

We spent another day recovering from our encounter with Klarion and his allies. It felt silly coming off of a two-day break to take another full day, especially when all of us were eager to get back to work, but it was hard to argue with how sore my back was after I woke up the next morning. Still, the bruising was fading by the time I sat down to have lunch.

Batman stopped by in the afternoon to debrief us, though I got the feeling it was more to check in on us than anything. We sat down in the conference room to watch everyone's body cam footage of the fight. I *had* been interested in this, but when I saw just how bad the body cams were at recording action, I quickly changed my mind. I'm sure they worked great for evidence gathering, but when Robin did a backflip to avoid a blast of energy from Felix Faust, it became extremely hard to follow. Still, it was important for us to be at least passingly familiar with how each fight went, so as we watched the footage, three screens at a time, the team in question went over what they were doing and what was going through their minds.

"He was keeping us pretty well pinned with his magic blasts, but it seemed like these runic circles were where his more interesting magic came from," Robin explained. "Once we figured that out, it was just a matter of staying clear of them."

"We managed to trip him up a few times by combining attacks, like when Ice froze his feet to the ground, and Robin got in close, but he countered us pretty quickly," Kyle said, frowning.

"Faust's magical power level is mid-tier at best, the danger he poses is his flexibility and the speed at which he casts," Batman agreed. "He learns his lessons fast and is quick to solve problems with unique magical solutions."

"Is that why I couldn't freeze his feet after the first time?" Ice asked, Batman nodding in confirmation before tapping a few buttons to rewind the footage, stopping at the point they were discussing.

"Having reviewed the footage, it appears when he freed himself, he also enchanted his boots to break the ice automatically. It's why he didn't even slow down the second time."

"I would really like to investigate getting a magic user on the team," I said, shaking my head as I leaned back in my chair. "The flexibility is staggering, even in a noncombatant role would be great. I would volunteer to study it myself, but I want to focus on my bending. I still might decide to dabble in some things eventually anyway."

"I will ask Zatara if he knows any magic users who would be interested in joining, as support or otherwise," Batman responded. "Is there an age limit?"

"For a pure support role, it's not as important, but generally, yes," I said, Kaldur nodding in agreement.

"As we get older, the age limit will change as well, but we feel forming a team would be easier when all members are around the same age group," The Atlantean continued. "I see us having groups of various ages at some point."

"Understood."

We continued to go over our fights, switching to Aqualad, Garth, and Tula's fight with Blackbriar Thorn. Again it was close, but the magic user was just a bit too strong and experienced for the three to take him down in the short time they had.

"I made an error, assigning group one to Felix Faust and group two to Blackbriar. Superboy's weakness to magic would have been mitigated by the fact that Thorn uses his magic *through* plants for the vast majority of his attacks, meaning Superboy would not have been affected. Further, Ice would have been effective at disarming him."

"Did you know that beforehand?" Wally asked, leaning on the table lazily.

"... I knew that Thorn used plants, not that he used them almost exclusively," Kaldur admitted.

"Sounds like there was not much you can do. Besides, if you pause to think about the best match, things could have gotten worse," I pointed out.

Kaldur reluctantly accepted my point, Superboy assuring him that it was fine and that he would have to learn how to deal with magic users anyway.

"Another reason to have one around," I pointed out, no one disagreeing. "They would be more familiar with magic and might spot something like that a lot more reliably than we could be expected to."

Eventually, the debriefing was done, and the team began filing out of the room. M'gann and I were the last ones to leave besides Batman. Before I could leave, however, the older hero caught my attention.

"Warren, a moment."

I stopped and sent a mental hug, followed by a slight nudge to go on ahead to M'gann, who returned the hug before focusing on following our teammates, while I turned back to focus on Batman.

"What's up?"

"Kent Nelson wanted me to tell you he is still looking forward to discussing your abilities. He also refused to elaborate on why," Batman said, stepping closer. "Unfortunately, he will be

extremely busy for the next few days. Once he recovered from the ritual, he communicated with the Nabu, the Lord of Order bound to the Helmet of Fate. After a lengthy explanation, Nabu has agreed to swear a binding oath to release his wearers, with the caveat that the strength of the oath hinges on him being consistently worn. Essentially, as long as we have people to put him on every day, and those people have a certain degree of magical talent, he agrees to allow his removal as long as his bearers are not being coerced to do so in any way."

"Really? That's good, it sounds like Nabu is a bit of a bastard, but a necessary one."

"Yes, a Chaos Lord is nearly impossible to combat without a Lord of Order," Batman agreed. "Kent Nelson will be busy selecting the first four wearers of the helmet, but after that, he wants to talk to you. As does Nabu."

"I... As an extra-dimensional refugee... should I be worried?"

Batman was silent for a while, staring back at me for a long moment before finally responding.

"I will talk to Kent and ask if that is an issue before you meet him."

"Damn... I was joking..."

I left the conference room not long after that, confirming that I was interested in meeting Kent, as I was eager to hear what he had to say about my bending.

The next few days were simple and relatively normal. The team woke up, worked out, sparred, and met up with either Ghost or the Colonel. Wally was a bit more difficult to round up and keep interested, especially when Ghost had a theory "Class" instead of practical application lessons. Nobody blamed him for wanting to run around a bit more, even if he had slowed down a bit since the actual ritual.

