

Thankfully Batman immediately allayed our nervousness about the League's decision, though he brushed over exactly who said what. The team cheered when he revealed that the League would be backing our idea one hundred percent. After that we began discussing specifics, making plans for what we were looking for in terms of trainers. We reluctantly agreed to let Batman handle the interview process for the trainers after he correctly pointed out that we would likely not be taken seriously by the types of people we were looking for. He did agree to compile a list that we could go over together before he started so we would still have some say.

When we were done discussing the meeting and everything else, he handed us back a revised list of team candidates. Instead of a simple list though, he handed me a large folder that was filled with paper. Each candidate had two pages of information, including a picture, a description of their powers and what they had been up to, as well as Batman's own analysis. Each candidate was marked in red or green depending if Batman believed they were a good match or not. I accepted the folder with a smile.

"Thank you for compiling this for us Batman," I said, resisting the urge to thumb through the folder any more than I already had. "We will take a look at these and discuss who our first candidates will be."

"After Speedy," Wally added, Robin and Kaldur nodding along.

"Right, after Speedy," I agreed, despite my reservations about the former sidekick. "We will let you know when we plan on starting our first recruitment."

"Keep me in the loop." He said with a nod before turning and leaving without another word.

"So... are we gonna go through that now or...?" Robin asked, tilting his head to try and take a peak.

"No, Wally is already running late and we all had a long day." I said, keeping the folder closed. "We can go through the list tomorrow, after we finish sparring."

Everyone agreed after a few grumbles, mostly from Robin who I was discovering absolutely hated not knowing anything going on around him. After a few more minutes Wally, carrying two boxes of pizza, said goodbye and headed out through the Zeta-Tube, Kyle following not long after. His guardians had suggested that he stay with them for a few days out of the week and the young clone was adorably into the idea. The rest of us returned to the main living space. We chatted for a while before Robin brought up the list of candidates again.

"Were you looking at a particular age range when you made the list?"

“We were keeping it generally around our age, but did not go as low as yours,” I admitted. “Not that there are many heroes your age out there. I think the oldest we looked at was nineteen and the youngest was fifteen.”

“That’s probably for the best,” Robin agreed with a nod.

M’gann nudged me mentally, her exhaustion coming through clearly. I looked down to see her nodding off, her head on my shoulder.

“*Getting tired?*” I mentally asked, getting a simple nod in return.

“*I need to get to bed.*” She responded, sounding slightly disappointed. “*I wanted to stay up longer but with all that pizza I can feel myself slipping.*”

“*Ah the pizza coma, I-*”

“So you guys are just always connected huh?” Robin asked, both M’gann and I starting slightly and looking at the young hero, who simply shrugged. “It’s not hard to spot once you know what you’re looking for.”

“Y-Yeah, we are connected most of the time now.” M’gann admitted sheepishly. “I know it’s weird but-”

“It is different, but not weird.” Kaldur assured her. “It is no different than me needing more water than you, or me being land sick.”

That had been interesting to learn about. Apparently, while Kaldur was perfectly capable of living on land indefinitely, as long as he drank about twenty five to thirty percent more water than a human, Atlanteans sometimes suffered from something they called land sickness after long stretches on land. Kaldur described it as a sensory issue, some sort of overload due to the lack of water around them. A few days after he had moved in he spent an entire day in the grotto working through it.

“I guess. I just don’t want you guys to be put off by it.” She explained, rubbing her elbow as she sat beside me. I sent her reassuring vibes which she returned as gratitude.

“It really saved us today.” Robin pointed out. “Being able to silently communicate... I don’t think we would have done nearly as well without that.”

“It is something to consider.” Kaldur agreed with a nod. “Perhaps we could give it another chance.”

“You could always prove for yourself that she isn’t listening to your normal thoughts, you know,” I said with a smirk.

"How does that work?" Robin asked.

