

Packing up took even less time than I had anticipated. Most of the clothes I had bought during my first few months were second hand and already on their last legs even before I started wearing them. I had been incredibly sparse with personalizing my tiny apartment, and even the tv I was using to watch the free channels wasn't worth lugging anywhere. I was already looking forward to getting my own clothes with the money Batman was setting up for me. I was even going to be able to get my license again. I would have to retake the driving test, but at this point I wouldn't complain for a moment.

When I stepped through the teleporter, back into the cave I was greeted by... an empty room. I shook my head and made my way across the central hall and into the tunnels, passing through the kitchen to the living quarters. I dropped my bags on the plain bed and started unloading my clothes, sliding them into some drawers. When I was done I did something I had been dying to do since I first realized the Justice League was going to be putting us under ground. I pulled off my socks and shoes and closed my eyes. I let my energy pulse out of me, feeling the rock around me, reinforced with metal and inlaid with pipes and vents. I could feel where the concrete ended and the natural rock began.

I was startled from my quasi meditation by a knock on my door. Letting out a deep breath I opened it.

"Red Tornado, Hello." I said, greeting the android with a smile. "I was wondering if you were around."

"Greetings Skarn. I wanted to introduce myself as I did not get an opportunity yesterday." he said, his robotic voice rather emotionless.

"Right, it's nice to meet you." I stuck out my hand, which he shook stiffly. "I was planning on trying to find you after I was done unpacking."

"For what reason?" He asked bluntly.

"I had some questions about team responsibilities, training schedules, team budgeting, stuff like that." I explained, stepping past him and into the hall. "C'mon, let's talk in the kitchen. My room isn't really set up for company quite yet."

The two of us made the short walk to the kitchen where I sat down on the edge of the couch and he simply stood, one step out of the entrance. I waited for a moment for him to sit but when he didn't I continued from where I left off.

"Black Canary is in charge of team training." The red android said. "Further I can approve things on a provisional basis but beyond that I believe Batman is in charge of most aspects of the team."

“Damn, I was afraid of that.” I said with a frustrated sigh. “Well I’ll need their contact info then at least.”

“Is there something wrong with Batman or Canary?”

“No, Black Canary seemed nice and honestly I don’t have a problem with Batman.” I assured him, rubbing my face. “But both of them are heroes who I presume already have plenty on their plate. Which means anything I need to ask for that isn’t high priority is going to get shuffled around.”

“You seem to have experience with this.”

“No, but Captain America did.” I explained simply with a shrug. “I’m stuck with some of him in me, I might as well take advantage of it.”

“I was under the impression that that problem had been fixed.”

“The oppressive parts of him have been stripped away. Personal memories, opinions, his instincts, his personality, that’s all been removed.” I explained with a small smile. “I’m no longer in danger of becoming him.”

Red Tornado simply nodded to my response, before turning to a nearby terminal in the wall of the cave and typing away for a moment before stepping aside.

“You can contact Batman and Black Canary through the base’s computer network.” He explained, gesturing to the simple messaging system he had brought up on the screen. “They will respond when they are able.”

“Thank you Red Tornado, I’ll write them a message now.”

The red android nodded and walked away, leaving towards the central hall as I made my way to the computer terminal. I spent the next thirty minutes writing what was basically two private network emails. The one to Canary simply asked for her schedule and if she had the training schedule for our team planned out, while the one to Batman was much longer. I asked several questions ranging from who was in charge of the team’s budget to what resources I had to design and produce my own suit. I also mentioned my worries about him having more important things to do than deal with the day to day crap of the base. I sent them both off with a final button click.

Satisfied that at least some of my questions would be answered I started familiarizing myself with the terminal, switching through several pages. I smirked when I found a map of the entire base, memorizing it after a few minutes of reading it. I made an internal note to check out the engineering lab, equipment storage and the garage. After I was done memorizing the base layout I turned to head back to my room, planning on moving my furniture around so my room

was a bit less cookie cutter when I heard the sound of the Zeta-Tube going off, as well as the computer voice announcing Batman's arrival.

I frowned and checked the time. It had only been ten minutes since I sent my message. I guess I was wrong about him being too busy for me. I turned and headed out into the main cavern, meeting the intimidating hero half way.

