

Green Arrow explained what they knew about this new vigilante, which was, unsurprisingly considering who he was standing next to, basically everything. Artemis Crock, a fifteen-year-old girl who grew up with two criminals for parents. Her mother was only recently released from prison, and just in time, as her father was recently thrown into one. Lawrence Crock, AKA Sportsmaster.

“Wait, we put her dad in jail and you think she’ll want to join the team?” I asked, looking a little skeptical. “How’s that math work?”

“We’ve already spoken to her mother, Paula Crock, better known as the retired criminal Huntress. During a mission with her husband, she was critically injured, paralyzed from the waist down. Instead of rendering aid, Sportsmaster left her behind to take the fall for their crimes,” Batman explained. “We have reason to believe that between the training her father put her and her older sister through, as well as his treatment of her mother, Artemis is far from upset about her father being in jail. Our greatest concern is about Artemis’s dedication to the cause, as it’s possible she is fighting crime as a way to keep her skills up and rebel against her father, rather than any desire to do good.”

“What did her mother say about that theory?” Kaldur asked.

“She believes that Artemis is attempting to make up for past crimes, things she was forced to do while her father was training her,” Batman responded. “She also said that between her and her sister, Artemis was always the one who struggled with the immorality of the ‘family business’”

“And who is her sister?” I asked. “Anyone we would recognize? Maybe we put her in jail too?”

“Her sister, who took her mother's maiden name, is Jade Nguyen, goes by the name Cheshire. She belongs to the League of Shadows.”

“Jesus, what is their relationship like?”

“Closer, but strained now that Cheshire is following in her father's footsteps.” Batman explained. “It is an issue that does need addressing. Should we be interviewing her?”

“We?” I asked, looking up from the folder with an eyebrow raised.

“The League of Shadows is an assassin organization,” Green Arrow explained. “We don't know how much koolaid her sister has already drank, but we will be accompanying you in case she is close by and takes violent steps.”

"I believe we can handle ourselves, but I understand your position. As long as you let us run the interview and recruitment then some company isn't that bad," I said, Kaldur nodding in agreement.

"Agreed," Batman said simply. "Paula Crock expressed interest in meeting you alone before you made the offer to her daughter. We suggested tomorrow, later in the afternoon, with the caveat that you might have to postpone."

"Later in the afternoon should be fine, as long as it's after training with the Colonel," I said, accepting the police report scan back from Kaldur and putting it back into the folder. "Should I see if M'gann minds flying us over?"

We talked a bit more, everyone agreeing that the Bioship was the best way to travel to Gotham, where the family lived. We sketched out the basics of the plan before calling it a day, Batman and Green Arrow leaving through the Zeta-Tube.

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The next day started out relatively normal, our morning routine went by quickly before we returned to the quarry for sparring. Kaldur and I had explained we would be going out to talk to a new candidate, before explaining some of her basic information. Both of us had agreed that her family's history was something that would eventually need to be explained, but we also agreed that it was something she would need to do if she was interested in joining.

Colonel Clayden called us down to the warehouse a few hours into our sparring, the older veteran launching directly into the day's lessons. It was a continuation of the breach and clear training we had already done, running us through a breach in slow motion again before we broke off into pairs and started to practice. He would add twists, stipulations, and goals for each run, and during our short breaks, he would ask us questions and point out our issues with what we had done wrong or what we could have done better.

When the Colonel let us go, Kaldur, M'gann and I returned directly back to the cave and quickly cleaned up. I put on one of my spare uniforms, clipped on my helmet, and headed out to the main area, where M'gann was already waiting for us.

"Are you sure you want me coming in with you?" She asked again. "You, Robin and Kaldur were the ones who met Tora first..."

"You'll do great," I said, giving her a hug, before turning to wave at Kaldur as he got closer.

Before long the Zeta-Tubes lit up and our two escorts, Batman and Green Arrow stepped into the cave and immediately headed toward us. Together we made our way to Bioship, boarding and getting settled in before M'gann lifted off and flew out into the sky. I could just

barely feel M'gann's connection to the ship, so I could feel a slight shiver as we became invisible. M'gann steered the ship up into space before coming back down over Gotham, following Batman's directions. We stopped, flying less than a dozen feet above an old apartment building. It wasn't exactly the best neighborhood, but from what I understood there weren't a lot of good neighborhoods in Gotham.

