

Silently, we spread out along the treeline, using M'gann to stay in contact as we all found separate to hide. Soon, we were all tucked in behind trees, underbrush, or, in Artemis's case, a tree branch twenty feet off the ground. Once we were in position, spread out to keep our presence as subtle as possible, we started taking note of everything we could see.

*"Definitely League of Shadows," Snapshot said after only a minute or so. "I recognize their style and can see a few people from their wanted lists."*

With her sister being an active member until just recently, her attempted recruitment, and the rest of her family's involvement, Artemis was by far our expert on the League of Shadows. It helped that she had a firm dislike of them in particular, for obvious reasons, and went out of her way to learn as much as she could about them.

*"Anyone we wouldn't be able to handle?"* I asked.

*"Not that I- No, wait, I see Deathstroke along the second level of the pyramid,"* She responded, cutting herself off halfway through her sentence. *"And... that's Lady Shiva. We... could probably take them, but only if they were our sole focus."*

I scanned the pyramid before finally finding the two criminals. True to Snapshot's description, they were on the second level, standing on the platform on the eastern corner, which was just barely visible from our position. They were both looking away from us, seeming to watch over their soldiers.

*"Dammit,"* I grumbled through the link. *"Let's hope Superboy and Wally get here quickly. M'gann, how many people can you feel?"*

*"There are at least thirty people in my range,"* She responded. *"Maybe as much as forty. I don't want to push for a tighter feel in case one of them is sensitive or has training."*

*"Most of them will have at least some mental training,"* Artemis responded. *"even if it's just calm mind and disciplined thoughts to detect intrusions."*

*"It looks like a mix of soldiers and people armed with melee weapons,"* Tula said. *"Can we handle that many people?"*

*"If we broke into two groups, one group could attack from one side. They take down as many as they can until everyone's attention shifts to them,"* I suggested, really just spitballing a plan of attack in case we needed to. I still intended to stay hidden until backup arrived. *"Then they retreat, and the second side attacks and ambushes everyone as they react to the first group."*

*"... It could maybe work, but Deathstroke and Lady Shiva will notice only half the team is attacking," Snapshot responded. "There's no way they both aren't briefed on us, especially after we spent so much time securing chaos artifacts."*

*"We-"*

Before I could finish my thought, there was a loud wave of compressive noise, and suddenly Klarion was standing at the top of the pyramid with Mauser by his side. Both Lady Shiva turned to look up. Klarion shouted down at them, but from this distance, even my enhanced hearing couldn't pick up what they were saying beyond wordless echoes.

*"I've got a bad feeling about this..."* Tora said over our mental link, and I nodded in agreement, even if she couldn't see.

Whatever the Chaos Lord was shouting was important because the entire clearing immediately buzzed with activity. Deathstroke and Lady Shiva both started giving orders, pointing, and talking to their soldiers and ninjas, which was really the only way to describe the sword-wielding minions. The distance made it hard to see exactly what they were doing, but they were clearly being directed precisely. Crates were being moved from a few locations, and their contents unloaded all over the clearing. It wasn't until one of those crates was brought close to our side of the clearing that we could see what it was.

Two soldiers, with their rifles slung around their backs, carried a black cargo crate about twenty feet from us. After putting it down, one of them pulled something from his hip, some sort of spotting device that he looked through, turning to the pyramid. While adjusting his position, either soldier began to unpack the crate, first pulling out a two-foot chunk of square black stone. He carried it to where the first soldier pointed, placing it down gently. He then pulled out some sort of small statue, a raven of some sort, onto the stone.

*"I think... they are setting up the ritual,"* Tula said across the team's link. *"But... it's massive. I've never seen a ritual this large before. If it's settled on the pyramid... The outer circle will be gigantic."*

*"That means this just got even more complicated,"* I said, shaking my head. *"We can't afford to wait. We need to stop them from activating the ritual at all. We will enter with stealth. Everyone try to take down as many artifacts as possible before being spotted. Best case scenario, throw them into the woods. Worst case, just knock them off their pedestals. Be careful, don't touch the artifact directly, and-"*

My warning was cut off by a golden yellow light being cast over the entire clearing. A massive, golden glowing ankh had appeared directly over the Pyramid, casting an impressive amount of light. After a moment, Dr. Fate floated through it, dressed in his usual gold and blue uniform, his cape fluttering around him. His eyes were brightly shining yellow, and his hands were outstretched.

