

With our initial investigation and interviews over, it was time to reach out and talk to Ice herself. Batman gave us an address, and agreed to call the young hero and her family to explain that we were coming and were legitimate.

To keep from overwhelming her and her family, the team agreed that Robin, Kaldur and I would be the ones to actually go and talk to them. Everyone else would wait in Bioship, close by and invisible in case we needed support for some reason.

The next day we were gathered in the cave at around noon when Wally finally showed up through the Zeta-Tube. He immediately made a beeline for M'gann, though he remained at a fast walk.

"Hello M'gann," He said, pausing for a bit before finally working up his nerve and continuing. "I-I need to apologize for making you uncomfortable. I... had no idea I was, but in hindsight I probably should have. I'm sorry."

"Thank you Wally, I appreciate the apology. I know that must have been hard," She responded with a smile. "I accept, as long as you've learned your lesson."

"Oh yeah, I have. Flash was very disappointed when I explained... the kind of stuff I had been saying." He admitted, rubbing the back of his head. "I feel so dumb for not realizing I was making an idiot of myself and making people uncomfortable."

"Don't beat yourself up too much Wally." I said, stepping close. "You're young, that's when you're supposed to make mistakes like this."

Wally eyed me for a moment, probably trying to figure out if I was being sarcastic or making fun of him. Eventually, when he couldn't find any signs of dishonesty his shoulder dropped and he nodded.

"Yeah. I guess I should apologize to you as well. I mentioned some stuff to Flash and he said... well he explained why you might have been on my case so much."

I raised an eyebrow, trying to figure out what he meant. His eyes darted to M'gann again and it came to me, Flash must have pointed out M'gann and I were probably involved and that his constant terrible flirting was what was annoying me so much. Realizing that this was a good opportunity to bury the hatchet I stuck out my hand.

"Water under the bridge Wally. I know how it can go."

Wally nodded as we shook hands, the rest of the team joining us. We talked for a while and discussed what we had learned the previous day before going over the day's plan. Wally agreed to hang back with M'gann and Kyle. I was going because of my position as base leader, while Kaldur and Robin were coming as two experienced and easily recognizable heroes.

"M'gann and I will stay connected so she will be our point of contact if anything goes wrong." I informed the team, getting various nods.

With the team all together we all piled into Bioship, M'gann guiding her up into space before immediately heading back down, a short hop to upstate New York, where Batman had relocated the family. M'gann guided Bioship down into a small wooded area, and Kaldur, Robin and I all stood up, our seats unbuckling themselves as we did. M'gann gave me a mental hug as we left the ship, which I happily returned.

The three of us walked down Bioships ramp and made our way out of the woods, making our way to the nearby suburban street. A quick look around and we casually walked down the sidewalks to house number nineteen, a perfectly normal looking home. Robin led the three of us to the front door, knocking in a distinct pattern.

"Really? A secret knock?" I asked, a single eyebrow raised.

"Yeah, did you expect something else from Batman?" He responded with a smirk.

The door opened, a dark blonde haired man standing in the doorway. He was on the shorter side, long dirty blond hair pulled back in a knot. He also had a thick, well maintained beard and was dressed in casual shorts and short sleeves.

"Can I help you?" He asked in a thick Norwegian accent, his suspicion coming through regardless.

"Yes, Batman said we would be in touch?" Robin said clearly. "Did you not recognize the secret knock?"

"Ah, that's what that was. I thought you are being impatient." The man said, getting a chuckle out of me. "Come in, please. The Batman explained someone would be by to talk to my daughter, that is you?"

"Yeah, we wanted to talk to her and ask her some questions." I answered. "Possibly make her an offer if everything works out."

"Does that mean you are heroes as well?" He asked as he brought us into a living room, walking past to look up a set of stairs, switching to norwegian. "Tora, heltene som Batman sa ville besøke er her."

"Jeg er nede om et øyeblikk!" A female sound voice shouted back. I could just make out rushed movements and someone talking with my enhanced hearing.

"She will be down in a minute. Please, sit." The man said, gesturing to the two couches.

After we had gotten situated, with the three of us sitting next to each other on one of the couches and the man sitting on the other.

“Thank you for letting us into your home. My name is Kaldur, this is Robin and Warren,” Kaldure said, gesturing to Robina and I.