After jumping down from Bioship and onto the roof of the building, Batman picked the exterior lock on the roof access door. From there we quickly made our way down to Paula Crock's apartment. Luckily it was only a single floor down from the roof, and we managed to stay out of sight, mostly thanks to M'gann warning us when someone was in the hallway ahead of us. Batman knocked on the door politely, an interesting sight to say the least.

"Coming!" An older woman's voice called from inside.

The door opened to a wheelchair-bound Vietnamese woman, who wheeled back away from the door to let us in.

"Quickly, please. The fewer people see me interacting with heroes the better," She explained.

She shut the door behind us when we were all inside the small apartment. Seeing all of us in the living room got a chuckle out of her as she wheeled into an empty space next to the couch.

"Please, take a seat," She said, leaning back in her chair. "I have some questions about what you're hoping to recruit Artemis into."

Batman remained standing, but Kaldur, M'gann, Green Arrow, and myself all sat down.

"Thank you for welcoming us into your home Ma'am," Kaldur said, bowing his head slightly to the woman.

"Most days it's hardly worth calling it that," she said, looking around the apartment. "And please, call me Paula."

I surreptitiously looked around as Paula did, noting a spot of peeling wallpaper and a few spots of water damage near the ceiling. I focused back on Paula before my looks could be too obvious.

"We would be happy to answer any questions you might have," I said, reaching up and unclipping my helmet, pulling it off my head and putting it on my lap.

"Well, Skarn I assume?" She asked, continuing when I nodded in confirmation. "What is your team like exactly?"

“At the moment it consists of seven individuals, including us three. Our abilities range from a peak human who has undergone intense training in combat, similar to your daughter, to a metahuman cryokinetic. Personally, I am an enhanced human with ferro and geokinetic abilities, and you might recognize Aqualad.”

*“Should I say something?”* M’gann asked as Paula acknowledged Kaldur.

I sent her the sensation of support, letting her know that it was up to her. Currently, she was wearing her standard human look, her usually green skin a tanned white.

“I’m a Martian, which comes with a variety of abilities,” She volunteered, raising her hand and shifting it to green, before shifting it back.

“Ah, I was wondering what you could do,” She said with a smile. “Are you the only other girl?”

“No, there is one other, the cryokinetic is also a girl,” She answered. “It would be nice to have more girls on the team though.”

We talked for another forty minutes or so, discussing the living arrangements, assuring her that she could live at the cave or at home, there was a Zeta-Tube close by enough that it wouldn’t matter much. After answering a lot of her questions she asked what kind of training we were receiving, and we acknowledge that while the source might have been questionable, some of this training might overlap what she already knows.

“If it’s minor, she may just have to work through it. One of the primary reasons for training as a team is to really secure ourselves as a unit. Skipping out on lessons because the Sportsmaster already taught her how to ambush people isn’t conducive to that,” I explained. “That said if it becomes a consistent problem we would probably figure something out. Robin is currently toughing it out so far, and his training is the most... varied out of all of us.”

Paula opened her mouth to say something, but before she could the front door flew open and Artemis stepped in.

“I’m home mom, what-” She started to say, before spotting all of us sitting in the living room.

Her eyes went wide and she dropped her backpack, staring at us wordlessly. She tried to speak, her mouth moving but no sound came out save for a few unintelligible syllables.

“Artemis, don’t be rude. Say hello.” Paula said, smirking as she teased her daughter.

"Wh- What is going on?" She asked, choking on the first word before getting the rest of the sentence out. "Is... this real? Did something happen?"

"Of course it is Sweetheart. Batman noticed your extracurricular activities and stopped by to say hello," She responded, still smirking.

"Wait, you knew!?" Artemis asked, her eyes still wide as she looked at her mom.

"Of course, I knew Arty, I was sneaking out of my house when I was your age too," She explained before adding. "Of course, I was breaking the law, not enforcing it, but still. Besides, I was Huntress for twelve years, did you really think I wouldn't figure it out?"

