

[David Lance POV]

I keep my eyes trained on Aqualad as we circle each other in the training room. Our steps are heavy and purposeful, echoing off the tiles as we position ourselves for an attack. I know he'll come at me with everything he's got, that was the purpose of this, and I'm ready. Taking a step forward, he lashes out with a stream of water, but I easily duck under it and come up behind him. Reforming the water he had just used, he tried to spin around and hit me with a water whip, but by the time he turned, I'm already gone.

"Where-" Aqualad muttered under his breath, cutting his words short as I landed a kick on the back of his head, pushing him to the ground. Grunting in pain, he stands up almost immediately. "I have underestimated your speed."

I smiled. It wasn't so much he had underestimated my speed. It was more like he had overestimated his ability to cover for his blind spots because that's what happened just now; I moved under his blind spot, giving the impression I was moving faster than expected.

"I won't repeat that mistake," Aqualad said, getting back into a fighting stance.

Before late, Aqualad moves his hands forward as a pair of water beams come at me fast. Darting forward, I easily weave through the beams, closing the distance between us, seeing me in front of him, Aqualad forms a water hammer and tries to strike me. However, I parry the attack with ease, headbutting the Atlantean a few steps back.

Recovering quickly, he takes two steps forward before whirling around, lashing in every direction with a water whip in an attempt to disorient me. Seeing his attack come, I calmly jumped over the attack, hurling in the process a few stunning knives at him.

The knives having fulfilling their purpose, blind Aqualad momentarily giving all the time I needed to force this battle into a close-quarters stage, or so I thought because as I neared the Atlantean, thinking he had been blind, he turned in my direction, firing a water beam.

He had tricked me into a false sense of security. I'm so proud.

Forcing my body down, I duck under his attack in just a sliver of time before slamming my fist into his stomach. He doubles over in pain, and I take the opportunity to sweep his legs out from under him. He hits the ground hard.

"I give up," Aqualad said, breathing heavily.

Smiling, I reach for his hand and help him up. ~You did well today. Especially that last attack.~

"I thought if I lowered my guard on purpose after one of your attacks, that you would lower yours," Aqualad replied with a faint smile across his face.

I nodded. It was a good strategy, and it almost worked. The only reason his plan hadn't worked was the timing behind his execution. ~It would've worked if you had waited a bit more before making your move. You took your chance too quickly, allowing me time to react properly; I only managed to dodge because I had time to understand what happened. Next time, don't give me time to understand what happened.~

"I will," Aqualad said with a nod.

"You both did great!" M'gann cheered as she walked into the training circle with a big smile on her face.

~Thanks,~ I smiled, giving Raven, who was in the back of the room levitating, a playful wink, in turn making her roll her eyes at me.

Ah, I love you too, my adorable emo.

"Come on, let's get some lunch," M'gann beamed, linking her arm through mine without much of a warning.

Well, I'm not hungry. But I am not against some food. So, why not?

"I could go for a few burgers," Superboy said, walking behind us as we made our way to the common area.

"So, who will pick the food up this time?" Kid Flash asked, joining us.

"You know who," Raven replied, giving the speedster a look.

"Again?" Kid Flash asked with an exaggerated groan. "Why does it always have to be me?" He muttered under his breath.

"You're the fastest," M'gann giggled, her grip on my arm tightening a little as we walked.

I wonder what's up with her and my arm today.

"But she can make portals!" Kid Flash exclaimed, gesturing towards Raven in an overly dramatic manner.

"I can," Raven replied with a calm expression that said, I don't give a fuck, heck my fucks don't give a fuck about fuck, hell, I have an empty farm of fucks, so deal with it. "But that doesn't mean I want to go through the hassle."

"Dude, you know the deal. Democracy and all," Robin said with a shrug as he walked beside Kid Flash.

"Ugh, fine," Kid Flash said with an exaggerated sigh as he came to a stop in front of us. "So, what will you guys want?"

"Fifteen bacon cheeseburgers, lettuce and tomato on all of them, ten sodas, and twelve large fries," Superboy said without hesitation. "No sauce on the burgers."

"I'll have a salad and two cokes," Raven said, her voice deadpan as always.

"Ooh, can I have some sushi?" M'gann asked, her grip on my arm loosening a little as she bounced up and down in place. "Please?" She begged, giving me puppy dog eyes.

Not sure why she had to beg, considering we literally have an infinite amount of money to spend. ~Sure,~ I smiled, ruffling her hair a bit.

"Why are you begging him? I'm the one that has to run to a sushi restaurant!" Kid Flash complained under his breath.

"You're the best! I have wanted to try sushi since I came to earth, but the opportunity never presented itself," M'gann beamed at me before turning to Aqualad with a look of terrified shock on her face.

"No, it is not an insult to eat fish for me, or any other Atlantian for that matter," Aqualad replied immediately, almost as if reading her mind. "I guess to some vegans in Atlantis, it would, but that's neither here nor there."