"Just think embarrassing things." I said with a shrug, smiling as M'gann mentally pouted. "Her blushing is on a hair trigger, and she couldn't stop it to save her own life, even with her ability to change her own color."

"I can't help it," She admitted quietly, a blush forming on her cheeks.

"... I suppose we will keep that in mind," Kaldur said after a short pause. "Perhaps a night to think about it will do Robin and I good."

"Of course," M'gann said with a smile. "I would never force anyone to use it outside of a real emergency, like today."

"I plan on including mikes in our standard load out even if everyone decides they are okay with it," I pointed out. "Maybe we leave connected minds for only when it's needed, like when we need silence or we are worried our radio's have been compromised."

"If we use it every time we need to keep quiet you might as well throw away the radios," Robin said with a grin. "Our whole schtick is that we will be using a lot of stealth tactics."

"That's... a good point," I said, my answer cut in half by a large yawn. "Alright guys. I think it's time for me to hit the hay."

"Me as well," M'gann said, standing up as I did.

"We won't be far behind I believe." Kaldur said with a nod.

A few minutes later I was asleep in my bed, my exhaustion wiping me out before i could even get under the covers.

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The next day, after our morning work out and sparring, the group re-convened in the library, where I used a fancy image scanner to scan and project Batman's gathered information. Wally was noisily eating a bag of chips while the rest of us were focused on the information.

"Alright, before we start we need to decide on a tryout process." I said, leaning against the wall by the projector. "Or if we will even have tryouts. As far as I can tell we can have two basic options. The first would be one at a time, which would avoid any conflicts but would be slow. The second is we invite multiple individuals after doing our initial investigations, then

heroes from that group. It would probably generate some minor conflicts between new members as they would be in direct competition with each other, but it would be much faster. That doesn't seem like a big deal now but later when we are trying to fill entire teams at once the one by one process could end up taking months."

"You are the Base Leader," Kaldur pointed out. "What is your opinion?"

"I'm a firm believer of quality over quantity, and the slow but steady method would ensure that we follow that line of thinking," I said with a frown. "On the other hand the competition between candidates could actually end up revealing some red flags we would otherwise miss."

"I think we should stick with the slow but steady for now." Robin said, leaning back in a cushioned chair. "If we have to change over at some point we can, but we won't need to for a while."

The rest of the team nodded their heads and agreed, so I nodded and pushed off of the wall I was leaning on, stepping closer to the scanner and flipping the first candidate's picture over.

"Alright, with that settled, let's start going through these," I said. "Our first greenlit candidate is a young heroine the papers are calling Ice, which is amazingly creative considering her powers are some sort of cryokinesis."

The image was of a young woman with white hair, her face covered by a mask of ice, sharp and angular with holes for her eyes. Her costume was simple, a blue, skin tight underlayer with several layers of white fabric over that to protect her modesty and accent the blue undersuit, as well as fur lined boots and gloves.

"She is a special case as Batman has already been in contact with her," I explained before pulling up a world map. "Apparently, a year ago there was a string of raids on a local gang in Norway called... Kloakk rotte? I have no idea how to actually pronounce that but apparently it means Sewer Rats. The fight ended in a rather large battle between Ice and an apparent meta-human member of that gang, who the news called Fire."

I pulled up a few images of the aftermath, showing some burnt out buildings as well as some covered in Ice. There were also some images of the two fighting, though they were blurry and hard to decipher. Fire seemed to be a glowing green woman, around the same age as Ice, who fired fire from her hands and could fly.

"Not long after that Ice began operating out of Los Angeles, stopping a few dozen minor crimes as well as a bank robbery," I explained. "Unfortunately for her, well I guess it's fortunately really, Batman was immediately able to use the fact that she moved from Norway to California to find her civilian identity."

“And if he can do it, anyone can.” Kyle pointed out, Robin frowning beside him, nodding in agreement. “Good thing Batman found her first.”

