

Coming home was strange after living so long in Mount Justice.

It had taken a while, but Dick had grown used to the constant activity, the continuous group training and activities, not to mention everyone just hanging out in between. The constant company had been overwhelming at first, but he had quickly grown to appreciate it. Now he was home at Wayne Manor, which dwarfed the living space of Mount Justice, with only three people and a dog living inside it. It was no surprise that it felt empty.

After morning training and workout, which started around six and ended at seven-thirty, Bruce had disappeared into the Batcave, quoting a need to check up on any updates that had accumulated over the night. Nothing major had happened, as the system would have immediately sent an emergency message, and Bruce would have dropped everything to check on it, but there was usually a backlog of minor updates that built up over time.

That just left Robin and Alfred to enjoy breakfast together in one of three dining rooms in Wayne Manor, the pair sitting at a large mahogany table. The hilariously expensive surface was nearly as big as his entire room at Mount Justice.

"Master Greyson, do you require any laundry services?" Alfred asked, dabbing his face with a napkin as he finished his French-styled scrambled eggs.

"No, Alfred, thank you," He responded. "I left most of my clothes at the cave- well, at Mount Justice."

"Very well," The butler responded, picking up his plate and leaving the room, leaving Dick alone.

The room was quiet for a while before Robin finished his breakfast as well, Alfred taking the dirty dishes away. As he stood from the table, Ace, the great dane and rottweiler mix, stood up with him, following him silently save the quiet clacking of his nails on the hardwood floors. He had been following him around since he returned a few days ago, either happy one of his pack had returned or sensing his growing unease.

It had never bothered Dick before, just how big and empty Wayne Manor was. Hell, a lot of times, he saw it as a good thing. There were plenty of places to explore, always a new place to sit. And on the few occasions Bruce had gotten on his nerves, there were plenty of places to hide away. Not that he was under any illusion that Bruce didn't know exactly where he was.

Now though? Now it was too quiet. There wasn't anyone to bump into while walking down the halls or to chat with while they waited to spar. Bruce was more than happy to point out where he did well and where he messed up while they sparred, but it just wasn't the same.

Of course, that was only a small portion of the problem. The first symptom of something that took him two days to figure out. When he finally put it together, he almost wished he hadn't.

Batman had always been a solitary fighter. Even when they had worked together, or with other people for that matter, he had always strived to be capable by himself. If he had a weakness, he solved it himself. A gap in abilities? He would find a way around it. A lack of skill? He trained until he had mastered it. There was no teamwork, there was no cooperation. Yes, Bruce knew how to set up a multi-pronged ambush or how to flank a combatant with the help of an ally. But he always strove to be all he needed in a fight.

After weeks with the team, working tirelessly to function as a single unit, just the idea of that felt so abstract and counterintuitive that it left a bad taste in his mouth. It was such a waste. Why would you spend so much time trying to find a way to be a master of every field when your teammates could easily compensate. Then, he could focus on mastering what he was actually good at, like stealth, computer hacking, infiltration, and martial arts. Was it important to be able to function independently? Of course! But relying on teammates wasn't a bad thing. It just meant he could focus on his core skills more.

Bruce had styled Batman as an unstoppable force, a machine that kept coming, always had a plan, always knew what to do, and always had the skills, the tools, and the drive. A nightmare for criminals that never needed to rely on anything and never needed to call in support.

If you had asked him a few months ago, hell even a week ago, what his future was, he would have admitted that he hoped to one day take up the mantle of Batman once Bruce retired. But now, after realizing that the image of Batman ran so counter to his current goal, to the New Titans' core value of fighting as a team... He wasn't sure that was possible. He was sure that he didn't believe it anymore.

Robin idly scratched Ace's head, the large dog leaning into the attention as they walked down into one of the many sitting rooms of the mansion. He made his way to the grandfather clock, opening the front glass, the large pendulum stopping as he did. He wrapped his hand around the brass cylinder, a green glow coming out from under his hand as it read his biometrics and fingerprints. He released the pendulum and closed the glass door, the entire wall shifting to reveal a staircase downward.

"C'mon, Ace, time to face the music."

Slowly he made his way down the solid stone stairs, his footsteps echoing down and upwards as the door sealed behind him. Many times he had tried to come down these stairs as quietly as he could, trying to sneak up on Bruce to show off his skills. It wasn't until recently that he realized he definitely had a silent alarm hooked up to all of the Batcave entrances.

As he descended down the stairs, his mind was still wrestling with the same question he had been asking himself for the last twenty-four hours. How could he inherit the title if he was

working with the New Titans, and maybe more importantly, how could he if he disagreed with one of the most important facets of Batman?

He reached the bottom of the stairs and, after a moment of looking around, made his way to the massive computer system that took up one of the central platforms of the cave. As usual, Bruce was in costume and scanning through tagged news reports, other heroes' alerts, UN files, and more. His cowl was off as he worked on the computer, scanning several screens at once.

Dick read over his shoulder for a while, picking up bits and pieces as his mentor scanned through dozens of things. After a while, when he noticed a lull in activity, the young hero finally spoke up.

“Hey, Bruce... could we talk?”

This was such a bad idea.

Why did she think this was a good idea? What had she been thinking!?

Tora stood nervously at one of several pick-up points of the Brasília International Airport, staring at the long line of taxis that stretched in front of her. That wasn't what was making her nervous, of course. Fighting through gunfire, magic users and element-wielding androids had a way of making mundane issues, like exploring a country you knew very little about and barely spoke a few words of their national language, seem easily surmountable. Besides, she already solved the major problems before she had even gotten here. She already had a stack of reals on hand in case the cab didn't take her debit card and an English-to-Portuguese dictionary in case the cab driver didn't speak any English.

