

Toxic

Von CP

Kapitel 1:

It was a trap. Of course it was a trap and they all knew it.

But weren't they heroes? Wasn't it their job to walk into traps, beat the bad boys and save the day?

So when the Young Justice team ran through the dark corridors of a secret laboratory somewhere in Gotham city they understood the risk. Well as far as a group of underage teenager was able to.

"Which way?" Kaldur asked the youngest member of the team.

Robin took a short look on his holographic computer and shrugged nonchalant.

A sigh escaped Aqualad and he felt the urge grow to bang his palm against his forehead. Whatever, there wasn't that many choices anyway...

"Split up!" he ordered. "Robin, Kid Flash, Superboy you take the left way. The rest comes with me."

The team nodded and the Atlantean watched his friends vanish into the opposite direction.

"Hurry up~~~" he heard an energetic KF shout from the distance. He could literally picture Wally running circles around the other boys by now. A gentle smile found its way on Kaldurs face at the thought. Keep your head in the game, he reminded himself, before he continued towards their target.

The mission was easy. At least it was supposed to be. Four heavily armed gangster behind every corner. Three genius Professors held hostage. Two already disarmed time bombs. And one Clown. It shouldn't be a problem.

As they reached the end of the hallway Kaldur gave the signal. Artemis took an arrow out, ready to shoot and Megan started to form an invisible, telekinetic shield around them. Just in case.

"Lets go!"

When Aqualad kicked the door in, his water blades were already resting in his hands. He quickly scanned his surrounding.

It looked more like the inside of a warehouse or a storeroom than a part of a laboratory. Most likely not used for scientific purpose. The room was way bigger than expected. Good that would gave them enough space to attack and doge. It was filled with huge crates and barrels. Even better they could use them as cover. Across the door were two henchmen busy carrying one of the bigger boxes, three others were just standing around with their machine guns, apparently doing nothing in particular and the last one put some kind of test tubes into a metal briefcase. So far nothing special.

Thought, he didn't know if their enemy's were surprised to see them or not, cause each face was plastered with a creepy clown mask.

Deadly silence filled the room, when the thugs paused in their movements. The tension of the upcoming battle let the air crackle.

So much for the confirmation of world wide gangster-movie cliches. Guess they had to maintain a certain reputation after all.

Kaldur stepped forward ready to use the small advance of surprise that was still left.

PFFFFART

Another silence filled the room. The awkward one.

The young Atlantean thanked mentally all of his gods that neither KF nor Robin were here. And in a corner of his head he thought, that this was really lame.

Aqualad lifted his foot from the whoopee cushion, he stepped on a second ago, before he finally realized what was going on.

"Get down!" He yelled, pushing both girls into the ground.

BOOM

While the heat of the explosion washed over them the team leader tried to protect his friends with his body as much as possible from the burning flames. He knew that Artemis couldn't handle such an attack directly and that the only weakness of a Martian was fire. Somewhere between these thoughts he managed to put a water shield up.

Once it was over a rough cough escaped from Artemis. Kaldur rolled to his side allowing the archer and the Martian girl more space to breathe.

"You gotta be kidding me!" Artemis said in disbelieve as she slowly got back on her feed, holding her still dizzy head.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

That was the first time Aqualad heard his laugh.

„My, my, guys... Look who wants to play with good, old uncle J?" A cheerful voice echoed towards them, as the dark Clown separated himself from the shadow's, followed by Harley Quinn on one side, his little hyenas on the other and a bunch of second rated henchmen behind him.

White face-paint smeared over his visage, framed by green oily hair. A M16 hung causal over the purple suit he was wearing and the never fading smile on his face was painted in red.

They stood face to face with the Joker, an experience Kaldur rather did not want to make twice. Not in this lifetime.

"Joker." He hissed.

"And here I was hoping Batman would personally show up to our little play-date! Oh, cruel fate! I thought he loved me the most~!"

Joker dramatically threw his head back and placed the back of his hand on his forehead.

"Well, I really should ask him for the number of the agency he gets his sidekicks from...Hahaha"

"We are not sidekicks!" Artemis proclaimed more out of reflex than anything else.

"Oh, of curse not, Dear, of curse not~... I bet Robby's little come-along-together will still be fun, don't worry! So, how do I get a club card?"

When nobody was responding his mode switched from weird to dangerous. His eyes became cruel.

"Get them guys!"

The hyenas smashed immediately forward, obeying blindly the command of their master. The fight was on.