The glowing ankh behind him shifted, and he moved around as if swinging it over his shoulder, the massive magical symbol shooting out a blast of energy that was aimed at plunging into the pyramid.

Before the blast could reach the ancient stone structure, however, Klarion appeared in the air, intercepting the attack and redirecting it into the jungle, where it took down a half dozen trees and slammed into the ground, exploding with enough force to shake the clearing.

My eyes snapped back up to the pyramid to see Klarion attacking Dr. Fate directly, hurling blasts of black and red chaos energy at him, already in his aggressive, chaos-steeped form. The Lord of Order fired back, their attacks meeting in the air and exploding. They seemed evenly matched at this point, which made it concerning when Mauser's hands glowed with a deep green magic circle, launching some sort of liquid glowing spray of energy at the Lord of Order.

*"That explains why they were suddenly rushing."* I guessed, shaking my head and focusing downward, knowing there was nothing we could do to hell without taking down the League of Shadows support first. *"Doesn't matter, just means we have a distraction now. It's the same plan as before. Take down goons as you go and focus on the artifacts. Move!"*

All together, we burst from hiding, charging into the clearing. I was first to reach one of the black stone platforms, but I didn't slow down. Instead, I stomped as I ran, launching the whole platform, including the chunk of carved jade resting on it, back to the forest on a stone pillar as wide as me. I spun on the anchor of my stomp, dragging my feet along the ground to hurl two stones at the nearest League of Shadows goon, knocking them off their feet with a meaty impact. I immediately kept moving, my attention focused on the second stone platform, a good twenty feet away.

I covered the distance quickly, hopping off an earthen wave to leap forward to roll behind a large gold and stone statue. Since it was way too big to throw, I made a tearing motion and opened a twenty-foot pit in the ground, kicking the artifact down into it and sealing it closed.

As I stood back up straight, I could see M'gann hurling what appeared to be her fourth artifact into the woods, using the added range of her telekinesis to snag a bunch as she flew silently across the clearing. Artemis used some sort of grappling arrow to drag her second artifact into the jungle. Tora and Beatriz were stuck lugging both of theirs the hard way, as Beatriz couldn't fly while staying quiet.

"Hey!" I heard someone shout, and I whirled around, hurling a chunk of stone at the goon who spotted me, sending him tumbling along the ground.

Unfortunately, the damage was done, and shouts started to ring out around the Pyramid and ruins. The League of Shadows goons and soldiers turned away from the still ongoing fight

above the pyramid to see that we were already screwing up the ritual. I pulled my shield off my pack, extending it down to my legs and forming it into a tower shield, just in time to deflect gunfire from the closest guards.

*"Gigs up, focus on taking down the goons before the big guns come down to join us,"* I mentally said. *"Take out more artifacts if you can, but focus on staying alive!"*

Even as I explained the new plan, I was already moving, running full tilt with my shield up, slamming into a pair of soldiers, knocking them off their feet and back a few yards. I kicked up my foot, lashing out at one of the ninjas, sending a chunk of stone firing at them. They blocked it with their sword, only for it to be torn from their grip and a second stone to slap them in the chest.

All around me, I could hear my team clashing with the League minions, even as I flicked a glowing blue crystal off its pedestal, using my earthbending to hurl the pedestal itself at a trio of Shadow soldiers.

A quick look showed M'gann tearing through a large group, using several chunks of the ruins to block their bullets and pummel them to the ground. Fire and Ice used their powers to quickly blast anyone targeting them, while Snapshot followed behind and covered them from longer-range threats.