“My name is Olaf. Olaf Goransson,” He said with a smile, reaching out across the coffee table to shake our hands. “My wife, Sofie, wanted to be here to meet whoever was coming but her work started yesterday. I do not start until next week though so all is well.”

“We are glad you and your daughter agreed to meet us.” I said with a smile.

“Batman said it was an opportunity of some kind and that mysterious man has not led us wrong.” Olaf said with a serious nod. “Who knows what would have happened if he had not found us first. And to help move us like he did, across the country in a matter of days...”

“He has a way of making things happen,” Robin said with an understanding smile. “We-”

“Hello, sorry I was just finishing something.” The same voice as before called down again, this time getting closer as they made their way down the stairs, stopping in the entrance into the living room. “Oh, sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Robin said with a smile. “It’s nice to meet you Tora, or should I say Ice.”

“It’s good to meet you as well, but please, call me Tora,” She responded in a much more controlled accent than her fathers.

After a short series of introductions, hand shaking and small talk Tora sat beside her father, looking nervous but confident.

“We are forming a team.” Kaldur eventually explained bluntly, the independent heroine’s eyes going wide. “Consisting of myself, Robin, Kid Flash as well as three newer heroes, of which Warren here is one of. This team would be separate and very different from the Justice League, though at the moment it is still heavily reliant on their support.”

“Different how?” Olaf asked, cutting off his daughter’s response, and getting a look for it.

“The League is basically, at its heart, a networking organization. Early in his career, when the Flash had an issue with aliens he had to muddle through and do his best. Now he can contact a Green Lantern through the League, who will have much more accurate data on any aliens who visit. They can also ask for help when there is the occasional threat they can’t handle on their own,” I explained, waiting for them both to nod in understanding. “We are looking to

start a team that functions as a unit. We will be training together, learning squad, stealth and coordinated assault tactics from several teachers to form cohesive teams. The idea is that individually we are strong but together, with the proper training and experience, we can take on threats much larger than any of us could hope to challenge alone.”

“And you hope to have my daughter on your team?”

“Yes...Though there are some questions that need answering before an official invitation can be extended. We interviewed quite a few people and it turned up some inconsistencies that need to be cleared up.”

As I talked Tora nodded along, though her nervousness started to break down into a sadder, more defeated expression.

“I guess the most pertinent question is what exactly happened between you and Fire. We know she wasn't actually a member of Kloakk Rotte, and we believe that she was extremely upset with you in particular, but that is all we were able to uncover.”

Olaf frowned and looked over at his daughter, reaching over and rubbing her back. She looked over at him and he nodded, the metahuman young woman letting out a final sigh before nodding in agreement.

“When I was little a family of four moved in next door. The father and daughter were from Brazil, while the mom and son were Norway natives. Me and Beatriz became best of friends overnight, despite the fact that at first she spoke absolutely no Norwegian and my English was barely enough to ask for help. For the next seven years we did almost everything together. Our parents were friends but me and Beatriz were all but sisters.”

By now the girl was crying, her tears trailing down her face and crystalizing into ice before tumbling to the floor.

“One day she came over spitting mad. Some gang was trying to tempt her brother into working for them. She ranted for a while but I could see underneath she was really just worried about her brother,” She explained, taking a deep breath before continuing. “Before that, I had never really thought about doing the whole superhero thing. I had had my powers for a few years prior and sure I put out the occasional fire or whatever but crime fighting had never seemed... I guess it just didn't hit close to home. But with Aksel in danger... It suddenly made sense. I was out fighting them by the end of the next week.”

She paused for a moment to collect herself, wiping away the frost that had formed around her eyes from her tears.

“What I didn't know was that Aksel had already been forced to work with them, and had lied to his sister that they were leaving him alone to keep her safe. Then...”

“The drug distribution center.”

“Yeah... I had been training with Pappa to hit flying targets, using a clay pigeon thrower. I just instinctively targeted the grenade, out of reflex! He... he was dead before I could even get to him, before I even knew he was there.”

By now Tora had almost crumbled into herself, her father's hand on her back. It took a few minutes before she could continue. When she finally did she was leaning against her father.

“Aksel was like a little brother to me, and when Beatriz learned that I killed-”

“You did not kill Little Aksel.” Olaf said, cutting his daughter off before Kaldur or I could. “The bastards of Kloakk Rotte did when they threatened his family and forced him to run their drugs.”