Artemis shoot some explosive arrows in their direction. The huge animals could not been taken lightly as they quickly dodged each of them. Well at least that got their attention, the blond archer thought, while she looked at the now angry growling beasts in front of her.

"Leave them to me!"

Kaldur raised an questioning eyebrow. A cocky smile graced Artemis face.

„What? I am more of a cat person.“

Aqualad hadn't time to question, how this comment was in any way relevant, instead he decided to avoid a razor sharp joker card that was flung at his head, while Megan stopped the other three in midair.

"Hihihi..." Harley giggled mischievous, like a kid that was caught with one hand in a cookie jar.

"I wanna dissect the frog girl! Can I, can I?"

Without waiting for an answer she throw more joker cards at the Alien girl.

"Your welcome to try." Megan replied, blocking the attack as easily as before.

Joker lifted his gun to use the momentary distraction, Harley had created, ready to fire, when Kaldur stormed between them. He kicked the deadly weapon out of his hand and the clattered sound from cold steel hitting the ground was way to loud for his taste.

"Looks like you gonna play with me."

Batman's arch enemy scowled at the Atlantean for a moment.

Instantly the hair on Kaldur's neck stood up under the pressure of the intense gaze, as the madman's anger turned into annoyance.

"Didn't you have a dolphin to save?" The clown teased.

Okay, that was it! That was Kaldur's once-in-a-lifetime chance! With this answer he could give the Joker the ultimate verbal beating he deserved. It would crush him from the inside, destroy his eternal soul and would make sure the crazy clown would never forget the Atlantean again. Come on Kaldur'ahm, you can do it. Think of something smart! Think...anything...*think*think*think* Ok... just say something!

"Huh? No witty comeback on that? How disappointing."

"Whatever..."

Damn it!

Kaldur lunged for a punch, but missed. The Joker was fast and had excellent reflexes, what made it difficult to aim. His erratic movements didn't help either. It made it even harder to predict the clown's next action.

"So what did they call you?" Joker asked while doing a back flip to dodge another of Aqualad's kicks.

"Oh, oh,no! Don't tell me! Let me guess~! Its Water Boy, isn't it?"

This time Aqualads fist found it's target.

"Fish Boy?"

Another blow into his stomach made the Joker stumbled back. Still smiling.

Did he let him hit him on purpose?

"Gill Head?"

Kaldur aimed for his face. Hard.

Was that a joke to him? He didn't understood.

"No, wait! The living flounder!"

Joker said, after spitting some blood out. He didn't seemed bothered by it at all.

Was he enjoying the pain?

"How about Arielle? Hahaha"

With a final strike, the Atlantean slammed his opponent into the next wall. The clowns head crashed against it and little bricks from the impacted covered his suit.

"It's Aqualad and its over. You lost Joker." he said pressing the psychopath with his hands against the cold stone, with no chance to escape.

"Oh, but the fun just begins! Should I tell you a secret Fish Boy?"

The clown prince of crime leaned closer. Eyes filled with madness, nearly beyond the point of hypnotizing. His sweaty face almost touched Kaldurs and his bloody lips pressed against his ear made him shiver in disgust.

"You hit like a little girl." he whispered and started to giggle like...well, like crazy.

"Your insane!"

"Depends on how you look at it. I would call it super sane hahaha~"

A new mental link was formed, as Kaldur connected this statement to the habit of creating weird new words, by a certain team member... The joker was indeed evil! Corrupting the innocence mind of a young boy.

The trickster of doom longed into his right pocket, pulled smoothly a remote control out and pressed the big, round button on it, before Aqualad could even blink.

"Hehehehe..."

Nothing happened.

"Huh?"

Joker shook the innocent device angrily and pressed again, this time stronger.

"If your talking about your little bombs, we already defused them..."

The serial killer pouted.

"... Party popper..." He grumbled, throwing the useless toy away.

Than he reached in his left pocket, pulling out another remote with an evil smiley-face in the middle.

"Nah~, Never mind!"

A truly sinister laugh escaped him as he pressed it.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

"What did you do Joker?" Aqualad asked, when once again nothing seemed to happen.

"Nah, nah, where is the fun in telling you that?" Giggled the clown evilly while the crazy smile still remained on his face.

Kaldur felt his anger rise. He didn't had much patient left for the psychopath and flexed his muscles more than necessary. Under the increasing pressure the Joker squirmed slightly.

„Easy here, big guy. We don't wanna do something you regret later, won't ya?" The clown said, forcing another laugh out, but choked a little when he couldn't get enough air trough his windpipe anymore.