"Skarn, I got your message." He said simply.

"I didn't expect you to respond in person." I admitted. "But I appreciate it nonetheless."

Batman nodded before gesturing, the room lighting up with a massive holographic screen, a system I recognized as the one I had just been using.

"While I am capable of staying on top of the team's needs while maintaining my other duties, I recognize that it wouldn't necessarily be on your schedule."

I nodded, watching as the seasoned hero scrolled through several screens, ending up on an acquisition page.

"I'm giving you access to the Leagues acquisition service. Through them you will be able to acquire the supplies and items the team needs." He said simply. "I'm putting you in charge of this responsibility. Keep in mind that the team does not have a budget but any... outliers requested will be questioned. Please include a note on any purchases that could be seen as one."

I rocked back a bit in shock, my eyes going wide before I nodded. "Yes, understood."

"The service is also capable of securing personal items should anyone need something delivered, though it must be filed separately and noted so the cost can be taken from their accounts. "

"Alright, I'll let everyone know." I said with a nod, stepping forward and scanning through the systems. It looked like I could request general items or send links or item numbers for specific items. "Speaking of everyone...?"

Instead of answering the unasked question Batman pulled out a decent sized box from the back of his utility belt and handed it to me.

"This is a league approved cell phone. It looks like a standard Wayne Tech phone but can connect to the computer systems and act as a terminal." He explained. "It is also as secure as possible and contains the numbers of your teammates. If you wish to coordinate team meetings that is up to you. The phone also contains the numbers for several League members. I expect you to use those only when it is needed."

I nodded and accepted the box, turning it over. It looked a lot like the standard cell phone boxes from my universe, save for the brand name. I focused on Batman again, assuming he wasn't done.

"Assuming you don't wish to make your own uniform, the League also has access to resources capable of making you one. Please write an outline of what you would like and I will forward your request."

"Thank you, sir."

"Is there anything else?"

"Yes actually. What are the chances someone could snag a decent sized asteroid at some point?" I asked casually, Batman's eyebrow raising in a silent question. "At some point I'm going to be working on metal bending. Canonically meteoric iron is the easiest metal for an earth bender to practice on. It doesn't have to be anytime soon, I'll be practicing for a long while before I get to that stage. The only problem is-

"Meteorites are expensive." Batman finished with a nod. "I will notify the Green Lanterns or anyone else who wishes to help."

"Thank you. I also wanted to ask about any test results you got from my blood, as well as what was the progress with getting me into the system."

"Your identity is being processed through the league resources at the UN. As for your blood." Batman turned back to the holographic screen and typed something in, quickly pulling up a new tab. "Your blood is not baseline human, that is obvious enough from simple observation. The doctors had no issues scanning for diseases, contaminants or any other medical test."

The bat themed hero brought up several test results and images, all of them coming up clean. I nodded and read some of the base findings, one of the images noting an increase in white blood cells as well as red blood cell density.

"However, the moment I began trying to analyze how your enhancement functioned I began having issues." He continued. "Computer crashes, machine failure, equipment malfunction and finally the sample was contaminated enough that it was rendered useless. Separately, any of these would be brushed off as bad luck or coincidence. Put together however..."

"The entity is protecting the serum." I said, shaking my head.

"It would seem so." Batman agreed with a nod. "I had a magical expert scan for any mystical influences but he found none."

“My gut says the entity responsible for... this.” I said, gesturing to myself. “Isn't using magic.”

“I would agree.” Batman said. “Multidimensional or interdimensional beings capable of manipulating reality wouldn't need to use magic.”

“I'm just glad I don't have to worry about someone making a serum from my blood.”

“Is there anything else?” He asked after I was done, stoic as always.

“One last thing and then that's it.” I assured him. “Is there any part of the cave where it's safe to pull stone from?”

For a moment Batman considered my question before nodding.

“Look on the map for a room called the grotto. It is lower in the mountain and was left mostly how it was, a natural freshwater spring that flowed through the lower caves. The lights there are all self contained units and the walls contain no wires or pipes. It is seismically stable and distant enough that you could dig out fifty feet on all sides without worrying about its structural integrity. Repair any damage you do and do not touch the stairs.”

