

[David Lance POV]

Seeing Wioska approach me, I looked at her. Her steps echoing in the cave, one after the other.

"Good job," Wioska praised with a slow clap. "You passed that little challenge with flying colors."

I still didn't know exactly what she had tried to test me for, but based on the nature of the test, perhaps it was ingenuity?

Wioska smiled at my clear look of uncertainty. "If you're still wondering what I was trying to teach you with this menial challenge, at least compared to the ones that came before this one. Allow me to explain... in your life, you will face challenges that will be impossible to take head-on, impossible to beat by simple prowess on the battlefield. In short, there are some fights that are simply not worth fighting."

I stared at her with a frown. "So, the purpose of this task was to show me that sometimes it is best to find other paths?"

Wioska nodded, pausing for a moment before continuing. "Yes, there will be times when the path you're currently on is not the correct one, and when that happens, you will need to find another way around your problems. You must always

remember, strength, as alluring as it is, it's not all there is. The one you know as Batman is a great example of what a weak creature can accomplish without any power."

Batman.

I gritted my teeth, trying to push down the anger that bubbled up at the mention of that name.

One Batman I considered a friend, the other I considered my enemy, one was to blame for Dinah's death, yet the other was my mentor.

Wioska glanced at me, her eyes narrowed. "You don't seem too pleased at the mention of him."

I looked at her in anger; my fists clenched so hard I was bleeding. "That's because I'm not," I replied darkly.

Wioska continued to stare at me for a few moments before finally breaking the silence. "You hate him, yet you don't hate him. Your Chi swirls in a vibrant color of chaos full of conflicting emotions."

"What's next?" I asked, my voice laced with venom.

Wioska chuckled, her eyes beaming with interest. "Interesting. I can't believe I didn't notice this before."

"What?" I asked, my brow furrowed in confusion.

"You're not from here," Wioska replied, her voice full of awe.
"From this universe."

I paused as the words left her mouth, my mind racing in confusion and shock, trying to come up with a way to answer that comment, trying to find the right words to reply. However, after a moment, I decided to simply accept her discovery with a straight answer.

"How did you figure it out?" I asked.

"You're not the first multiversal traveler I have met," Wioska replied, her voice full of mysterious amusement. "When you live for as long as I have, even the unusual becomes ordinary."

I suppose that makes sense.

If Klarion sent me here, it was only fair to assume other entities of the same caliber or higher could've done the same to other beings.

Klarion wasn't the strongest thing out there, not by a long shot, meaning this feat of his wasn't much in the great scheme of things.

"Do you know how to travel between universes?" I asked, hoping she knew how to leave this accursed universe.

More than anything, I didn't want to remain here. Once my mission was done, once Superman paid for his crimes at my hands, I wanted to leave.

Wioska's amusement faded, her face contorting in a thoughtful frown. "I'm afraid I don't. As powerful as I am, I lack the necessary knowledge to breach other universes."

My heart sank at her words, the hope that had bubbled up inside me fading away as quickly as it came.

"However," Wioska continued, her voice gaining a dark edge. "I'm not the strongest being, you know. Right?"

I paused, confused by her words. "What do you mean?"

"Don't play dumb with me, brat. I know you know of another who is far more powerful than I," Wioska replied, her voice dripping with venom. "One who could show you the way out."

Death.

She was talking about Death.

"You knew?" I asked, my voice laced with disbelief.

Wioska nodded, her face contorting in a smile. "Of course. Sure, I have never personally met this entity, but I have felt its presence enough to know for certain that you came into contact with it."

Considering how old New Gods can be, and Wioska being one of the oldest, it made sense what she was saying. Her life before retirement was one of war and carnage, meaning more than not, she was surrounded by those who had fallen, be it by her hands or the hands of those she trained.

Knowing that it didn't sound far-fetched to think she at one point had felt Death close to her, the embodiment of Death.

"I see your point, Wioska. And yes, I have met with the entity you refer of, at least in a manner of speaking. However, I have no way to contact said entity," I replied. Sure, in an ideal world, calling Death would probably solve my problems. However, this was one of those situations that were easier said than done.

I didn't even know if calling Death was possible.

Or if she would help.

After all, she had already helped me more than enough.

Wioska's smile widened, her eyes gleaming with amusement. "You could always die."

I looked at her, unamused by her words. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me," Wioska replied, her voice dripping with mirth. "If you die, you'll meet Death once again. It's the simplest way to contact the one who governs the realm of death."

"I won't humor your games any longer, Wioska. I have no intention of dying," I replied, my voice laced with disgust and anger as my ring glowed brightly. "Cease this nonsense at once."

Wioska's amusement faded, her face contorting in a dark scowl. "And if don't?"

I looked at her, my face betraying no emotion. "I know you are stronger than me. Be that as it may, I won't dance to your amusement."

Wioska's scowl deepened before she immediately started chuckling. "What a wonderful development. A few days ago, you would've jumped at me, trying to kill me. Now, you keep your head cold even through anger. Your change is admirable."

"Flattery," I replied, looking at her with a frown. "Should I be afraid of what remains of our training?"

Wioska's chuckles slowly faded as she shook her head before replying. "Not at all. But then again, who knows what I have in store for you, right?"

I looked at her, not bothering to hide the impatience in my voice as my ring spoke. "Yes, well. I suppose we'll find out soon enough."

Wioska nodded. "Now come, time is running short, and using it in futile conversations is not the wisest course of action."

I nodded before following her as she turned around and started walking away.