After confirming the team was all right, I focused on my own problems, working my way through even more Shadow members. A trio of swordsmen charged me, approaching me with their weapons ready to slash at me. I quickly shrunk my shield back to its smaller form, using it to block the closest fighter's opening strike, before crumpling him around my knee. I grabbed his sword, flicking it out and shaping it into a more familiar European-style blade before leaping forward to catch the next two soldiers off guard.

Between my bending and superior strength, I was able to easily handle the surprised fighters. A rapid punch broke one's nose, before I blocked a stab from the second one. I bent his blade around mine, slamming his foot into the earth and sealing it there before headbutting the first one. I slammed my foot into the second knee, and the spartan kicked the last one, both of them going down, clutching at their broken and damaged bodies.

*"Warren, lookout!"*

I got a snap image of Deathstroke about to stab me in the kidney from behind, which was just enough warning to spin away. I threw my borrowed blade at him, but he easily ducked sideways, avoiding the modified blade. I thrust my hand out, attempting to drive him backward to give me some breathing room, only to find that there wasn't a bit of metal on him.

"Couldn't make it easy, could I?" He said, settling into a fighting stance.

I couldn't quite make out his expression, with only his eye visible through his mask, but his voice sounded smug. As I jumped back, using a chunk of stone to push me, I could see that most of the gear he usually had was gone, with only two extra knives strapped to his chest.

"Carbon fiber knives, nothing for you to push me around with," He said confidently, stepping closer. "Time for a little payback. I don't like being forced to give up on a mission."

He rushed me with no warning, coming in low and slashing at my stomach. He was clearly enhanced, moving faster than any average human could. Thankfully, the super soldier serum seemed superior to whatever he had received, but it was still more than enough to pose a challenge.

I used my bending to jump up and over the attacks, launching myself backward. I grabbed my shield and tore it in half, covering both my hands and upper arms. Even as I moved back and shifted my meteor metal, he kept pushing forward, slashing and stabbing. I managed to block most of it, and my armor stopped some more, but a few slices and a single stab got through, cutting my legs and punching into my shoulder.

I jumped back again, trying to keep his stab from punching too deep, and only half succeeded, keeping him from cutting anything important. The wound still burned though, and I cursed as I lashed out in response, slamming my feet down and yanking up chunks of stone, spinning and hurling them at him. The first three he dodged, but the fourth managed to catch him in the side, forcing him to turn and absorb the impact, putting him on his back foot.

I immediately pressed the opening, blocking a defensive cut from one of his fancy knives. I slammed a metal fist into his chest, cracking some sort of impact plate in his armor and breaking a rib or two behind it. Unfortunately, the experienced assassin punished me for it, slashing down with his second blade. It caught the side of my helmet and dug into my skin, slicing my cheek and down my jaw.

We both jumped back, but I wasn't done. Ignoring the sharp pain of my wounds, I immediately launched myself forward the second my feet hit the ground, pulling up a long pillar of stone to fling myself at the assassin. He seemed surprised I was attacking so aggressively but almost instantly recovered.

Unfortunately for him, with his entire focus on my new attack, he failed to notice the massive chunk of moss-covered stone that M'gann slapped him with, lifting him completely off his feet. He flew several yards across the clearing before slamming into a stone wall, which collapsed around him in a cloud of dust.

*"Thanks for the help,"* I said as my Martian girlfriend landed before me.

*"How bad is it?"* She asked, reaching out to my face but stopping herself from touching the wound.

*"It's fine,"* I assured her, pulling a quick sealing bandage from my utility belt and pressing it against my face, the built-in disinfectant stinging as it sealed. *"Probably won't even scar. Now come on, let's take down the rest-"*

A massive explosion echoed across the clearing, coming from up on top of the pyramid. We both looked up just in time to see Dr. Fate struggling to recover from an explosion. Klarion looked a little rough, too, but not nearly as bad as Nabu, whose uniform was cut in several places, blood staining through the blue. I had time to take one step forward before Mauser appeared behind him and stabbed him with a wicked-looking curved knife. The Lord of Order's uniform faded completely, and he fell from the sky, letting Mauser reach out and snag the helmet off the falling corpse.