After our training classes, we would break off in pairs or alone to train our own individual abilities. I would spend a few hours working on my distance bending down in the grotto while M'gann worked on her fine control and pushing her maximum TK lifting capacity. We both made progress, which was encouraging, but it was slow. Ice was working on her accuracy and range for her ability, as well as working with both Artemis and Robin to improve her hand-to-hand.

After the fourth day of the normal schedule, when we were all getting a bit antsy with the repeated days with nothing but practice, training, and our "classes," Batman came to us with another patrol, this time a four-day schedule. It would be during the day, which meant that we would be able to comfortably keep a relatively normal schedule before leaving to patrol from three in the afternoon to nine at night. It would still be a lot to just shove into our already busy schedule, if not because of time than simply from physical exertion. Because of that, we agreed to lower our morning workouts to simple wake-up and limber-up routines.

The patrols took place in Metropolis, a city with a very different vibe than the Central City. It was futuristic, almost like every inch of it was following the same retro seventies science fiction city style. It was also calm, with very little crime happening, both because we were patrolling during the day and because of who regularly patrolled this city. Superman had made a rather impressive name for himself, and despite the fact that he was not even in the city during our patrols, you could almost feel the fact that he protected this city as you walked around.

During the four-day patrol schedule, we mostly focused on accidents, with a few muggings mixed in on the last two days. I actually helped an old lady cross the street and helped get a kitten down from a tree, both of which I found hilarious. The others, however, didn't understand that it was a trope and just shrugged it off. In all, the worst thing we responded to was a car accident involving several vehicles when a large truck lost control.

The truck demolished the car in front of it, which was luckily a parked car, but also smashed that car into another two, injuring the occupants. Worse still, this was all happening around rush hour, meaning the ambulances were stuck with no way to get to us. Luckily we had more options, and we loaded the injured into the Bioship, flying them to the nearest hospital. It was a chaotic scene, but in the end, everyone involved was just glad the first car was parked, there was no way anyone inside of it could have survived.

After the patrol was drawing to a close, Wally pointed out that it seemed like we were being used as city babysitters while League members took some time off. I could only imagine how poorly he would have reacted to that realization a few weeks ago, which Kaldur and I had already discussed. At a minimum, he would have been annoyed at the perceived slight at our abilities or be upset that they weren't treating us like full-time heroes. Instead, he proved how much he had changed in the last month by being happy that we could give Superman a few hours off and the opportunity to stretch his legs and get some experience.

When our four-day patrol was over, with nothing happening that was nearly as eventful as our previous patrol assignment, we returned to our normal schedule. A day into that and Kaldur made an announcement at dinner.

"I wish to return to Atlantis for several days," He explained after getting everyone's attention. "I... I have been putting off visiting my parents since I moved here and putting off my old friendships even longer. I wish to apologize in person and, if they can forgive me, spend some time reconnecting with them."

"I'm sure they will understand, Kal," Robin said, patting his friend's shoulder. "They seemed like good people."

"They are, I know they would never hate me for this... but I find myself nervous anyway," He explained with a frown.

"Well... how long will you be gone?" Tora asked.

"At least three days, maybe four," He answered. "I do not know how free my friend will be before I talk to them."

"Well... If you're going to be gone for so long... Maybe I should head back to the Batcave for a few days?" Robin suggested. "Might be a good idea to spend some time with Batman."

"Well... Maybe this might be a good time to have a mentor or family week?" M'gann suggested. "I've been meaning to spend some time with Uncle J'onnn, I need some help with mass shifting and it's been a while since we patrolled together."

"I would like to spend some time with my family," Tora responded. "School will be starting in a month or so, and I have a feeling we will be much busier keeping up activities."

"Kaldur and I have been brainstorming on what to do when school starts," I responded before turning the conversation back. "But a mentor and family week sounds like a good idea."

We talked a bit more and eventually decided that the team would split up for a solid week, though we would have to talk to our teachers and individual mentors. We ended up putting it off for two days while everyone figured everything out and set up plans with their families or mentors.

Kyle was going with his guardians on a trip to a family vacation home, one that Sarah owned with her siblings. He was understandably nervous and excited as he would be meeting his extended family for the first time. After a few days of that, he would be leaving to work with Superman, who had promised to show him the ropes and mentor him about handling his new abilities.

Wally, who learned about the idea the day after we came up with it, was eager to spend as much time with his mentor as possible, exploring his newly repaired connection to the Speed Force. Apparently, the older Flash, the one who used to work with Wonder Woman, was working with them as well.

Ice wasn't spending time with a mentor, as she never really had one, but she was eager to spend time with her parents and have some time to herself. Where Robin was going was obvious, though he also confirmed he would be spending some time with his family as well. Artemis was in the same boat, though she was spending time with Green Arrow, who wasn't really her mentor but did have plenty to teach her.

M'gann was the last person to leave the cave for the break, save for me, and that was on purpose. It had been a while since our last date, and with everyone gone, we spent the day together. I woke up early to make pancakes, which we enjoyed on a stone picnic bench by the

water. Around noon we traveled to Central City to go bowling, something M'gann had always wanted to do, even before she came to Earth. When that was done, we went for a walk in a park before returning to the cave. We spent a few hours reading in the library, enjoying each other's company, before cooking a simple dinner of shrimp scampi and garlic bread together.

After we finished dinner and cleaned up our mess, we retired to the couch, where we snuggled up and watched TV. M'gann's love for the older, cheesier shows was adorable, even if I found the campiness in some of them a bit much. Eventually, after a while, the notification popped up on the tv, the streaming service asking if we were still watching, the show paused in the background.

By then, however, we were too preoccupied to notice.