Clam down Kaldur, you can't give into that kind of guy. He took a deep breath. Don't lose focus.

He must be careful not to underestimate the mad man. Batman had warned him that this would end most certainly deadly. Still the Joker was no match for him in a direct confrontation and wouldn't stand a chance in a hand to hand fight. There was no way the clown would get out of this. All he had to do was tie him up and wait for the police to bring him back to Arkham where he belonged.

During the Jokers useless attempt to wiggle himself out of Kaldurs hold, he noticed a white hand sneaking upwards. The Atlantean assumed to loose his grip...

He was wrong. Dead wrong.

Which was not just proven by the squeezing sound that came from the jokers stupid flower bouquet a second later, but also by the incredible pain he felt right now.

Damn it! Just damn it! It was so frustrating, the clown had pulled another trick out of his hat and he fell for it again like some rookie.

As soon as the liquid touched Aqualad he screamed in agony. His eyes burned like hell from the acid. Blinded by pain he tumbled backwards, hands crouched over his face trying to peel the bare skin with his fingernails.

„I would say its just water, but well~ it isn't."

By the time Kaldurs world got black tables had turned jet again and not in a good way. Aqualad used all his strength to concentrate on his hearing, which was not easy with the Jokers laugh coming apparently from everywhere. But it wasn't as bad as Kaldur first feared, thanks to his dense atlantean skin. The problem were his sensitive eyes. It would take some time for them to recover. In the moment the only thing he could do was keep his enemy talking. That wouldn't be too hard. After all there was a well known phenomenon which most of the villains had in common. They love to give a long speech about their diabolic plans instead of finishing his opponent off. He'd just hoped that this would count for the Joker too.

„You know what the problem is with you youngster?" Aqualad heard the raspy voice saying, still not able to figure out where the joker was hiding. „You taking everything waaaaaay to serious! But sometimes you just have to step aside and go with the - "

"AQUALAD!" A scream echoed from the other side of the room.

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It didn't looked that good for the team, Artemis thought while she shot her last arrows at the never ending row of thugs in front of her.

Sure she had managed to took out Jokers little pets and Megan handled Harleys card games without breaking into a sweat. It then did got a little harder once the cards started to explode, but the Martian girl was tough... well, till the point she realized she was surrounded by flames from the explosives. After that it all went down hill. Harley had an easy game and was about to gave Megan the final blow with a freaking bazooka she pulled out of nowhere.

Where the hell did she got that thing anyway? (eBay?)

Of course Artemis stepped in to help her currently unconscious friend.

Now she was confronted with the crazy Harlequin and not to mention a howl bunch of henchman. Anytime she defeated one of them he would be replaced by two others. Was there a nest or something? As she reached over her shoulder to get another arrow she signed. 10 left and there was still no end in sight.

Things were definitely not going too well.

Suddenly Artemis heard a scream from Kaldur and looked up.

Mistake, big mistake.

A joker card rewarded her lack of attention by piercing its way into her shoulder.

„Never thought i gonna play that card on you? Huh, Missy?"

Heavily cursing she pulled the card out of her body. At least it didn't explode. A small comfort, really small. She should know better. When did she became that soft? Caring for her teammates right now was a luxury the archer could not afford. She had her own battle to fight.

Artemis didn't bother to reply and the harlequin didn't gave her a chance to rest while aiming her bazooka at her. In shock the archer watched the clown girl pulling with relish the trigger.

She had to made a decision: dodge an get the Martina girl take the blow or stay and die.

The newest member of the team made up her mind. There was no going back now, she would stick with her choice, Artemis thought as she watched the missile getting closer. Before it hit its target she closed her eyes.

When no detonation was coming she opened them again in suspicion and blinked. Artemis couldn't believe her luck!

"Missed..." She breathed out in surprise.

"Wasn't aiming at ya."

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"Hurry up~~~" an energetic KF shouted from the distance. Robin rolled his eyes under his mask but forced his pace up anyway.

"KF could you slow down a bit?"

"You ask for the impossible boy wonder" the speedster giggled mischievous, which earned him a slight punch in the ribs. Still worth it.

"This is serious. We're dealing with the Joker here. And I bet this place is full of booby traps and stuff like that."

"Oh come on Rob, what's the worst thing that could happen?" Wally slung his arm casual over Dick's shoulder.

"You just did not want to go there, did ya?"

Another grin was all he got from the ginger before they reached a giant metallic door in front of them.