"Wow, you answered that fast and the best part? She didn't even have to ask the question," Robin commented with a smile on his face.

"I've... been asked that a lot," Aqualad replied as a matter of fact. "I would like four bacon cheeseburgers with onions, lettuce, and mustard. No drinks; I will get some water from the kitchen."

~I would like ten hotdogs, with everything, extra onions on all of them. And no drinks as well; I will get water or a soda from the kitchen,~ I said, giving Kid Flash an eye smile as he wrote everyone's order on a notepad.

"Unlike the rest of the team, save for Raven, I have one stomach only, so... a cheeseburger, with everything, large fries, and a coke," Robin said, giving Kid Flash a small grin.

"Alright, that will take me five minutes if I got to the best place for each item," Kid Flash hummed. "I will place the orders through my phone. That way, I will only have to pick them up one by one."

Twenty minutes later, after Kid Flash had left to pick up the orders, Artemis, Batman, and Green Arrow arrived, with Green Arrow presenting Artemis as his new protege and Batman introducing her as the newest member of the team.

I had heard of her and her debut in Gotham City. Yet, I wasn't aware Green Arrow had contacted her; I mean, I knew Batman had because he was Batman, a very territorial hero, but not that Oliver had reached out to her.

I guess I had been really disconnected from Star City and everything within.

I sighed, giving Green Arrow a look, who in turn simply smiled.

"The WALLMAN is here with some food!" Almost as if on cue, Kid Flash arrived with the food through the Zeta Tube.

"Wallman, huh? What exactly are your powers? Good customer service?" Artemis said with a playful grin.

Ha! I like this girl.

"I do too," Raven muttered, a faint smile coming across her face for the faintest of moments.

"So... who's this?" Kid Flash asked, gesturing at Artemis in clear confusion.

"Artemis, your new teammate," Artemis replied with confidence.

"Kid Flash never heard of you," Kid Flash replied just in kind, making Artemis frown.

"Ahm, she's my new protege," Green Arrow chimed in, giving the team an awkward smile.

"Wh-what happened to the old one?" Kid Flash asked, frowning at Green Arrow.

[Recognized. Speedy B-0-7]

"Well, for starters, he doesn't go by Speedy anymore. Call me Red Arrow."

"Roy... you look," Green Arrow said, taking a step forward as Batman and I shared a knowing look.

"Replaceable," Red Arrow replied in a cold tone.

Buddy, you have no idea how true that is.

"Why are you even mad? You didn't want to be anyone's protege," Raven interjected, giving Red Arrow a plain look. "Oh, I see; that's your power, isn't it? Hating everything."

"Ha!" Artemis snorted under her breath.

"Can you even use that bow?" Red Arrow scoffed, giving Artemis a condescending look.

"Yes, I can. Want to play moving target?" Artemis replied with a smirk, taking a step forward.

"Don't pay attention to... whoever her name is," Kid Flash said, giving Red Arrow a smile.

"She's my niece," Green Arrow chimed in as if that would ease tensions.

I smiled, giving him a look that said. Is she now?

Green Arrow smiled tightly.

"There's no need for hostilities; she's not your replacement. We have always wanted you on the team," Aqualad began as he walked toward Red Arrow. "We have no quota on archers."

"And if we did, you know who we'd picked," Kid Flash said, giving Red Arrow a smile.

"Whatever DoorDash, I'm here to stay," Artemis shot back, rolling her eyes as she walked closer to the rest of the team.

Hahaha! DoorDash! Oh, God. She's a riot.

"I didn't come here to join your little clubhouse. I came here for a reason, a reason named Dr. Serling Roquette," Red Arrow replied, turning to look at Batman.

"Nanorobotics genius and claytronics expert at Royal University in Star City. Vanished two weeks ago," Robin said, using his wrist computer to get info on the Dr.

"Abducted two weeks ago by the League of Shadows. I already rescued her, of course. Only one problem, the Shadows had already coerced her into creating a weapon. Doc calls it The Fog, comprised of millions of microscopic robots," Red Arrow continued, using the holographic display of the cave to show what he had about this. "Nanotech infiltrators. Capable of disintegrating anything in their path. Concrete, steel, flesh, bone. But its true purpose isn't mere destruction. It's theft. The infiltrators eat and store raw data from any computer system and deliver the stolen intel to the Shadows, providing them access to weapons, strategic defense, cutting-edge science, and tech."

"Perfect for extortion, manipulation, power broking," Artemis hummed, index finger pressed upon her lips. "Yup, sounds like the shadows."

Red Arrow said nothing, turning to Batman once again. "The Shadows are after her. For the time being, she's safe. I stashed her at the high school's computer lab, so from here forward, it is your responsibility to stop the shadows from getting her."

"Will you be joining us on this mission?" Kid Flash asked, sounding hopeful.

"No. I'm done here," Red Arrow replied, walking out of the room into one of the zeta tubes, leaving the base.

"Charming," Artemis said, breaking the silence after he had left.