No, she knew she could handle getting around Brazil. What made her nervous was why she was here and her whole stupid plan about *that*. What scared her was that she was in Brazil, and no one knew, not her parents or her teammates. It had all made so much sense when she left, and now...

Taking a deep breath to calm herself down and push her rising anxiety to the side, she made her way to the nearest taxi. She waved it down and slid into the back seat, closing the door behind her and leaning forward to talk to the driver. She described her destination in broken, barely functioning Portuguese bits, handing the driver a pre-translated address. He seemed to understand her message, though and soon pulled away from the curb and drove away from the airport.

How had she thought that this was a good idea? Why did she think that her being here would do any good?

She knew she couldn't just do *nothing*, but how could she have thought that going herself was a good idea? She still considered Beatriz her sister, even if it wasn't by blood. Beatriz, on the other hand, no doubt still hated her guts. How was she showing up supposed to help?!

Tora's stomach was folding and spinning like it had been for the past three days, ever since she had learned what Beatriz was up to. At first, she was angry, upset that no one had told her what was happening. After a while, though, she admitted to herself that she understood. After all, look at how she reacted! She dropped everything, lied to her parents that she was being called in by the team, and spent her savings to purchase a plane ticket to Brasília. It was crazy, stupid, and would most likely blow up in her face and make everything worse...

But she couldn't just do nothing.

The drive was longer than she had expected, but eventually, the taxi stopped at a seemingly random spot in the city. She paid the man with her card and stepped out, the car pulling away quickly, probably eager to spend as little time as possible in this part of the city.

This was a bad idea. But if Beatriz was determined to use her abilities as she had been, then as a hero, she had to stop her. And if by some miracle she could talk some sense into her, then...

"How is seeing me again going to do anything but piss her off?" She mumbled to herself, walking past a handful of people, ignoring the looks she was getting.

It had been two days since she had stumbled into Beatriz's updated League file. She knew she shouldn't have read it, but she was curious and desperate for more news about her sister. She didn't know what she expected but was still shocked to find a recent update. Several recent updates.

Beatriz had dropped out of school. When her parents had refused to let her, she ran away from home, the conflict resulting in a small house fire. Now free of her parents, she went on to make friends that were less than desirable. In only two weeks she had resorted to using her powers aggressively. So far, she had only stolen some food and threatened people who were already threatening her, but according to the League, who was watching her due to her public use of powers, her friends had strong connections to one of the several gangs in the city.

She had to do something.

She quickly walked down an alley, looking around to check if anyone had been watching. Satisfied she had a bit of privacy, she quickly changed, throwing on her uniform, clipped on her utility belt and stepped back out of the alleyway with what she hoped looked like a calm and in-control facade.

Only to lose it immediately when a voice spoke from beside her.

"Hello, Ice."

She jumped to the side with a shout, raising her hand to blast the person with ice, only for them to blur closer, grab her hand with a steel grip and hold it away, the gathered freezing energy blasting out harmlessly against the alleyway wall.

"W-Wonder Woman!" Tora said, eyes wide in shock. "Wh- Uh... What are you d-doing here?"

"I suspect something very similar to what you are doing," The Amazonian princess said, releasing the teenager's arm. "Your friend is heading down a dangerous path. Hopefully, with the right encouragement, this can be prevented."

"You... you came to help Beatriz?" Tora asked, very nearly collapsing in relief. "That... that is amazing! I was- I didn't think- I should have- I know-"

The Amazonian reached out and put her hand on the younger girl's shoulder, silencing her slow spiral.

"You heard someone you cared about is in trouble and became too focused to think properly," She finished, Tora slowly nodding in confirmation. "While I think you already know you could have handled this better...."

Tora looked away and nodded, unable to meet one of her personal hero's eyes.

"Your dedication and eagerness to help your friend *is* admirable," Wonder Woman finished.

"Thank you," Tora responded after a long moment. "I'm not sure what I would have done. I wasn't even sure how I was getting into the building."

The young hero gestured to a building down the road, which had originally been her target. It was a run-down, abandoned apartment complex, in which the pseudo gang Beatriz had been running with took over and worked out of.

"I believe you would have managed," Wonder Woman assured her. "You are a capable hero, and while I understand your history is tumultuous, you clearly genuinely care about your friend still."

"She is my sister," She explained, wiping an eye. "Her hating me doesn't change that."

Wonder Woman looked down at the Norwegian teenager, studying her and thinking to herself. Just before Tora could ask if there was anything wrong, she nodded.

“Very well. Then we shall do this together.”

“What? No! She won’t listen to you if I’m there!” Tora responded, eyes wide. “She hates me, Wonder Woman, I... I only came because someone needed to do something, and I couldn’t just let her fall... I owed it to her to keep her from becoming something she hated. Even if she hated me... I-”

“The final decision is yours, I will not force you to accompany me.” The older heroine assured her. “But I believe you may be wrong about your sister hating you. I believe that your coming with me will help.”

“I...”

Tora trailed off, looking up at Wonder Woman before looking back at the building that she was pretty sure Beatriz was living in. It was broken down, old, and covered in graffiti. She could only imagine what kind of condition the interior was in.

“Tora, the reason I am here is because we believe that Beatriz can be saved,” She explained. “And while I believe I can stop your friend from falling into the wrong crowd and separate her from those who would use her, there is a not insignificant chance that I will have to resort to force in order to start the conversation. I believe that you might be able to prevent that.”

“O-okay. I’ll help,” Tora responded, visibly composing herself. “What do you want me to do?”

“For now? Hold on tightly,” The experienced heroine said before reaching out and confidently grabbing Tora before flying away into the air, towards the broken-down building.

Only Tora's work with Superboy kept her from shouting in shock as Wonder Woman carried her toward the run-down building.