Robin started to do his thing and persuade the technology to bend to his will. Which was surprisingly harder than he thought.

"Can't you hack the security system any faster?" KF asked, while tapping impatient with his foot.

"I could if you were able to be quiet for longer than 5 seconds." Came the smooth reply.

"Guys", Super Boy reminded them of his existence. "I don't think it's necessary, the door is open."

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Artemis snapped her head back.

"AQUALAD!" she screamed a desperate warning, but it was already too late. Helplessly she watched Kaldur going down.

"Aqualad!" the young girl tried again. No reaction.

This was bad. And worst part: it was her fault. How could she let this happen? If she only had paid more attention, if she were faster, if she had defeated the Harlequin first instead of going for the stupid Hyenas... Kaldur would still be alive- No! He was not dead! He just couldn't. He was a super hero. For god's sake, he had super strength! There was no way!

"Aqualad!"

An iron knot was beginning to grow inside her stomach as she looked again at the lifeless figure of her friend and panic spread through her veins. Her hands started to

tremble.

Keep it together Crock, this is not over. She looked down at her feet. Artemis couldn't chicken out yet, Megan still needed her help.

"Hihihihi. Did I hit him Puddin? Did I?"

The harlequin chirped as she jumped up and down in excitement. Her bells rang happily.

"Harley" the Joker growled, "How often have I told you NOT to interrupt me while I am talking?"

"Sorry Hon~."

Her shoulders sloped immediately down, but she didn't sound sorry at all. While Harley lifted her head up again her eyes met with Artemis. The satisfied smile on her face was all it took for the archer to snap.

"You gonna pay for that bitch!" Artemis icy voice promised a painful future.

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BANG

Funny how everything was supposed to start with a big bang and now it would be responsible for Kaldurs end. Oh irony. Thank goodness Aqualad hadn't time to think of how the world pulled sometimes the cruelest jokes on you.

He was otherwise occupied.

It ripped Aqualad with a brutal force from his feet, and smashed him into the ground. There was nothing but hot pain exploding in his back, burning it's way past his skin. His entire body was on fire. Literally. Somewhere in the distant he vaguely heard a weird mix between laughing and yelling. Kaldur didn't care. All he knew was that it hurts.

The Atlantean couldn't move an inch, he barley managed to keep himself awake. Every breath felt like it was too much to take.

At this time "of the game" he was completely at the mercy of the psychopath, not that it mattered to him anyway. Again, it hurts a lot.

"So what are we gonna do with you now water boy? You wanna see a magic trick?"

He continued the doomed fight against his clouded mind. Some small victory's were already accomplished. For once, he got his vision back. How he found the strength to successfully open his eyes, he had no idea. Everything seemed blurry and a little out of place, but Kaldur was almost sure, that the room spinning around him was not real... almost.

There was a pair of black shoes next to his head, slowly circling around his aching body, like vultures. The rhythmical tapping of them held something strangely comforting. It reminded him of the steady sound of waves tossing against the beach.

"I wonder if you can breath without that gills of yours...I always wanted to see a fish drowning. Hahaha... Now that would be funny! A fish who can't swim! HAHAHA"

Aqualads thoughts were floating back to his home. Not Mt. Justice. Kaldur 'Ahms real home, the deep blue ocean. His grip on reality started to fade. How easy it would be to let himself drifted back into the welcoming darkness... just for a little while. But there was that nagging voice. It was annoying to tell the least and made his headache worse. All he wanted was for it to shut up.

"You see my old man always told me: Sonny, what doesn't kill you simply makes you stranger."

Sadly the voice didn't seem to care at all.

"Oh, don't worry! This will definitely kill ya!"

It was ridicules hard for Kaldur to figure out the meaning behind these words. They just wouldn't made any sense.

"HMMMM...Normally i would make this one as slow as possible, since your a friend of the boy Blunder" Joker eyes lightened up in excitement as soon as he mentioned Robins name, "But you know my schedule is a little crowded, so I just gonna put a bullet trough your brain."

With time passing and the dizziness leaving, it was getting easier to put the words together, but he still felt like he was missing the point. And since when could shoes talk anyway? Kaldur saw them stop in there track and noticed a white hand coming out of space, grabbing something that looked like a big black stick, which lay on the floor. Weird...

Suddenly his brain decided spontaneously to work again and the pieces fell perfectly together. The jigsaw puzzle was complete. All to soon reality seemed painfully clear to him again. Oh man, did Kaldur wished he was still in denial.