“I know, I know,” Tora said before nodding and taking another deep breath. “I’m sorry. I’ve been seeing a therapist but... It’s still hard to retell it like this.”

“We completely understand, I’m sorry we needed to dig into old wounds like this,” I responded as gently as possible. Tora nodded and eventually continued.

“When Beatriz learned what happened she blamed Ice... she blamed me. A week or so after I was walking home when I saw a house fire, with someone still trapped inside. I couldn’t do anything, so I put out the fire and... and it turned out Beatriz was the one ‘trapped’, and that she had started the fire with her powers.

“Beatriz is Fire?” Robin asked, confirming a growing suspicion.

“Yes. She chased me across the city and I couldn’t do anything because... well I could never hurt her... even if it meant letting her kill me. Eventually she got lucky and blasted me off of my feet, shattering my mask in the process. When she saw who I was she was stunned. She just stared. I pleaded with her to understand and... she left, without a word. They moved back to Brazil and we moved to America.”

“Have you heard from her since then?” Kaldur asked, looking at Tora and then her father. “Have you heard from any of the family?”

“Olivia, Beatriz’s step-mother, sent us a letter shortly after we moved to California, apologizing for Beatriz and assuring Tora she and her husband didn’t hold her responsible.”

“It... it really helped.” Tora admitted. “I... I wasn’t doing well at that point.”

“Understandable,” Kaldur assured her before looking at Robin. “I think we should contact the League, have Fire’s file updated. If grief was the driving motive behind her attack then allowances should be made, especially since she was not directly responsible for any civilian casualties.”

“Yes! Please, she... she wasn't in her right mind. She doesn't deserve to be labeled as a villain.” Tora said pleadingly.

“We will explain the story to Batman.” I assured her with a smile. “Thank you for sharing the story with us, I know it wasn't easy.”

“If it means that Beatriz won't be labeled as a villain it's worth it.” She said, smiling for the first time since she began her story.

With the largest question out of the way we continue to ask other questions, about how much training she has, which was more than we expected. Apparently her parents, upon learning that she was doing the hero thing, were very proud of her and immediately got in contact with an old uncle who was a retired policeman. He trained her in basic close quarters combat, as well as the general concepts of room clearing and a few other small things. She had also spent at least a few hours a week practicing and keeping her powers flexible, always looking for new strategies. She admitted she might be a bit rusty, but it was honestly a lot better than any of us could have hoped for.

After a while the three of us shared a look, both of them nodding to me in unspoken agreement.

“Well, I think that is the end of our questions,” I said with a smile. “Tora Olafsdottir, we would like to invite you to join the New Titans on a preliminary basis.”

“We would need to include her mother before we could say anything either way.” Olaf said, again cutting off his daughter, this time to keep her from immediately accepting. “But what would membership entail?”

“At the moment we meet every day for a workout and sparring, the latter of which has evolved to a powers workshop of sorts,” I explained. “One group has a friendly fight, the others discuss the previous fights and talk about how they could improve or things that might work. Batman is reviewing trainers to teach us and train us in the areas I mentioned earlier.”

“All but one member of the team lives in our current headquarters to promote team cohesion.” Kaldur added on after I stopped.

“And when the summer ends?”

“Optimally we will continue living together, but I understand how that might not be possible. Luckily you live pretty close to a Zeta-Tube so if that is unacceptable it shouldn’t get in the way.” I answered before adding more on. “It should be noted that this concept is not supposed to be a quick process. The creation and eventual independence of the New Titans is something that will take multiple years, so needing to take time off for school isn’t a deal breaker. Right now we are in the experimental phase, trying to find what works best and how to do it well so that we can expand into a multi team organization.”

“That... sounds very ambitious,” he said. “But I approve of the general concept. I would like to hear more about...”

For the next forty five minutes we answered both Olaf and Tora’s questions, everything from what kind of headquarters we lived in to what kind of supervision we had. Eventually, when all of their questions were answered, Olaf confirmed that he, his daughter and his wife would be having a serious conversation when she returned.

Not long after that, after hand shakes and trading contact information, the three of us left the normal suburban home, making our way back down the street and into the wooded area. By the time we arrived, Bioship was already waiting for us with her boarding ramp down. We climbed in and the ramp sealed behind us, our friends and teammates greeting us as Bioship lifted into the air.