

## [David Lance POV]

Two days after Mr. Twister's attack, M'gann bursted into my room after a few euphoric rapid knocks, spinning the door open with a radiant grin that, by human criteria, appeared abnormally big, inviting me to participate in a team bonding activity.

A camping trip.

Seeing nothing bad with the offer, I accepted, much to Raven's dismay, because now she had to go, and well, she wasn't particularly happy with the idea of socializing more than absolutely necessary.

As for me, well, I loved the outdoors almost as much as I loved being alone reading a book.

That very morning, we set off out of the cave in one of the League vehicles, driving towards our camping destination. It took a few hours, but eventually, we arrived at the place where we started setting up camp, pitching tents, and building the fire.

As the day wore on, we settled around the bonfire, with M'gann and Aqualad sitting a few feet away from it, unlike the rest. There, we started to talk about random things, each one of us opening a bit more to the team as the night grew dark. I, for one, shared to an extent how my heroic journey had begun, telling them without much detail how much my powers had affected me and how I had worked to get past that one day at a time.

Needless to say, telling my story, even if it was a heavily revised one, was strange; after all, only Raven, Robin, and the League knew with detail how much I had struggled to come to peace about who I was.

But I knew that this was something they needed to hear some more than others, even if it wasn't the entire story. I knew that by talking about that dark period of my life to them, I would give them something they lacked; I would give them perspective, the perspective to realize many things on their own accord.

At some point during the night, after I had talked about my past, M'gann started to sing a song from her home planet before joining me in the sharing talk by telling us some of her past without going into much detail.

"I guess what pushed me to come was my uncle," M'gann smiled fondly, her eyes growing soft. "Hearing his tales of heroism every time he came to visit was breathtaking. So, one day I decided to come without telling him, so I snuck on his

future ship, who in the end bonded with me, and came here, and well, the rest is history."

I smiled under my mask.

"I suppose, in a way. My story is like yours," Aqualad noted, his eyes on the bonfire. "Before I was a hero, I was a soldier, and for a time, that's all I was. I fought the enemy at the orders of my King, following his commands without question. One day, however, I was transferred to the Conservatory of Sorcery in Poseidonis."

"What's that?" Raven asked, the sorcery part getting her attention.

At this, Aqualad smiled, his filling with fondness as he looked down at his hands. "The Conservatory of Sorcery is the most prestigious academy in all of Atlantis, led by Queen Mera herself. As the name suggested, it is a place for students who are interested in studying sorcery and other subjects."

At this, Kid Flash rolled his eyes, something that went unnoticed by everyone but me.

Aqualad smiled. "I had some of my best days there."

~I can imagine,~ I replied, getting a nod from Aqualad, something that surprised me because no one had translated

for me, meaning that Aqualad had understood what I had said without any help.

"I have started to learn sign language. It is a disrespect to you and others that can communicate with their voice not to have this skill," Aqualad replied, reading my expression of shock.

I smiled; that was very thoughtful of him. ~Well, you are picking it up fast.~

"I have had help," Aqualad replied, giving M'gann a smile.

~So, how did you go from an academy student to a hero?~ I asked, turning the conversation back to the subject.

"Well, one day like any other. Ocean-Master attacked Atlantis, causing our King to battle with him head-on. During this fight, our King was defeated, so seeing this, I rushed to save my King without hesitation with the aid of a friend. The two of us attacked Ocean-Master with all our might. Though in the end, we proved to be no match for him, so we were easily defeated; however, our intervention allowed our King enough time to recover, resulting in the defeat of Ocean-Master," Aqualad replied, continuing with his story. "After Ocean-Master's defeat, our King, grateful for our help, offered the both of us the opportunity to become his protégés, his sidekicks in his journey of justice throughout the world. My friend rejected the invitation, while I jumped at the chance, finding the life of a

hero one worth living, so, from that day forward, I became Aqualad."

~That's quite a tale,~ I said, getting a smile from Aqualad.

"It is," Aqualad nodded, his eyes fixed on me. "I have one question, if you don't mind me asking."

I paused, giving him a pondering look before nodding, feeling a bit curious about what question he had for me.

"You said that at first, you became a hero because you had no other choice, right?" Aqualad asked, to which I nodded in response. "What changed that? What made you pick this path?"

~Those I love,~ I replied, my expression softening as I thought of my sister. ~ There are a few people that mean the world to me, and in order to protect them, I must be strong.~

Aqualad nodded in understanding, something that was shared by the others around the campfire as well.