“Exactly. The family is already being moved again, this time with new names. Ice herself has now been seen performing heroics around the country to obscure their move.”

“Did Batman say anything to her about the team?” Wally asked through a mouthful of chips. Robin snagged the bag from him with an eye roll.

“Not according to what he wrote. He did observe that her parents were proud of her heroics, apparently she is following in the footsteps of an older relative, or some sort of ancestor, he wasn't sure.”

“It sounds like she is competent.” Kaldur said. “And Cryokinesis is a potent ability.”

“And more so for her.” I said, smiling as I tapped through some screens and brought up some cell phone footage. “M'gann noticed this while we were compiling the original list. Take a look.”

The cut down clip was of the Norwegian girl summoning a thick wall of ice, which absorbed the impact of a few dozen bullets. As the people she was fighting stopped to reload she waved her hand along the side of the ice, which immediately dissolved, most of it disappearing while some of it turned to water and flowed away, allowing her to blast the criminals with ice, freezing their guns solid and blasting them off of their feet.

“I mean that was pretty decent accuracy?” Wally said, trailing off like it was a question. “I'm not sure what else there is.”

“She melts her ice!” Robin said after a short pause. “I don't think any other cryokinetic we know about can do that!”

“Exactly. Killer Frost has shown the ability to move and shift ice after she summons it, and Icicle junior has shown some ability to gain strength depending on how much ice he creates around himself but as far as I could tell none of them can simply wave their hand and dismiss it.”

“If that ability includes ice not created by herself, she would be able to fight any ice based villain with ease,” Kaldur said as he realized the importance of her ability. “She would make a valuable asset to the team.”

“She has experience and solid powers,” Kyle said. “She looks like a good match.”

“That's not all she looks like,” Wally said, without a hint of shame. “I wouldn't mind having her around more often.”

“Really? That's your response?” I said after a long shocked pause, my frustration with the speedster bubbling over. “What is wrong with you?”

“What, she-”

“Is a person who wouldn't appreciate you drooling over her like a cut of beef.” I finished for him. “It's honestly skeezy as hell, this and how you talk to M'gann. You need to control yourself because it is not a good look. You're young but not young enough to get away with saying stuff like that, especially not in a setting like this.”

Wally looked at Robin and Kaldur for support, only to find them shaking their heads in agreement with Warren.

“Women like when you compliment them!” He insisted, doubling down and turning to M'gann. “Right beautiful?”

“...Yes and no Wally. A compliment about their outfit or a new hairstyle is great, but you... you take it way too far,” She admitted with a frown. “It can make us feel really uncomfortable and awkward. For someone who is just a friend... well you shouldn't say anything that you wouldn't say to your mom...”

Wally's confident shell started to crack as M'gann talked, slowly learning what his “Compliments” had actually been doing.

“But... the forums said...”

“Oh for fuck sake Wally, please tell me you weren't taking advice on how to talk to women from the fucking internet,” I said rubbing my face with my hands.

Wally was silent for a long moment, before looking away. Robin facepalmed almost as hard as I had while Kaldur and Kyle looked slightly confused.

“Okay, that... fucking hell Wally. Do you watch porn and think that's what sex is like too?” I asked sarcastically, stopping when Wally looked at me with wide eyes. “Seriously?! What the fuck Wally?! You need to talk to someone about this, the sooner the better. Your parents, Flash, a psychologist, someone you trust and who you know has your best interests at heart, but a real actual person. Holy fuck, you've been just short of sexually harassing people because a stranger on the internet suggested it!”

Wally was blushing now, unable to make eye contact with anyone. M'gann reached out mentally, pointing out that shaming him wasn't going to help. With a sigh I took a long deep breath before letting it out.

“Wally, I’m sorry if I embarrassed you by bringing this up like this, but I had no idea... No, that’s not the point, the point is if it was actual ignorance and misinformation then it’s not your fault. I question the decision to trust anonymous people on the internet over real people but... yeah. Talk to someone, and soon because you have been grossly misinformed.”