Artemis groaned and sat down on one of the chairs by the kitchen table, rubbing her face. It took a moment or two but eventually, she looked back up.

"Alright, so mom, you knew about... what I was doing, but why are all of you here?" She asked. "Not like I'm breaking any laws."

"You have actually," Green Arrow said with a smile. "But none that we would take you in for."

"We have an offer for you," I said, standing up from the couch, Kaldur and M'gann standing with me. "We are part of a team-"

"Not interested." She said, cutting me off and rolling her eyes.

Paula turned her head and gave her daughter a harsh look, a mother wordlessly admonishing her child. Artemis caught the look and flinched, letting out a sigh.

"Sorry, but I'm not interested in teaming up," She repeated, this time with less casual dismissal. "I prefer working alone. Besides... if you're here, you know who my dad is..."

"We do, and we aren't concerned about that seeing as we already put him in prison once," I said, both Paula and Artemis looking at me with wide eyes.

"You guys are the ones who put him in prison?" Artemis asked, standing up from her seat. "How? Where? Why?"

"He wasn't actually our intended target. The circumstances were... complicated, but he was essentially a contact for someone we were following," I explained, keeping it vague for Speedy's sake. "When he showed up we took him down. Of course, technically he didn't surrender until the big guns showed up, but we had him on the ropes."

For a moment Artemis looked like she didn't believe us, until Batman nodded in confirmation.

"Well... Thank you I guess," She said, though she didn't seem entirely sure. "Sorry, I know he deserves to be in jail, but..."

"We understand. Which is why we are actually more concerned about your sister, Jade, as she is still at large and working for the League of Shadows." Kaldur stated, Artemis once again looked shocked, before shaking her head.

"Of course, you know about her too. Well, then why are you here?" She asked, sitting back down in her chair. "If you're worried about me and Jade..."

"Because you've been doing good work," I said with a shrug. "And you've got potential. Enough that both of these guys noticed. When we asked if anyone was on their radar for potential recruitment, both of them suggested you."

Artemis looked surprised for a moment before she shook her head. She was about to say no again before I cut her off.

"How about we describe what the New Titans are like, and what our eventual goal is," I said. "Then, if you're still not interested, we will leave you alone."

For a moment Paula looked like she was going to say something but Batman shook his head, just enough for her, and myself, to notice. She stayed quiet, letting me continue.

I spent fifteen minutes outlining the team's goals and strategies. I went over our basic schedule, our desire to start patrolling various cities, and our eventual goal of separating from the Justice League into our own stand-alone organization, one that would include multiple concurrent teams. I discussed that we were essentially the test run, the founding members of an organization that would someday, with hard work and luck, help defend Earth from threats spanning from organized crime to alien invasions. I also explained how our tactics and composition were vastly different from how the Justice League functioned, and that our team-centric outlook worked particularly well when the team member's skills and abilities varied, meaning that she would be a valuable asset to the team despite the fact that she couldn't bench press a small car.

By the time I was done outlining what we were trying to do, Artemis' casually dismissive attitude was well and truly gone. Instead, she listened with rapt attention, both her and her mother, nodding along as I described how we were looking for ways to mitigate our teammates' weaknesses and covering for each other's shortcomings.

"I..." Artemis started to say, trailing off quickly.

“Arty, you should do it,” Paula said, wheeling her chair around and moving towards her daughter. “This is your chance to pull away from what your father and I dragged you into, to be something better than what your father trained you for. I know part of why you have been going out is guilt, but this is your chance to move past that. To be a hero.”

Paula reached out and gave her daughter's hand a squeeze, Artemis looking back at her for a moment before slowly nodding.

“Alright, I guess I'll give it a shot.” She said, looking back at me. “What do I have to do?”

“Well, you can start by joining us for sparring and our morning workouts,” I said with a smile. “That should let us test the waters, see how everyone meshes.”

We talked for a while, explaining that the team would have to be a priority and that we would need to discuss her parentage with the group. She did not like that idea, but I assured her that no one would shut her out for that, as long as she did her best for the team and the cause. By the time we left, I could tell she was nervous but hesitantly excited.