"I became a hero because of him," Raven said, cutting through the silence that my answer had created. "You could say he saved me, and well, that inspired me in ways I didn't think possible."

Aqualad smiled. "My King always says that the biggest quality of a hero is their ability to inspire others to hope, to change, to make the world better."

"He's not wrong," Robin chimed in, a faint smile coming across his face. "I wouldn't be the hero I am today if it wasn't for Batman."

"Same goes for me," Kid Flash said. "The Flash inspired me to help, to be more than I was."

Aqualad nodded, his eyes filled with admiration. "It is truly amazing what one person can do."

I couldn't help but agree; after all, if it wasn't for my sister, I would have never found the courage and reason to become a hero.

"I suppose," Superboy said, his eyes fixed on the bonfire.

"What about you, Superboy? Did Superman inspire you?" M'gann asked, her question making the young Kryptonian tense.

"In a way," Superboy replied, his eyes growing dark as he paused, trying to find the right words to continue. "I... there isn't a day where I don't think about destroying Superman."

Everyone was frozen in shock, except for me and Raven. We were aware of this situation in great detail, so the revelation didn't surprise us at all.

"What?" Kid Flash was the first one to speak, his voice cutting through the silence like a knife.

Superboy nodded, his eyes growing dark as he continued. "I was created by CADMUS to replace Superman should he perish, or to destroy him should he turn from the light."

As soon as Superboy spoke, I examined his body language from head to toe to discern whether the word he said held any additional significance for him beyond what it signified in his sentence. Thankfully, based on how he carried himself, it seemed that the word was nothing more than a figure of speech to him.

"I also admired him," Superboy continued, taking a deep breath. "So, you could say I have a conflict of emotions about him."

"I apologize beforehand if I'm out of place, but have you considered the possibility of CADMUS having installed psychic triggers on you?" Raven said, making Superboy freeze in place as he considered the possibility. "If they made you to destroy him, chances are they wanted a way to control you."

A great move by Raven. By bringing this fact to his attention, Superboy will now question a lot of things and will dread the prospect of Raven's words being true, which will eventually lead him to the conclusion that the only way he can be sure his mind is his own is to allow someone else inside it.

"I had never considered that," Superboy said, his eyes growing distant as he considered Raven's words. "Thank you for bringing this to my attention, Raven."

"Just making an educated observation based on what I know," Raven replied calmly. "I could be wrong, but I could also be right."

~We can talk about that on a later date,~ I said, cutting the conversation from growing in that direction as I turned to Superboy. ~What made you want to be a hero, then?~

Superboy turned to me, his eyes meeting mine as he spoke. "I want to make a difference, just like Superman has."

I nodded, understanding his sentiment.

"An honorable reason to pursue this path," Aqualad said, his voice soft. "I'm sure that in time, we will all make a difference."

Superboy looked down a faint smile on his face. "I hope so."



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Two days after the camping trip, we were summoned by Batman to the central room to take on our first mission; unlike the rest of the team, I had already been made aware of this by him a few hours prior, so this summon was more of a notification thing for the rest of the team to know.

The mission was on Santa Prisca.

"Isla Santa Prisca," Batman began, as the holographic computer behind him showed images of the island as he spoke. "This place is the primary source of a dangerous and illegal neo-steroid. A strength-enhancing drug sold under the street name Venom. Infrared heat signatures indicate their factory is still operating at full capacity. However, all shipments of Venom have been inexplicably cut off. That's where this team comes in."

"We're going to break into their facility and find out what's going on," Kid Flash said, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

I, on the other hand, was not as enthusiastic as Kid Flash. Based on my knowledge, the island was ruled by Bane, who acted as a brutal dictator who enjoyed nothing more than torturing his enemies and allies if he felt like it, Bane on itself wasn't a problem; I was confident I could take him on easily, the problem was whatever had cut the shipments, as whoever had done it, was clearly stronger than Bane.

My biggest concern was that whoever was behind this was clearly an unknown, and unknowns were a factor I didn't like at all because they left little room for optimal preparation.

~You can count on us,~ I said after a few moments. Already planning ahead in order to deal with any scenario that could pop up.

"Good," Batman said with a short nod. "I have full faith in you all."

With that, the meeting was adjourned, and we all went our separate ways to prepare for the mission.