kissed his cheek as well.

"Goodnight, Babe," She said, smiling when Kaldur also returned the affection.

Both of the young men watched the young woman leave, clear love and affection in their eyes. Eventually, they focused back on us, and we chatted for a bit longer. At some point, Garth leaned on Kaldur, who put his arms around the slightly shorter teenager. It was a few more minutes before we all agreed it was time for bed, Kaldur and Garth sharing their own kiss goodnight as I walked M'gann to her room.

"Goodnight," I said with a smile, the slightly shorter Martian floating up to give me a kiss.

"Goodnight, Warren," She said before pushing back into her room and slowly, reluctantly, closing the door.