Robin, who a moment ago had been struggling not to laugh now seemed to understand that his friend was actually upset. He reached out and patted his shoulder, the speedster looking over at him, the bird themed hero giving him a supportive nod.

“I...I will talk to Flash. He’s tried to have a talk about this type of stuff before and I brushed him off. I thought I knew everything I needed to know,” He said, now leaning forward in his chair, head in his hands. “God this is so embarrassing.”

“I think we can all agree that this is something we don’t need to spread around.” M’gann said, giving me a look and nudging me mentally. After a moment I nodded.

“All in favor of taking Wally’s secret to our graves, as long as he talks to someone about it?” I asked, everyone’s hands immediately going up. “Looks like it’s unanimous Wally.”

“Thanks guys,” He said after a moment. “Could we... focus back on the candidates? I will talk with Flash when we are done, I promise.”

“Alright, sure,” I said with a nod, turning back to the projection, coughing once and continuing. “Ice seems like a good match to me as well, I’m thinking she could be our first candidate. The second candidate is a-”

“What about Speedy?” Robin asked, his eyebrow raised.

“If he wants to join he can,” I said with a shrug. “But from what his file says, as well as what you’ve told me I don’t think he will.”

“Why is that?” Kaldur asked.

“Because he only seems interested in joining the League,” I explained with a shrug. “Despite that though, he refuses to even talk to anyone from the League. He wants to join but refuses to cooperate.”

“Our friend did seem intent on being recognized as a full member of the League.” Kaldur admitted, looking slightly frustrated.

“Half of the team hasn’t met him yet.” Kyle pointed out. “Why should he get to skip the candidate process?”

“Because he has been our good friend for many years,” Kaldur explained. “I would like to give him a chance.”

“I... I think Kyle is right.” M’gann said. “From how Warren described him... He doesn't seem like a great candidate.”

“He... has been ignoring us as well.” Robin admitted. “I had planned on finding him while he was out on patrol since he isn't responding to phone calls or texts.”

“Is... that out of character?” I asked, a thought starting to form. “Does he get upset like this often? Or hold grudges for this long?”

“Kind of? He gets intense about some things sometimes but... grudges like this are a bit out of character, yeah. Why?”

“Nothing, it's just I'm a bit paranoid about living in a world where people can be brainwashed and mind controlled.” I admitted, mentally reaching out to M’gann to assure her I trusted her. “In my home reality a sudden shift in personality would mean some sort of trauma or potentially an issue with drugs or alcohol. But here...”

“You think he might be being influenced?” Kaldur asked. “That is not an accusation you should make lightly.”

“I would have no idea, you guys are the ones who know him,” I said with a shrug. “The way you describe it makes me suspicious, but again that just might be my own paranoia. Maybe you should ask Green Arrow, Batman or Martian Manhunter what they think.”

“Yeah... I think we will,” Robin answered, sharing a look with his three friends.

“Good. For now, let's focus on going through this list and seeing who we think our primary candidates should be. Batman reduced the list from thirty to fifteen, we should get it down to six or seven before we can vote on who we think we should contact first.”

The group refocused on the list of candidates, going through all of them over the next few hours. In the end we settled for Ice to be our first candidate. If Speedy was interested he would be the second, but barring that they would seek another young heroine, this time a magic user going by the name Misfit, working out of Gotham. She had been seen using an ability to teleport and an early understanding of magic. Her costume was basic at best, a Batman t-shirt, a homemade utility belt, cape and mask, finished off with a pair of jeans. So far she had only been seen stopping minor crimes. Batman recommended that she would make a good candidate, and that getting her out of Gotham would be the best thing for herself and the dangerously unstable political and criminal structure of the city.



Wally, who had been in such a dazed state that he didn't even complain when I brought up Misfits magical nature, was the first one out the door, zipping away and stepping through the Zeta-Tube.