He felt his heartbeat speed up, when he realized what would happened next, now that the joker was finished with his crazy rambling and holding the deadly weapon.

The clown was wandering in slow motion towards him, holding the M16 he had picked up. He kicked Kaldur, not very slow-motion-like, into his stomach, so that the energy

of the impact forced him on his back. Now Aqualad was facing the mad man, with a gun barrel pressed painfully against his forehead. Waiting for the inevitable.

"By, by, bir- fish boy." the semi-sweet voice of the Joker was filled with poison. Sickening pleasure was gleaming in his eyes.

Kaldur closed his own, not able to watch any longer. The next thing he heard was the merciless clicking noise the gun made...actually... it sounded more like a Batarang hitting metal.

Wait, what? Aqualads eyes shot open.

And there he was, the big dark shadow of the Bat jumping at the Joker. Driving the lunatic away from Kaldur, who was letting a breath out he didn't even know he was holding. And for the first time since the mission started the Atlantean felt the constant weight on his shoulders lifted.

"Batman!" Joker exclaimed surprisingly happy for a guy who was just about to get owned by one of the greatest heroes ever.

"I was wondering when you'd show up."

The clown licked his lips in a thrill of anticipation. Craving for the caped crusaders attention. And forgotten was Kaldur, as if he didn't exist in the first place, completely wiped out of Jokers mind. He had just eyes for the dark knight. Creepy, maddening, merciless eyes of a psychopath, though, which would pierce through the soul of every normal human being. Kaldur knows, they were fixed on him just a minute ago.

Well Batman wasn't normal. He was...Batman, that had to be enough.

The Bat glared for a brief moment over his shoulder. When their eyes met, Kaldur cringed inwardly. The obviously disappointed look he received from the older hero screamed plainly: I expected more from you. It was all it needed to let his self esteem shatter into 1000 tiny pieces. Shame over rolled him. Never before had he felt that his super hero name was so fitting. AquaLAD.

Kaldur couldn't stand it any longer and lowered his eyes. Was Robin feeling all the time like this?

Of course Joker noticed the small exchange between them, what brought the Atlantean back into his rather limited attention range.

"Told ya he liked me the best!" The villain twinkled suggestive toward Kaldur's direction, like they were BFF's, who shared a diary since Kindergarten.

He followed in silence the duel of the dark knight and the clown. It was at least to tell fascinating. They moved on pure instincts mixed with adrenalin. Batman made it look so easy to beat the Joker. How comes Kaldur himself had so much trouble with Gothams villains? First Clayface and now Joker.

In a weird dance fists were flying, punches and kicks exchanged. They knew every

single move of each other, like an old, married couple. That thought alone was scary.

As soon as it begun, it was over, with the dark knight standing in all his glory and pride victorious over his enemy.

"Smuggling weaponry is not your stile." The bogymen of evil doers stated.

His arch enemy doesn't seemed to mind the lake of an introduction. He most likely was used to it.

"Just making some small delivery's here and there. I am like Santa." The maniac proclaimed in a childish way.

There was a low growl escaping from Batman.

"Oh~ my poor, poor delusional knight. Its too late, its too late! This round goes to me!" The clown suddenly repeated hysterical over and over, giggling in sickening pleasure.

The nerve wrecking sounds were barley to bear, even for the Bat, who pulled him abruptly up and interrupted the shrill noise.

"Talk."

" Hihihih...Oh Batsy, aren't ya missing something? I wonder if they still make the kiddy sized coffins on 5th avenue. You know, I think Hank would give me a discount. I am his favorite costumer after all! Hahahahaha"

"What did you do?"

"ME?" Joker snapped.

"I didn't do anything! It was Fish boy here who deserves the honor!", he pointed gleeful at Kaldur.

"Wha- No!" Aqualad didn't understand what was going on.

"Your the leader of this little fight club aren't ya? You send them into there death, didn't you? You made your choice. And a bad one if you allow me to comment. I'll terribly gonna miss our little baby bird!" He whipped an imaginary tear from his eye.

"What do you mean?" Kadur'Ahm burst out.

Laughing filled again every corner of the room.

"It would be better if you had stood in your pond." said unsmilingly, poisoning the young man's mind with every spoken word.

"At least then-"

A fist was colliding with Jokers temple, which left the room in a bitter-sweet silence.

The dark knight let the criminal fall carelessly to the ground and took automatically his communicator out.

"Robin are you there?"

Batman was greeted with static.