“Of course, thanks again Batman.”

Batman nodded and waved his hand, the holographic display shutting down and fading away. He turned back to me.

“For non emergencies you can contact me through the caves computer network. For emergencies use the number in your phone.”

This time I answered with a simple nod, the hero turning and without hesitation or a look back, steps into the Zeta-Tube and teleports away. I let out a sigh and shook my head.

“That man is intimidating as fuck.” I mumble, looking around the cave for a moment, going through the mental image of the map I now had in my head.

It took a few minutes to make my way down to the grotto, stopping at the bottom of a long set of stone stairs to take in the rather impressive room. The light was dim, but not too badly, especially for my improved night vision. There was a second set of stairs leading up and around, connecting to the same doorway as the set I had just walked down. The pond was a decent size, and was fed from a small waterfall on the other end. The water flowed out through a small river, running under a bridge that connected the two areas together. As I looked around I could see some ventilation in the ceiling, but besides that Batman had been correct, it was mostly untouched. I walked to the edge of the water, looking down into the clear pond. With the reduced light I could see all the way to the bottom, which appeared to be four or five feet down.

After a moment I stepped back and followed along the path that followed the edge of the pond on both sides, eventually just picking a spot. I stomped my foot and dragged my hand up, pulling a rough pillar of stone about half a foot thick from the ground. With another rough move I raised a chunk of stone with a flat top for me to sit on before chopping at the side of the original pillar, knocking the top chunk off and catching it. Holding the hunk of stone I sat down, closed my eyes and focused on my breathing until I felt settled, then focusing on the energy that flowed through me.

Letting out a long breath I pushed that energy into the rock, visualizing it crushing and chipping the extra stone away. I opened my eyes to check my progress to find a surface that was kind of round... ish. It was certainly better than my original attempt. I kept practicing, eventually frowning and dropping the stone when I ruined it with an over zealous hit. I slapped the side of the pillar, knocking another chunk loose and starting over again.

I practiced for almost an hour before a now familiar presence slid in next to my mind. I couldn't help but smile as it radiated excitement and happiness.

*"Welcome back."* I said, standing from the stone bench and stretching. Quickly I stomped and flexed, pushing the pillar and the stool back into the ground.

*"Hello Warren! When did you get here?"* She asked.

*"An hour ago, maybe two."* I thought to her with a mental shrug.

*"Sorry, I was out flying with Bioship."* She said, her presence feeling a bit sorry for not being here when he arrived.

*"It's fine. I've been practicing my earthbending and had a conversation with Batman about the team."*

*"Oh, okay! Umm, where are you? I can feel you but you're farther away than I thought the base went."*

*"It's a room called the grotto. You should come down here, it's... nice down here."*

I could feel her curiosity as she sent me an affirmative. It took her a minute or so to get down to me, during which I made my way back to the entrance, walking to the bridge and leaning on the handrail. Eventually M'gann came floating down, letting out a gasp as she looked into the cave.

*"This is amazing!"* She thought to me, still floating above the stairs. *"What is this place?"*

*"I don't know, but Batman said it was mostly left as they found it. A place to relax I suppose?"*

*"Whatever they left it for, it's beautiful."* She said, floating down from where she had been to the bridge, standing next to me.

We both enjoyed the sounds of the waterfall and the serene view for a few minutes before she looked at me.

*"What did you talk to Batman about?"*

*"A bunch of general questions about the team, my uniform, stuff like that."* I explained, turning around to lean against the bridge. *"He put me in charge of keeping the team supplied through a League system."*

*"Wow, really? So when I want stuff to make chocolate chip cookies I come to you?"*

*"Not quite, it's more about mission related stuff I think, though he said I can set up buying personal items as well. I can access the list of what groceries are delivered though. We could make it a standard purchase when they stop by if you want."*

*"I wanted to try my hand at baking, so maybe?"*

*"Sure, let's go up to the kitchen, pull up the list and add a few things."* I thought to her with a smile. *"I have to write up what I'm looking for in my uniform eventually but we have some time."*

*"Oh, that's exciting. Do you have designs in mind?"*

*"I have a few ideas."*